



Women's Empowerment and the Question of Male Discrimination: Examining Emerging Social Perceptions

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Abstract: This study examines the relationship between women's empowerment and perceived male discrimination among respondents from different age groups in the Delhi region. This study is divided into four sections: (A) respondents' demographic profile; (B) women's empowerment; (C) perceptions of male discrimination; and (D) social perceptions of gender. Using a stratified random sampling technique, data were collected from 350 participants through a structured Likert-scale questionnaire covering women's empowerment, male discrimination, and social perceptions on gender. The data were analyzed using SPSS and Microsoft Excel. The findings reveal that women's empowerment significantly contributes to more balanced and positive social perceptions. Although concerns about male discrimination exist, the results do not strongly support the view that increasing women's empowerment leads to greater discrimination against men. The study concludes that gender equality should be pursued through an inclusive approach that addresses the concerns of both men and women, promoting a fair and progressive society.

Keywords: Women's Empowerment, Gender Equality, Perceived Male Discrimination, Social Perceptions, Gender Bias and Stereotypes, Feminism and Masculinity

Introduction: In recent decades, women's empowerment has emerged as a central theme in social, economic, and political discourse across the world. Efforts to promote gender equality have led to significant improvements in women's

access to education, employment, and decision-making roles. These developments have been widely recognized as essential for achieving inclusive growth and sustainable development. However, alongside this progress, a new debate

has surfaced regarding the perception of male discrimination in contemporary society.

While women's empowerment aims to address historical inequalities and systemic disadvantages faced by women, some sections of society perceive that the growing focus on women's rights may unintentionally overlook or marginalize men's issues. Concerns related to legal biases, social expectations, and emotional well-being of men have contributed to this emerging discourse.

In this study conducted by *Schuler et al. (2013)*, When feminine norms evolve (e.g., in response to expanded educational and employment opportunities for girls and women, and laws and policies supporting women's equal rights and social participation), masculine norms may evolve to accommodate greater gender equity, or they may be thrown into crisis. In the former case, men may establish more collaborative, companionate and collegial relationships with their wives, help with housework, and/or change their routines to accommodate their wives' income.

Grèzes, Julie & Gelder, Beatrice. (2009), in this chapter, we will review neuroimaging studies that explore the neural basis of everyday human competence to perceive emotions, beliefs and deceit through the observation of other people's non-verbal behaviour. An automatic motor simulation process of perceived nonverbal

behaviours may constitute the basis of a primitive and implicit form of understanding of other people's mental states, and therefore may underlie key development of mind-reading abilities.

Madeline E. Heilman, (2012), this paper focuses on the workplace consequences of both descriptive gender stereotypes (designating what women and men are like) and prescriptive gender stereotypes (designating what women and men should be like), and their implications for women's career progress. Its central argument is that gender stereotypes give rise to biased judgments and decisions, impeding women's advancement.

Some definitions of Women's Empowerment:

Naila Kabeer (1999): Women's empowerment is "the process by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such ability," emphasizing access to resources, agency, and achievements.

United Nations: Women's empowerment involves enhancing women's capacity to participate fully in economic, political, and social life, ensuring equal rights, opportunities, and access to resources.

Amartya Sen (1999): Empowerment is linked to expanding women's capabilities and freedoms, enabling them to lead the kind of lives they value.

Srilatha Batliwala (1994): Women's empowerment is a process of transforming power

relations in favor of women, including control over material and intellectual resources.

World Bank: Women's empowerment refers to increasing women's access to resources and opportunities while strengthening their voice and participation in decision-making.

Perceived Male Discrimination:

Warren Farrell: Perceived male discrimination refers to the societal and institutional disadvantages faced by men, particularly in areas such as family law, education, and mental health recognition.

American Psychological Association (2018): While not directly defining discrimination, it highlights that traditional masculinity norms can lead to the neglect of men's psychological well-being, contributing to perceived inequality.

David Benatar (2012): Suggests that men may experience certain forms of systemic disadvantage, which are often overlooked in mainstream gender equality discussions.

Gender Studies perspective: Perceived male discrimination is understood as a subjective interpretation shaped by social norms, media narratives, and changing gender roles rather than always reflecting objective inequality.

World Health Organization: Emphasizes those men's health issues, including mental health and shorter life expectancy, are often under-addressed, contributing to perceptions of neglect or imbalance.

