

Empowerment status of Scheduled Caste women- a case study research

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Abstract : Empowerment of women is now a major issue all over the world for the upliftment of women from their miserable, dominant and disadvantaged situation. The women empowerment issue was first introduced in India in 2001 and the year 2010 is considered as “The National Women Empowerment Day”. Although many initiatives have been taken by the Govt. of India and others organizations, but still the literacy level of women is very low. Especially in some states of India. The literacy rate of scheduled caste women is also low. As the SC population is the disadvantaged section of the society so, the researcher decided to find out the empowerment status of SC women in a selected area. This is a case study research. The objectives of the study were, to find out the empowerment status of SC women, the empowerment status of women by dimension, the difference in empowerment status in respect of educational qualifications, marital status and age of the women. Sample were collected by using judgmental sampling method. SC women were selected as the sample for the study. The sample were between the age range of 19 to 38. Survey method was used for data collection by applying questionnaire. The tool of measurement was “The Questionnaire Measuring Women Empowerment.” The reliability and validity of the questionnaire has determined by the test developer. For the analysis of data simple mathematical calculations were done like, frequency distribution, percentage calculation and calculation of average score. The result shows that the overall empowerment status of the SC women is satisfactory. According to their opinion, they enjoy most of the empowerment aspects. Only about the political issues and in some of the social empowerment aspects they have expressed negative responses. Most of the women responses were high in the educational, social and technical dimension of empowerment. It was also found by the researcher that SC women are less empowered in the economic dimension. But the most important among all is that they are not in favor of boy child. One more finding is that visible difference is found among the SC women with respect to their educational qualifications. Almost no difference is found among the women regarding their age and marital status.

Key words: Women empowerment, Empowerment status, Scheduled caste, Education.

1. Introduction

According to Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, “If you educate a man you educate an individual, however, if you educate a woman you educate a whole family. Women empowered means mother India empowered.” Women education, women employment and women empowerment – these three terms are related to each other very closely. Although among them Education is the basic activity through which women can gain the others two developmental criteria. Therefore, not only in India but around all over the world ‘women education’ is now a vital issue. Women are the indispensable part of a nation. Thus, for the all-round development of a country it is a necessity to properly utilize its all available resources including human resources. And to utilize all its human resources at first human development has to be done. A nation can reach to the pick of development, only when all the citizens of the country irrespective of men and women contribute by giving their best. So, it is very much important to educate the women. Women education will increase women employment and through education and employment, women will enjoy empower. Empower refers to the gaining of power in all the aspects of life, it may be personal or public, surrounded him or her. As from the very first century, women are considered only as the child carriers, domestic workers and the person who fulfilled the needs of all family members, therefore their actual potentialities and abilities are remained unexplored. They were deprived from all the rights they have, disrespected and dominated by the patriarchal society. Their domestic works are not considered as any economic contribution to the family by the men. So, there was a very need to empower them by education and employment. Besides women, there are a major section in society who are always having their place in backward and are considered as the untouchables by the higher section of a society. They were faced discrimination, less economic prosperity and enjoyed less social, political and economic power. This discrimination is based on mainly the caste system (Jati Pratha). This not only exists in India but all over the world more or less. In India regarding caste, the “Scheduled Caste” and “Scheduled Tribes” are the most downtrodden section in the society. So, it can be seen that the women, the scheduled caste and scheduled tribes face most difficulties in all aspects of their lives comparing than that of the so-called higher castes. After seeing the miserable conditions of these three sections of the country, the government of India has taken many initiatives for the improvement of this sections. Special laws were built for their upliftment and for saving them from any type of violence, misuse and disadvantages. Government of India also safeguard their all personal, social, political, economic, educational and religious rights. Many laws were made which guarantees equality against all types of discriminations. But still now they have not got their actual position and status in the society, especially the women. In general women cannot enjoy their all rights with full-fledged, moreover when they

are from the disadvantage sections their status will be poorer. So, in this study the researcher considered the scheduled caste women as the sample of study for investigating their present empowerment status.

