

EMPOWERMENT OF WOMAN FOLK: A CASE STUDY OF FEMALE IN BSNL KERALA CIRCLE

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INTRODUCTION: The term empowerment refers to measures designed to increase the degree of autonomy and self-determination in people and communication in order to enable them to represent their interest in a responsible and self-determined way, acting on their own authority. It is the process of becoming stronger and more confident, especially in controlling one's life and claiming one's right.

Women empowerment implies the authority in women to take decisions with regards to their life and work and giving equal rights to them in all spheres like, personal, social, economic, political, legal and so on.

BSNL is a PSU. For administrative convenience it is divided into 27 telecom circle .Kerala is one among them.

KEY WORDS: *Empowerment, social, BSNL, employees, women, gender, status etc.*

REVIEW OF LITERATURE: Empowerment as action refers to the process of self –empowerment and professional support of people, which enables them to overcome their sense of powerlessness and lack of influence and to recognise and to use their resources. The term empowerment originates from American community psychology and is associated with the social scientist Junior Rappaport(1981).However ,the root of empowerment theory extend further into history and linked to Marxist sociological theory. These sociological ideas have continued to be developed and refined through Neo-Marxist theory.

Empowerment includes encouraging and developing the skills for, self-sufficiency, with a focus on eliminating the future need for charity or welfare in the individuals of the group. This process can be difficult to start and to implement effectively. It is the process of which enables individuals /groups to fully access personal or collective power, authority and influence and to employ that strength when engaging with other people, institutions or society .In other words empowerment is not giving people power, people already have plenty of power, in the wealth of their knowledge and motivation, to do their jobs magnificently.

Women's empowerment and equality is a fundamental human right and critical to achieve, development objectives including health. As per article 14 of our constitution Women's have all privileges. Women's increased political participation, control of resources including land, access to employment and education are crucial for promoting sustainable development. There are numerous pathways by which greater gender equality can lead to improvements in health and quality of life for women with greater agency exposure are more likely to have fewer children, more likely to survive, receive better childcare at home and receive health care when they need it. At the same time, improved health outcomes for women can help to strengthen their own agency and empowerment. Healthy women are more able to actively participate in society and markets and take collective action to advance their own interests. They are likely to have greater bargaining power and control over resources within the household.

Sociological empowerment often address members of groups that social discrimination process have excluded from decision making process through –for example –discrimination based on disability, race, ethnicity, religion or gender. Empowerment as a methodology is also associated with feminism.

Legal empowerment happens when marginalized people or groups use the legal mobilization that is law, legal systems and justice mechanisms to improve or transform their social, political or economic situations.

To empower a female sounds on though we are dismissing or ignoring males, but the truth is, both genders desperately need to be equally empowered, Empowerment occurs through improvement of conditions, standards, events and a global perspective of life.

In social work empowerment offers an approach that allows social workers to increase the capacity for self-help of their clients. In economic development, the empowerment approach focuses on mobilizing the self-help efforts of the poor rather than providing them with social welfare. Economic development is also the empowering of previously disadvantaged sections of the society. The approach to empowerment is partly informed by feminism and employed legal empowerment by building on international human rights. The UN sustainable development goals targets gender equality and women's empowerment for the global development agenda.

According to Thomas .A. Pottenfield many organizational theorists and practitioners regard employee empowerment as one of the most important and popular management concepts of our time. In the sphere of management and organizational theory "empowerment" often refers loosely to process for giving subordinates (or workers generally) greater discretion and resources:

distributing control in order to better serve both customers and the interests of employing organizations.

Empowerment is simply the effective use of a manager's authority and subsequently, it is a productive way to maximise all around work efficiency. It refers to the delegation of some authority and responsibility to employees and involving them in the decision making process, not in mere job activities, but rather at all the levels of management

The most common ways of empowerment are participation in boards, stock options, collective bargaining job enriched and enlarged, quality circles, suggestion schemes, total quality management, self-managed teams etc. Empowerment increases the organization's responsiveness towards the problems or issues. Also, there is an increase in the productivity of an employee as he is completely engaged with the firm and takes decisions for the betterment of the organization as a whole.

Empowerment suffers from serious limitations; the decisions made might not be in line with organizational goals. There would be lack of coordination among the different levels of the organization. The superior-subordinate relation might get tensed due to the violation of authority. Sometimes it can be counterproductive as the superior might keep a close watch on the employee to check if the authority is misused. This might increase the dissatisfaction among the employees.

Employee empowerment is a management strategy that aims to give employees the tools and resources necessary to make confident decisions in the work place without supervision. Empowerment is a long term, resource-intensive strategy that involves significant time and financial investment from the organization's leaders.

