

Enhancing Rural Women Empowerment in Sri Lanka

B. V. N. Wijewardhana

*Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice
University of Sri Jayewardenepura*

M. M. M. Dias

*Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice
University of Sri Jayewardenepura*

Abstract

Economic empowerment of rural women is a critical component and a shared goal in all societies. Moreover, it is fundamental to the sustainable socio-economic development of entire countries in the overall process of realizing gender equality. This paper explores how orthodox ideas on women's economic empowerment have changed with the availability of social and economic resources for women. Four indicators have been accompanied as supplement autonomy as capabilities, access to resources, securities, and decision making in shaping empowerment. The study adopted the descriptive design as quantitative and qualitative research methods by considering 200 married women 18-55 in Divisional Secretariats in Monaragala and Ampara districts reported where poverty rates are 25% and 28%, respectively. Data were gathered through focused group discussions, questionnaires, interviews, case studies, and observations. An equal number of employed and un-employed married women in each rural context were selected as the sample. Data were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively.

The study identified several barriers that affect women's economic empowerment at the national level based on the data analysis. These barriers are the lack of decision-making power in family matters, attending extended educational needs, unattainable promotions of jobs, a lack of a compassionate working environment, and an increased risk of un-infectious diseases. It was possible to determine that there is no effective and optimistic mechanism to

deal with such complexities. Much of the narrative focuses on instrumental gains on what women can do for development rather than what development can do for women manifested through the study.

Keywords: Empower, Family Bonds, Married Women, Resources, Rurality

Introduction

The issue of economic empowerment of women and gender congestion exists a foremost place in every society across the globe. In all developing countries, gender inequalities and disparities are rampant compared to developed countries (Ahamed et al., 2001). According to the radical perspective 1980s, empowerment has become a mainstream development concern. Sri Lanka considers a country with one of the lowest female labor force participation rates globally. Only 32.5% of women are economically active from the total women's population, and it is comparably 72.4% for men (UN Women, 2021). The gap has become widespread in rural regions where the unemployment rate is recorded as 7.3% among rural women (Madurawala, 2018). Women contribute to the rural economies in many ways, from small village self-help groups to positions of authority in dynamic cycles at various levels (UN Women, 2021).

Women's economic empowerment consists of advancing economic power, status, and agency (ESCAP, 2014); women have been empowered and ensured by policies and regulations that implemented to address several injustices, with attention to cultural practices, social values, and stigmatization (Muberekwa & Nkomo, 2016). According to the sustainable socio-economic development goals, it is agreed that women's economic empowerment is crucial for economic growth, and it matters from individual women, families, regions, and to their countries (ESCAP, 2014). Similarly, it directly impacts to boost the economy of a country. Thus, women invest an average of 90% of their earnings back within the family, and it is 30% - 40% exceeds the men's

contribution (Gender and Development Network, 2016). Women assume a focal part in financial advancement as food makers, medical care suppliers, and suppliers of regenerative errands (World Bank, 2011). Because of their different roles and responsibilities, women have diverse energy needs from men, both for homegrown and useful utilization, and arrangements and plans seldom offer due thought to their necessities, concerns, and commitments to improvement (Groot et al., 2017). Accordingly, women perceive more discrimination at the societal level compared to the household level. Married women perceive that they are discriminated against in mobility, property, occupation, and education (Wijewardhana & Rajaneththi, 2019).

The term 'Empowerment' is used vaguely across the globe. "A woman is economically empowered when she has both the ability to succeed and advance economically and the power to make and act on economic decisions" (Cornwell, 2016). The United Nations identified three Millennium Development Goals to promote gender equality and empower women (UN MDG, 2011). Accordingly, four domains were recognized, which created wide gaps in gender equality towards women's economic empowerment (UN, 2010). This study adopted these domains as determinant factors to ascertain whether women's empowerment has been fully mainstreamed in the rural context in Sri Lanka. The first Domain is identified as the capability domain, notably girls' and women's education, training, and health; secondly, access to resources, notably assets, including land and finance; and employment. Thirdly, the security domain: protection from the violence of all sorts (political, criminal, and domestic). Finally, the fourth Domain will be the Domain of decision-making and power (UN MDG, 2011).

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) shows that the ratio of education rate of girls to boys has risen everywhere: in 1970, it was 0.2 in South Asia and by 2010, it was nearly 0.6; in Africa, it rose from 0.3 to 0.65; and in Latin America, from 0.75 to 0.9; Women's Empowerment and Gender

Equality is a majorly amplify the importance of female education, it contributes to health and nutrition of the family, as well as family incomes, and economic productivity (UN Women, 2021). Following the female literacy rate in Sri Lanka, 71% in 1971, it has increased to 97% by 2018 (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2019). The one trademark shared by the very best human career progressors is a high proportion of female to male training. The advancement of female instruction should be a need all over the place (Cornwell, 2016).