2. Definitions of important terms:

2.1 Women Empowerment:

Women empowerment is not product, it is a process by which women acquire self-confidence, control over decision making power and household resources, critically analysis her surrounding environment and have the power to choose from all available alternative choices. Empowerment can be explained in different dimensions, social empowerment, political empowerment, psychological empowerment, economic empowerment, educational empowerment etc. When a woman empowered, her potentialities are explored and she understands all her rights she has and also the way to achieve them.

2.2 Scheduled Caste:

According to Sachchidananda, the term Scheduled Caste is not a sociological concept rather a constitutional concept. In 1927 the term first used by Simon Commission. Scheduled Castes are the historically disadvantaged people of India officially identified as a specific group by the administrative body of India.

2.3 Empowerment Status:

'Status' refers to a particular situation or position that one's has during a process in a particular time and the term "Empowerment Status" refers to the present condition or situation of empowerment. In this study "The empowerment status of Scheduled Caste women" refers to the present situation or position of Scheduled Caste women regarding their empowerment.

2.4 Education:

Education is the process through which an individual develops fully in all dimensions- social, intellectual, moral, emotional, linguistic etc. It will be the best definition in explaining education- "By education I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man- body, mind and spirit. Literacy is not the end of education or even the beginning." By M. K. Gandhi. (Kumar, R.)

3. Objectives of the study:

The objectives of the study are to:

- a) Find out the empowerment status among the women in study area.
- b) Compare the empowerment status of women considering different dimensions of women empowerment.
- c) Compare married and unmarried women regarding their empowerment status.
- d) Find out the difference of the empowerment status among the women with respect to age.
- e) Estimate the difference of the empowerment status among the women with respect to their educational qualifications.

4. Delimitations of the study:

The study is delimited by the following aspects. These are,

- I. The study is delimited by the sample. Only scheduled caste women are selected as the sample for study aged between 19-38 years old.
- II. The study is delimited by the size of sample. From 33 scheduled caste women the data are collected.
- III. Data are collected only by using questionnaires.
- IV. Only simple mathematical calculations are used for data analysis and interpretation.

5. Significance of the study:

The study has the following significances,

- i. It will reveal the present conditions of scheduled caste women in study area.
- ii. The study findings will reveal is educational qualification has any effect on the empowerment of women.
- iii. It will prove the situations of married scheduled caste women compared to unmarried.
- iv. Lastly the study will make understand the empowerment status of different aged women and also their positions.

6. Research Questions of the study:

The researcher has formed the following research questions. These are stated below:

1. What is the empowerment status of scheduled caste women in study area?
2. What is the educational empowerment status of SC women in study area?
3. What is the economic empowerment status of SC women in study area?
4. What is the psychological empowerment status of SC women in study area?
5. What is the social empowerment status of SC women in study area?
6. What is technological empowerment status of SC women in study area?
7. What is the status of SC women in household management and decision making in study area?
8. How educational qualifications of the scheduled caste women make any difference in their empowerment status?
9. Is there exist any difference in the empowerment status of married and unmarried scheduled caste women?
10. Is there any difference in the empowerment status of scheduled caste women regarding their age?

7. Research Methodology:

It is a case study research. Collected data was analyzed by using simple mathematical calculations.

7.1 Sample and Sampling technique:

The population of the study are the women who are scheduled caste according to the constitutional statement of the Govt. of India. Researcher selected scheduled caste women as the sample of study from the selected study area. All the sample are in the age range of 19 to 38. Simple judgmental sampling technique has been applied for selecting the representative sample.

7.2 Data Source and Tools used:

Primary data are used to find the empowerment status of scheduled caste women. Their responses against a questionnaire are collected. For measuring the empowerment status of the scheduled caste women, a short form of “The Questionnaire for Measuring Women Empowerment” developed by Haldar and Sarkar (2014) was applied. The reliability of the scale reported by the developers of the scale is respectively 0.82 and 0.99. The validity of the scale is established by experts’ judgements. The data about the educational qualifications, age and marital status were collected from the general information section of the above stated questionnaire.

