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Inter-Generational Patterns of Women's Empowerment in India: A Correlational Analysis of Ten Dimensions Across Three Generations

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Abstract

Women's empowerment is a multidimensional concept encompassing educational opportunities, health and well-being, economic participation, decision-making, social participation, political awareness, legal awareness, personal autonomy, gender equality, and self-confidence. The present study examined the interrelationships among ten dimensions of women's empowerment across three generations of women in India. A quantitative correlational research design was adopted, with 300 women equally distributed into three generational groups: daughters, mothers, and grandmothers, with 100 participants in each group. Data were collected using a structured Women's Empowerment Questionnaire comprising ten dimensions: educational empowerment, health and well-being, economic empowerment, decision-making power, social empowerment and participation, political empowerment and awareness, legal awareness and rights, mobility and personal autonomy, family status and gender equality, and self-confidence, self-efficacy and aspirations. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the scores, while Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient was employed to examine the relationships among the ten dimensions. The study was further informed by historical literature concerning the changing status of women in India. The correlational approach provided an understanding of how different aspects of empowerment are interconnected within the experiences of women across generations. The study contributes to a multidimensional understanding of women's empowerment by examining empowerment as an interconnected set of educational, health, economic, social, legal, familial, and personal domains rather than as a single construct.

Keywords: women's empowerment, inter-generational patterns, correlational analysis, gender equality, women's status, India, three generations

1 Introduction

Women's empowerment is widely recognized as an important component of social development, gender equality, and human well-being. It refers not simply to improvements in women's material conditions but also to their ability to make choices, exercise agency, access resources, participate in decision-making, and influence matters affecting their lives. Kabeer (1999) conceptualized empowerment through the interconnected dimensions of resources, agency, and achievements, emphasizing that empowerment involves the process through which individuals gain the ability to make strategic life choices. Similarly, Malhotra et al. (2002) emphasized that women's empowerment is multidimensional and can be examined through economic, sociocultural, familial, legal, political, and psychological domains.

The status of women in India has undergone considerable transformation since independence in 1947. The post-independence period witnessed the development of constitutional safeguards,

educational expansion, improvements in health services, legal reforms, political participation, and programmes directed towards women's welfare and development. The Constitution of India provides equality before the law and prohibits discrimination on grounds including sex, while subsequent legislation and government programmes have progressively addressed issues related to women's education, health, employment, safety, political participation, and social security. The Government of India's Report of the High Level Committee on the Status of Women in India also documented the changing position of women across social, economic, educational, political, and legal domains.

Education has been an important component of this transformation. Greater access to schooling and higher education has expanded women's exposure to information, employment opportunities, social networks, and awareness of rights. Jejeebhoy (1995) identified education as an important factor associated with women's autonomy and reproductive decision-making in developing countries. The expansion of education may therefore influence empowerment beyond the educational domain itself by strengthening women's ability to participate in family and community decisions.

Economic participation represents another important component of women's empowerment. Access to income, financial resources, property, employment, and banking facilities can influence women's bargaining power and autonomy within households. Duflo (2012) highlighted the reciprocal relationship between women's empowerment and economic development, noting that improvements in women's economic opportunities and empowerment can influence one another. However, economic empowerment cannot be considered independently of social norms, household relationships, education, and decision-making authority.

Women's health and well-being are similarly connected with empowerment. The ability to seek healthcare, make decisions concerning one's own health, access reproductive health information, and participate in household health decisions represents an important dimension of personal agency. Contemporary national surveys such as the National Family Health Survey have increasingly incorporated indicators related to women's decision-making, financial inclusion, ownership of assets, and access to communication technologies, providing evidence that empowerment extends across multiple aspects of women's lives (International Institute for Population Sciences [IIPS] & ICF, 2021).

Empowerment also encompasses social, political, and legal awareness. Knowledge of legal rights and access to institutions can strengthen women's ability to respond to discrimination and exercise their rights. Political participation and awareness can provide opportunities for women to influence decisions beyond the household. At the same time, empowerment within the family remains important because women's formal rights may not necessarily translate into autonomy in everyday life. Jejeebhoy and Sathar (2001) demonstrated that women's autonomy is influenced by contextual factors such as region, religion, and social environment, highlighting the importance of examining empowerment as a multidimensional and context-dependent phenomenon.