Gender Equality:

Gender equality in India is strongly supported by the Constitution, which guarantees equal rights and opportunities to all citizens irrespective of gender. The following articles of constitutional provisions ensure gender justice:

Article 14 Right to Equality: Guarantees equality before the law and equal protection of laws to all persons, ensuring that both men and women are treated equally.

Article 15(1) Prohibition of Discrimination: Prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth.

Article 15(3) Protective Discrimination: Allows the State to make special provisions for women and children to promote their welfare and empowerment.

Article 16 – Equality of Opportunity in Public Employment: Ensures equal opportunity for all citizens, including women, in matters of public employment.

Article 21 – Right to Life and Personal Liberty: Interpreted to include the right to live with dignity, which applies equally to both genders.

Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP): Article 39(a): Equal right to livelihood for men and women. Article 39(d): Equal pay for equal work. Article 42: Provision for just and humane working conditions and maternity relief.

Fundamental Duties (Article 51A (e)): It is the duty of every citizen to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women.

Research Objectives:

- To analyze the level of women's empowerment in contemporary society.
- To examine perceptions of male discrimination.
- To study the relationship between empowerment and perceived inequality.
- To explore changing gender roles and societal attitudes.
- To suggest balanced policy recommendations.

Review of the Literature:

Kaiser, Md Shahidulla & Amin, et. al. (2017), In empowerment literatures men are represented as homogenous groups: The research shows the way this form of hegemonic masculinity works to negatively impact on women, it has also shown

how not all men occupy the same position of power and how hegemonic masculinity obscures other masculinities. The Gender and Development (GAD) approach goes beyond the preoccupation with women alone in ensuring gender equality. GAD approaches emphasized the socially and historically constructed relations between women and men, which allowed for a better understanding of the relational nature of gendered power, and of the interdependency of women.

In the study conducted by *Lansana, Patrick & Kamara, et. al., (2025)*, the pervasive problem of gender discrimination and its adverse effects on women's empowerment globally. By examining the plight of discriminated women in our society, particularly in rural areas, this research sheds light on the entrenched biases that prevail. The prevalent discriminatory attitudes are evident, especially towards girl children, perpetuating inequality. Employing a quantitative research approach and utilizing a questionnaire for data collection, this study underscores the enduring presence of gender discrimination in our society. Women bear the brunt of this discrimination, particularly in rural settings, where it severely hampers their access to basic education. Addressing the fundamental issue of inequality necessitates a shift in societal perspectives to eradicate gender discrimination comprehensively.

The research study conducted by **Gurieva, Svetlana & T.V., et.al. (2022)**, found that articulation of personal experiences of gender inequality is associated with social perceptions of the absence of essential gender differences in various social domains (egalitarianism) and sensitivity to gender inequality with regards to career opportunities.

Bosson, Jennifer. (2016), Studying the male gender role poses some unique challenges for feminist researchers. I use my personal experiences as a feminist and social psychologist to frame three key questions about the merits of studying men and men's gendered experiences. Specifically, I consider whether work that compares men's and women's experiences reinforces the gender binary; whether research on precarious manhood downplays women's gender-based struggles; and the potential of my research to illuminate factors that pose barriers to feminist progress. While the questions I consider do not necessarily have clear-cut, definitive answers, the exercise of unpacking and examining them is both intellectually and politically important.

Mtike, Rubbie & Risper, et al. (2022), there is a continual search for knowledge on perceptions towards gender inequality globally. This study aimed to explore the factors that would predict perceived gender inequality in Malawi. For the data gathering, a questionnaire was administered

to a random sample of 76 respondents (40 females and 36 males). The results indicated that discrimination and gender were the major predictors of gender inequality in Malawi, and it also confirmed that there is strong perception of gender inequality, especially among the female and those who feel discriminated against.

Research study Gaps:

Lack of Integrated Approach: Existing studies largely focus on women's empowerment or men's issues separately, with limited research examining both dimensions together in a balanced framework.

Insufficient Empirical Evidence: There is a shortage of quantitative, data-driven studies analyzing the relationship between women's empowerment and perceived male discrimination.

Research Methodology:

Research Design: The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to examine emerging social perceptions regarding women's empowerment and perceived male discrimination.

- **Descriptive:** To understand current perceptions of empowerment and discrimination.
- **Analytical:** To examine relationships between gender empowerment and perceived male discrimination.

Study Area: The study may be conducted in urban and semi-urban regions of Delhi focusing on diverse demographic groups to capture varied perceptions.