7.3 Statistics used:

For the analysis of collected data simple mathematical calculations have been done. The interpretations and results of the study have been presented by using Bar-Graphs, Percentage Calculation and Frequency Distribution.

8. Data analysis and Interpretation:

The researcher has done the analysis of collected data and makes interpretations according to the above stated objectives and research questions by using bar-graphs, percentage calculations and frequency distributions. Which are shown in tables and figures below:

➤ **8.1 Total Frequency Distribution of the SC Women’s Responses for each Empowerment Status statements**

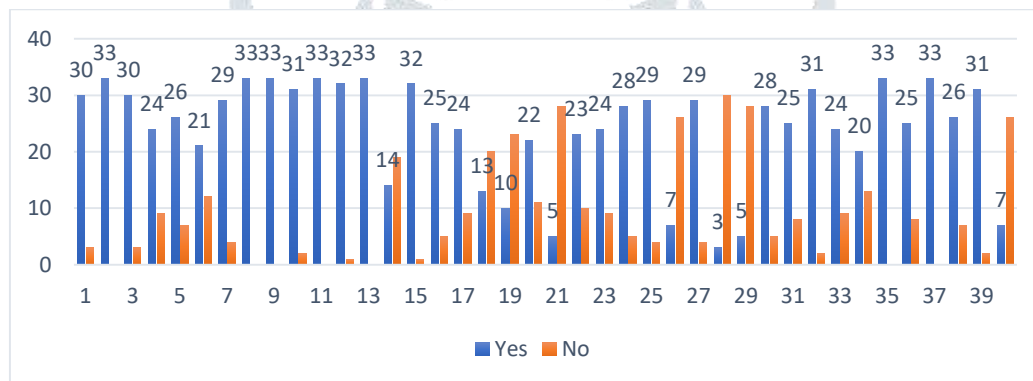


Fig.1 Graphical representation of SC women responses in each statements of Empowerment status

From the above diagram shown in Figure 1 it is clear that in many aspects SC women’s empowerment status are high. They have shown highest positive responses for positive statements in the area of opportunities can make women self-dependent, compulsory marriage registration, widow and divorced remarriage, ability of getting higher education in any discipline, independent in decision making and independent of making choice from many alternatives. In these aspects they enjoyed most of their empowerment. But in many statements, they also express most negative responses. The areas where SC Women of West Bengal feel less empowered are, most of the women responses against the desire to involve in politics. They also face obstacles in going outside from home and they also don’t have their personal properties. But among all, most of the women have not the desire of having male child. This result somehow opposes to the result of Ghosh, S. (2016).

➤ **8.2 Analysis of Women’s Responses for each Dimensions of Women Empowerment Status Statements**

• **8.2.1 Percentage distribution of women’s responses for Educational Empowerment Status**

Scheduled caste women’s responses for educational empowerment presented by the researcher by calculating percentage of total responses, which are shown with the help of figure 2 below:

Sl. No.	Statements for Educational Empowerment	% Yes	% No
1	Women are eligible for any type of job or service.	91	9
2	Opportunities can make women self-dependent.	100	0
3	Women are equal to men in all aspects.	91	9
4	Women can get higher education in any branch of study like men.	100	0
5	I can continue my study with my choice of subject	100	0

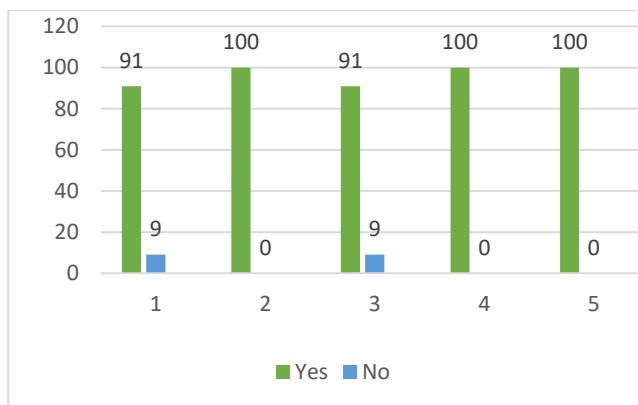


Fig 2. Graphical representation of women’s responses for Educational Empowerment status

From the above figure the researcher interpreted that, the educational empowerment status of SC women in West Bengal is very high. They feel empowered almost in all aspects of educational empowerment. They feel equal competent and eligible for any educational aspects like men.

