Chapter 1

Introduction

The introduction chapter of the thesis acquaints about the meaning of women empowerment, the background of women empowerment, the underlying problem in the society, the necessity for women empowerment, how it can help women and make them independent etc. Objectives and hypotheses are also stated here. Identified research gap along with a brief research design is explained in this chapter. The significance of the study and the limitations also are explained in this section.

1.1 Meaning

Empowering women is allowing them to make their own decisions in every walk of their life. This is important for women because they are being suppressed by people around them and it is high time they come out of this suppression. Most of the women these days are employed in service sectors. Finding the factors which will influence women empowerment in the service sectors becomes extremely important so that women can be trained towards cultivating those factors and can stay empowered. The present study is about finding such influencing factors and the extent to which they are influential in empowering women.
1.2 Background

Women Empowerment is an issue crucial to the lives of women because it is important that they make their voices heard, as in this age of information superhighways, they are still deprived of their basic human rights. According to CARE (2005), of the 1.3 billion people who live in absolute poverty around the globe, 70 percent are women. For these women, poverty doesn’t just mean scarcity and want. It means rights denied, opportunities curtailed and voices silenced. According to the United Nations Millennium Campaign to halve world poverty by the year 2015, women work two – thirds of the world’s working hours. The overwhelming majority of the labor that sustains life – growing food, cooking, raising children, caring for the elderly, maintaining a house, hauling water – is done by women, and universally this work is accorded low status and no pay. The ceaseless cycle of labor rarely shows up in economic analyses of a society’s production and value. Women earn only 10 percent of the world’s income. Where women work for money, they may be limited to a set of jobs deemed suitable for women – invariably low-pay, low-status positions, says CARE (2005).

Scholars believe that in ancient India, women enjoyed equal status with men in all fields of life (Mishra, 2006). However, some others hold contrasting views (Pruthi, Devi & Pruthi, 2001). Works by ancient Indian grammarians such as Patanjali and Katyayana suggest that women were educated in the early Vedic period. Rig Vedic verses suggest that the women married at a mature age and were probably free to select their husband (Majumdar, 1951). Scriptures such as Rig
Veda and Upanishads mention several women sages and seers, notably Gargi and Maitreyi.

Although reformatory movements such as Jainism allowed women to be admitted to the religious order, by and large, the women in India faced confinement and restrictions. The practice of child marriages is believed to have started from around sixth century (Kamat, 2006). The Indian woman's position in the society further deteriorated during the medieval period (Mishra. R. C, 2006) when Sati among some communities, child marriages and a ban on widow remarriages became part of social life among some communities in India.

In the 19th century reformers such as Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Jyotirao Phule etc. fought for the upliftment of women. Peary Charan Sarkar, a former student of Hindu College, Calcutta and a member of "Young Bengal" set up the first free school for girls in India in 1847 in Barasat, a suburb of Calcutta. Rani Lakshmi Bai, the Queen of Jhansi, led the Indian Rebellion of 1857 against the British. She is now widely considered as a nationalist hero.

In 1917, the first women's delegation met the Secretary of State to demand women's political rights, supported by the Indian National Congress. The All India Women's Education Conference was held in Pune in 1927. In 1929, the Child Marriage Restraint Act was passed, stipulating fourteen as the minimum age of marriage for a girl through the efforts of Mahomed Ali Jinnah. Though Mahatma Gandhi himself married at the age of thirteen, he later urged people to boycott
child marriages and called upon the young men to marry the child widows (Kamat, 2006).

Women played an important part in India's independence struggle. Some of the famous freedom fighters include Bhikaji Cama, Dr. Annie Besant, Pritilata Waddedar, Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Aruna Asaf Ali, Sucheta Kriplani and Kasturba Gandhi. Other notable names include Muthulakshmi Reddy, Durgabai Deshmukh etc. The Rani of Jhansi Regiment of Subhash Chandra Bose's Indian National Army consisted entirely of women including Captain Lakshmi Sahgal. Sarojini Naidu, a poet and a freedom fighter, was the first Indian woman to become the President of the Indian National Congress and the first woman to become the governor of a state in India.