Secondly, regarding access to resources: traditionally, women have no right to owning land or property and financial status, and it is exclusively available for only men (Kandaneerachchi & Ratnayake, 2017). Ladies currently structure 40.5% of the worldwide work power, a slight increment over the earlier decade (UNDP, 2012). Ladies are involved in generously compensated positions (18% in the industry), and to a higher extent in agribusiness (UNDP, 2012). They are indeed in weak occupations and types of work than men (UNDP, 2012). Ladies' compensation is all-around beneath that of people for the same positions. Over the world, ladies' absolute income ranges from 16% to 74%. Women's pay is universally below that of men for the same jobs. Over the world, women's total earnings range from 16% to 74% (UNDP, 2012). While women have increasingly taken on paid employment outside the home, their responsibility for household work has changed very little. Consequently, women generally work much longer hours than men.

Globally, several studies have addressed the issues of women's empowerment and gender imbalances. Through an interdisciplinary approach that brought the social sciences, arts, and humanities into literary composition, researchers related with pathways explored women's lived experiences of empowerment and the effects and effectiveness of interventions that sought to enhance women's rights, power, and authority. It is assumed that promoting gender equality empowers women (Porter, 2013).

Hence, there's no universally agreed comprehensive set of women's empowerment measures, in terms of the level of operation, the study adopted key characteristics of autonomy and empowerment as a process. Measures reflected women's autonomy in the four domains. It is crucial to examine the attitudes and the orthodox ideas of women's empowerment in a positivism approach related to women's empowerment, especially in the rural sector. While attentive to the resources provided to empower women and determine the similarities and dissimilarities of evolution in the above ideas. This study mainly addresses how the orthodox ideas on women's empowerment have changed with social and economic resources for married women in a rural context.

Over the years, Sri Lanka has made a significant view on gender equality through the education and healthcare sectors. But there is a large discrepancy in the youth unemployment rate for women is at 36.3% compared with 21.1% for men (Madurawala, 2018). Similarly, the unemployment rate held at a foremost place in the rural sector (7.3%) than the unemployment rates for both urban women (6.2%) and estate women (4.1%) (UN Women, 2021). In the rural context, the barriers performed as customs, values, and attitudes arising from certain historical tribulations seem natural when women are taught to accept it without being rational (Wijewardhana, 2020).

This study identifies available social and economic resources for married women in rural areas and to which extent the notifiable factors can affect women's economic empowerment. Moreover, the study aims to elucidate measures taken to empower women economically and provide recommendations on achieving women's empowerment.

Literature Review

Based on the conceptualizations of empowerment ranging from narrow and spread to complex ones that interact with structural and social change, interpretations have diverse and mutual impacts on methodological conditions

(Muberekwa & Nkomo, 2016). Empowerment is “the process by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such an ability” (Kabeer, 1999). Similarly, empowerment implies a process of change that connects with the notion of choice (Bhattacharya & Banerji, 2012). This notion of choice entails the possibility of alternatives and further ability to choose the willingness. While identifying the nature of patriarchy within the marriage as a strong social element aside from religion, gender, and division of labor has been operating in the Sri Lankan society, pushing women to the household system (Wijewardhana & Dias, 2020). The social construct alludes to relations between the genders, in view of their relative jobs, enveloping the financial, political, and socio-social credits, imperatives, and openings related to being male or female, and fluctuating across societies and over the long run (USAID, 2019). The studies published on women’s empowerment thoroughly emphasized that ‘gender is still a confusing term, especially in rural areas (Hamber, 2007). On the other hand, there is a logical association between poverty and dis-empowerment because of the insufficiency of resources, and the greater significance of some choices have than others in terms of their consequences for people's lives. It emphasized that the more women become empowered, the more men feel they lose their identity (Bhattacharya & Banerji, 2012). Hence age, gender, marital status, nationality, economic activity, health, self-reported capabilities, and collective empowerment define empowerment at both levels, and the implications are based on developing policies related to gender, age, and social boundaries. (Trommlerova et al., 2015). In contrast, women in positions of force are just about as impacted as men by political pressure organized by sexual orientation, class, nationality, and other social partitions, which impact setting explicit social standards. It emphasizes gender inequality; the societal structure can also affect women’s autonomy and empowerment.

Several studies have considered women's viewpoints through understandings of empowerment. Guerin et al. (2013) point out that women are "not necessarily looking for autonomy and independence from men, but rather for respect within their community. Jeyasankar and Ganhewa (2018) reprimand the suitability of individual government assistance approaches in social orders with the solid family-focused impression of the character. Dawning the findings to the Sri Lankan context, women did not engage in work in the past, even in the urban settings. But recently, most women are employed, which leads to bearing the burden of two jobs in the workplace and the home (Herath, 2016). Because women have 14 hours coping with their economic and domestic roles while men work 9 hours a day (UN Women, 2021).

