

The Role of Decision Making Skills and Empowerment among Female Students in Varanasi District**Ms. Simpa Dolai¹****Review: Feb 14, 2025****Acceptance: Feb, 24, 2025****Publication: May, 02, 2025****Abstract**

Decision-making skills are a process that involves identifying the best course of action from multiple options and are essential for personal and professional growth. Empowerment is the process of gaining confidence, control, and self-determination in one's life or in specific areas such as work, education, finance, or personal relationships. It involves equipping individuals or groups with the skills, knowledge, resources, and authority needed to take their own decisions. This study examines the role of decision-making skills and empowerment among female students in the Varanasi district. This research paper focuses on how decision-making capabilities contribute to the personal and academic growth of young women. This study also investigates the levels of empowerment experienced by these students and how this empowerment influences their ability to make choices regarding their education, finances, and social dimension. This study used a descriptive survey research design to examine the role of decision-making skills and empowerment among female students of the represented age group between 21-35 years in different areas of the Varanasi district, Uttar Pradesh, with a sample size of 100, and a stratified random sampling technique was used from both rural and urban areas. A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data from respondents. Decision-Making Skills and Empowerment of Female Students—DMEF: The scale was used to evaluate the level of decision-making skills and empowerment of female students in various educational institutions in the Varanasi district. The finding of the study that urban students were generally more empowered than rural students in all areas. When women are given the support and resources to make autonomous decisions, they are more likely to pursue higher education and career opportunities.

Keywords: Decision Making Skills, Empowerment, Female Students, Varanasi District.**Introduction**

India is a very diverse country. Many religions, castes, and cultures are deep-rooted in India. The people believe in many goddesses, but the irony is that in a country where women are worshiped, they are considered incapable of making their own decisions. In our society, women are neglected, but it cannot be denied that they have a defined role to play in society. Culturally, women are held as a bring down of social status, which has further worsened their opportunities and access to education. Today, the importance of women's education is being acknowledged more than ever. It is vital not only to educate girls and women, but also to ensure they have access to fundamental facilities. In many countries, especially in developing countries, women have a literacy rate still low compared to men (Chui et al. 2019).

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The main reason behind women's lower illiteracy rates is insufficient availability of proper resources. In India, women's education is still challenging. As per the 2011 census, the literacy rate of Indian women was 64.6%. This number is quite low when compared with the literacy rate of men, which is 80.9%. And the average literacy rate in Varanasi district as per census 2011 is 78.41% of which males and females are 83.30% and 72.92% literate, respectively (Census of India, 2011).

Decision-Making Skills:

Decision-making skills are defined as a process by which individuals make choices after considering possible outcomes. In the context of empowerment, decision-making skills enable female students to take responsibility for their actions and future, enhancing their problem-solving abilities and fostering independence. Developing these skills helps students better navigate personal, academic, and career challenges (Sonkar&Choudhary, 2021). Decision-making becomes especially crucial for young women, as it determines their capacity to shape their future in both domestic and professional settings.

Empowerment:

Empowerment refers to a process through which an individual can control behavior and decisions that affect their lives, enhance self-confidence, and access resources and opportunities (Chui et al. 2019). For female students, empowerment includes acquiring knowledge, skills, and the ability to participate in decision-making processes at home, school, and society. Empowerment is considered a key outcome of education and for reducing gender disparities.

Rural and Urban Dynamics in Empowerment and Decision-Making:**Rural Female Students:**

Rural female students often facing many challenges in our day life such as limited access to quality education, socio-cultural restrictions, and economic dependency, which can hinder their decision-making abilities and empowerment. However, participation in programs like self-help groups (SHGs) and community engagement activities can positively impact their decision-making skills by building financial literacy and social capital (Sonkar & Choudhary, 2021).

Urban Female Students:

In Urban cities, girls have improved access to education and resources, but they are still facings social obstacles, gender norms and family expectations, that can limited involvement in decision-making. Urban students have more freedom and empowerment programs available, they are address various issues such as academic pressure and need to adhere social expectations.

Schools and colleges serve an essential role in fostering both decision-making skills and empowerment by promoting critical thinking, encouraging leadership activities, and offering career guidance. Education can assist

students break away from conventional roles and builds their confidence to make independent life decisions (UNESCO, 2015). Empowered students are more tend to contribute positively to their families and communities, promoting overall societal development.