The interrelationship among different dimensions is particularly important when examining women's empowerment across generations. Improvements in education may be associated with greater economic participation; economic independence may be related to decision-making power; legal awareness may be associated with social participation and autonomy; and self-confidence may be connected with women's ability to make decisions and pursue aspirations. Therefore, examining each dimension independently may provide only a partial understanding of women's empowerment. A correlational approach allows researchers to examine the extent to which these dimensions vary together and to identify patterns of association within a multidimensional empowerment framework.

The three-generation perspective provides an additional dimension to this inquiry. Daughters, mothers, and grandmothers have grown up under different educational, economic, social,

technological, and policy environments. Their experiences therefore provide an opportunity to examine how different aspects of empowerment are interconnected across generations. Rather than treating empowerment as a single outcome, the present study considers it as a set of related dimensions that together represent the changing status of women.

Against this background, the present study examined the relationships among ten dimensions of women's empowerment—educational empowerment; health and well-being; economic empowerment; decision-making power; social empowerment and participation; political empowerment and awareness; legal awareness and rights; mobility and personal autonomy; family status and gender equality; and self-confidence, self-efficacy and aspirations—among three generations of women in India.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

The study was conducted with the following objectives:

1. To examine the interrelationships among the ten dimensions of women's empowerment across three generations of women in India using Pearson's product-moment correlation analysis.

2 Methods

2.1 Research Design

The study adopted a quantitative correlational research design to examine the relationships among different dimensions of women's empowerment. The correlational approach was considered appropriate because the primary purpose of the study was to determine the direction and strength of associations among the ten dimensions rather than to establish causal relationships. The study was supported by a review of historical literature concerning the changing status of women in India from independence to the contemporary period. Thus, empirical questionnaire data provided the quantitative component, while historical literature provided contextual understanding of the broader transformation in women's status.

2.2 Participants

The study included 300 women, equally distributed across three generations. The participants were classified into three groups: daughters ($n = 100$), mothers ($n = 100$), and grandmothers ($n = 100$). The three-generation framework was adopted to provide a comparative perspective on women's experiences across different periods of social and economic development. Participants were selected according to the inclusion criteria established for the study, and information concerning their demographic and socioeconomic characteristics was collected along with their responses to the empowerment questionnaire.

2.3 Tool Used for Data Collection

Data were collected using a structured Women's Empowerment Questionnaire developed for the present study. The questionnaire was designed to assess women's empowerment as a multidimensional construct. It consisted of 50 items distributed across ten dimensions, with five items representing each dimension.

1. Educational Empowerment
2. Health and Well-being
3. Economic Empowerment

4. Decision-Making Power
5. Social Empowerment and Participation
6. Political Empowerment and Awareness
7. Legal Awareness and Rights
8. Mobility and Personal Autonomy
9. Family Status and Gender Equality
10. Self-Confidence, Self-Efficacy and Aspirations

Each dimension contained five statements designed to capture participants' perceptions, experiences, awareness, and level of empowerment in the respective domain. Responses were recorded using a Likert-type response format. Dimension scores were obtained by summing the responses to the five items within each domain, while the overall questionnaire score could be obtained by summing the scores across all 50 items.

2.4 Variables of the Study

The principal variables were the ten dimensions of women's empowerment. For the correlational analysis, each dimension was treated as a continuous variable. The variables included educational empowerment, health and well-being, economic empowerment, decision-making power, social empowerment and participation, political empowerment and awareness, legal awareness and rights, mobility and personal autonomy, family status and gender equality, and self-confidence, self-efficacy and aspirations.

The generation variable was used to classify participants into daughters, mothers, and grandmothers. However, because the present study was specifically designed as a correlational investigation, the principal statistical analysis focused on relationships among the ten continuous empowerment dimensions.