The capability domain entails the abilities and willingness to advance themselves towards empowerment. Hence, several tribulations created within the society manifest that a woman is working at home, and the work of a man is the community (Wijewardhana & Dias, 2021). In addition, women are viewed as truly powerless; however, they are viewed as feeble when contrasted with men, which is how the public treats them (Khan, 2015). According to Mahmud et al. (2012), confidence is especially applicable to strengthening, which could emphatically impact their discernment and mentalities towards their versatile limits and, consequently, their strengthening. However, as Zwartveen and Neupane (1996), women can have a strong agency and access to resources despite non-participation in decision-making bodies. Participation is determined by rules, social norms (such as gender segregation of public space, gender division of labor, and gendered behavioural norms), and social perceptions. Mahmud et al. (2012) assume that women's ability to change these factors depends on their bargaining power with the state, community, and family. Still, it leads to a manipulative and deceptive influence on shaping access to resources.

Further, it leads to expressing their opinions and being heard and improved male perceptions about women's capabilities and weakened social norms as drivers for enhancing participation (Lewin, 2010). ILO (2021) reports that Sri Lankan rural women face inequalities and challenges that hinder their access to decent work opportunities and improvements to their productivity. Other challenges that women face in the rural economy include a lack of information on job availability and opportunities for training, limited access to property, land, and financial and non-financial services. Herath (2016) emphasized that Tamil women governed by Thesawalamai cannot transact business without the consent of their husbands, and even commercial transactions and owning lands should obtain the husband's consent. This research uncovered that the universal society stays male-centric and sexual orientation imbalances present as a downside for ladies' emergence.

The security domain mainly concerns protection from violence and crime within families, workplaces, and society. In rural settings, most women assume that they must shoulder the burden of household activities, leaving the husband to deal with the larger society and the community (Herath, 2016). Moreover, her job role is created to act within the family. The customs, values, and attitudes arising from certain historical tribulations seem natural when women are taught to accept them without being rational (Wijewardhana, 2020). Many women have defined their lower status as their destiny because it is inscribed in their religious beliefs (Herath, 2016). The Dowry system is one more idea in conventional families, which was initially given to protect the ladies' autonomy. While the shared framework might impact such a response, many accept that to be conceived a young lady is the aftereffect of wrongdoing carried out in a past birth (Wares, 2019). Regardless of the social position, dowry remains necessary for a bride to be accepted within the groom's family and treated well (Wijewardhana & Dias, 2020). Generally, workplace environments and norms are considered as challenges to Sri Lankan women

who join the workforce (Wares, 2019). There are no laws in Sri Lanka mandating non-discrimination in employment based on gender or requiring equal remuneration for work of equal value (World Bank, 2020). However, protective measures are often not enforced, and women fear speaking out due to reprisal and backlash (Kandaneerachchi & Ratnayake, 2017). When concerning the protection received from the society, many women in Sri Lanka have restricted portability because of worries over transportation security, just as socio-social standards that disparage ladies who travel outside their town (Jeyasankar & Ganhewa, 2018). Moreover, it revealed that women had been marginalized themselves.

The decision-making process focuses on the status of the women within the social institutions and the nature which influences the women in this process. Women are ill-treated or regarded differently not by a segment of males but within the social system represented by them. The said social system is built through the social bonds and the disgraceful attitudes to thrust women to a lower rank which prevails from the inception to the end of human society (Wijewardhana & Dias, 2021). "The education process should be consciously used to empower women to challenge obscurantist practices and rituals. That perpetuates the subordination of women in the family through marriage practices and acceptance of patriarchy in household decision making" (Jayaweera, 1995). The drawbacks in the education system have been identified which are not offering encouragement to female students representing rural, and some concepts are still visible in cultural competence as 'dependent wives', 'weaker sex' or 'supplementary earners' have inevitably led to gender inequality that severely impedes a woman's ability and opportunity to gain a fair chance and exposure in her chosen social position (Wijewardhana & Dias, 2020). It was visible that, from accrediting household responsibilities to the step of marriage, the majority do not have the right to decision-making.

Moreover, after the marriage, the acceptance of patriarchy became a practice in household decision-making. The traditional controlled upbringing of girls has made a vacuum in the improvement of young ladies' social jobs to the degree that they need freedom in navigation and experience vulnerability notwithstanding challenges (Herath, 2016). Vulnerability, emotional weakness, and traditional core virtue on women's protection are visible reasons behind this scenario.

