

**Factor associated with Women's Empowerment based on NDHS and NFHS data: A comparative study between Nigeria and North India.**

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**Abstract:** The aim of the present study is to estimate women's empowerment based on some autonomous factors like women's households decision making power and their attitude towards wife beating using different variables. We have seen that in Nigeria, almost half of the population of currently married women were considered to have low empowerment and only one third are highly empowered; while in the case of North India about one fourth of the women have low empowerment and about half of them are highly empowered. Looking at women justification for wife beating, in both populations considered in this work, greater number of women opposed the idea of wife beating by husband, but there is about 12 percent higher tolerance in Nigeria compared to North India. Increase in the level education and age of respondents contributes positively to autonomy of women in both study populations. Place of residence in North India have more pronounced effect on the autonomy of women than in Nigeria. We also proposed an instrument to calculate Women's Empowerment Index (WEI) for both populations based on the two autonomous factors, that is Household Decision Making Power (HDMP) and Attitudes Towards Wife Beating (ATWB). Result of the WEI signifies less empowerment for Nigerian women and greater empowerment for women in North India.

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**Keywords:** Women's Empowerment Index, Decision making, Attitudes.

**Introduction:**

Women empowerment is receiving global attention ever since the United Nations has included gender equality and women empowerment as part of its development goals; this is so because women's empowerment is an essential ingredient for achieving all the development goals. At the level of development bodies, the concept of empowerment was adopted after the Beijing Conference (1995), in its declaration of (section 13) at the conference, it presented women's empowerment as a key strategy for development. Many countries including developing countries like Nigeria and India are on track to achieve at least some of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) at the appointed dateline of 2015, in which empowering women is among these goals. These goals can be achieved if countries improve their economic growth, educational and health systems, which in place, will improve the quality of life of the people (Zaid 2010, The World bank, 2007).

However, the concept of empowerment is not a new one, references to the term dated back to the 1960s, particularly in the Afro-American movement and in Paolo Freire's theory based on the development of critical conscience, Charlier and Caubergs (2007). Since 1985, popular women's movements in Latin America and the Caribbean as well as feminist movements have seen the notion of empowerment as being tied. On the other hand, to the seizing of power, by emphasising mainly the improvement of self-

esteem and self-confidence as well as the ability to chose what direction one's life should take; and on the other to the collective power to change gender relations in the economic, political, legal and socio-cultural spheres. "Women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and their acceptance of some gender roles, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace."

**Why women empowerment?**

In an effort to give an answer to the above question, Ar kabrata (2001) in one of his presentation on "women empowerment, says that "the role of women in the development of society is of utmost importance, in fact it is the only thing that determine whether a society is strong and harmonious, or otherwise, women are the backbone of the society", which is also in agreement with the popular saying that 'Educating a man means educating an individual, but educating a woman/female is educating an entire family,' women need empowerment for the progress of any nation. However, there are so many other reasons why women need to be empowered, some of these reasons in addition to the above stated ones includes; educational problems, culture, Gender prejudice, Low confidence, Lack of unity, Problem related with Health, Poverty and Ignorance, traditional barriers.

These and many more reasons call for the need to empower women.

Empowerment of women can be seen as an essential avenue for reducing the differences between the sexes that exist in nearly all societies in most countries around the world. Empowerment is defined in several ways depending on the purpose or usage of the term. It can be referred to as "the process by which the powerless gain greater control over the circumstances of their lives." Greater control over resources but also greater self-physically coercive acts used against adult and confidence and the ability to make a decision on equal adolescent women by current or former male intimate partners.

Kishor (2008) says empowerment denote women's increased control over their own lives, bodies, and environments. In discussions of women's empowerment, emphasis is often placed on women's decision-making roles, their economic self-reliance, and their legal rights to equal treatment, inheritance and protection against all forms of discrimination, in addition to the elimination of barriers to access such resources as education and information. One of the major and direct indicators of empowerment is the decision-making ability of women. Kabeer (2005) lists decision making power as one of the elements required to enable one gain power, authority and influence over others, institutions or society. In short, empowerment is the process that allows one to gain the knowledge, skill-sets and attitude needed to cope with the changing world and the circumstances in which one lives.