In Varanasi, The Role of decision-making skills and empowerment among female students is critical to address gender disparities and to promote their equitable development in our society. Its focusing on skill development, financial independence, and leadership training can assist in bridge the empowerment gap and enable young women are empowered to become active decision-makers in society.

Review Related Literature

Decision-making skills

Escardíbul and Albert (2017) conducted research on how education influences women's role in household decision-making in Spain. They indicated that a higher level of education for both husbands and wives leads to more balanced decision-making within families. Specifically, educated couples are more likely to share responsibilities equally in three areas: everyday shopping, large purchases of durable goods, and major child-related expenses. The study also considered family characteristics, confirming that education positively contributes to equality in decision-making, independent of other demographic factors. Namdeo, R.P. (2017) explored how education influences women's decision-making abilities. It found that educated women demonstrated better decision-making skills compared to uneducated women. Moorthi, S. (2018) conducted a study assessing the decision-making skills of college students in educational institutions across Tamil Nadu. The sample comprised 251 college students selected through random sampling. They found out that the overall level of decision-making skills among these students was average. Furthermore, it indicated that there were no significant differences in decision-making skills based on various factors such as birth order, family size, and parents' educational status.

Empowerment

Duflo, E. (2012) examined the close relationship between women's empowerment and economic development. The study highlights that while economic development can significantly reduce gender inequality, empowering women can also enhance development outcomes. Duflo questions whether focusing on either aspect alone could create a self-sustaining cycle of improvement. However, she concludes that the interrelationships between men and women are typically too weak to be self-sustaining, emphasizing the need for continuous policy commitment to achieving gender equality. Nayak, P. & Mahanta, B. (2012) conducted on women's empowerment in India. The study discovered that Indian women are disempowered, enjoying a lower status than men despite governmental efforts. Significant gender gaps persist in education and employment, and women's decision-making abilities and mobility rights vary with age, education, and employment status. The obtaining of inequality gender norms is still prevalent, with many women justifying domestic violence. Control over finances boosts with age and education; rural women are facing a high rate of domestic violence compared to urban women. The authors conclude that although education and employment are crucial for empowerment,

achieving gender equality largely depends on societal attitudes. Sundaram, M. S., Sekar, M., & Subburaj, A. (2014) investigated the impact of education on empowered women. Their research highlights that education is crucial for promoting women's empowerment, development, and well-being. They emphasize that women are facing discrimination throughout life and must overcome systemic gender biases, which requires empowerment through education. The study, conducted in the Madurai district with 455 women aged 20–50, found that educational qualifications significantly influence empowerment. The paper concludes that sustainable empowerment can only be achieved through education, making it essential to enhance women's educational opportunities.

Rationale of the Study:

Decision-making skills and empowerment are essential for female students' personal and academic growth. Rural and urban female students in Varanasi face different socio-cultural challenges that affect these abilities. Rural students encounter traditional barriers, while urban students experience modern pressures. This study aims to explore how female students are to promote gender equality and empowerment and to develop decision-making skills. The findings will help to design effective policies and rights to empower women across various settings.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To study the level of decision-making skills in educational, financial, and social aspects among female students in their relations to locality.

- To study the level of decision-making skills in the educational aspect of female students.
- To study the level of decision-making skills in the financial aspect of female students.
- To study the level of decision-making skills in the social aspect of female students.

2. To study the level of empowerment in educational, financial, and social aspects among female students in their relations to locality.

- To study the empowerment in the educational aspect of female students.
- To study the empowerment in the financial aspect of female students.
- To study the empowerment in the social aspect of female students.

Delimitations of the Study

- The present study was confined to female students within the Varanasi district, excluding other districts of Uttar Pradesh.
- The study focused on female students at specific educational levels, such as higher education.
- The study emphasized particular aspects of decision-making skills, such as educational, financial, and social dimensions.

- Only 21 to 35 years of rural and urban female students were considered in the present study.
- Only postgraduate students have been taken from various departments at Banaras Hindu University.

Research Methodology:

The study used a descriptive survey research design to examine the role of decision-making skills and empowerment among rural and urban female students of the Varanasi district.

Population of the Study:

For this study, all female students at higher education levels doing postgraduate from professional courses and academic courses from Varanasi district of Uttar Pradesh state have taken as population.

Sample and Sampling Techniques:

In this study, 100 female students from Banaras Hindu University (50 rural and 50 urban) have been taken as a sample. A stratified random sampling technique was used to collect data from different areas.