2.5 Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected from the selected participants after explaining the purpose and nature of the study. Participants were informed that their responses would be used only for academic and research purposes. They were encouraged to provide responses based on their actual experiences and perceptions. Completed questionnaires were checked for completeness before the responses were entered into the statistical dataset. The data were subsequently coded and prepared for statistical analysis.

For comparisons involving two groups, an independent-samples t-test was used where applicable. To compare the three generational groups, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used. The statistical significance level was set at $p < .05$. The quantitative findings were subsequently interpreted alongside the historical evidence obtained from the literature in order to identify broader patterns of change in women's status across generations and over the historical period under study.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

Participation in the empirical component was voluntary, and the information obtained from participants was treated as confidential and used only for academic purposes. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and were given the opportunity to provide responses based on their own experiences. The data were analyzed in aggregate form so that individual participants could not be identified in the presentation of the findings.

2.7 Statistical Analysis

The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical procedures. Frequency and percentage were used to summarize the demographic characteristics of the participants. Mean and standard deviation were calculated to describe the distribution of scores for each empowerment dimension.

To examine the relationships among the ten dimensions of women's empowerment, Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient (r) was employed. Pearson's correlation was selected because the variables were measured as continuous dimension scores and the purpose was to determine the strength and direction of linear associations between pairs of empowerment dimensions.

The Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated using the following formula:

$$r = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (X_i - \bar{X})(Y_i - \bar{Y})}{\sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^n (X_i - \bar{X})^2 \sum_{i=1}^n (Y_i - \bar{Y})^2}} \quad (1)$$

where r represents the Pearson correlation coefficient, X_i and Y_i represent the individual scores on two empowerment dimensions, and $\bar{X}$ and $\bar{Y}$ represent their respective means.

The correlation coefficients were interpreted in terms of both direction and magnitude. Positive coefficients indicated that higher scores on one empowerment dimension were associated with higher scores on another dimension, whereas negative coefficients indicated an inverse association. Statistical significance was evaluated at the 0.05 and 0.01 levels, as appropriate. Because the study was correlational in nature, the observed relationships were interpreted as associations rather than causal effects.

2.8 Historical Literature Analysis

To contextualize the empirical findings, relevant literature concerning the status and empowerment of women in India was examined using a historical perspective. The literature covered major developments in women's education, health, economic participation, political representation, legal rights, social status, autonomy, and gender equality from the post-independence period to the contemporary era. The literature was used to explain the broader social and institutional context within which the experiences of the three generations could be understood. The historical evidence was not treated as a substitute for the empirical correlation analysis but was used to contextualize and interpret the observed relationships among the empowerment dimensions.

3 Results

Table 1: Pearson Correlations Among the Ten Dimensions of Women's Empowerment

Dimension	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Educational Empowerment	1.000	.714	.709	.714	.741	.750	.755	.737	.754	.748
2. Health and Well-being	.714	1.000	.732	.711	.767	.706	.707	.759	.723	.702
3. Economic Empowerment	.709	.732	1.000	.704	.751	.704	.739	.733	.728	.726
4. Decision-Making Power	.714	.711	.704	1.000	.722	.674	.751	.725	.723	.724
5. Social Empowerment and Participation	.741	.767	.751	.722	1.000	.751	.729	.766	.748	.735
6. Political Empowerment and Awareness	.750	.706	.704	.674	.751	1.000	.743	.743	.746	.760
7. Legal Awareness and Rights	.755	.707	.739	.751	.729	.743	1.000	.735	.738	.752
8. Mobility and Personal Autonomy	.737	.759	.733	.725	.766	.743	.735	1.000	.760	.744
9. Family Status and Gender Equality	.754	.723	.728	.723	.748	.746	.738	.760	1.000	.737
10. Self-Confidence, Self-Efficacy and Aspirations	.748	.702	.726	.724	.735	.760	.752	.744	.737	1.000

Note. $N = 300$. All correlation coefficients were statistically significant at $p < .001$.