Hammer and Champy (1993) suggest that empowerment of front-line workers is crucial if organization want to understand core business process. Economic empowerment implies that women are able to take on productive activities that confer some degree of financial independence, however, small burdensome they may be initially. Women's political participation is an important issue in the context of empowerment. Desai and Thakker (2001) have discussed women's political participation, legal rights, and education as mechanisms for their empowerment. In a broader sense it encompasses all voluntary actions intended to influence the making of public policies, the administration of public affairs and the choice of political leaders at all levels of Government (Nayak&Mahanta,2009)

Women's empowerment is an essential requirement for sound reproductive health (Secretariat of the UN, 2001). Regardless of the many international agreements formally confirming women's human rights, women are still much more likely than men to suffer from poverty and illiteracy, as

well as having less access to medical care ,property rights, credit, education and employment. They are far less likely than men to be politically active and to a greater extent, victims of domestic violence. One vital aspect of promoting equal opportunity between the sexes is the empowerment of woman. It is vital to sustainable development and the realization of human rights for all (UNFPA, 2008, UNDP, 2007)

Women’s wage is important for economic growth and the well-being of families. But women are often hindered by obstacles such as limited availability to education and vocational training, heavy workloads at home, unpaid domestic and market activities, and labour market discrimination. These obstacles hinder women ,forcing them to limit their participation in paid economic activities, and even when work, cause them to be less productive and accept lower pay .When women are in paid employment, they tend to be concentrated in the non-agricultural sector(world bank 2010,2012,Chen et al 2005)

Women constitute almost50% of the world population, but India has shown disproportionate sex ratio whereby female’s population has been comparatively lower than males. As far as their social status concerned, they are not treated as equal to men in all the places. Even today gender disabilities and discrimination are found in India.

The status of women in India has been subjected to many great changes over the past few millenniums. In early Vedic period women enjoyed equal status with men. Rigveda and Upanishads mention several names of women sage’s seers notably by Gargi and Maitrey. Late the status of women began to deteriorate approximately from 500 B.C. The situation worsened with invasion of Mughals and later by European invaders.

Constitution of India guarantees equality to women (article 14)There are other articles too which ensure rights of women .No discrimination by the state (article 15(17),equality of opportunity (article 16) etc. are some of the weapons for giving protection to women folk. Feminist activism picked up momentum in India during later 1970’s.later on many groups and NGO’s have been working for the empowerment of women. We proceed that in India women got voting right much before USA and some other European countries.

Empowerment of women would mean equating women to be economically independent, self-reliant, have positive esteem to enable them to face any difficult situation and they should be able to participate in the process of decision making. In India MHRD (1985) and the national Commission for Women (NCW) have been worked to safe guard the rights and legal entitlement of women. The 73 rd &74th amendments (1993) to the constitution of India have provide some special powers to

women that for reservation of seats(33%).The “New panchayath raj “is the part of the effort to empower women at least at the village level.

The national policy for the empowerment of women (2001) was an important step taken by the Government of the time for accelerating the pace of women empowerment. The policy was aimed at ensuring women empowerment through positive economic and social policies for the full development of women. The policy assured equal access to women to health care, quality education, participative and decision making in social, political and economic life of the nation. The national policy also aims at strengthening legal system for eliminating discrimination against women. It also visualizes strengthening partnership with civil society, particularly women’s organization.

Under the social empowerment of women steps needs to be taken to improve the health status of women, reduce maternal mortality especially in the areas which do not have good medical facilities. Awareness programmes need to be organised for creating awareness among women especially belonging to weaker sections about their rights.

Education for women has to be paid special attention .Greater access for women to education must be ensured in the education system .Efforts by the Government are on to ensure gender equality but Government initiatives alone would not be sufficient to achieve this goal. Society must take initiative to create a climate in which there is no gender discrimination and women have full opportunities of self-decision making and participating in the sound political and economic life of the country with a sense of equality.

BSNL formed in 1st October 2000 from the erstwhile DOT. For administrative convenience it is divided into 27 telecom circle. Kerala is one among such. In BSNL about two lakhs employees are working. Out of this approximately forty percentage of employees are women. Among the total employees 25% are executives and 75% are nonexecutives.

In Kerala Telecom circle for the betterment, unity of the women employees BSNL women welfare association is working. Present president is the better half of CGMT BSNL Kerala .In this association BSNL working women employees and males staff’s spouses are also actively participating. Last year in Trivandrum this organization played a active role for the betterment of the public, and needy society.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 1) To make an assessment of critical factors affecting the empowerment of women in BSNL**
- 2) To analyse the factors influencing the empowerment of women folk in BSNL**

Methodology: A survey is conducted and filled questionnaires collected from 100 women employees of BSNL Trivandrum SSA(Secondary switching Area).The collected data is analysed using simple statistics

ANALYSIS OF DATA

1. Age group of women employees:

Age group in Yrs	No of participants	percentage	Total cumulative
21-30	15	15	10
31-40	40	40	50
41-50	25	25	75
51-60	20	20	100

40 % of women employees are in the age group of 31-40 yrs followed by 25% in the age group of 41-50 yrs and 20 % in 51-60 years of the age group.