8.2.2 Percentage distribution of women’s responses for Social Empowerment status

Women’s responses for the statements of social empowerment is presented by the researcher by calculating percentage of total responses, which are shown with the help of figure 3 below:

Sl. no	Statements for Social Empowerment	% Yes	% No
1	Women can fight with any situations like men.	73	27
2	I read newspapers.	79	21
3	I get opportunities to go outside independently	73	27
4	Get opportunities to participate in any socio-cultural programs.	85	15
5	I attain all meetings and associations.	21	79
6	I want to participate in election as nominee.	15	85
7	I face problem in staying out of home.	85	15

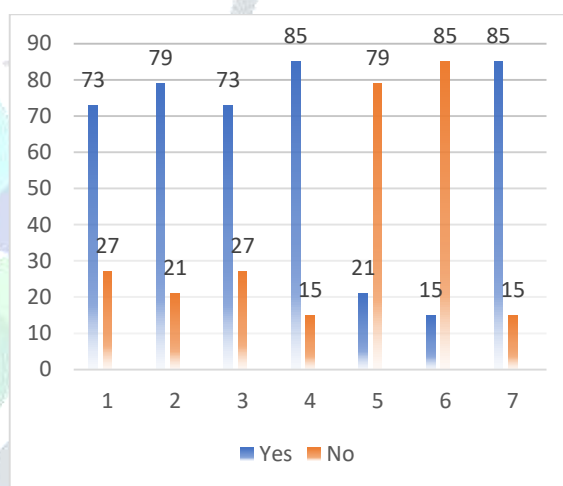


Fig. 3 Graphical representation of women’s responses for Social Empowerment status

From the above figure, the researcher has found that most of the SC women enjoy their social empowerment. But still there is a lack in 100% involvement. The major finding is that still they want to keep themselves away from political involvement.

8.2.3 Percentage distribution of women’s responses for Economic Empowerment Status

Women’s responses for the statements of economic empowerment status are presented by the researcher by calculating percentage, which are shown with the help of figure 4 below:

Sl. no	Statements for Economic Empowerment	% Yes	% No
1	I take part on making decisions about family’s expenditure.	39	61
2	I take part on making decisions about bargaining.	67	33
3	I have personal property.	15	85
4	I spend money freely and independently.	70	30

5	I have personal bank account.	88	12
6	I involved with professional organization.	9	91

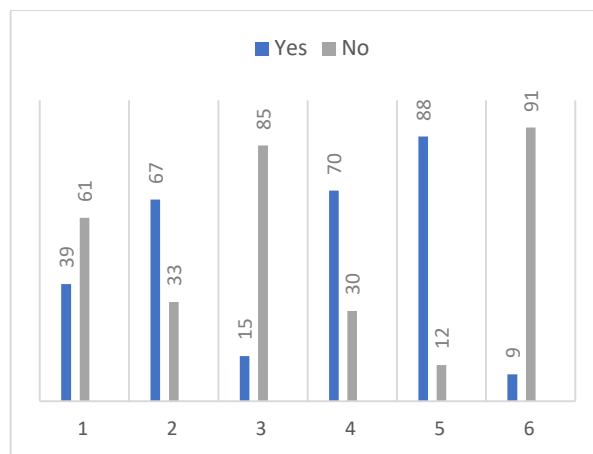


Fig. 4 Graphical representation of women’s responses for Economic Empowerment status

The researcher has found in the above figure, that when it comes to economic empowerment the SC women feel themselves less empowered. Till now there is a crisis of being self-dependent. They are not able to take all economic decisions of their own.

