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EFFECTS OF EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SETTINGS ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS

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ABSTRACT

The present study investigate both independent and interaction effects of education and social setting on empowerment of adolescent girls with respect to autonomy & self-reliance, decision making and participation. The subject of the study consists of 120 adolescent girls from secondary and higher secondary schools of rural and urban areas using random sampling. The investigator adopted the Adolescent Girls Empowerment Scale (AGES) which developed by the Sisodia and Singha (2009). The study examined the impact of education and social setting on empowerment among adolescent girls, revealing varied effects. Education independently influenced autonomy, self-reliance, decision-making, and participation, with urban girls showing greater empowerment due to educational advantages. Urban girls were more socially empowered than rural counterparts in autonomy and decision-making but not in participation, where both groups were equally empowered. An interaction effect between education and social setting was found only in decision-making, highlighting urban girls' dual advantage. Overall, urban girls benefited more from social and educational factors, reflecting disparities between urban and rural contexts in adolescent empowerment.

KEY WORDS: *Adolescent, Women Empowerment, Education, Social Setting, Urban and Rural Areas*

INTRODUCTION

Adolescent girls represent a vital demographic whose empowerment is crucial for fostering broader societal progress. Empowerment during adolescence is not just about individual growth but also about developing the capacity to participate fully in social, economic, and political life. However, adolescent girls, particularly those in rural settings, often face barriers that hinder their personal growth and limit their potential. These barriers are rooted in complex factors, with education and social setting being two of the most influential determinants of empowerment. Education has long been recognized as a powerful tool for empowerment. It provides individuals with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to navigate and overcome societal barriers. For adolescent girls, education plays an especially pivotal role in shaping their autonomy, decision-making, and participation in society. When girls are educated, they acquire the ability to make informed choices about their lives, their bodies, and their futures. Education also helps challenge the traditional roles that society often assigns to women, opening doors to greater self-reliance and participation in social, political, and economic spheres. The Human Development Report (1995) stressed that "empowerment is about participation and investigation in women's capabilities and empowering them to exercise their choices as it is not only valuable but also the surest way to contribute to economic growth and overall development".

Rationale of the Study

A critical examination of research studies conducted so far on women empowerment revealed that most of the studies were conducted to assess issues and challenges of women empowerment (Shettar, 2015), financial literacy of working women (Arora, 2016; Sirajuddin, 2017; Singh & Kumar, 2017), entrepreneurial behavior of working women (Mariammal & Seethalakshmi, 2017), role of self-help group in women empowerment and health (Narshima et al., 2016; Senthilkumar & Dharmaraj, 2020), changing socio-economic effect on women empowerment (Hemalatha and Amutha, 2018; Shanti & Murty, 2019). The lack of empowerment among adolescent girls in rural areas compared to urban counterparts raises concerns about systemic inequities. This study aims to bridge gaps in understanding how education levels and social contexts interact to influence various dimensions of empowerment. Identifying these effects can inform policies targeting equitable educational and social opportunities. Education plays a pivotal role in developing knowledge, skills, and attitudes, enabling control over resources and ideologies, fostering greater self-confidence, and leading to an inner transformation of consciousness necessary to overcome external barriers to empowerment. Moreover, adolescence is a critical period during which competencies and efficiencies are formed that continue to influence empowerment throughout life. However, limited research exists on the impact of education and social settings on the empowerment of adolescent girls. Therefore, the present study is designed to explore the effect of education and social contexts on the empowerment of adolescent girls.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study independent effect of education on women empowerment of adolescent girls with respect to autonomy & self – reliance, decision making and participation.
2. To study independent effect of social setting on women empowerment of adolescent girls with respect

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to autonomy & self – reliance, decision making and participation.

3. To study interaction effect of education and social setting on women empowerment of adolescent girls with respect to autonomy & self – reliance, decision making and participation.