2. Employees based on educational qualifications:

Qualifications	No of participants	percentage	Total cumulative
Up to degree	0	0	0
Degree	60	60	60
Post-graduation	40	40	100
Above PG	0	0	100

60% of the women are degree holders and 40 % of the respondents are PG holders.

3. Based on length of service:

No of years in service	Number of respondents	percentage	Total cumulative
Up to 10 years	14	14	14
10-20 yrs	56	56	70
21-30 yrs	10	10	80
Above 30 yrs	20	20	100

56% of the women employees are having service 10-20 yrs followed by 20% have above 30 yrs of service

4. Based on number of dependent in the family:

Number of dependents	No of respondents	Percentage	Total cumulative
1-2	62	62	62
3-4	30	30	92
Above 4	08	8	100

62% of the employees have 1-2 dependent members and 30 % having 3-4 members in their family.

5. Based on marital status:

Parameter/variable	No of respondents	percentage	Total cumulative
single	18	18	18
married	81	81	99
diverse	-	-	99
widow	01	1	100

81% of the respondents are married .18% are not yet married.

6. Opinion about present working environment:

Opinion	No of respondents	percentage	Total cumulative
Very Good	35	35	35
Good	65	65	100
Neutral	-	-	100
Bad	-	-	100
Very bad	-	-	100

All respondent have good opinion about the present working environment.

7. Opinion about superior-subordinate relations

Opinion	No of respondents	percentage	Total cumulative
Very Good	38	38	38
Good	62	62	100
Neutral	-	-	100
Bad	-	-	100
Very bad	-	-	100

All participants have Good/Very good opinion about the superior –subordinate relation.

8. Opinion about employee involvement in work:

Opinion	No of respondents	percentage	Total cumulative
Very Good	26	26	26
Good	74	74	100
Neutral	-	-	100
Bad	-	-	100
Very bad	-	-	100

100% of the participants informed that they are fully involved in their work.

9. Opinion about present promotion policy and opportunity:

Opinion	No of respondents	percentage	Total cumulative
Very Good	4	4	4
Good	56	56	60
Neutral	19	19	79
Bad	21	21	100
Very bad	-	-	100

60% of the employees favoured that present promotion policy and opportunity is good.19% has neutral opinion and 21% have bad opinion about it

10. Opinion about gender roles in responsibility

Opinion	No of respondents	percentage	Total cumulative
Very High	2	2	2
High	58	58	60
Moderate	22	22	82
Low	18	18	100
Nil	-	-	100

60% of the respondents have the view that gender playing a good role in responsibility. 18% have the opinion that responsibility has less role in gender.

11. Opinion about influence of health problems in empowerment of women:

Opinion	No of respondents	percentage	Total cumulative
Very High	4	4	4
High	16	16	20
Moderate	41	41	61
Low	39	39	100
Nil	-	-	100

Only 20% of the respondents informed that health problems affect the empowerment of woman. 41% are moderate opinion about it and 39% have low opinion ie negative view about it.

12. Influence of emotional factors at work place on empowerment.

Opinion	No of respondents	percentage	Total cumulative
Very High	3	3	3
High	18	18	21
Moderate	29	29	50
Low	24	24	74
Nil	26	26	100

Only 21% of the respondents have the opinion that emotional factors affecting empowerment of women. 29% have moderate thinking and 50% not have such opinion that emotional factors at work place influence the empowerment.

13. Influence of working environment in women empowerment.

Opinion	No of respondents	percentage	Total cumulative
Very High	2	2	2
High	38	38	40
Moderate	19	19	59
Low	11	11	70
Nil	30	30	100

40% have the opinion that working environment influence women empowerment and 60% is of the view that no influence , 19% have moderate thinking about it and 40 % have the opinion that lack of working environment will not influence women empowerment.

14. Opinion about Academic qualifications as criteria for women empowerment

Opinion	No of respondents	percentage	Total cumulative
Very High	4	4	4
High	41	41	45
Moderate	18	18	63
Low	15	15	78
Nil	22	22	100

45% of the respondents telling that there is a relation between academic qualification and women empowerment. 18% have moderate thinking and 37% have the opinion that academic qualification has no impact on women empowerment.

FINDINGS

- 1) 40 % of the women employees falls in the age group of 31-40 Years, 25% in the group of 41-50 years and 20 % in the age group of 51-60 years.
- 2) All the women employees having qualification degree or above it. 56% of them having 10-20 years of service.
- 3) 62% of the respondents having 1-2 dependent members in their family. 81% of the respondents are married.
- 4) All the women employees have the opinion that working environment, superior-subordinates relation and all involvement of work are good /very good.
- 5) 60% of the respondents are satisfied with the promotion policy and opportunity and they are having the opinion that gender playing a god role in responsibility.
- 6) 80% of the women having the opinion those health problems have no influence on women empowerment and 20% against it.
- 7) 50% having the opinion that emotional factors no influence on women empowerment .40% have the opinion that working environment influence the women empowerment. 45% having the opinion that academic qualification is influencing the empowerment of women and 37% is against it.



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