Sri Lankan rural orthodox society remains patriarchal to the present day. Even the rural women's role is rougher and tougher since they must take domestic responsibilities. The study intended to address the gap between available resources and women's empowerment. As emphasized above, some research focused on women's empowerment and career progression without considering the resources available to them to enhance their capabilities. So, it is necessary to examine to what extent the orthodox idea on women's empowerment changes in accordance with the resources available to them? The study will aim at married women's perspectives through four determinants accordingly, the capability domain, access to resources, the security domain, the Domain of decision-making, and power.

Methodology

The research methodology has adopted a descriptive research method to explore the selection of geographical areas; in consideration of the geographical, social, and economic backgrounds in Sri Lanka, the researcher applied a multi-dimensional approach. The study had directed the; status of women in the rural sector, their role, nature of discriminations, attitudes towards empowerment, and how the idea of empowerment carries in the country.

According to the percentage of the female workforce by Province and Districts by GIS (Geographical Information System) Department of Census and Statistics (2018), Ampara recorded a minimum rate of 25% in Eastern

Province. Monaragala recorded the lowest rate as 28%, and these districts comparable held low rates in Poverty headcount ratio since 2016 (Weeraratne, 2016). This study is centralized to the two districts by targeting the population who were married, employed, and unemployed women. Two hundred data providers were chosen within the society, whereas 100 data providers were selected from each district with the representation of 50 married employed and the balance 50 of married unemployed and the age limits specified were from 18 to 55 years. Within the non-probability sample methods, the purposive sampling method was applied. In preparing the sample frame, stakeholders from selected divisional secretariat divisions of relevant districts were approached and collected needed information. Those stakeholders approached were; Grama Niladharies, Development officers, and Samurdhi officers of selected divisions. The data collection process consisted of two approaches as Primary and Secondary sources. Using descriptive research methods, this study used both qualitative (Open-ended code) and quantitative methods to analyze the data.

Data collections were carried out based on employed and unemployed localities of rurality in selected districts. Rapport was built with the data provider, and it was possible to record creditors from respective geographies. Data gathering was sought after at risk to the survey and amicable ties with vendors by rehearsing and verbal exchange forms. In qualitative data gathering, the organization applied conventional conversations and casual conversations: focused group discussions, interviews, case studies, and observations. The respondents participated in formal and casual conversations, and they performed while filing questions and recording inputs.

This approach changed when questions were raised in workplaces with unemployed women in the rural context. Quantitative information is gathered through the investigation and the information just as other proof-based realities, including questionnaires. Further, quantitative data were examined

with the application of GIS Technology, P Application (WOP-Master- online application), usage of data tables statistical and scientific methods. The analyzed data and information were presented in an analytical order applying tables/charts and graphs. In particular, the uttering of data providers' qualitative data presented descriptively was included therein in actual form.

Analysis and Discussion

Analysis has been split into two segments as the research has adopted qualitative and quantitative methods. Socio-demographic and descriptive data analysis were presented in quantitative analysis, and the analysis of case studies, interviews, and discussion was presented in qualitative data analysis.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Table 01: Demographic Data Analysis- Participants' characteristics at baseline (N=200)

Socio-demographic characteristics	Code	Frequency (N)	Percentage (P)
Age	18-25	48	24%
	26-35	65	32.5%
	36-45	51	25.5%
	46-55	36	18%
Ethnicity	Sinhala	158	79%
	Tamil	12	6%
	Muslim	30	15%
	Burgher	0	0
Religion	Buddhist	156	78%
	Christian	6	3%
	Islam	30	15%

	Hindu	8	4%
Educational level	Up to 5	12	6.5%
	Up to O/L	109	54.5%
	Up to A/L	62	31%
	Diploma	8	4%
	Graduate	6	3%
	Postgraduate	3	1.5%
Marital status	Married	147	73.5%
	Divorced	23	11.5%
	Widowed	12	6%
	Cohabiting	4	0.2%
	Separated	14	0.7%
Marriage type	Love Marriage	87	43.5%
	Arranged Marriage	113	56.5%

Source: 2018/2019 Survey

According to the analysis, 73.5% of complete interviewees have hitched accomplices. A high-level rate addressed in the study was moderately aged ladies between the ages of 26-35. There was not any specification in ethnicity and religion. In accordance with the data accumulated, a considerable proportion had attained the basic educational level, and married women represented higher segments (73.5%). Further, 43.5% of ladies had entered relationships followed by relationships, though; the rest were hitched through the proposition. Among the complete information suppliers, 64% affirmed that a few worries and premiums were there among the relatives while picking a life partner preceding their relationships, and 36% expressed that there was no worry among the relatives on their relationships.

