ABSTRACT

Evolving from the multidimensional concept and process of empowerment of women, the present study sought to examine the linkages between three sets of psychosocial parameters of empowerment, namely, sociodemographic, psychological, and behavioral. The sociodemographic variables comprised education, employment, income, and age; the psychological variables included self-esteem, personal control beliefs, and gender stereotype; and the behavioral dimensions consisted of decision making input and health care seeking behavior. The primary aim of the study was to indicate the strength and direction of the relationships amongst the three sets of variables. The sample comprised 150 women in the age range of 21 to 50 years from the high, middle and low socioeconomic strata of Baroda city. Multiple regression and chi-square (for the categorical variable of health care seeking behavior) analyses were used to identify the salient linkages amongst the variables. Results revealed that (a) education, personal control beliefs, and masculine gender stereotype contributed significantly to self-esteem, (b) age, employment, and personal control beliefs emerged salient for decision making input, and (c) age, socioeconomic status, personal control beliefs, and self-esteem were significantly related to selected aspects of health care seeking behavior. Implications of the study focus upon the need to evolve new parameters of women's sense of self-esteem, and discover alternate domains of power for women. In essence, the study calls for questioning, re-examining and re-defining the existing sociocultural fabric and evolving a new vision of women's empowerment that is more aligned with their world view.