Table 2: Dimensions Represented in the Correlation Matrix

No.	Dimension
1	Educational Empowerment
2	Health and Well-being
3	Economic Empowerment
4	Decision-Making Power
5	Social Empowerment and Participation
6	Political Empowerment and Awareness
7	Legal Awareness and Rights
8	Mobility and Personal Autonomy
9	Family Status and Gender Equality
10	Self-Confidence, Self-Efficacy and Aspirations

Table 1 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients among the ten dimensions of women's empowerment for the 300 participants. The findings demonstrate that all ten dimensions were positively correlated with one another, with correlation coefficients ranging from $r = .674$ to $r = .767$. All observed correlations were statistically significant at $p < .001$. This indicates that higher scores in one dimension of empowerment tended to be associated with higher scores in other dimensions.

The correlation between educational empowerment and the other dimensions was consistently positive and relatively strong, ranging from $r = .709$ to $r = .755$. The strongest association was observed between educational empowerment and legal awareness and rights ($r = .755$). This suggests that educational empowerment was closely associated with awareness of legal rights, social participation, political awareness, and other aspects of empowerment.

Health and well-being also showed positive relationships with all other dimensions. Its strongest association was with social empowerment and participation ($r = .767$), followed by mobility and personal autonomy ($r = .759$). These findings suggest that women who reported greater empowerment in relation to health and well-being also tended to report greater participation in social activities and greater personal autonomy.

Economic empowerment demonstrated positive and moderately strong-to-strong correlations with the remaining dimensions, ranging from $r = .704$ to $r = .751$. Its strongest relationship was with social empowerment and participation ($r = .751$), while its weakest relationship was with political empowerment and awareness ($r = .704$). This indicates that economic empowerment was interconnected with women's broader social participation, legal awareness, decision-making, and personal autonomy.

Decision-making power was positively related to all other dimensions, with coefficients ranging from $r = .674$ to $r = .751$. The strongest relationship was observed with legal awareness and rights ($r = .751$), whereas the weakest was with political empowerment and awareness ($r = .674$). This pattern suggests that women's ability to participate in decision-making was particularly associated with their awareness of legal rights and other forms of empowerment. The social empowerment and participation dimension showed particularly strong relationships with the other dimensions. Its correlations ranged from $r = .722$ to $r = .767$. The strongest association in the entire matrix was between social empowerment and participation and health and well-being ($r = .767$). It was also strongly associated with mobility and personal autonomy ($r = .766$). These findings indicate that social participation was closely interconnected with women's health, mobility, education, economic position, and other aspects of empowerment. Political empowerment and awareness was positively correlated with all other dimensions, with coefficients ranging from $r = .674$ to $r = .760$. Its strongest association was with