Table 02: Relationships of co-variables- Adjusted Multivariable Analysis (N=200)

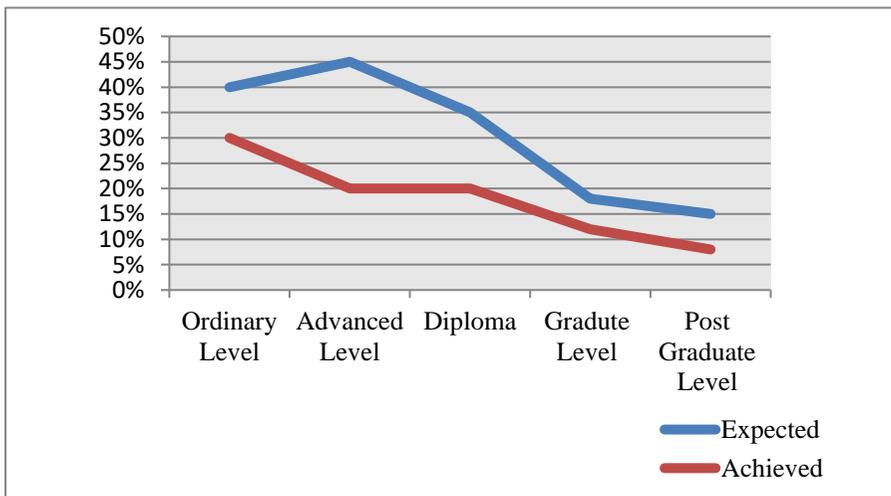
Domains	Mean	Level
The capability domain		
Willingness to educate	1.05	(0.96–1.14)
Vocational training before marriage	1.65	(1.14–2.38)
Vocational training after marriage	1.61	(1.16–2.24)
Willingness to employability	2.61	(1.80–3.77)
Access to resources		
Access to education	1.65	(1.14–2.38)
Access to medical treatment	1.61	(1.16–2.24)
Access to employment	1.25	(0.77–2.00)
Access to assets	0.89	(0.62–1.28)
Security domain		
Dowry is given at the marriage	0.61	(0.41–0.89)
Natal family provides any financial support	1.06	(0.72–1.58)
Protection in the workplace	0.58	(0.35–0.96)
Protection from society before the marriage	1.89	(0.94–3.80)
Protection from society after the marriage	1.51	(1.04–2.21)
The legal framework to protect women in the workplace	0.75	(0.42–1.32)
The Domain of decision making and power		
Age at Marriage	18.0	(18-55)
Social group participation before marriage	1.28	(0.91–1.81)
Social group participation after marriage	1.25	(0.77–2.00)
Duration of Marriage	0.89	(0.62–1.28)
Husband has occupational stability	2.03	(1.45–2.83)

Source: 2018/2019 Survey

It reported willingness to educate with the highest mean of 1.05, but access to education was at the intermediate level. The main reason for not getting the needed consideration of family members for the education was dissatisfaction. With an average age of 18, respondents have entered into the marriage while reporting the unfavorable family status of the male partner. While 79% of married women were in the said category, the balance 29 % commented differently that some disagreements were there as women's family members had brought separate proposals for marriages. The majority of the respondents were among those who got married at the ages below 18 years. The cause that affected early marriages was the disruption or interruption that happened to discontinue their education.

Similarly, with a mean of 0.96, another segment raised another explanation of the impact of relatives. Another explanation was the instructive base degree of guardians. An assumption can be made that obliviousness is (5%), low instruction, and destitution is (6%). Certain relationships were the penchants that impacted this mishap; the inclination to enter relationships at pre-mature ages addresses in higher proportion in rustic regions.

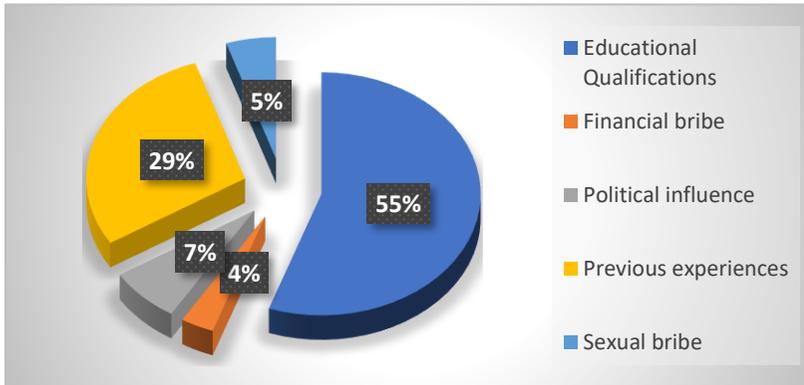
Figure 01: Expected and achieved education level



Source: 2018/2019 Survey

As per figure 01 vast gap is visible between the expected education level and achieved academic level. Further, reasons are directly connected with access to education under the access to resources.

