

Review of: "Socio-cultural factors influencing women empowerment: A cross-sectional study among an ex-criminal tribe in West Bengal, India"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

The paper titled "Socio-cultural factors influencing women empowerment: A cross-sectional study among an ex-criminal tribe in West Bengal, India" represents the empowerment scenario of 110 ever-married women of the Lodha tribe, an ex-criminal tribe of Paschim Medinipur district of West Bengal, India. The authors differentiate the magnitude of empowerment of the women who have participated in any of the SHG group of their village or if they are employed in any kind of wage income with women who are not working.

Apart from an interesting cross-sectional descriptive study of Lodha tribal women, it suffers from many limitations:

- Beside strong patriarchal norms, here, most of the women were child brides, with a background of criminal history, thus they are already suffering from low self-esteem, hence, empowerment, which means a state where women are aware of their selves and gaining the strength to participate in decisions that influence their welfare and control their own lives (Rahman (2013); Malhotra et al. (2002); Kabeer (1989); Kishor and Gupta (2004)) is difficult for them.
- The authors may have incorporated a dimension of women's perception towards justification of wife beating by their husbands in different aspects of daily life as this is a major dimension of measuring women empowerment (Upadhyay and Karasek (2012)).
- Employment is considered as a significant accelerator of empowerment but the aspect of employment and empowerment is crucial and debatable which the authors have not taken into account. Because it is found that employed women become the victim of spousal violence more often. There is evidence from past studies that employment in self-help groups makes the women financially confident, but not empowered (Banerjee and Ghosh (2012), Garikipati et al.(2008)).
- From the narration of the tribal women given in the paper it can easily be inferred that most of them are afraid of their husband which is a clear evidence of low self-esteem hence disempowerment arises (Mishra, 2020). This factor is omitted by the authors.
- Whether they have access to health facility in the village, access to any kind of mass-media, these questions may boost the study further. Basic asset and infrastructure information such as access to proper sanitation facility, access to clean fuel, access to drinking water, electricity must be incorporated in order to analyse the empowerment aspect of the women (Duflo(2012)).
- Exploration of determinants of empowerment would enhance the policy prescription for the welfare of the tribal women and hence empowerment of them. For this purpose the authors may use logistic regression with a consolidated

measure of empowerment.

I hope the suggestions may help the authors to improve the study further.

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