Hypotheses of the Study

1. There exists independent effect of education on women empowerment of adolescent girls with respect to autonomy & self – reliance, decision making and participation.
2. There exists independent effect of social setting on women empowerment of adolescent girls with respect to autonomy & self – reliance, decision making and participation.
3. There exists interaction of education and social setting on women empowerment of adolescent girls with respect to autonomy & self – reliance, decision making and participation.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Design: This study aimed to investigate both independent and interaction effects of education and social setting on empowerment of adolescent girls with respect to autonomy & self – reliance, decision making and participation causal comparative method and ex-post facto research design has been used.

Sample: A randomly selected of 120 adolescent girls comprising students from secondary schools and higher secondary schools located in both urban and rural area was selected in the study.

Tools: To evaluate empowerment of adolescent girls, Adolescent Girls Empowerment Scale (AGES) prepared by the Sisodia and Singha (2009) was used. This scale was specifically designed to measure girls' empowerment across seven dimensions: power and entitlement, autonomy and self-reliance, decision-making, participation, capacity building, social, political and legal Awareness and exposure to information media respectively. The final form of scale consisted of 49 statements aimed at assessing the empowerments of adolescent girls. The internal consistency reliability coefficient of scale was 0.71.

Statistical Techniques Used: The data was analyzed by 2 (urban vs rural) ×2 (secondary vs higher secondary) way analysis of variance (ANOVA)) to found out the significant independent and interaction effect of social setting and education on women empowerment of adolescent girls.

THE RESULTS

1. Effect of Education and Social Setting on Women Empowerment of Adolescent Girls with respect to Autonomy and Self Reliance

As can be seen in Table 1 there found out Independent effect of education between Secondary education and Higher secondary schools on women empowerment of adolescent girls with respect to Autonomy and Self-reliance ($F=8.75$, $df=1$, $P<.01$). Therefore, the null Hypothesis stating that there exists independent effect of education between secondary education and higher secondary schools on women empowerment of adolescent girls with respect to Autonomy and Self reliance was rejected. As can be seen in Table 1 there found out Independent effect of social setting between rural and urban areas on women empowerment of adolescent girls with respect to Autonomy and Self Reliance ($F=14.25$, $df=1$, $P<.01$). Therefore the null Hypothesis stating that there exists independent effect of social setting between rural and urban areas on women empowerment of adolescent girls with respect to Autonomy and Self Reliance was rejected. Figure 1 reveals the different group of mean scores of independent effect of education between secondary education and higher secondary schools on women empowerment of adolescent girls with respect to Autonomy and Self Reliance .($M=27.54 > M= 24.77$). As can be seen in Table 1 there found no interaction effect between social setting and education on women empowerment of adolescent girls with respect to Autonomy and Self Reliance ($F=3.48$, $df=1$, $P<.01$). Therefore the null hypothesis stating that there exists no interaction effect of education and social setting on women empowerment of adolescent girls with respect to Autonomy and Self Reliance was rejected. Figure 1 reveals the different groups of mean scores of independent effect of social setting between urban and rural areas on women empowerment of adolescent girls with respect to power and Autonomy and Self Reliance .($M=27.54 > M=24.77$).

From the above analyses, the findings emerged could be summarised as (i) there was found out independent effect of education among secondary and higher secondary adolescent girls students living in urban and rural areas with respect to Autonomy and self-Reliance. The urban and rural areas girls were not equally empowered in education with respect to Autonomy and self-Reliance. (ii) there found out independent effect of social setting among urban and rural areas girls students with respect to Autonomy and self-reliance , It was found that urban areas adolescent girls were socially more empowered than the rural areas adolescent girls. (iii) There found no interaction effect of education and social setting among girls students with respect to Autonomy and self-reliance. It was found out that urban area and rural areas adolescent girls were empowered in education and social setting with respect to Autonomy and self-reliance.