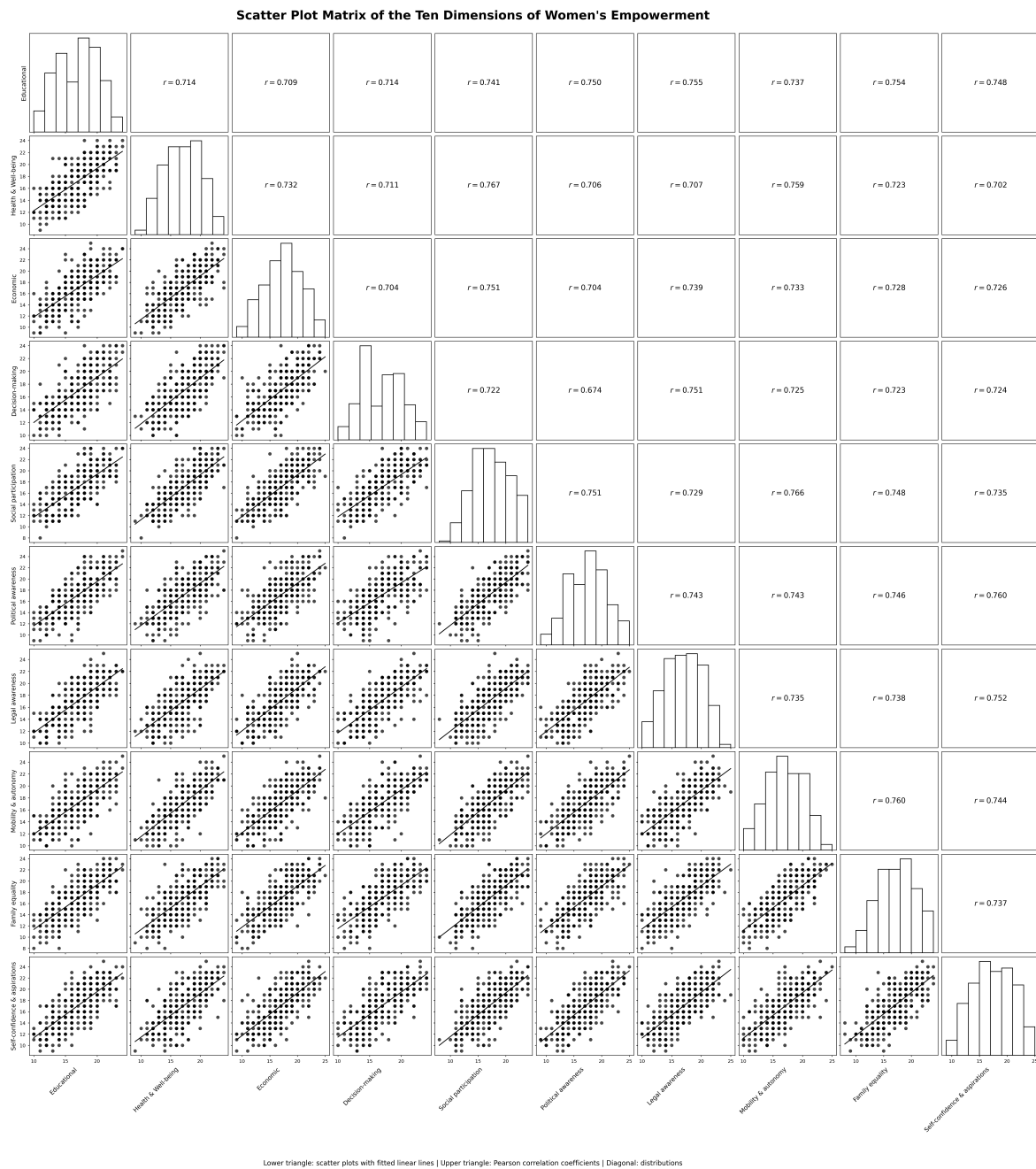


Figure 1: Scatter plot matrix showing the interrelationships among the ten dimensions of women's empowerment across the three generations.

self-confidence, self-efficacy and aspirations ($r = .760$), followed by educational empowerment ($r = .750$). This suggests that political awareness and participation were closely associated with women's confidence and aspirations as well as their educational empowerment.

Legal awareness and rights demonstrated strong positive relationships with all other dimensions, ranging from $r = .707$ to $r = .755$. Its strongest correlation was with educational empowerment ($r = .755$), followed by decision-making power ($r = .751$). This pattern indicates that awareness of legal rights was closely associated with education and women's ability to participate in decisions affecting their lives.

Mobility and personal autonomy showed strong positive correlations with the remaining dimensions, ranging from $r = .725$ to $r = .766$. Its strongest relationship was with social empowerment and participation ($r = .766$), followed by health and well-being ($r = .759$). This indicates that personal autonomy and mobility were closely connected with women's participation in social life and their health-related empowerment.

Family status and gender equality was positively correlated with all other dimensions, with coefficients ranging from $r = .723$ to $r = .760$. The strongest association was found with mobility and personal autonomy ($r = .760$). This suggests that greater perceptions of gender equality within the family were associated with greater personal autonomy and empowerment across other domains.

Finally, self-confidence, self-efficacy and aspirations showed positive relationships with all nine remaining dimensions, ranging from $r = .702$ to $r = .760$. The strongest relationship was with political empowerment and awareness ($r = .760$), while the weakest was with health and well-being ($r = .702$). This indicates that women's confidence and aspirations were strongly interconnected with their political awareness, legal awareness, education, autonomy, and social participation.