• **8.2.4 Percentage distribution of women’s responses for Technological Empowerment Status**

Women responses for the statements of technological empowerment status are presented by the researcher by calculating percentage of total responses, which are shown with the help of figure 5 below:

Sl. no	Statements for Technological Empowerment	% Yes	% No
1	I listen to radio.	42	58
2	I watch television.	97	3
3	I Know the use of computer.	76	24
4	I know the use of internet.	76	24
5	I use mobile phone.	94	6
6	I can communicate by using E-mail.	73	27
7	I involved with different social networking sites.	61	39

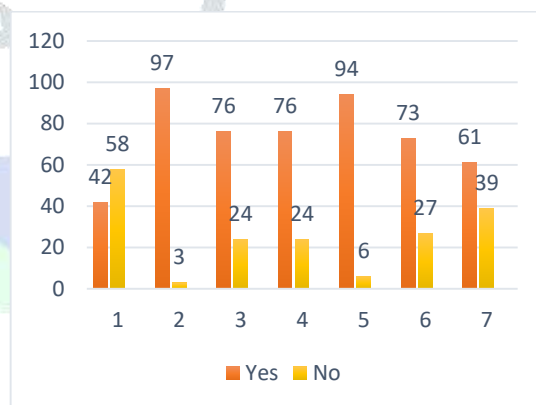


Fig5 Graphical representation of women’s responses for Technological Empowerment status

From the above figure the researcher interpreted that SC women are technologically empowered. They can access almost all types of technologies for daily use. But the percentage of negative answer is not negligible.

• **8.2.5 Percentage distribution of women’s responses for Psychological Empowerment status**

Women’s responses for the statements of psychological empowerment status are presented by the researcher by calculating percentage of total responses, which are shown with the help of figure 6 below:

Sl. No.	Statements for Psychological Empowerment	% Yes	% No
1	I support marriage between higher and lower caste.	88	12
2	Marriage registration must be compulsory.	100	0
3	I support widow and divorced remarriage.	100	0
4	Divorce is not illogical, when needed.	94	6
5	I am inthe favor of jobs of women.	100	0
6	I want to continue job even after marriage.	97	3

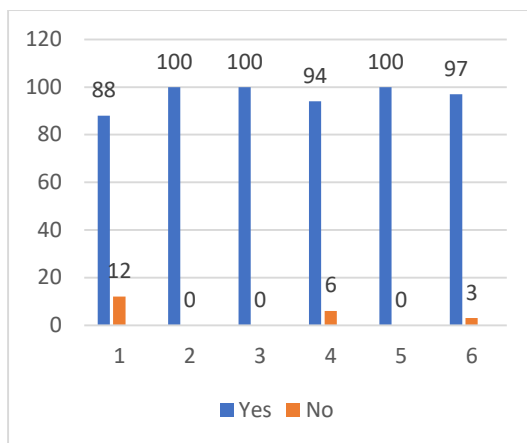


Fig. 6 Graphical representation of women’s responses for Psychological Empowerment status

It is shown in the above figure, that psychologically SC women are almost empowered. Their opinions about psychological empowerment is high. They have the attitude to change the traditional social system and they feel themselves competent for that.

• **8.2.6 Percentage distribution of women’s responses for Household Management and Decision-making status**

Women’s responses for the statements of household management and decision-making are presented by the researcher by calculating percentage of total responses, which are shown with the help of figure 7 below:

Sl. No	Statements for H.M and D.M	% Yes	% No
1	Only I take decision about my marriage.	64	36
2	My opinion is taken in making important faming decisions	73	27
3	I play active role in making decision about property selling.	30	70
4	I get scope to express my opinion freely.	88	12
5	I give vote with my choice.	100	0
6	I take decision about my future savings.	76	24
7	I take decision about my health and nutrition.	79	21
8	I expect son child, not girl child.	21	79