Data Collection Sources and Tools: There are two sorts of data collection sources: (i) primary data, which is gathered via (online-Google forms) structured-questionnaires; and (ii) secondary data, which is gathered from books, government papers, academic journals, and reliable databases.

Sampling Design and Data Analysis Techniques: Respondents from various age groups in the Delhi region are divided into two categories: male and female. For this study, a stratified random sampling technique was employed. This study has a sample size of 350 respondents. Data analysis in this study was performed using SPSS and Excel Cloud-based applications.

Variables of the Study: The study's variables include independent, dependent, and controlled factors.

Research Hypotheses:

- **H₀ (Null Hypothesis):** There is no significant relationship between women's empowerment and perceived male discrimination.

- **H₁ (Alternative Hypothesis):** There is a significant relationship between women's empowerment and perceived male discrimination.

Results, Analysis and Discussion:

This study is divided into four sections:

(A) Respondents' Demographic Profile;

(B) Women's Empowerment;

(C) Perceptions of Male Discrimination; and

(D) Social Perceptions of Gender.

Section A: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variables	Statement	Respondents	Percent age (%)
Gender	Male	179	51.14
	Female	159	45.43
	Prefer not to say	12	3.43
Age Group	Below 20	87	24.86
	21–30	129	36.86
	31–40	73	20.86
	41–50	47	13.43
	Above 50	14	4.00
Educational Qualification	High School	97	27.71
	Undergraduate	117	33.43
	Postgraduate	67	19.14

Occupation	Professional Degree	46	13.14
	Others	23	6.57
	Student	46	13.14
	Government Employee	87	24.86
	Private Sector Employee	137	39.14
	Self-employed/Business	37	10.57
	Unemployed	29	8.29
	Others	14	4.00
Monthly Income	Below ₹10,000	79	22.57
	₹10,000–₹30,000	136	38.86
	₹30,001–₹50,000	77	22.00
	Above ₹50,000	58	16.57

Table 1 shows of the percentage of respondents
(Data Sources: Online-Questionnaire)

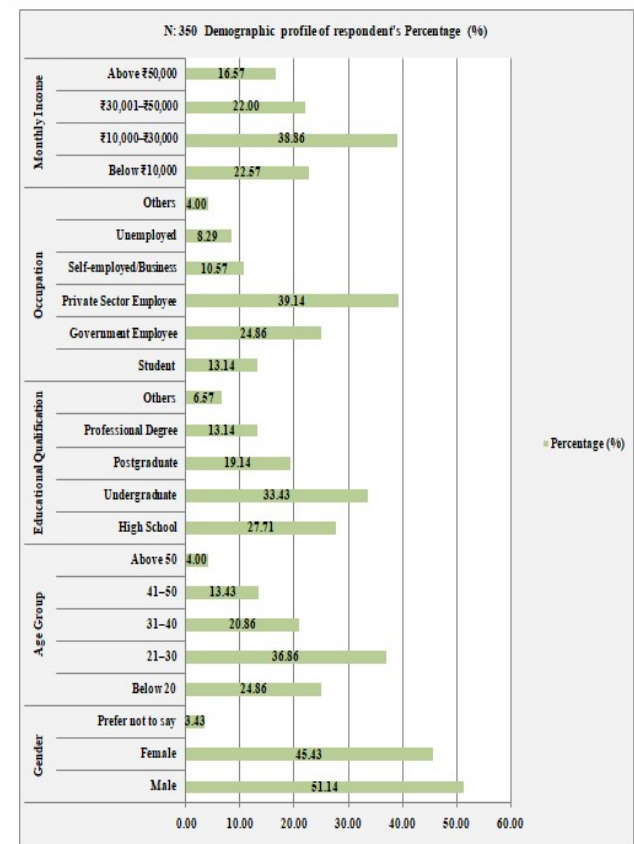


Fig. 1 shows of the percentage of respondents

This figure 1 presents the analysis and interpretation of the demographic data collected from 350 respondents. The purpose is to understand the background characteristics of respondents, which play a crucial role in shaping perceptions regarding women's empowerment and male discrimination.

The data reveals a slight dominance of male respondents (51.14%), followed by females (45.43%). The small percentage (3.43%) preferring not to disclose gender reflects sensitivity toward identity. The near-balanced

gender composition ensures diverse viewpoints. Slight male dominance may influence perceptions toward male-related issues such as discrimination. Female participation remains strong, supporting meaningful insights into empowerment.