Figure 02: Reasons for unemployment



Source: 2018/2019 Survey

Figure 02 indicates the reason for the unemployability of the respondents, including the causes to discontinue the jobs, absence to apply for jobs, and failure to select in job interviews in consideration of experiences which have been obtained due to the association of society excluding the personal attitudes and favouritisms.

Qualitative Data Analysis

During the interview carried out throughout the study, findings revealed the economic status of women, which directly connects with the household responsibilities and attitudes of the respondents towards the capabilities and accessibilities. The following cases provide more details:

Case 01

"We belong to the poorest category in our villages. Even our parents are not properly employed, and on the contrary, the size of our family was somewhat bigger since the number of brothers and sisters was in a higher number. Due to the immensity of the family size, which had ushered contentious living

hardships in this context, I had to start a love affair with a fellow. I decided to flee away from the family with the decision to get rid off of the living hardships" (a respondent, in Monaragala).

Some respondents stated that being a member of an extended family and experiencing financial difficulties are general characteristics in their rural localities. Poverty is directly connected with the non-education in the rural context, which manifests the nature of families in which extended families have been harshly undergone difficulties. Sometimes, these situations influence rural women to make decisions in their lives.

Case 02

"Upon completing General Certificates of Education, Advanced Level, I could complete the Diploma Certificate Course on Information Technology. After that, I desired to continue the Degree course as well on the same stream. At this juncture, I had to attain my marriage, too. At this time, my husband's mother was unwell due to some sicknesses. As a result, I had to evolve my time to maintain domestic affairs while caring for the sick mother; hence, time became crucial. Finally, I had to give up hopes on further education" (a respondent, in Monaragala).

"Indeed, even our folks are not appropriately utilized. The size of our family was big since the number of siblings and sisters was a larger number. Because of the large family size, which had guided hostile living difficulties in this setting, I had to begin an illicit affection relationship with an individual. I removed the choice to escape from the family to get freed off from the living difficulties" (a respondent, in Monaragala).

Case 03

"I am a SAMURDHI officer. Time is one of our constraints, and we don't even have time to think about health matters. We don't even remember the weight of our bodies. We go to work in the morning and return in the evening. After

that, we have to involve in our domestic work and have no time for other things. Even on Sundays, we are busy. In such a situation, I don't have time even to think on health" (a respondent, in Monaragala).

Most women paid attention to the household role rather than their well-being. It reflects that rural women are willing to sacrifice themselves for the well-being of their family responsibilities without any criticism (Wijewardhana & Dias, 2020). The sample is varied with employees and non-employees as the study intended to involve both parties, which is beneficial in comparative analysis.

Case 04

"Before my marriage, I worked in a private institution and worked as a computer data operator. Even after the marriage, I could continue my job for three months. Since I had to leave home in the morning and return in the evening, I could not involve in other domestic activities. This has resulted in my husband's mother taunting me. Finally, I decided to vacate the job. Afterward, the situation turned into a problematic status compelling us to move into a rented house. Issues confronted after the marriage led me to discontinue my jobs" (a respondent, in Monaragala).

Further, it was apparent that neglecting the typical household role usually leads to household conflicts. Hence, this role of women is rooted in cultural beliefs and practices, and the alteration of this phenomenon is problematic. These case studies indicated several issues women face with job opportunities. Most of the respondents have commented on balancing the job and their responsibilities and the household role in which they act.

The majority of the respondents in the study expressed their dissatisfaction with women's status within the society, whereas the minority have uttered their satisfaction with women's status in the prevailing social setting. Among those married informers, the majority commented that positive social acceptance of women exists within the family settings depending on factors such as; fertility,

virginity, ownership of property, and several other causes. As the usual causes of clashes in families, respondents articulated that the key motive to create clashes within families is alcoholism, and economic problems to be a strong factor for clashes. At the same time, some brought up reasons as delayed or forgotten responsibilities. Other segment minimum respondents highlighted those certain arguments too leads for clashes. Those employed women brought up the issue of incomplete work at home due to their business can also lead to clashes with husbands.

These interviews revealed the exact issues which negatively influenced them and affected their progression. A strong bond between the women and the household was visible within the social tribulations. This figure reflects the attitudinal changes of the rural women based on their ideas.

Discussion

Since the research is based on the concepts of women's economic empowerment, resilience, available resources, and social attitudes, it has deviated into four domains. The first Domain identified as the capability domain, notably girls' and women's education, training, and health; secondly access to resources, notably to assets, including land and finance; and employment; and the security domain: protection from the violence of all sorts (political, criminal and domestic). The fourth Domain will be the Domain of decision-making and power (the task force included this in access to resources).