Women's empowerment has essential components like, women's sense of self-worth; their right to have and to determine choices; their right to have access to opportunities and resources; their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a just demographic, social and economic orders, both nationally and internationally. In this paper, our focus is on women's right to have power to control their own lives both within and outside their homes.

### **Status of Women Empowerment in Nigeria and India:**

Although Nigerian women have been under the yoke of all forms of abuse meted out by men, and though fellow Nigerian women have been trying to get them empowered, with a view to liberating them, however, the women empowerment struggles have not yet yielded commensurate and significant results in Nigeria Roseline et al. (2009). Unfortunately, in traditional African society norms, a woman is still not expected to be an equal to a man. Lack of adequate education, economic and political development has

been identified as significant factors for poor performance at the level of women's empowerment programmes in Nigeria. This paper is designed to show and highlight the associations of some socio-demographic factors influence women empowerment in the Nigerian context. According to an assessment carried out by UNICEF (2002), the level of education of women is low in Nigeria most especially in Northern parts of Nigeria.

In India on the other part, much researches on women's empowerment suggested broad view on the condition of a female in the society. Women's autonomy in decision making is positively associated with their age, work and number of living children Acharya (2010). Autonomy is an increasing trend with the educational level of women Reddy (2009). Education and wage-work status are also significant determinants of the autonomy index, and residence have more powerful effect on women's freedom, education (even at the primary) plays a well-known role in enhancing almost every dimension of autonomy; wage work has a positive but less consistent effect Jejeebhoy, (2001). Higher ages at marriage for girls, greater levels of schooling and better employment opportunities for women may also contribute to women's empowerment Karen (2003).

The household standard of living increases women's freedom. Freedom plays a role in determining patterns of attitude towards girl-child education and future fertility preference Saraswati (2007). The relationship between female education, access to economic resources as a means of furthering empowerment of women especially in terms of their reproductive behaviour and increased access to resources is a major factor toward ensuring the much desired empowerment Odutolu (2003).

### **Need for the study**

Several studies have been conducted by many people on diverse issues relating to women's empowerment, some of which includes; measuring women empowerment, level of women empowerment, sources of women empowerment, constraints of women empowerment and so on, but only few attempt has been made so far to study women's empowerment in some cultural settings having different background and culture. This study therefore, will consider and compare women's empowerment in two populations that is Nigeria and North India. The selection of this population is based on the reason that both region are in their developing stages and both have similarities in demographic characteristics, and are almost similar in size of population of currently married women. A comparative scientific study will enable us understand the differences and commonalities between the two groups in terms of women participation in

household decisions and their view or attitudes to gender violence. Such a study will help to establish whether international agenda on women's empowerment differs in execution in the two populations and the extent this may occur. Only a comparative study can show the extent to which some demographic and socio-economic variables such as age, education, work status, standard of living, number of children and other developmental variables affects women's empowerment in different cultures and backgrounds.

India is a very vast country with all type diversity across the states in terms of demographic and socio-economic characteristics. Since independence, the Government of India has been making various efforts to empower women. In various plan periods, the issues regarding women empowerment has been given priority. In a study by Nayak and Mahanta(2009), they stated that there has been a remarkable shift from welfare oriented approach of women empowerment to development approach right from the fifth five year plan onwards. The National Commission for women was set up by an Act of 11 Parliament in 1990 to safeguard the rights' of women. In a similar vein, the 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution of India provided an opportunity for women to take part in active politics. The year 2001 was declared as the year of women's empowerment for enhancing their status. In other to achieve this goal, government introduced different programs, identified strategies, established institutions and made various legal provisions.