The majority of respondents belong to the 21–30 age group (36.86%), followed by younger respondents below 20. Indicates a youth-dominated sample. Younger individuals are: More aware of gender equality issues; and Influenced by social media and modern ideologies. Older age groups are underrepresented, which may limit traditional perspectives.

A large proportion of respondents are undergraduates (33.43%), followed by high school and postgraduate individuals. The sample is well-educated, enhancing data reliability. Educated respondents are more likely to: Understand legal rights; and Evaluate gender policies critically this strengthens the study's analytical depth. The largest group consists of private sector employees (39.14%), followed by government employees. Working professionals dominate the sample. Workplace exposure contributes to: Awareness of gender equality practices; and Real experiences of discrimination or fairness. Private sector dominance suggests competitive and performance-based environments, influencing perceptions.

Most respondents belong to the ₹10,000–₹30,000 income group (38.86%), indicating a middle-income majority. Middle-income groups face: Economic pressure; and Work-family balance challenges. This may influence: Perceptions of male financial responsibility; and views on economic empowerment of women. Most respondents fall into the lower-to-middle income categories, which aligns with the younger age profile of the group. The demographic analysis reveals that the study is predominantly represented by young, educated, and economically active individuals, with the majority falling in the 21–30 age groups, holding undergraduate qualifications, and working in the private sector. Income levels are largely concentrated in the ₹10,000–₹30,000 range, indicating a middle-income population. Although gender distribution is relatively balanced, the sample shows a youth-centric bias with limited representation from older age groups and higher-income categories.

Section B: Women's Empowerment

Statements	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	Mean Score
Equal	12	28	45	16	100	3.8

opportunities in education/employment				5		9
Capable of leadership/managerial roles	8	15	32	140	155	4.2
Equal decision-making in family matters	15	35	50	150	100	3.81
Government initiatives improved empowerment	20	45	85	130	70	3.53
Empowerment contributes to development	5	10	25	120	190	4.37

Table 2 shows of the respondents score in percentage regarding women's empowerment (Data Source: questionnaire)

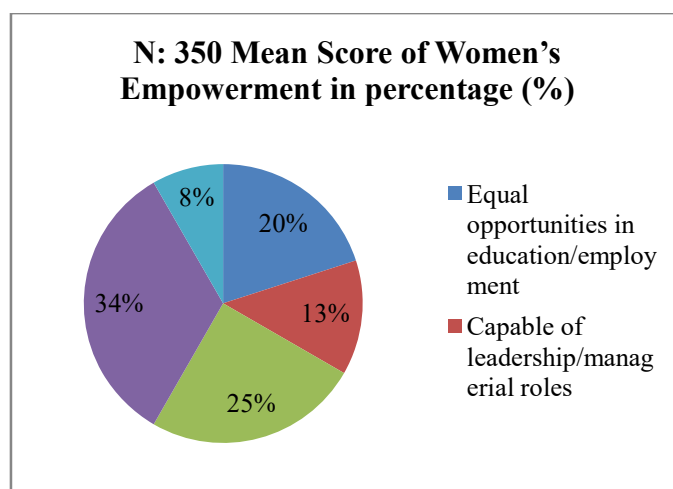


Fig. 2 shows of the percentage of women's empowerment

Overall Sentiment: The respondents show a strong positive attitude toward women's empowerment. The highest level of agreement is seen in the belief that empowerment contributes to societal development (Mean: 4.37), suggesting that the demographic views this as a collective benefit rather than just an individual right.

Leadership and Capability: There is high confidence in women's professional abilities, with a mean score of 4.20 for leadership roles. This aligns with your earlier data showing a high percentage of undergraduate and postgraduate respondents who likely value merit-based professional growth.

Government Impact: The lowest mean score (3.53) relates to government initiatives. While still positive (leaning toward "Agree"), it suggests that respondents feel there is more room for

improvement in policy implementation compared to their personal belief in women's capabilities.

Domestic vs. Professional Equality:

Respondents are slightly more supportive of equality in the workplace (3.89) than in family decision-making (3.81). This slight gap often indicates that traditional domestic roles are slower to change than professional perceptions.