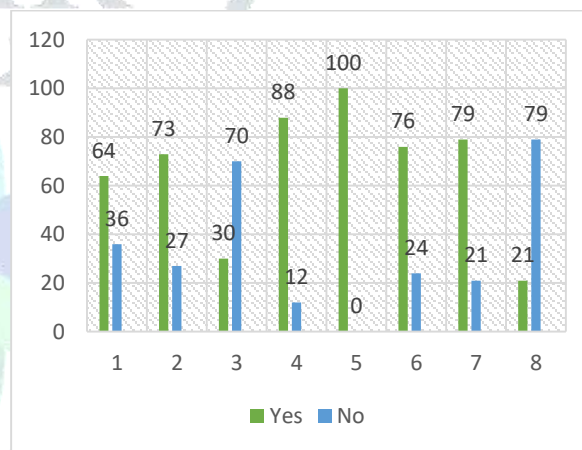


Fig7 Graphical representation of women’s responses for Household Management and Decision Making

For the household management and decision-making aspects most of the SC women are empowered, which can be seen in the above figure 7. But it is also seen that there exists 20 to 30 percent of women who do not have household-management and decision-making power. Most of the women do not have any role in property selling decision. But it is an important finding that most of the women do not want a boy child.

➤ **8.3 Difference in Empowerment Status among the SC Women according to their Educational Qualifications**

Scheduled caste women’s empowerment status regarding their educational qualifications are presented by the researcher by calculating average empowerment score, which are shown below with the help of figure 8.

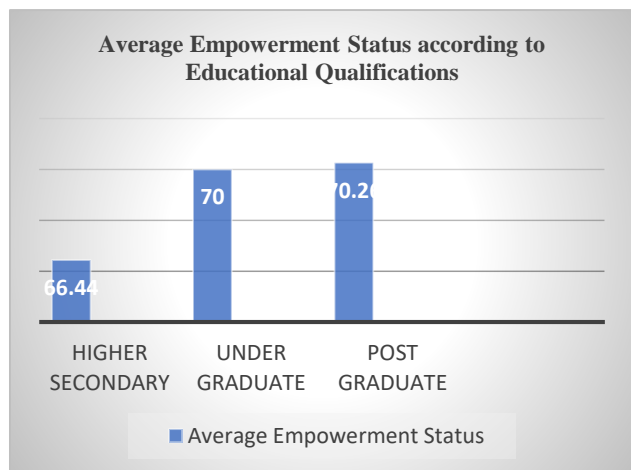
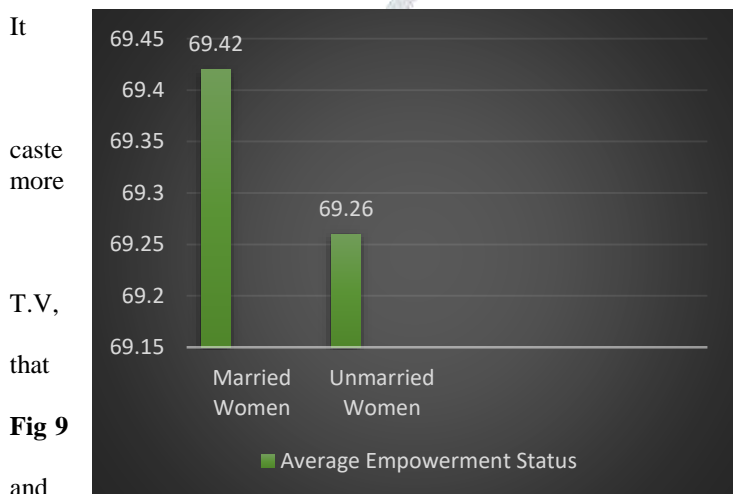


Figure 8 shows that, there exists major difference among the women who have higher secondary level of educational qualification and those who have under graduate and post graduate level of educational qualifications. A small difference has been found in the empowerment status of U.G and P.G scheduled caste women. But those who have H.S education, their empowerment status is very low. Although the significance of the difference is unfounded. But it can be said from the above data analysis, that higher education can make women more empowered in any aspects of empowerment. The study result is similar to the result of Sundaram, Dr. M.S.; Sekar, Dr. M. and Subburaj, A. (2014). They also have found same result that educational qualification plays significant role in

Fig 8 Graphical representation of women’s empowerment.
women empowerment.