In spite of all these efforts and actions, women in India still lag behind the men. If we see the overall development of the country, India is far behind especially in the area of women's empowerment, there are many studies about women's empowerment, which explained their demographic and socio-economic importance in the society. On looking at various literatures, there are individually many studies that elaborate the status of women in the family settings. The study of Kishor and Gupta (2004) revealed that average women in India were disempowered in relation to men, and there had been little change in her empowerment over time. Blumberg (2005) viewed that the economic empowerment of women was the key to gender equality and well-being of the nation. These would not only enhance women's capacity of decision making but also lead to a reduction in corruption, armed conflict and violence against females in the long run. Women's empowerment in India is heavily dependent on many different variables which includes geographical location (urban/rural), educational status, social status (caste and class), and age. Policies on women's empowerment exist at the national, state, and local (Panchayat) levels in many

sectors, including health, education, economic opportunities, gender-based violence, and political participation. However, there are significant gaps between policy advancements and actual practice at the community level.

#### **Data and Methods:**

We used the 2008 Nigeria Demographic and Health Surveys (NDHS) data from West African country and the 2005-2006 National Family Health Survey (NFHS-3) data from North India. DHS surveys are nationally representative household survey where data is collected using standardized questionnaires using nationally representative samples of the population. DHS surveys provide comparable data for countries of interest on majority of variables of interest.

For the present study, the key variable of interest used is the women's empowerment which is measured by two indicators: participation in household decision making, attitude towards wife beating. Each of these indicators of women's empowerment was measured specifically as described below:

The measure on participation in household decision making focuses on issues around decision on some household variables, specifically, the study uses the following questions from the DHS to measure this aspects:

Who usually decides on your health care?

Who usually makes decisions about making household purchases?

Who usually makes decisions about making purchases for daily household needs?

Who usually decides on your visit to family/relatives?

In response to these questions, there are a number of five responses; respondent alone, respondent with husband/spouse jointly, respondent and another person, Husband/spouse alone, someone else or others. A respondent is said to be not involve (*Never involved*) in decision if she did not participate in making any of the decisions above, she is said to be *partially involve* if she has participated jointly either with her husband or another person in making decision on the decision making variables, also, she is said to be *fully involved* if she has participated in making decision alone.

Attitude to domestic violence is used as a proxy to gender equality, and female autonomy.

The following questions from the DHS were used to find out some information from the women on their opinion (attitude) towards a husband's right to beat/hit his wife in any of the following situations

If she goes out without telling him

Is she neglects the children

If she argues with the husband

If she refuses to have sex with him  
 If she burns the food

There are two responses to these questions, *Yes* or *No*. A respondent says ‘*Yes*’ if she is in support of wife beating by husband based on the above situation, and says ‘*No*’ if she does not agree with the

fact that husband should beat/hit his wife for any of the above situation.

The chart below describes two autonomous factors, i.e. decision making power and attitudes towards wife beating with their variables (Chart 1).

Chart 1. Two autonomous factors, i.e. decision making power and attitudes towards wife beating with their variables

<b>Decision on own health care</b>	<b>Decision Making Power</b>	<b>AUTONOMY</b>
<b>Decision on making major household purchases</b>		
<b>Decision about making purchases for daily household needs</b>		
<b>Decision on visit to their family/relatives</b>		
<b>She goes out without telling to husband</b>	<b>Attitude Towards Wife beating</b>	
<b>She neglects the children</b>		
<b>She argues with the husband</b>		
<b>She refuses to have sex with him</b>		
<b>She burns the food</b>		

We proposed an instrument to calculate Women’s Empowerment Index (**WEI**) for both populations based on two domains as; **Household Decision Making Power (HDMP)** & **Attitudes Towards Wife Beating (ATWB)**. The value of WEI ranges from zero to one, where higher value indicates greater empowerment and lower value indicate lesser empowerment. The WEI can be constructed as follows:  $WEI = \alpha * HDMP + (1 - \alpha) * ATWB$ ..... i  
 Where  $\alpha = 0.8$  is weight for HDMP and  $(1 - \alpha) = 0.2$  is weight for ATWB.  
 $HDMP = \sum pi/4, i = 1,2,3,4$ ..... ii  
 Where, pi is the proportion of women who takes decision either alone or jointly with their husband/someone in each of the four decision making variables.  
 $ATWB = \sum qj/5, j = 1, 2,3,4,5$ ..... iii  
 Where, qj is the proportion of women who have not justified wife beating by husband in each of the five situations for wife beating.  
 Substituting HDMP and ATWB from equation (ii) and (iii) into equation (i) gives WEI as follows:  
 $WEI = 0.8 * \{ \sum pi/4 \} + 0.2 * \{ \sum qj/5 \}$ ..... iv