Tool Used

The self-administrated tool was used by the researcher to assess the level of decision-making skills and empowerment. Tool name: Decision Making and Empowerment of Female Students (DMEF), yielding the scores on three dimensions of decision-making skills and empowerment, i.e., educational, financial, and social.

Statistical Techniques Used

In this study, the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and norms.

Analysis and Discussion of Data:

The analysis and interpretation of the data are given below:

Objective

1: To study the level of decision-making skills in educational, financial, and social aspects among female students in the Varanasi District in their relation to locality.

a) To study the level of decision-making skills in the educational aspect of female students.

The data was analyzed through percentages, and the results are given in the following table.

Table 1 (a) Decision-Making Skills of Rural & Urban Female Students in Relation to Educational Level.

SL. NO	Level of Assessment	Distribution of respondents N=100	
		Rural female students	Urban female students (50)

		(50)			
		f	%		
1	5-11(Low)	32	64%	1	2%
2	12-18(Average)	14	28%	2	4%
3	19-25(High)	4	8%	47	94%

Out of 50 rural female students, 32 (64%) were found to be at a low level, 14 (28%) were revealed to be at the average level, and 4 (8%) scored at a high level of decision-making skills in the educational aspect. Out of 50 urban female students, 1 (2%) was shown to be at a low level, 2 (4%) were discovered to be at the average level, and 47 (94%) scored at a high level of decision-making skills in the educational aspect.

b) To study the level of decision-making skills in the financial aspect of female students.

The analysis of the data was conducted using percentages, and the results are given in the following table.

Table 1(b): Decision-Making Skills of Rural & Urban Female Students in Relation to Financial Level.

S.N	Level of Assessment	Distribution of respondents N=100			
		Rural female students (50)		Urban female students (50)	
		f	%	f	%
1	5-11(Low)	33	66%	1	2%
2	12-18(Average)	15	30%	11	22%
3	19-25(High)	2	4%	38	76%

Out of 50 rural female students, 33 (66%) were indicated as a low level, 15 (30%) were proven to be at the average level, and 2 (4%) scored at the high level of decision-making skills in the financial aspect. Out of 50 urban female students, 1 (2%) was observed to be at a low level, 11 (22%) were determined to be at the average level, and 38 (76%) scored at the high level of decision-making skills in the financial aspect.

c) To study about the Level of decision making skills in social aspect of female students.

The data was examined through percentage and the result are given in the following table.

Table 1((c) Decision Making Skills of Rural & Urban Female Students in relation to social level

SL.NO	Level of Assessment	Distribution of respondents N=100			
		Rural female students (50)		Urban female students (50)	
		f	%	f	%
1	5-11(Low)	36	72%	2	4%
2	12-18(Average)	12	24%	10	20%
3	19-25(High)	2	4%	38	76%

Out of 50 rural female students, 36 (72%) were considered to be at a low level, 12 (24%) were assessed as at the average level, and 2 (4%) scored at a high level of decision-making skills in the social aspect. Out of 50 urban

female students, 2 (4%) were described as a low level, 10 (20%) were declared to be at the average level, and 38 (76%) scored at a high level of decision-making skills in the social aspect.

Objectives-2 To study the level of empowerment in educational, financial, and social aspects among female students in relation to locality.

a) To study the empowerment in the educational aspect of female students.

The data was summarized with the help of percentages, and the results are given in the following table.

Table 2 (a) Empowerment of Rural & Urban Female Students in relation to educational level.

SL.NO	Level Assessment	Distribution of respondents N=100			
		Rural female students (50)		Urban female students (50)	
		f	%	f	%
1	5-11(Low)	35	70%	1	2%
2	12-18(Average)	13	26%	8	16%
3	19-25(High)	2	4%	41	82%

Out of 50 rural female students, 35 (70%) were concluded to be at a low level, 13 (26%) were highlighted as being at an average level, and 2 (4%) were at the high level of empowerment in the educational aspect. Out of 50 urban female students, 1 (2%) was reported as a low level, 8 (16%) were noted to be at the average level, and 41 (82%) were at the high level of empowerment in the educational aspect.

b) To study the empowerment in the financial aspect of female students.

The data analyzed was carried out with percentages, and the result can be given in the following table.

Table 2 (b) Empowerment of Rural & Urban Female Students in relation to financial level.