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TABLE-1
Summary of 'F' Values for women empowerment with respect to autonomy and self-reliance (N=120)

Source of variance	df	SS	MS	F	Level of significance
Education	(E-1)=1	140.83	140.83	8.75	.01
Social setting	(S-1)-1	229.63	229.63	14.25	.01
Interaction	(E-1)(S-1)=1	56.04	56.04	3.48	N.S
Within	ES(n-1)-116	1869.2	16.11		

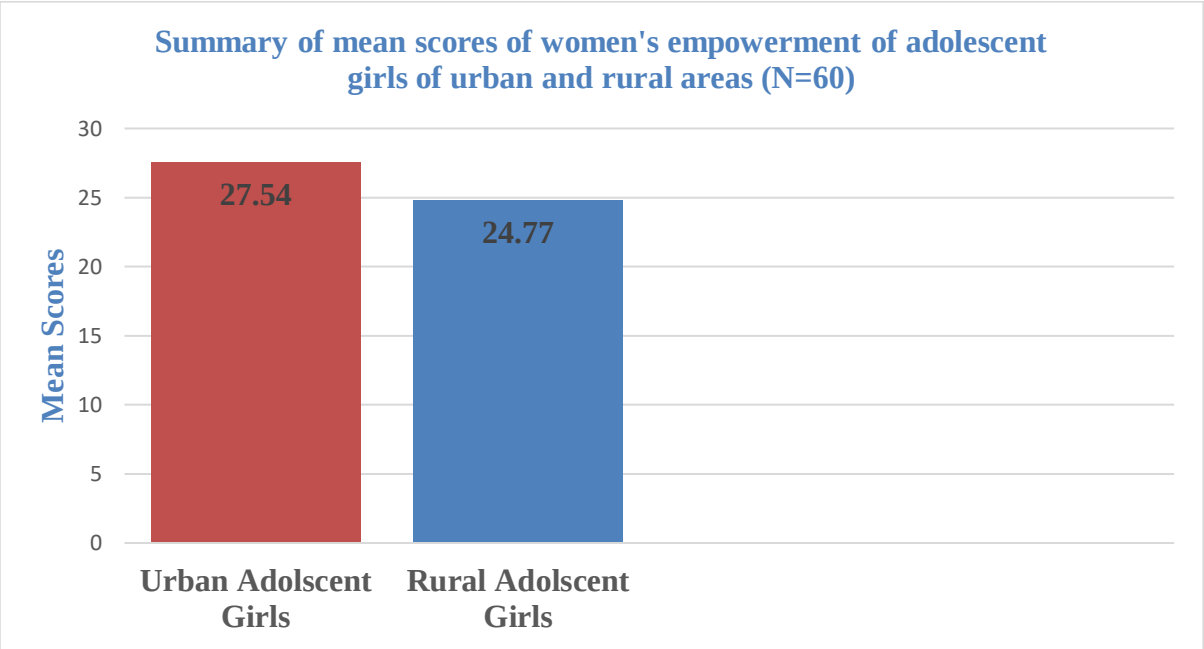


Figure:1 (Summary of mean scores of women's empowerment of Adolescent Girls of urban and rural areas (N= 60)

2. Effect of Education and Social Setting on Women Empowerment of Adolescent Girls with respect to Decision Making

As can be seen in Table 2 there found out independent effect of education on women empowerment of adolescent girls with respect to Decision Making (F=8.14, df =1, P<.01). Therefore the null hypothesis stating that there exists independent effect of education on women empowerment of adolescent girls with respect to power and Entitlements was rejected. Therefore the adolescent girls studying in secondary and higher secondary were not equally empowered with respect to Decision Making. Table 2 reveals there found out no independent effect of social setting between Urban and Rural areas on women empowerment of adolescent girls with respect to Decision making, (F=1.34, df=1,P>.05). Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there exists no independent effect of social setting between urban and rural areas adolescent girls with respect to Decision Making was accepted. Figure 2 reveals the different group of mean scores of independent effect of social setting between urban and rural areas on women empowerment of adolescent girls with respect to Power and Entitlement. (M=25.81 >M=27.5). As can be seen in Table 3 it concluded that after the multiple comparison of different groups using Scheffe method there found out significance of difference between the education and social setting on women empowerments of adolescent girls (F= 5.19, df =116, P<.05).

Whereas there found no differences between urban secondary and rural secondary (F=0.63, df=116, P>.05),urban secondary and rural higher secondary (F=0.35,df=116.P>.05,).urban secondary and urban higher secondary (F=0.184,df=116,P>.05), urban higher secondary and rural higher secondary (F=0.059,df=116,P>.05),urban higher secondary and rural secondary (F=1.29,df=116,P>.05), and rural higher secondary and rural secondary (F = 0.29, df = 116,P>.05) on women empowerment of adolescent girls with respect to Decision making was accepted.