The status of women in India has been subject to many great changes over the past few millennia. From equal status with men in ancient times through the low points of the medieval period, to the promotion of equal rights by many reformers, the history of women in India has been eventful says Jayapalan (2001). In modern India, women have adorned high offices in India including that of the President, Prime minister, Speaker of the Lok Sabha and Leader of the Opposition. As of 2011, the President of India, the Speaker of the Lok Sabha and the Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha (Lower House of the parliament) were all women.
“Indian women are heading for the corner offices and there’s no stopping them! Top business consulting and accountancy organization, Grant Thornton’s International Business Report (IBR) reveals that the proportion of Indian women in senior management positions has increased from 9% in 2011 to 14% in 2012,” says Chanania (Sept 19, 2012).

However, women in India generally are still exposed to numerous social issues. According to a global study conducted by Thomson Reuters, India is the "fourth most dangerous country" in the world for women. This kind of insecure environment is unhealthy for the mere existence and survival of women in India. It is totally unfair and unjust that women should face such difficulties in their lives.

According to Jasmine & Panchanatham (June, 2012), in India most of the organizations do not give importance to work life balance. They are not interested in encouraging women employees in the organization. When such is the attitude of employers, the little hope for women to earn and survive becomes a disaster. This world should be made a better place for the peaceful and happy living of women because every human being deserves a fair and just treatment in his / her life.

By empowering women this danger could be reduced to a great extent. Also women could become independent and strong enough to face any kind of issues arising in their life if they become empowered.
1.3 Statement of the problem

Women, particularly in India, are not being treated equal to men. They face injustice in all spheres of their lives. When they are children, in majority of the Indian families, sons are given more importance than daughters. Sons get better food than daughters, to start with. Discriminating women begins as early as childhood. Female children are expected to behave in a certain way while there is no such restriction with male children say Jasmine & Panchanatham (July, 2012). Generally mothers, though they are women themselves, feel that their sons need more energy than daughters because sons do most of the tough jobs like carrying heavy objects, pushing or lifting heavy objects which require more energy. Therefore better quality and quantity of food is given to sons and daughters don’t even have a choice of what kind of food they prefer. Whatever food is left over after the father, grandfather or son consumes, is consumed by the daughter(s) and the mother herself. In poor families the situation is worse because the daughter(s) and/or mother goes to sleep hungry if no food is left over. After the heavy household work and cooking this is the reward she gets at the end of the day. This situation though slowly changing, has not completely changed in some parts of the country.

Sons get better education than daughters. Some people especially in villages feel educating daughters is waste of time and money. Instead of going to school she could help her mother with the household chores. But the Government of India insists on education to all children both boys and girls and has put forth
lot of schemes and scholarships for girl children in particular. Government provides free and compulsory school education to all children. Government also provides free food for all children attending schools to supplement for the malnutrition prevailing among the Indian children. Still some girl children are suppressed and not sent to school in some parts of the country.

Some girl children who have the opportunity to go to school are not sent to college. Even if they are allowed to go to college they are not allowed to choose a course of their preference. Parents themselves categorize courses as ‘those ideal for girls’ and ‘those ideal for boys’. So, girls are allowed to pursue only those courses, which parents think are suitable for them. Most of the parents have a preconceived notion that teaching is the profession which is suitable for girls. They feel only teachers can balance both the family and work easily. Very few families are breaking such walls these days and are prepared to invest in their daughters’ education as per their daughters’ choice. Not all families are ready to do so. This situation must change.

Another issue is sons have the right to play any game they want but not daughters. Though this cannot be considered as a major issue still it affects the girl child psychologically when she is stopped from playing a game of her choice. This is especially true when it comes to outdoor games. She is allowed to stay inside her house and play an indoor game but not allowed outside.
Sons by default inherit their fathers’ properties but not daughters. But Government of India has given equal rights to sons and daughters for property inheritance. Yet fathers prefer to give away their properties to their sons.