**Results and Discussions**

Table 1, shows the percentage distribution of some demographic and socio-economic variables of currently married women of age 15-49 in Nigeria and India. It can be seen from the table that more than 50% of currently married women in Nigeria and North India live in rural areas. In Nigeria, the higher percentage (39%) of women is in the age group 25-34 years, while in North India, a higher percentage (38%) of currently married women are in the age group 35-49 years. In both populations considered here, age at marriage is below 18 years as seen in table 1 which has about 67 and 68 percent for Nigeria and North India respectively. Age at first birth is on the average 18 years and above in both populations. Looking at their parity, most currently married women in Nigeria and North India have of 3 and above with percentages 66 for Nigeria and 55 for North India. In both populations, majority of currently married women have no formal education (i.e., illiterates), 52% and 49% for Nigeria and North India respectively. The table also reveals that 65% of currently married



women in Nigeria are working and 35% are not working, while in the case of North India, only 31% are working, and 67% of them are not working. Considering the standard of living for currently married women from the table given, a higher percentage (50%) is observed to have a low standard of living in Nigeria while in the case of North India about 52% of currently married women have a high standard of living. Mostly, the age of the household head in both populations is 35 years and above.

Table 2 presents the distribution of decision making ability on different decision variables of currently married women in Nigeria and North India. It can be observed from the table that more than half (58%) of currently married women in Nigeria are never involved in making decision on their health; 62% are never involved in making decision on large purchases, 53% never make a decision on daily household purchases, 47% never involve in making decision on the visit to family/relatives, and about 69% never involve in making decision on husband's earnings. On comparing these percentages with that of women in the North India, 38% of the women never involve in decisions on their health care, 47% on large household purchases, 40% on daily household purchases, 42% on visit to family/relatives and only 29% never involved in the decision on husband's earnings. The result in table 2 reveals low percentage of women who fully involved in making decision on all the variables in both Nigeria and North India.

Table 3 present results on the distribution of women's attitude towards the wife beating by husband based on the different variables for currently married women in Nigeria and North India. It can be seen from the table that in both Nigeria and North India, majority of women considered in this work do not support wife beating by husband on any of the stated reasons, this is seen in high percentage value of respondents saying, "No" to their reason to husband to beat/ hit his wife.

Table 4 present results on the level of women's empowerment based on their decision making ability and their attitude to wife beating of currently married women in Nigeria and North India. As can be seen in the table high percentage (50%) of currently married women in Nigeria is low empowerment in terms of household decision-making ability while in the case of North India, a high percentage (49%) of currently married women are highly empowered in terms of their decision making ability in the household. Reverse is the case for Nigeria with regards justification to wife beating, where high percentages (60%) of women are highly

empowered. Similarly, in North India about 73% of currently married women have high empowerment when it comes to their justification to wife beating. Women in Nigeria and North India are moderately empowered as revealed by the result in table 2, with 64% in Nigeria and 58% in North India.