➤ **8.4 Difference in Empowerment Status among Married and Unmarried SC Women**

The difference in empowerment status among the SC married and unmarried women are presented by the researcher by calculating average empowerment score, which are shown below with the help of figure 9:



It
caste
more
T.V,
that
Fig 9
and
handle them alone.

can be seen in the above diagram shown in Figure 3 that, almost no difference has been found in the empowerment status expressed by the scheduled caste married and unmarried women. Marriage does not affect the scheduled women on being empowered. But the researcher has done a analysis and besides in general highest responses for some specific statements, it is also found that most of the married women have their own bank account with passbook, they support the reservation for women in Govt. service, watch can spend money freely and can express their opinions in family. On the other hand, in two aspects it has been seen the unmarried SC women are a little more empowered than married and these are, they have the supreme
Graphical representation married and unmarried women
power of taking decision about their marriage women can face any type of diverse situation and can

➤ **8.5 Difference in Empowerment Status among the SC women in their Age**

The differences in empowerment status among the SC women according to their age are presented by the researcher by calculating average empowerment score, which are presented below with the help of figure 10.

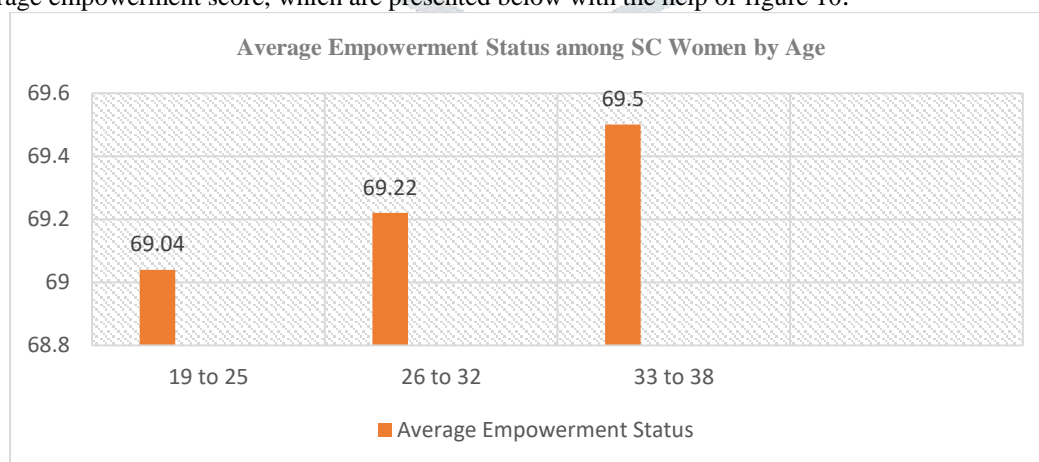


Fig.10 Graphical representation of women empowerment status according to age of the women

From the above diagram shown in figure 10, it can be interpreted that age does not has any impact on the empowerment of scheduled caste women. The average empowerment status score is 69 and this is almost similar for the three types of age-ranged

women. Or, it may be said that unlike marriage, age do not affect women empowerment. As women are still dominated by the male community of a society, therefore, women's empowerment situation does not change after marriage or becoming aged.

9. Major Findings of the study:

The major findings of the study are listed below:

- The overall empowerment status of SC women is not so much unexpected from both good or bad. Rather a sign of improvement has found from the calculated data. It proves increasing status of women empowerment.
- Most of the sample are educationally, psychologically and technologically empowered. Women's responses are highest in these dimensions.
- In the economic empowerment dimension women's responses are very low. They are not economically independent, free and confident.
- Differences found in the empowerment status of SC women regarding educational qualifications. Those who have higher secondary education are less empowered than others.
- Almost no difference is found in respect of marital status and age among the SC women.

Conclusion:

Finally, from the above research study it can be concluded by the researcher that, the scheduled caste women are not still in the position of deprived, disadvantaged and miserable. But a little bit dominated still now. The researcher has recommended from the above data analysis that the Govt. of India should take some initiatives where scheduled caste women still depend on others and does not enjoy their empowerment. Different rules and laws were made by the Govt. of India, which should enforce properly by the Govt. of India and other organizations. Only then the actual empowerment for 100% scheduled caste women in India will be possible.

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