SL.NO	Level Assessment	Distribution of respondents N=100			
		Rural female students (50)		Urban female students (50)	
		f	%	f	%
1	5-11(Low)	43	86%	1	2%
2	12-18(Average)	4	8%	10	20%
3	19-25(High)	3	6%	39	78%

Out of 50 rural female students, 43 (86%) were seen as a low level, 4 (8%) were disclosed to be at the average level, and 3 (6%) scored at the high level of empowerment in the financial aspect. Out of 50 urban female students, 1 (2%) was recognized as a low level, 10 (20%) were suggested to be at the average level, and 39 (78%) scored at the high level of empowerment in the financial aspect.

c) To study the empowerment in the social aspect of female students.

The data was analyzed with the help of percentages, and the results are given in the following table.

Table 2 (c) Empowerment of Rural & Urban Female Students in Relation to Social Level.

SL.NO	Level of Assessment	Distribution of respondents N=100			
		Rural female students (50)		Urban female students (50)	
		f	%	f	%
1	5-11(Low)	44	88%	5	10%
2	12-18(Average)	4	8%	17	34%
3	19-25(High)	2	4%	22	44%

Out of 50 rural female students, 44 (88%) were suggested to be at a low level, 4 (8%) were inferred to be at the average level, and 2 (4%) scored at the high level of empowerment in the social aspect. Out of 50 urban female students, 5 (10%) were found to be at a low level, 17 (34%) were observed to be at the average level, and 22 (44%) scored at the high level of empowerment in the social aspect.

The Findings of the Study:

Objective 1(a): It is concluded that a maximum of 64% of rural female students were found to be at a low level of decision-making skills in relation to education, and a maximum of 96% of urban female students were found to be at a high level of decision-making skills in relation to education. It means there is a better educational level of decision-making skills in urban female students of the Varanasi district.

Objective 1(b): It is concluded that a maximum of 66% of rural female students were found to be at a low level of decision-making skills in relation to finance, and a maximum of 76% of urban female students were found to be at a high level of decision-making skills in relation to finance. It means there is a better financial level of decision-making skills in urban female students of the Varanasi district.

Objective 1(c): It is concluded that a maximum of 72% of rural female students were found to be at a low level of decision-making skills in relation to social, and a maximum of 76% of urban female students were found to be at a high level of decision-making skills in relation to social. It means there is a better social level of decision-making skills in urban female students of the Varanasi district.

Objectives-2(a): It is concluded that a maximum of 70% of rural female students were found to be at a low level of empowerment in relation to education, and a maximum of 82% of urban female students were found to be at a high level of empowerment in relation to education. It means there is a better educational level of empowerment in urban female students of the Varanasi district.

Objectives-2(b): It is concluded that a maximum of 86% of rural female students were found to be at a low level of empowerment in relation to finance, and a maximum of 78% of urban female students were found to be at a high level of empowerment in relation to finance. It means there is a better financial level of empowerment in urban female students of the Varanasi district.

Objectives-2(c): It is concluded that a maximum of 88% of rural female students were found to be at a low level of empowerment in relation to social, and a maximum of 44% of urban female students were found to be at a high level of empowerment in relation to social. It means there is a better social level of empowerment in urban female students of the Varanasi district.

Educational Implications of the Study:

The importance of the study include, conducting on a empowerment workshops and decision-making training tailored to diverse needs of female learners in various locality, designing an inclusive curriculum while training teachers to address female students' specific challenges, offering scholarships, career guidance and counselling for mental health , and mentoring programs focused on rural female students, organizing awareness programs for parents and communities, to promote female education and empowerment, providing equal resources to rural schools to reduce urban-rural educational disparities, and peer support networks to enhance the confidence, self-efficacy, and well-being of female students.

Conclusion

Decision-making skills and empowerment play a vital role in shaping the educational and personal development of female students in both rural and urban areas of Varanasi. Rural female students often face unique challenges due to limited resources and socio-cultural constraints, while urban female students tend to have more access to opportunities, but they still encounter gender-based barriers. By fostering decision-making skills and empowering these students through tailored educational programs, gender-sensitive teaching, and community involvement, significant strides can be made in bridging these disparities. Empowered students are more likely to pursue higher education, make their own choices, and contribute to societal change. Therefore, targeted interventions, such as mentorship, scholarships, and awareness programs, are essential in enabling female students to overcome barriers, realize their potential, and make meaningful contributions to their communities.

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