Sons get to choose their career path and not daughters. This is very true because right from the education phase itself girls don’t get to choose the course they prefer. After completing their college education girls were not allowed to take up a job. But these days many girls have started working. But once she gets married it becomes mandatory for her to quit her job or continue based on the decision taken by her husband. She doesn’t have a choice here too.

Working women have to face lot of problems domestically as well in the work place. They have to finish their household chores before leaving to the work place. Very few women get help from their husband or in laws. They have to struggle all by themselves. Earlier things were worse when there was no LPG stove, electric stove or microwave. Although life is becoming easier for women these days due to technological advances, yet the job of cooking, cleaning, mopping, washing etc. is expected from them. A woman is expected to complete these work, take care of her children, send them to school and then leave for work. In the work place there are male chauvinists not ready to coordinate and cooperate to work along with or work under women. Though not all men behave this way, many such men do exist in the work place. Then there is the problem of glass ceiling effect. While considering for promotion or pay hike the woman is bypassed for a man with similar experience and qualification.
Why should women face such problems? A society comprises of men and women. Men and women are considered as the two sides of a coin which implies both are equal. One without the other is meaningless. When this is the case why are women being suppressed and treated unfair? How can such problems be put to an end? Is it actually possible to put an end to such problems or is it destiny that women have to live with them? Can women empowerment be a possible solution for such problems?

1.4 Need to empower women

Women need to be treated equal to men be it at home or at work place or anywhere outside her home for which empowerment is essential.

According to Michael de Laine (2010), empowering women in developing countries in a way that gives them employment is “smart economics”. Not only does this give them jobs and help them contribute to economic growth, it is a route to combat poverty and a movement towards greater liberty and democracy. Also Jasmine & Panchanatham (September 2011b) say, an emotionally intelligent woman is likely to exhibit qualities of a good leader. She will be able to handle problems in the family as well as in the organization effectively. She will also be able to handle her own as well as others’ emotions efficiently which is very important for the well being of an organization. But there are challenges that must be overcome before such success is achieved.

Across the developing world, far more women continue to be out of the labour market than men, according to the Millennium Development Goals report
from 2009. Northern Africa and western Asia have exceptionally low female employment-to-population ratios, and only about 20% of working-age women are employed in the most important sectors here, industry and services.

Overall, almost two-thirds of all employed women have vulnerable jobs, either as contributing family workers or as own-account workers. Michael de Laine in *The Copenhagen Voice* (March 31, 2010) quotes the speech, “We must empower women for them to gain their rights and promote economic growth,” by Soren Pind, Denmark's recently appointed Minister for Development Cooperation, in the conference on women empowerment and employment, arranged by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Pind added that a new draft for Denmark's development cooperation has five focus areas, including gender equality and boosting the position and status of women. “Through economic growth we can try to help and empower women, and that helps combat poverty,” Pind said. “Empowering women is smart economics,” said Robert E Zoellick, the president of the World Bank group (Michael de Laine, March 31, 2010).

Michael de Laine in *The Copenhagen Voice* (March 31, 2010) also writes, various reports indicate that improving women's situation can benefit society in ways that transcend the direct benefits to individual women. Women's independent earnings improve the well-being of their families and communities, reduce poverty and stimulate economic growth. Higher income for women and better access to and control over their resources lead to better health and nutrition for children. In
Bangladesh, access to micro-finance increases household consumption when the borrower is a woman, and access to credit also improves children's health and nutrition. While noting that women “can be driving forces in economic growth”, Zoellick, in the same conference on women empowerment and employment, arranged by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, added, “Women and girls are hit first by economic downturns.”

Helen Clark, the administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in the conference on women empowerment and employment, arranged by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, underlined, “Investing in women and girls has a multiplier effect across the Millennium Development Goals and expands the economic possibilities and employment of women. Women's legal skills and situation must be strengthened in terms of their rights and to enable them to take part in decision-making processes, including in national legislatures.” This would ensure greater equality (Michael de Laine, March 31, 2010).