Section C: Perception of Male Discrimination

Statements	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	Mean Score
Men face discrimination in legal matters such as family or divorce laws.	25	45	80	120	80	3.53
Society often ignores men's mental health issues.	10	20	40	130	150	4.11
Men are expected to bear financial responsibility unfairly.	15	35	65	145	90	3.74
Men receive less support in cases of domestic abuse.	12	28	55	135	120	3.92
Gender equality discussions often overlook men's issues.	8	22	50	140	130	4.04

Table 3 shows of the percentage of Perception of Male Discrimination (Data Source: Questionnaire)

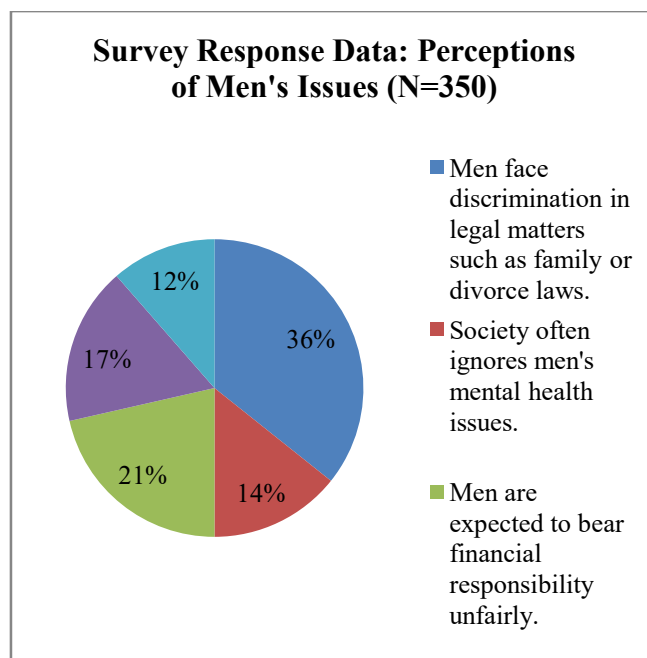


Fig. 3 shows of the percentage of Perception of Male Discrimination (Data Source: Questionnaire)

In the Figure 3 presents are of the percentage of Perception of Male Discrimination-

Mental Health: The statement "Society often ignores men's mental health issues" received the highest level of agreement with a Mean Score of 4.11. This suggests a strong perception among the 350 respondents that psychological support for men is a significant social gap.

Gender Equality Discourse: Respondents largely feel that current equality discussions are one-sided. With a Mean Score of 4.04, there is a clear consensus that "Gender equality discussions often

overlook men's issues," indicating a desire for a more inclusive approach to gender advocacy.

Domestic and Legal Vulnerability: There is notable concern regarding support systems for men. The high mean for domestic abuse support (3.92) and legal discrimination (3.53) reflects a belief that institutional frameworks may be biased or insufficient when addressing the needs of men in crisis.

Economic Pressure: The "unfair" expectation of financial responsibility (Mean: 3.74) shows that traditional gender roles—positioning men primarily as "providers"—are viewed as a burden by a significant portion of the surveyed group.

Section D: Social Perceptions on Gender

Statements	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	Mean Score
Gender equality benefits both men and women equally.	15	25	40	145	125	3.97
Traditional gender roles still influence society.	5	15	30	160	140	4.19
Both men and women face unique challenges in modern society.	2	10	25	153	160	4.31
Media portrays gender issues fairly.	60	110	95	65	20	2.64
A balanced approach is needed to address both women's and men's issues.	5	8	32	135	170	4.31

Table 4 shows of the score mean of respondents of Social Perceptions on Gender (Data Source: Questionnaire)