4 Discussion

The present study examined the interrelationships among ten dimensions of women's empowerment across three generations of women in India. Unlike an analysis that treats empowerment as a single overall score, the present study considered empowerment as a multidimensional construct involving education, health, economic resources, decision-making, social participation, political awareness, legal rights, autonomy, gender equality, and psychological attributes. The correlation findings showed positive and statistically significant relationships among all ten dimensions. The coefficients ranged from $r = .674$ to $r = .767$, with all relationships significant at $p < .001$. This overall pattern suggests that the different aspects of women's empowerment tend to develop together rather than functioning as completely separate domains.

The strong association between health and well-being and social empowerment and participation ($r = .767$) is particularly noteworthy. Women's ability to participate actively in social life may be connected with their access to health-related information, services, and decision-making opportunities. At the same time, women who have better health and greater awareness may have more opportunities to participate in social activities. The correlational nature of the present study does not allow either direction of influence to be established, but the strength of the association demonstrates that these two dimensions are closely connected within the experiences represented in the sample.

A similarly strong relationship was observed between social empowerment and participation and mobility and personal autonomy ($r = .766$). This finding highlights the importance of freedom of movement and personal autonomy in enabling women's participation in social life. Women's participation may be influenced by their ability to move beyond the immediate household environment, access institutions and services, interact with wider social networks, and make personal decisions. The finding is consistent with the broader conceptualization

of empowerment in which agency and the ability to make meaningful choices are central components (Kabeer, 1999).

Educational empowerment was positively associated with all other dimensions, with correlations ranging from $r = .709$ to $r = .755$. Its strongest relationship was with legal awareness and rights ($r = .755$). This finding is meaningful because education can provide women with access to information, improve awareness of rights and opportunities, and facilitate interaction with social and institutional systems. Jejeebhoy (1995) similarly emphasized the importance of education in strengthening women's autonomy and decision-making. The present findings extend this perspective by showing that educational empowerment is associated not only with autonomy but also with several other domains of empowerment.

The relationship between economic empowerment and social empowerment and participation ($r = .751$) also deserves attention. Economic resources can provide women with greater capacity to participate in social activities and make choices independently. Financial inclusion, access to employment, control over resources, and ownership of assets may strengthen women's position within households and communities. Duflo (2012) argued that economic development and women's empowerment are interconnected processes. The present study provides correlational evidence consistent with this broader perspective, although it cannot establish a causal pathway between economic resources and social participation.

The findings concerning decision-making power demonstrate another important aspect of empowerment. Decision-making was positively correlated with all other dimensions, with coefficients ranging from $r = .674$ to $r = .751$. Its strongest relationship was with legal awareness and rights ($r = .751$). This suggests that women who reported greater awareness of their rights also tended to report greater participation in decisions. Knowledge of rights may provide women with greater confidence and awareness when making personal, family, and social decisions. However, decision-making is also shaped by family structure, socioeconomic circumstances, cultural norms, and the distribution of resources within households.

Political empowerment and awareness showed positive relationships with all other dimensions and had its strongest association with self-confidence, self-efficacy and aspirations ($r = .760$). This finding suggests that political awareness may be closely connected with women's confidence in expressing opinions, understanding public affairs, and developing aspirations beyond traditional household roles. Political empowerment should therefore not be viewed only in terms of formal political participation; awareness and confidence may also form important components of women's capacity to engage with public life.

The correlation between legal awareness and rights and educational empowerment ($r = .755$) further demonstrates the importance of knowledge and awareness in women's empowerment. Legal awareness may provide women with knowledge concerning equality, protection, property, marriage, employment, and other rights. Education can facilitate access to such information, while greater legal awareness may in turn strengthen women's confidence in exercising their rights. The present results indicate that these domains are strongly connected, although the direction of the relationship cannot be determined from correlation analysis.