According to Jasmine & Panchanatham (August, 2012), women play a major and active role in the well being and effectiveness of any organization. Treating women well without showing gender discrimination in the organization is very important. It is all the more important to empower women irrespective of their age, designation and nature of work. This will help in developing commitment towards the organization which in turn helps the organization to
retain its workforce, reduce absenteeism and improve loyalty. Job performance of such women employees will also improve when empowered.

The correspondent of *Youthkiawaaz*, Utsav Prashar (2010) writes, “Gandhi ji had once remarked, ‘Be the change you want to see in the world’. And, as we can see, that change is finally happening, albeit slowly, but surely. Particularly in the economic sector, women of highest caliber and talent are leading the pack. They dared to dream and thus achieved what we can call “phenomenal success.” Their charisma spans countries to continents, individual to generations. Still, they are concerned enough for women who are less fortunate than they are”.

Utsav Prashar (2010) also says, the status of Indian women is analyzed in the light of historical and contemporary indicators. A series of reforms is urgently needed for the upliftment of women workforce. In a way it is hoped that if the Government adopts various upliftment machinery, it will go a long way in ensuring the dignified life for Indian women.

1.5 Need for the study

Women empowerment is the need of the hour because studies say that for the development of a nation and its economy ‘women empowerment’ is the key factor. A woman who is empowered will be independent and will be in a position to guide her family in the right direction. Empowerment should be not only at the household level but also at the work place level. Only then she will also be in a position to fulfill her duties to the fullest in her work place. Well developed
families make well developed society and therefore a well developed nation. The same is true for organizations. Healthy organizations build an economically sound nation. Therefore empowering women becomes imperative.

According to The Corporate Gender Gap report brought out by the World Economic Forum (March, 2010), India has the lowest percentage of women employees (23%) and the findings of the survey confirm that the services sector employees the greatest percentage of women employees. Therefore, the present study was initiated to gain knowledge on the factors which would influence women empowerment in the service sectors.

The services sector covers a wide range of activities from the most sophisticated information technology (IT) to simple services provided by the unorganized sector, such as the services of the barber and plumber. National Accounts classification of the services sector incorporates trade, hotels, and restaurants; transport, storage, and communication; financing, insurance, real estate, and business services; and community, social, and personal services. In World Trade Organization (WTO) and Reserve Bank of India (RBI) classifications, construction is also included.

The present study was made in the town of Puducherry, India. Quantitative type of research was used. The variables used were broadly classified into dependent and independent variables. The dependent variable was women empowerment. The independent variables consisted of demographic variables, organizational profile variables and behavioural variables. The population
comprised of all women employed in the service sectors. The various service sectors included were wholesale and retail trade, restaurants and hotels, posts and telecommunication, banking services, education, health and social work, and other community and personal services sectors.

1.6 Research Gap

Many studies have been made in the area of women empowerment and many interesting findings have been drawn. The various factors which would influence empowerment of women have also been studied. Factors like education, economic independence, micro finance etc have been identified by many researchers to be influencers of women empowerment. There is no study as such relating to the influence of behavioural variables such as emotional intelligence, work – life balance or organizational commitment on women empowerment. Hence, the study and the above mentioned three behavioural variables were selected for the study.

1.7 Significance of the Study

Many behavioural variables like personality, quality of work life, ethics, emotional intelligence, organization culture, leadership, organizational commitment, organizational climate, work life balance and group dynamics were identified as some of the dominant factors influencing women empowerment through first round of the pilot study. To study the entire ten behavioural variables would exceed the time limit allocated for the present study.
Therefore, three variables namely emotional intelligence, work life balance and organizational commitment, which ranked first three in the second round of the pilot study conducted, were taken as the factors influencing women empowerment and further study was made with these three factors.

This study throws light on the fundamental or basic factors influencing women empowerment such as emotional intelligence, work life balance and organizational commitment. If managers or anybody in the organization for that matter feel the need to empower women the first thing they need to do is to train women on improving their emotional intelligence, check whether there is proper balance of personal life and work life and then adopt measures to increase their commitment towards their organization. Influence of these three variables on women empowerment is applicable at the household level, community level and broader arenas too. Therefore this study is a significant one, due to its wide applicability.