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TABLE-2
Summary of 'F' Values for Women Empowerment with respect to Decision making (N=120)

Source of variance	df	SS	MS	F	Level of significance
Education	(E-1)=1	153.36	153.66	8.14	.01
Social Setting	(S-1)-1	25.21	25.21	1.34	N.S
Interaction	(E-1)(S-1)=1	97.87	97.87	5.19	.05
Within	ES(n-1)-116	2188.6	18.86		

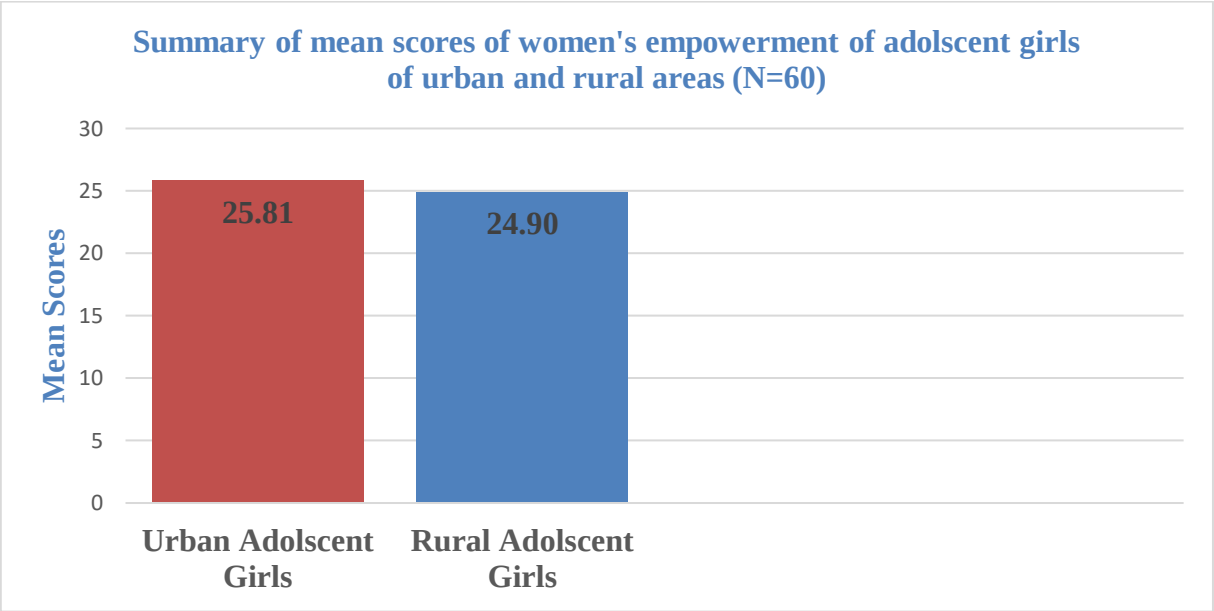


Figure:2 (Summary of Mean Scores of women's Empowerment of Adolescent Girls of Urban and Rural Areas (N= 60)

From the above analyses, the findings emerged could be summarised as (i) there was independent effect of education among secondary and higher secondary adolescent girls students living in urban and rural areas with respect to Decision making. The urban and rural areas girls were not equally empowered in education with respect to Decision-making. (ii) there found no independent effect of social setting among urban and rural areas adolescent girls students with respect to Decision making, It was found that urban and rural areas adolescent girls were equally empowered in social setting with respect to Decision making . (iii) There found out interaction effect of education and social setting among girls students with respect to Decision making. It was found out that urban area adolescent girls were not only educationally empowered but also socially more empowered than the rural area adolescent girls.