Table 5 present results from binary logistic regression for women's level of empowerment on various covariates among currently married women in Nigeria and North India. From the table, it is found that women belonging to age group 18-24 years and age 24 and above are having more autonomy than those below age 18, this can be seen from the values of the odds ratio, Nigeria having 1.546 (18-24) and 2.044(above 24), while North India has 2.013(18-24) and 2.825(above 24). On looking at women's residence in North India, those women living in urban areas having two times autonomy (odds=2.114) than women living in rural areas, while in the case of Nigeria, place of residence has no any significant difference in autonomy of women among the urban and rural women. Women's autonomy is seen to have increased as the level of education increases in both Nigeria and North India. In the case of standard of living, women's autonomy increases as their standard of living increases in Nigeria, while reverse is the case in North India where the odds shows not significant (odds ratio=0.979) result of women with a high standard of living. Looking at the women's parity result, autonomy increases with an increase in a number of children in North India, while it decreases with an increase in the number of children in the Nigerian context. Currently, married women in Nigeria having the age at first birth 19 and above have greater autonomy than those having age at first birth less than 19 years whilst in North India, women with age at first birth less than 19 are more empowered than those with age 19 and above. Age at marriage also a positive relationship with autonomy in both populations considered, in that women in Nigeria with higher age at marriage (18 and above) are more autonomous (odds ratio=1.373) than those below 18, though this is not so significant in North India (odds ratio=1.011). Working women have more autonomy than women that are not working; this can be observed from the values of their odds ratios in table 5. Finally, Table 6 shows the computed values of WEI for Nigeria and North India obtained as 0.498 and 0.626 respectively. This values signifies less empowerment for Nigerian currently married women and greater empowerment for women in North India.

**Table 1: Percentage Distribution of some Demographic and Socio-Economic variables of Currently Married Women in Nigeria and North India**

Variables	Nigeria		North India	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
<b>Residence</b>				
Rural	17,049	72.6	21,670	60.0
Urban	6,430	27.4	14,479	40.1
<b>Age group</b>				
0 (15-24)	5,569	23.7	8,351	23.1
1 (25-34)	9,154	39.0	13,865	38.4
2 (35-49)	8,756	37.3	13,933	38.5
<b>Age at marriage</b>				
Below 18	15,739	67.0	24,447	67.6
18 and above	7,740	33.0	11,702	32.4
<b>Age at first birth</b>				
Less than 18	11,012	46.9	13,359	37.0
18 and above	12,467	53.1	22,790	63.0
<b>Parity</b>				
0	2,004	8.5	3,450	9.5
1 or 2	6,063	25.8	12,916	35.7
3 and above	15,412	65.6	19,783	54.7
<b>Women's Education</b>				
Illiterate	12,229	52.1	17,856	49.4
Primary/Middle	4,986	21.2	4,714	13.0
Intermediate & above	6,264	26.7	13,578	37.6
<b>Women's Occupation</b>				
Not working	8,137	34.7	24,761	68.6
Working	15,342	65.3	11,324	31.4
<b>Standard of living Index</b>				
Low	11,644	49.6	11,183	30.9
Medium	4,402	18.8	6,319	17.5
High	7,433	31.7	18,647	51.6
<b>Age of household head</b>				
Less than 25	840	3.6	815	2.3
25-34	5,567	23.7	6,346	17.6
35 and above	17,072	72.7	28,988	80.2

**Table 2: Percentage Distribution of Decision Making Ability on Different Variables for Currently Married Women in Nigeria and North India**

Variables	Nigeria		North India	
	Never involved	%	Partially involved	%
Own health care	13,633	58.1	7,890	33.6
Large HH purchases	14,777	62.9	7,480	31.9
			Fully involved	%
			1,956	8.3
			1,222	5.2

Daily HH purchases	12,349	52.6	7,717	32.9	3,413	14.5
Visit to family/relative	10,924	46.5	10,239	43.6	2,316	9.9
<b>North India</b>						
<b>Variables</b>	<b>Never involved</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Partially involved</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Fully involved</b>	<b>%</b>
Own health care	13,724	38.0	12,315	34.1	10,091	27.9
Large HH purchases	16,792	46.5	17,126	47.4	2,213	6.1
Daily HH purchases	14,526	40.2	10,002	27.7	11,603	32.1
Visit to family/relative	15,165	42.0	17,583	48.7	3,383	9.4

**Table 3: Percentage Distribution of Women's Attitudes towards Wife Beating on Different Variables for Currently Married Women in Nigeria & North India**