The capability domain explored the willingness for education, vocational training, and employability. Hence, most data providers had studied only up to grade 10 representing and the reasons set off to suspend instruction were in fluctuated highlights, though, neglected to proceed with schooling because of financial difficulties, fizzled in tests while and because of relationships. One other factor affected was the low advertency of parents due to their lower scale of education and love affairs and owing to psychic reasons. As per analysis,

an outsized majority had not achieved any academic qualifications after their marriage. As needs are, they had associated with academic fields like Teachers' Diploma. On Preschool training, Computer innovation, and Degree courses accomplished anticipated outcomes.

As per figure 01, reasons are directly connected with access to education under the access to resources. The striking obstructions those effect after union with training were the outrageous time limits, just as monetary deficiencies inside families. Additionally, fewer roads and openings are accessible for country ladies to continue schooling after their relationships.

Most of the respondents had to conclude their education after their relationships. The study revealed that a few key reasons impacted this situation, especially the unacceptance of husbands and the failure to perform both scholarly and home-grown issues together. Further, a minor number of interviewees expressed their reluctance for advanced education after the relationships.

The study could gather information on access to medical health and found that most informants suffer from sicknesses undergoing treatments. It is conspicuous that the processes of undergoing medical treatments by sick persons in rural societies are crucially different as the rural women undergoing treatments by attending clinics in Government Hospitals without payment. They undergo treatments for some of the common sicknesses being suffered are Bone diseases, megrim (headache), etc., that in position as a chronic situation.

Access to employment versus gender concerns the factors related to womanhood have a strong linkage with the characteristics of the workplace. As per the opinion shared by data providers on recruitment, promotions, etc., such things are derogated on salary increments. Women are not just considered physically weak but are deemed weak in everything compared to men, which society treats them (Khan, 2015).

After the recruitment as trainees, no salaried paid, delayed action to consider promotions for eligible employees, and it manifested the influences of male staff in senior positions to obstruct decisions of female senior staff (Wijewardhana & Dias, 2021). At the same time, low salary scales unpaid salaries as crucial incidences they face. Data analysis revealed several other anomalies, such as the deferred practice on the promotions entitled by female workers; it is revealed that male executives act forcefully against female bosses to finalize certain decisions in favor of female employees. When the overtime coverage is to be addressed, the management focuses more on women. Also, women workers are subjected to the frequent accusation, trimming of salaries, etc., leading to the notion that economic empowerment will lead to overall empowerment or that participation in decision-making processes will empower women (Khan, 2015).

Conclusively, it is a complicated matter for women to be eligible for employments comprised of higher salaries. Data providers shared views that addressing disparities against women and skill development on self-employment opportunities are some of the services these women's societies attend.

Thus, access to assets is a long-term process for rural women since the financial support of banks are necessities due to the lack of savings. According to the property law in Sri Lanka, normal banking practices remain patriarchal as money lending and loan services mainly consider the financial strength, ability to pay-off, etc., and there is a notable custom as the youngest male child owns the natal house, which daughters are not considered in this manner (Wijewardhana & Dias, 2021). Therefore, the Natal family's financial support is also limited to marriage and dowry.

As per the protection in the workplace under the security domain, the gravity of pressure and the endanger of women compared to men is extremely high. Another higher majority commented that women's risk and endanger against

a larger scale. In comparison, the male partners themselves had avoided women enjoying their rights and decreasing needed levels of security for women causing varied nature of harassments.

The reasons affected for some of them to resign from their jobs are multifaceted. The majority had to be away from jobs due to their marriages. Due to the instability of employment, they had vacated their posts because of the inadequacy of salaries, resulting from unmanageable workload at the domestic level. The pressure came up from their families while a minority had to give up jobs due to the harassment faced at the workplace for being a woman. The reasons for leaving the jobs were the remonstrance of husband, involvement in higher studies, etc. In some other cases, those mothers of kids could not be away from home on jobs. The analysis of the study disclosed that the hard-working lifestyle and the motherhood be encountered after the marriage is the key reasons for the lower rate of low employment ship. Similarly, the level of protection received from the family after the marriage decreased, and some respondents also play the role of protectors.

In the fourth Domain of decision-making and power, women's status plays a decisive role in obtaining acceptability within social institutions, including the family. Further, without a gender consideration, the build of social status mainly deals with financial stability (Wijewardhana & Dias, 2020). The promotion of women's involvement in the economic field correlates with their financial autonomy, increased decision-making authority, control over their own lives, and ability to realize their rights (ESCAP, 2014) fully. Within the cultural and social tribulations in Asian countries, a woman's status is considered regarding her financial strength with the natal family. As per the traditional practice, the bride needs to offer a dowry during marriages. The majority agreed that she becomes frustrated when the bride is unable to provide a dowry. If the dowry is not offered, such a woman is subjected to low respect from the husband's family.

