

PERCEPTION OF HUSBANDS ON WOMEN'S AUTONOMY AND STATUS OF REPRODUCTIVE & CHILD HEALTH: A STUDY IN KADAPA DISTRICT OF ANDHRA PRADESH

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Generally similarities and differences exist in the perceptions of rural Indian women and their husbands with regard to various dimensions of women's autonomy. Gender is a salient source of social stratification across many societies and the study of autonomy and power of women relative to men reveals important in sites about women's well being and constraints on women autonomy, in relation to social demographic and health outcomes. Basic tenet here is that, the greater relative power of women allows them to successfully negotiate for, and execute their preferences within the marriage irrespective of men's preferences. An implicit assumption here is that there exists a divergence between the goals and the interest of men and women. The nature of the disagreement between men and women varies substantially across the varied social setting in our society. The convergence of low autonomy due to youth as well as gender means that woman's autonomy is at its lowest point during the peak of childbearing years. This has considerable implications for demographic and health outcomes in terms of poorer child survival, slower fertility decline, and poorer reproductive health.

The dimensions of women's autonomy and their relationship to maternal health care utilization lie in three areas:

- Control Over Finances,
- Decision- Making Power, And
- Freedom of Movement.

In this paper an attempt was made to understand the perception/opinion of Husbands on women's autonomy, and how far they recognize that women's autonomy leads to overall benefit of families.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The Major objective of the study was to

1. Understand the perception of Husbands on various aspects related to women's autonomy, and how they are participating in promotion of Reproductive and Child Health.
2. Understand the nature of Husband's opinion on different issues related to family, women's work and child bearing.

AREA OF THE STUDY

The study was carried out in Kadapa District of Andhra Pradesh. This district constitute with three revenue divisions, viz., Rajampeta, Jammalamadugu and Kadapa. At the first stage of sampling Four Mandals from each Revenue Division are selected purposively to carry out the study. In the second stage 50 currently married Husbands in the reproductive age and with at least one child are selected from randomly chosen villages. Thus from 12 mandals a total sample of 600 husbands were considered for the study.

PERCEPTIONS ON AUTONOMY OF WOMEN

The perceptions of males on the autonomy of women has been elicited and presented in the below given Table1.

Table -1, Opinion / Perceptions of Males on the Autonomy of Women

S.No.	Issues on Autonomy of Women	Level of Perception			Total
		Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
1.	Girls going for higher studies	8.33 (50)	41.33 % (248)	50.33 % (302)	100.00 % (600)
2.	Sending daughter far away for higher studies	0.00 % (120)	37.67 % (226)	42.33 % (254)	100.00 % (600)
3.	Married women working in office Along with men	24.67 % (148)	33.67 % (202)	41.67 % (250)	100.00 % (600)

4.	Remarriage of young widows	21.67 % (130)	46.67 % (280)	31.67 % (190)	100.00 % (600)
5	Consulting wife for Decision making on important issues	23.00 % (138)	42.67 % (256)	34.33 % (206)	100.00 % (600)
6.	Daughter's inter caste marriage	50.33 % (302)	30.67 % (184)	19.00 % (114)	100.00 % (600)
7.	Wife's active Participation in political activities	45.67 % (274)	34.33 % (206)	20.00 % (120)	100.00 % (600)
8.	Equal property rights for females	26.33 % (158)	46.33 % (278)	27.33 % (164)	100.00 % (600)
9.	30 % seats for females in employment and political fields	23.67 % (142)	51.67 % (310)	24.67 % (148)	100.00 % (600)
10.	Girls' postponing marriage until getting job	30.00 % (180)	45.33 % (272)	24.67 % (148)	100.00 % (600)
11	Property on wife's name	24.33 % (146)	48.67% (292)	27.00 % (162)	100.00% (600)

The table presents that more than half of the respondents, i.e., 302 (50.33%) 'strongly agreed' for girls going for higher studies and 248 respondents (41.33%) 'agreed' for girls going for higher studies but on the contrary, 50 respondents (8.33%) disagreed for girls going for higher studies.

In the case of sending daughter for higher studies to faraway places, 42.33% strongly agreed, 37.67% agreed and none disagreed. Regarding Married women working in office along with men, 41.67% strongly agree, 33.67% agreed and 24.67% disagree. Moreover, 46.67% agreed, 31.67% strongly agreed and 21.67% disagreed the remarriage of young widows. Similarly, 42.67% agreed, 34.33% strongly agreed and 23% disagreed the consulting with wife and other elder members while taking certain important decisions regarding family matters.

In case of Daughter's inter caste marriage 50.33% disagreed, 30.67% , agreed, and only 19% strongly agreed. Regarding Wife's active participation in political activities, 45.67 disagreed, 34.11% agreed, and the remaining 20% strongly agreed. Similarly, in case of Equal property rights for females along with males introduced by the AP government, 46.33% strongly agreed, 27.33% agreed and 26.33% disagreed.

In case of 30 % seats for females in Employment and political fields reserved by the Government of Andhra Pradesh, 51.67% agreed, 24.67% strongly agreed and 23.47% disagreed. Regarding girls postponing marriage up to 20 years and above age, 45.33% agreed, 30% disagreed and 24.67% strongly agreed. Finally, in case of approval of keeping property on wife's name, 48.67% agreed, 27% strongly agreed and 24.33% disagreed.

GROUP INDEX PERCEPTINS ON AUTONOMY OF WOMEN

The overall perception level of respondents on Autonomy of women was judged through an index based on above factors and are categorized as those with low, medium and high level of perceptions. The respondents with favourable attitude on majority of autonomy related aspects are treated as having high perception level and vice-versa.

The respondents are grouped into low, medium and high level of perceptions based on the scores obtained over the index. The overall score range was between 11 -33 and the sample was divided as follows.

- a. Score range of 11 to 18 - Poor perception.
- b. Score range of 19 – 26 – Medium perception.
- c. Score range of 27-33 High perception

The overall perceptions on the autonomy of women has been elicited and presented in the Table .2.

Table.2 Group Index on Autonomy of Women

S.No.	Perception on women autonomy	Percentage %
1	Low	36.00 % (216)
2.	Medium	36.00% (216)
3.	High	28.00% (168)
	Total	100% (600)

The majority of the samples in the study area (36%) are having medium level of Perceptions on Autonomy of Women. The respondents with high perception in this regard are only 28 percent, and bulk of them is having low level of perception. This show that majority of respondents are not having favorable attitude on women Autonomy.

Lack of awareness on importance of women autonomy in dealing with participation in decision on Children's Education, Maintenance of daily household needs, in-laws care, cleanliness in house and surroundings is the reason for low perception of Husbands on Autonomy of their wives. The health personnel and other rural development agencies are to concentrate on educating Husbands, especially illiterates and low educated persons on the importance of involvement of wives in proper maintenance of Household and on Reproductive and Child Health roles.