Wife beating Justified if.	NIGERIA				NORTH INDIA			
	No.	%	Yes	%	No.	%	Yes	%
she goes out without telling him	14,689	62.6	8,790	37.4	27,727	76.7	8,421	23.3
she neglects the children	15,418	65.7	8,061	36.7	27,111	75.0	9,037	25.0
she argues with him	16,185	68.9	7,294	31.07	26,716	73.9	9,428	26.1
she refuses to have sex with him	16,090	68.5	7,389	31.47	32,171	89.0	3,971	11.0
She burns the food	19,036	81.08	4,443	18.92	30,116	83.31	6,033	16.69

**Table 4: Percentage Distribution of Level of Women's Empowerment based on their Decision Making Power and Attitude To Wife Beating for Currently Married Women in Nigeria and North India.**

Variables	Nigeria		North India	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
<b>Decision Making Power</b>				
<b>Low</b>	11,653	49.6	9,558	26.4
<b>Moderate</b>	3,918	16.7	8,724	24.1
<b>High</b>	7,908	33.7	17,867	49.4
<b>Justification to Wife Beating Attitude</b>				
<b>Low</b>	4,995	21.3	4,076	11.3
<b>Moderate</b>	4,309	18.4	5,863	16.2
<b>High</b>	14,175	60.4	26,210	72.5
<b>Empowerment</b>				
<b>Less Empowered</b>	3,051	13.0	1,539	4.3
<b>Moderately Empowered</b>	15,025	64.0	20,965	58.8
<b>Highly Empowered</b>	5,403	23.0	13,645	37.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>23,479</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>36,149</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 5: Logistic Regression of Women's Level of Empowerment on Various Covariates among Currently Married Women in Nigeria and North India**

	Nigeria		North India	
	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.
<b>Respondent Age</b>				
less than 18 (Ref)				

18-24	1.546*	0.083	2.013*	0.074
25 and above	2.044*	0.122	2.825*	0.112
<b>Type of Residence</b>				
Rural (Ref)				
Urban	1.011	0.042	2.114*	0.056
<b>Level Of Education</b>				
No education (Ref)				
Primary education	1.862*	0.084	1.286*	0.047
Secondary/Higher education	2.874*	0.141	1.681*	0.053
<b>Standard of Living</b>				
Low (Ref)				
Middle	1.311*	0.062	0.821*	0.030
High	1.480*	0.075	0.979	0.034
<b>Parity</b>				
No Child (Ref)				
1-2 children	1.071	0.075	1.494*	0.074
Above 2 children	0.916	0.067	1.515*	0.082
<b>Age at First Birth</b>				
less than 19 (REF)				
19 and above	1.037	0.046	0.987	0.029
<b>Age at First Marriage</b>				
Below 18 (Ref)				
18 and above	1.373*	0.062	1.011	0.031
<b>Respondent Work Status</b>				
Not working (Ref)				
Working	1.353*	0.052	1.139*	0.029

**Table 6: Women Empowerment Index (WEI)**

	HDMP	$\alpha$	ATWB	1- $\alpha$	WEI
<b>Nigeria</b>	0.449	0.8	0.693	0.2	0.498
<b>North India</b>	0.583	0.8	0.796	0.2	0.626

**Conclusion:**

We can conclude that in Nigeria, about half of the population of currently married women considered have low empowerment and one third are highly empowered; while in the case of North India near about one fourth of the women have low empowerment and about half of them are highly empowered. On looking at women justification for wife beating, we can say that in both populations considered in this work, greater number of women opposed the idea of wife beating by husband, but there is about 12 percent higher tolerance in Nigeria compared to North India.

Increase in age of respondents as one of the important demographic variable is having positive effect on women's autonomy in both study populations. Place of residence in North India have more effect on the autonomy of women than in Nigeria. As the level of education increases, the autonomy of women also having same direction in the both population. Autonomy increases as the number of children increases in North India; while opposite in the case of

Nigeria. Work status of women increases their level of empowerment in both populations. WEI value signifies less empowerment for Nigeria women and greater empowerment for women in North India.

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