Moreover, it confirmed that dowry becomes a decisive factor even among those married after love affairs. It is remarkable that there can be conflicts after marriages due to dowry. Most informers believe that the said situation prevails based on cultural factors and social attitudes. Accordingly, the analysis can be shown up on the assessment that there can be examples that settlement has made a negative impact on married women.

In terms of occupational segregation, women's decisions are considered only if the person holds a socially accepted and well-honored job (Herath, 2016). Further, the influence of masculinity cannot be ignored when cultural practices are still conformed and where women believe that they are responsible for obeying masculinity (Wijewardhana & Dias, 2020). While achieving a better education is a real hardship for rural women, occupying higher administration is problematic in which the chain again connects to the poverty of the rural context. Culturally standardized notions of 'empowerment' that have manifested in the traditional and neoliberal agendas cannot be adopted in this context. It is attributed to this repeatable cycle that fluctuates within poverty, lack of resources, and the attitudes within the box.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Even today, in Sri Lanka, the status related to women has not been changed very much. Though many policies and regulations are implemented in the literature, there is no clear view on regulation, and still, women remain disadvantaged, marginalized, and subordinate in many respects. It is noticeable that the higher participation of women in these societies is unemployed mainly due to cultural beliefs in adopting domestic roles and unavailability of resources.

Especially, the oscillation between poverty and accessing resources to achieve economic empowerment will appear to be a drawback in married women who are strongly attached to the household. Most males feel a carefree upbringing while the female was overprotected and carefully raised to interact with

society, and she may miss many opportunities to advance her abilities. Even the rural women with better abilities work in agriculture due to a lack of opportunities to access education. It turns back to the absence of access to well-paid job opportunities. However, limitations in mobility, familial responsibilities, and safety concerns prevent women, particularly married women and those with young children, from leaving their villages to search for jobs by migrating to urban suburbs, which directly manifests the difficulties in accessing jobs. The opportunities available for women's economic empowerment are not used to the required extent by each society. It is varied in accordance with the requirements and considerations of the authorities in countries. However, the avenues available for unemployed women to be exposed to the out-of-home setting are blocked due to the above-stated reasons and causes. Access to available resources, avenues to attend decision-making forums, and the unacceptable social gap between males and females can negatively affect women's composition, status, and reputation. In addition, it highlights the effects of women's biological features, too, on the said scenario. It can be concluded that woman is covered by the screen of motherhood and had encompassed socially and retained at the mid of economic empowerment.

There was limited access for the resources available within the society and limited attendance for decision-making events, especially the negative influence that affects the economic background of women due to the imbalanced pursuance between male and female personalities. Approaches to understanding empowerment as a relational and processional concept take social structures and agency into account. The connection to resilience sheds light on interventions and policies that can target dimensions of empowerment, adaptation, and transformative capacities so women can effectively participate in decision-making processes.

Further, the study recommends inculcating improved lifestyle within family settings without departmentalizing domestic activities between wife and husband. Also proposed to open more avenues to access employment and entrepreneurial opportunities within the economy to enable more women to involve in such prospects. Establishment of supportive atmosphere for women to either to continue or to attend newly for higher educational options even after the marriages. The existing limitations for women to find jobs with higher salaries are the reason to propose this action. The majority of informers proposed increasing women's representation within the political structure to awaken the voice of women. More proposals are there to insist authorities introduce new laws to eradicate harassment against women and address gender-based disparities. Especially, a village-based partnership approach is recommended to advance from the village level to the national level.

This can be pursued under the theme of *the National Committee for Controlling Gender-Based Discrimination (NCCGBD)*. The initial step would be to establish women's societies at the village level. Those societies are to be registered under the Divisional Secretariat's office for regular monitoring in subsequent stages, which illustrates how it moves from the village level to the national level. According to the lack of resources available to the women in rural areas, the study suggests implementing a National Committee for controlling gender-based discrimination. This committee mainly aims to empower rural women through the resources of health and nutrition, education, and empowering against violent behavior, which is identified as a lack of resources with the collaboration of a primary unit of women's welfare organizations which connects to divisional secretariat and thirdly to the district secretariat.

Further, the district secretariat will directly link with the provincial council and later with the Ministry of women's affairs. Though this acts as a chain of the resources the study has identified will be separately addressed by each unit,

and voluntary organizations and civil organizations will elaborate with the chain in each step of the flow. The above process can be an exclusive modality to attain the overall problem-solving mechanism of women, yet; this strategic approach is considered a vibrant move to empower women as a key element of harnessing national development in Sri Lanka. Also, be deliberated as a strategy to control discriminative actions against women. This process was created to receive the contribution of various civil and government authorities to be enrolled and regulated into government administration structure by concerning multi-dimensional subjects. It is crucial to explore the attitudinal changes of the women in career progression towards the economic progress regarding the current economic and political situation in Sri Lanka to obtain the exact outcome of implementing the aforementioned mechanism.

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