TABLE-3
"F" values obtain by the Scheffe method for multiple comparisons of different groups

Groups	Mean	F values	Level of Significance
Urban Secondary vs Rural Secondary	25.4 / 24.03	0.53	N.S
Urban Secondary vs Rural Higher Secondary	25.4 / 25.76	0.20	N.S
Urban Secondary vs Urban Higher Secondary	25.4 / 26.23	0.037	N.S
Urban Higher Secondary vs Rural Higher Secondary	26.23 / 25.76	1.36	N.S
Urban Higher Secondary vs Rural Secondary	26.23 / 24.03	0.84	N.S
Rural Higher Secondary vs Rural Secondary	25.76 / 24.03	0.80	N.S

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3. Effect of Education and Social Setting on Women Empowerment of Adolescent Girls with respect to Participation

As can be seen in Table 4 there found out independent effect of education between secondary education and higher secondary schools on women empowerment of adolescent girls with respect to Participation (F=4.15, df =1,P<.05). Therefore the null hypothesis stating that there exists independent effect of education between secondary education and higher secondary schools on women empowerment of adolescent girls with respect to Participation was rejected. Table 4 reveals there found out no independent effect of social setting between urban and rural areas on women empowerment of adolescent girls with respect to Participation (F=3.68, df=1,P>.05). Therefore the null hypothesis stating that there exists no independent effect of social setting between urban and rural areas adolescent girls with respect to Participation was accepted. As can be seen in Table 4 there found no interaction effect between social setting and education on women empowerment of adolescent girls with respect to Autonomy and Self Reliance (F=0.015, df =1,P<.01). Therefore the null hypothesis stating that there exists no interaction effect of education and social setting on women empowerment of adolescent girls with respect to Participation was rejected.

TABLE-4

Summary of 'F' Values for Women Empowerment of Adolescent Girls with respect to participation (N=120)

Source of variance	df	SS	MS	F	Level of significance
Education	(E-1)=1	88.41	88.41	4.15	.05
Social setting	(S-1)-1	78.41	78.41	3.68	N.S
Interaction	(E-1)(S-1)=1	3.01	3.01	0.0015	N.S
Within	ES(n-1)-116	2476.17	21.35		