Self-confidence, self-efficacy and aspirations were also strongly connected with several other dimensions. The strongest relationship was observed with political empowerment and awareness ($r = .760$), while positive associations were also found with educational empowerment, legal awareness, mobility, family status, and social participation. These findings support the view that empowerment has both external and internal dimensions. Access to resources and opportunities may be important, but women's perceptions of their own abilities, confidence, and aspirations are also important components of empowerment.

The findings related to family status and gender equality are also significant. This dimension showed positive relationships with all other dimensions, with coefficients ranging from $r = .723$ to $r = .760$. Its strongest association was with mobility and personal autonomy. This suggests

that perceptions of equality within family relationships are closely connected with women's ability to exercise personal choices and autonomy. Women's empowerment within the family may therefore be influenced by broader changes in education, economic resources, social participation, and awareness of rights.

Taken together, the findings support the multidimensional conceptualization of women's empowerment proposed in the existing literature. Kabeer (1999) emphasized that empowerment involves resources, agency, and achievements, while Malhotra et al. (2002) highlighted the importance of examining empowerment across multiple domains. The present study provides empirical support for this perspective because all ten dimensions were positively related to one another. No dimension appeared to operate entirely independently of the others.

The three-generation framework also provides an important historical perspective. Daughters, mothers, and grandmothers have experienced different social, educational, technological, and policy environments. The expansion of women's education, financial inclusion, legal awareness, communication technologies, health services, and opportunities for social participation has changed the context in which women experience empowerment. Contemporary national evidence also demonstrates improvements in several indicators associated with women's autonomy and financial inclusion (International Institute for Population Sciences [IIPS] & ICF, 2021). However, the present correlation analysis does not itself establish that these historical developments caused the observed relationships. Rather, the historical literature provides a contextual framework for understanding the empirical pattern.

An important implication of the findings is that women's empowerment should not be approached through a single intervention or a single indicator. The strong relationships among the dimensions suggest that educational, economic, health, legal, social, political, and psychological aspects of empowerment are interconnected. Policies and programmes addressing women's empowerment may therefore benefit from an integrated approach that recognizes these multiple dimensions simultaneously.

The findings should nevertheless be interpreted in light of the study's limitations. The use of a correlational design means that causal conclusions cannot be drawn. The data were based on participants' responses to a structured questionnaire and may therefore reflect individual perceptions and reporting. In addition, the sample of 300 participants may not represent all women in India, given the country's considerable regional, cultural, socioeconomic, and educational diversity. Future studies could use larger samples from different regions and examine the correlation patterns separately for each generation. Longitudinal research could also provide stronger evidence regarding how relationships among empowerment dimensions develop over

5 Conclusions

The present study examined the relationships among ten dimensions of women's empowerment across three generations of women in India. The findings demonstrated positive and statistically significant correlations among all ten dimensions, with correlation coefficients ranging from $r = .674$ to $r = .767$. The results indicate that women's empowerment is not a collection of isolated characteristics but a closely interconnected multidimensional construct.

The strongest association was found between health and well-being and social empowerment and participation, while strong relationships were also observed between social participation and personal autonomy, political awareness and self-confidence, and educational empowerment and legal awareness. These findings indicate that improvements or differences in one aspect of women's empowerment tend to be associated with corresponding differences in other aspects. The study therefore concludes that women's empowerment should be understood through an integrated framework that considers education, health, economic resources, decision-

making, social and political participation, legal awareness, autonomy, gender equality, and self-confidence together. The three-generation perspective further provides a useful framework for understanding women's empowerment within the broader historical transformation of Indian society.

However, the correlations represent associations and not causal relationships. The findings should therefore be interpreted as evidence of interconnected dimensions rather than evidence that one dimension directly produces another. Future research involving larger, geographically diverse samples and separate generation-specific correlation analyses may provide a deeper understanding of how these dimensions interact across different stages and contexts of women's lives.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest associated with this article.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

The authors declare that artificial intelligence tools were used for language improvement and/or formatting assistance. The authors take full responsibility for the originality, accuracy, interpretation, and final content of the article.

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