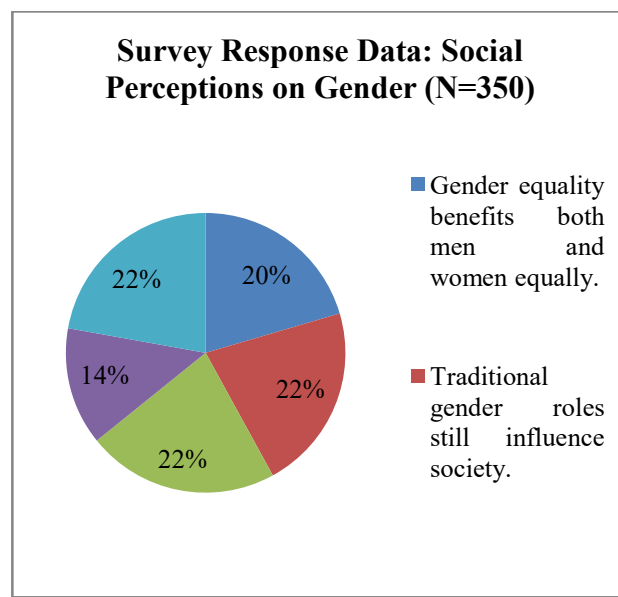


Fig. 4 shows of the percentage of respondents of Social Perceptions on Gender

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Economic Pressure: The "unfair" expectation of financial responsibility (Mean: 3.74) shows that traditional gender roles—positioning men primarily as "providers"—are viewed as a burden by a significant portion of the surveyed group.

Correlation Matrix (Pearson):

Variab les	WE (Women's Empowerm ent)	MD (Male Discriminat ion)	SP (Social Percepti on)
WE	1	-0.342**	0.517**
MD	-0.342**	1	-0.276**
SP	0.517**	-0.276**	1

**** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)**

Table 5 shows of correlation matrix

In the table 5 shows of the moderate positive correlation exists between Women's

Empowerment and Social Perception ($r = 0.517$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that higher empowerment is associated with more balanced and progressive gender perceptions.

A moderate negative correlation is found between Women's Empowerment and Male Discrimination ($r = -0.342$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that as empowerment increases, perceptions of male discrimination decrease.

A weak negative correlation between Male Discrimination and Social Perception ($r = -0.276$, $p < 0.01$) indicates that higher perceived discrimination is linked to less favorable social perceptions.

Coefficients:

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.108	0.172	—	6.44	0
WE	0.472	0.049	0.508	9.63	0.000**
MD	-0.198	0.058	-0.182	-3.41	0.001**

**** Significant at 0.01 level**

Table 6 shows of the coefficients

Women's Empowerment (WE) has a strong positive and significant effect on Social Perception ($\beta = 0.508$, $p < 0.01$). Male Discrimination (MD) has a negative and significant effect on Social Perception ($\beta = -0.182$, $p < 0.01$). The table 6

shows that increasing women's empowerment improves balanced social perceptions, whereas higher perceived male discrimination slightly reduces positive social perception.

Reliability Test

Section	Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretation
Women's Empowerment (WE1–WE5)	5	0.801	Good
Male Discrimination (MD1–MD5)	5	0.764	Acceptable
Social Perception (SP1–SP5)	5	0.823	Good

Table 7 shows of reliability test

In the table 7 indicates all three sections (WE, MD, SP) show acceptable to good reliability ($\alpha > 0.70$). The overall Cronbach's Alpha value (0.842) indicates high internal consistency of the scale.

Hypothesis Testing

H₀ (Null Hypothesis): There is no significant relationship between women's empowerment and perceived male discrimination.

H₁ (Alternative Hypothesis): There is a significant relationship between women's empowerment and perceived male discrimination.

Variables	r-value	Sig. (p-value)	Decision
WE & MD	-0.342	0.000**	Reject H ₀

** Significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)

If $p < 0.05 \rightarrow$ Reject H₀

If $p \geq 0.05 \rightarrow$ Fail to reject H₀

Since the obtained p-value (0.000) is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected.

H₀ is rejected, but H₁ is accepted.

The Pearson correlation analysis reveals a moderate negative relationship between Women's Empowerment and Perceived Male Discrimination ($r = -0.342$). This relationship is statistically significant at the 1% level ($p < 0.01$).

As women's empowerment increases, the perception of male discrimination decreases. The relationship, while not strong, is meaningful and consistent across the sample of 350 respondents.

Conclusions:

In the study conducted among respondents from various age groups in the Delhi region, categorized into male and female groups. A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure fair representation of both genders. The

total sample size consisted of 350 respondents. Data were collected using a structured Likert-scale questionnaire covering women's empowerment, perceived male discrimination, and social perceptions on gender. The analysis of data was carried out using SPSS and Microsoft Excel (cloud-based tools), ensuring accuracy and reliability in statistical interpretation. The findings of the study indicate that women's empowerment plays a crucial role in shaping positive and balanced social perceptions on gender issues. While concerns regarding male discrimination exist, they are not strongly supported as a consequence of increasing women's empowerment. Overall, the study concludes that gender equality should be approached in an inclusive manner, addressing the needs and challenges of both men and women to ensure a fair and progressive society.

Conflict of interest:

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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