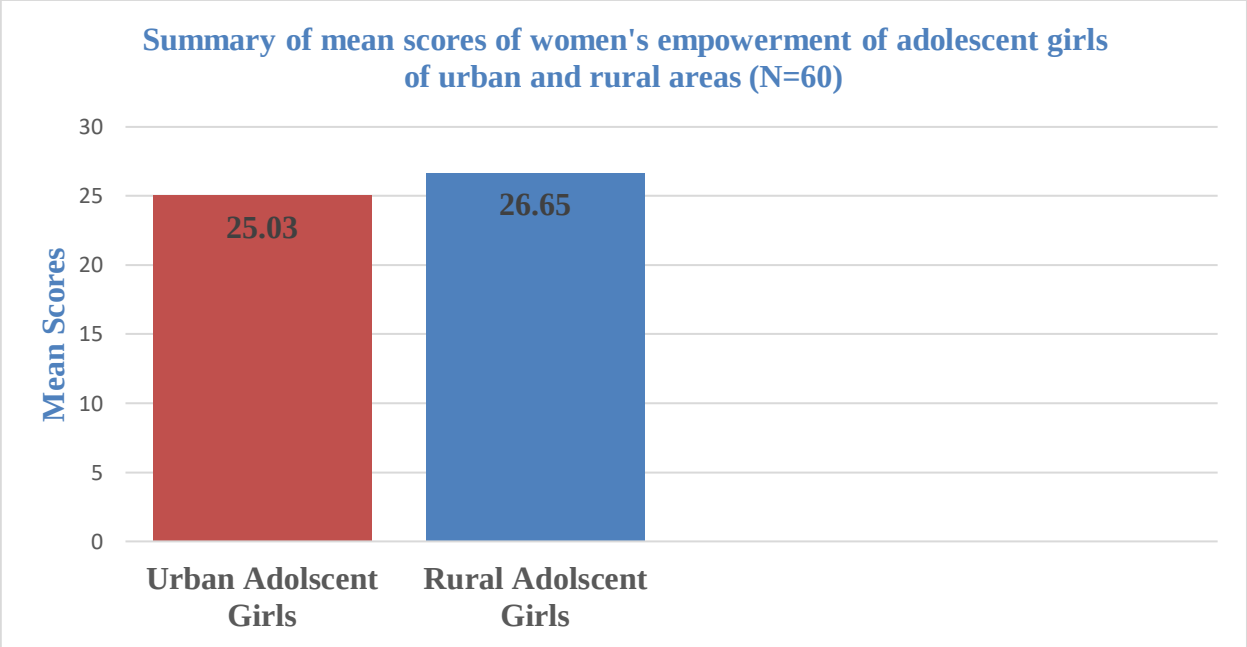


Figure:3 Summary of Mean Scores of women's Empowerment of Adolescent Girls of Urban and Rural Areas (N= 60)

Figure 3 reveals the different group of mean scores of independent effect of social setting between urban and rural areas on women empowerment of adolescent girls with respect to Participation.(M=26.65 >M=25.03).

From the above analyses, the findings emerged could be summarised as (i) there was found out independent effect of education among secondary and higher secondary adolescent girls students living in urban and rural areas with respect to Participation . The urban and rural areas girls were not equally empowered in education with respect to Participation. (ii) There found no independent effect of social setting among urban and rural areas girls students with respect to Participation. It was found that urban and rural areas adolescent girls were equally empowered in social setting with respect to Participation. (iii) There found no interaction effect of education and social setting among girls students with respect to Autonomy and self-Reliance. It was found out that urban areas and rural areas adolescent girls were equally empowered in education and social setting with respect to participation.

MAJOR FINDINGS

1. The study found an independent effect of education and social setting each on autonomy and self-reliance among adolescent girls. The urban adolescent girls were more socially empowered than rural adolescent girls in educationally. Adolescent urban and rural girls differed in empowerment, with urban girls showing greater autonomy and self-reliance due to their social and educational advantages.
2. The study also reveals that an independent effect of education on decision-making among adolescent girls of

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urban and rural differing in empowerment levels. No independent effect of social setting was observed, as both groups were equally empowered socially in decision-making. It also found that, an interaction effect of education and social setting with respect to decision-making. It was showing urban adolescent girls were more empowered both educationally and socially compared to rural girls highlighting urban girls' dual advantage.

3. The study found an independent effect of education on participation among adolescent girls, with urban and rural girls differing in empowerment levels. No independent effect of social setting was found, as both groups were equally empowered socially in participation. Additionally, no interaction effect of education and social setting was found, indicating that urban and rural girls were equally empowered in both education and social settings regarding participation.

DISCUSSION

The analysis reveals that clear advantage higher secondary students in autonomy and self-reliance compared to their secondary level. This suggests that the progression in education fosters greater personal agency and independence. The urban girls performed well in comparison to rural girls in this domain may reflect better access to resources, exposure and support systems in urban setting. However, in rural girls can get limited such type of opportunities, limited resources and economic restrictions. The finding also reveals that higher secondary education significantly enhances decision-making capability. This finding aligns with the notion that advanced education equips girls with critical thinking and analytical skills. Both urban and rural girls in decision making at large indicates some level of uniformity in this capability, but the greater benefit for urban girls from higher education suggests that environmental factors like access to role models, exposure to diverse ideas and support networks play a role. Higher secondary education boosts participation, helping girls engage more in society and community activities. The lack of difference between urban and rural girls is encouraging, showing that education alone can improve participation. The consistent impact across settings suggests education works equally well everywhere.

CONCLUSION

Education and social support play pivotal roles in empowering adolescent girls, fostering confidence, independence, and equality. Education equips girls with essential skills, broadening their opportunities for economic participation, leadership, and decision-making. It raises awareness about their rights, health, and social responsibilities, enabling them to challenge traditional gender norms. Social support, including family, community, and peer networks, creates a nurturing environment that encourages personal growth and resilience. When combined, education and social influence reduce vulnerabilities like early marriage, exploitation, and discrimination, paving the way for holistic development. Empowered adolescent girls are more likely to advocate for their rights, contribute to societal progress, and break intergenerational cycles of poverty and inequality. Therefore, a synergy of education and social reinforcement is indispensable for sustainable empowerment, enabling adolescent girls to realize their potential and create a positive ripple effect in society.

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