1.8 Objectives

1. To find the level of women empowerment among the women employees of various services sectors in Puducherry town.

2. To find the association between women empowerment and demographic variables.

3. To find the association between women empowerment and organizational profile variables.
4. To find the association between women empowerment and behavioural variables.
5. To find the relationship between women empowerment and demographic variables.
6. To find the relationship between women empowerment and organizational profile variables.
7. To find the relationship between women empowerment and behavioural variables.
8. To find whether there is significant difference between women empowerment and demographic variables.
9. To find whether there is significant difference between women empowerment and organizational profile variables.
10. To find whether there is significant difference between women empowerment and behavioural variables.
11. To find whether there is significant difference in the women empowerment scores for respondents belonging to various services sectors.
12. To find whether there is significant difference in women empowerment scores for respondents with and without children.
13. To find the multiple correlation among women empowerment, emotional intelligence, work life balance and organizational commitment.
14. To find the multiple regression between women empowerment and behavioural variables.
15. To give suggestions regarding how women can be empowered through the factors influencing empowerment.

1.9 Hypotheses

1. There is no association between women empowerment and demographic variables.

2. There is no association between women empowerment and organizational profile variables.

3. There is no association between women empowerment and behavioural variables.

4. There is no significant relationship between women empowerment and demographic variables.

5. There is no significant relationship between women empowerment and organizational profile variables.

6. There is no significant relationship between women empowerment and behavioural variables.

7. There is no significant difference between women empowerment and demographic variables.

8. There is no significant difference between women empowerment and organizational profile variables.

9. There is no significant difference between women empowerment and behavioural variables.
10. There is no significant difference in the women empowerment scores for respondents belonging to various services sectors.

11. There is no significant difference in women empowerment scores for respondents with and without children.

1.10 Research Design

The present study falls in the descriptive research category. It consists of 587 samples selected at random, proportionately from service sectors such as wholesale and retail trade, hotels and restaurants, posts and telecommunication, banking services, education, health and social work, and other community and personal services sectors. Primary data were collected from these participants using questionnaires. Separate standardized questionnaires were used to collect data for behavioural variables. Self designed questionnaire was used for women empowerment scale. A pilot study was conducted and questions were reframed based on the feedback from the pilot study. This women empowerment scale was tested for validity and reliability and was found reliable with a score of 0.774 (Cronbach’s alpha value), before administering to the participants.

The selected participants were given these scales and they were required to fill in themselves. After a week’s time the filled in scales were collected back. The raw data were coded and tabulated for further analysis using statistical tools.
1.11 Scope of the study

The study confines itself to finding the level of women empowerment and whether behavioural factors like emotional intelligence, work life balance and organizational commitment have an influence on women empowerment, the samples being taken from various service sectors in Puducherry town. The study uses statistical analysis to find the influence of the three above mentioned behavioural variables on women empowerment. Statistical analysis is also done to find association, relationship and significant difference between women empowerment and demographic variables, organizational profile variables, behavioural variables. The study further suggests how women can be empowered. Implications of the study at the individual level and industry level are also explained.

1.12 Limitations of the study

The study was made among the women working in service sectors alone. There are women out there who work for construction sector, manufacturing sector and the like. But those samples have not been considered and are beyond the scope of this study.

The samples were confined to Puducherry town only. Puducherry is composed of many small villages surrounding the town region. But the samples have been restricted to the town region due to the difficulty in collecting reliable data.

Only three behavioural variables such as emotional intelligence, work life balance and organizational commitment were studied due to time constraint. Many
such behavioural variables can be studied and tested for their influence on women empowerment.

1.13 Plan of the study

Chapter 1 deals with introduction about women empowerment. Objectives, hypotheses are also detailed along with the limitations for the study. Chapter 2 deals with review of literature on women empowerment and its concepts. Chapter 3 deals with the research methodology which explains about the population, samples, tools for analysis etc. Chapter 4 deals with the discussion and interpretation of the results. Chapter 5 deals with findings, suggestions and conclusion.