



## IMPACT Model of Women's Empowerment

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### Abstract

Empowerment as delegation of power to someone has been a mechanism to increase personal and work life quality of woman in recent decades. Higher education and occupation is effective instrument to empowerment of women but culture role can't be denied in this relation. Social norms can directly or indirectly limited women empowerment. In this article the role of higher education and occupation in psychological empowerment of women in Tehran has been quested. Current research is a descriptive-practical research. Education and occupation were independent variable and empowerment was dependent variable. Random sampling was used and 600 questioners were completed by women in Tehran city. To determine validity of scale we took advantages of construct validity and factor analysis. The reliability index of Cronbach's alpha was 0.8945 and spearman correlation and structural equations model was used for statistical analysis. Results of research indicate that higher education and organizational occupation determine the level of to empowerment for women in Tehran.

**Keywords:** Women, Psychological Empowerment, Culture, Occupation, Higher education

### 1. Introduction

The concept of power has a long history in social sciences and its derivatives like empowerment is one of the controversial topics among social science and management researchers. Since early years of the 20th century, feminism has built a body of theory and in recent decades women empowerment has been suggested as a mechanism to improve the quality of women's work as well as their personal lives. The empowerment of women is an essential precondition for the elimination of world poverty and the upholding of human rights. This concept is accompanied with, freedom, self-determination and power, which are necessary for the women all over the world. Empowerment gives rights to women which enables them to be independent of men.

Since education and employment are key factors in empowerment of women in western societies, theorists believe that there may be the same connection between these factors in non-western societies.

There is much theoretical and practical studies that stress educational and employment opportunities as critical means for women to attain control over their lives (United Nations, 1994). Although education and employment can empower

women, the role of culture can't be denied. Namely, powerful patriarchal norms can hold back women's empowerment plans. Some studies show that, in some cultures, better access to education and the jobs for women in the preceding decades have not significantly changed power relationships within families. In these cases, educated and employed women are as deprived as uneducated and unemployed women. Social norms determine the level of women's empowerment. Social norms can restrict women's empowerment directly or indirectly. Social norms may limit women's willingness to empowerment directly or they may influence the access of women to education and income. Some times, these norms permit women to earn money without retaining control over it or gaining any position in the family or society, in these situations men are the ultimate beneficiaries of women empowerment. In some cases even if women can control their earnings within the family, the outcome may not be completely positive for them, or their family then the women fell happy because of achieving a better financial status, and being able to keep it and save it, but earning money doesn't not mean more money for the whole family, because their husbands or fathers might deprive the women from their money, the money of the husband or father, once they became aware of the women's financial position. It might also lead to marital problems, as earning money would mean they threatened the power balance in the family.

Education and revenue don't cause to empowerment if necessary base for presence of women are not facilitated by social institutions. Based on some researches, educated and jobholder women even have worse condition than none educated and housekeeper women in some countries (mason, 2002); namely in this ground cultural expectation and prescription are strong determinant. There is probability that with existent institutions Iranian educated and jobholder women could not gain necessary freedom and empowerment (Shafiq, 1991).

## **2. Formal education and employment in Iranian culture**

In a preliminary society (protohistory), the most economical promotion had happened by women. In matriarchy age, women had had authority of rule, judge, and family and society administration.

For long, when men were hunting, women were farming around their tent, and were creating many domestic arts; each of them now, is base of many important industries. Early woman innovated first cord and after that textile from cotton; and in highly probability, cause progression of loom, pottery, carpentry and mason arts. She often commerce and aroused domestic club and gently involved man, then taught him decorum and society art. But when agriculture and industry progressed and developed, the stronger gender extended his ascendancy upon it little by little. Agriculture, which was thought ordinary in the eyes of hunters of the old age, completely attracted men, therefore man grabbed economical predominance which was the outcome, from woman; specially because plough, which needed more muscular force, supervision shifted from woman to man. Increasing the tangible assets helped men to make women more obedient because then the man asked her to be loyal so the born children were the real children of the man. Man's paternal right had been recognized in family, hence inheriting which up until that time was through woman, was authorized by man. Maternal right surrendered to paternal right, and in society, instead of matriarchy, patriarchy had been recognized as legal, political and economical unit.

Gods, that until that time were embodied in women, changed to men, wearing beard which indeed were symbols of fathers and tribe chiefs. Around these gods "Harems" were built like what men had dreamt in their solitude (Durant, 20-60-2001).

Durant argued that Iranian women had lofty status in Zoroaster time like it was common in the past. They came among people with complete liberty and could become landlords and estate owners. After Darius (Medes king), women's dignity, especially among plutocracy, decreased (Durant, 432-434, 2001); poor women retained their liberty since they have to came among people for work. Iranian culture was mixed with Islamic culture after Moslems overthrew Sassanid Dynasty. According to Islamic men and women are equal concerning juridical laws and financial independence. Woman is allowed to do any lawful jobs. She can possess her gain and spend it as she wishes (Durant, 231, 2001).

Since the beginning of Islam in Iran until Safavie period, Iranian women always had right of possessing tangible and intangible assets. At this age, many buildings were constructed by women everywhere in Iran (Hejazi, 230-232, 1997). Besides housework, women were engaged in productive activities such as carpet weaving and sewing; although these activities were mainly done for meeting the needs of the family, they were also sort of jobs and money making activities (Hejazi, 1997, 243-244). During Safavid period, Iranian women were interested in speech and sermons; they enthusiastically pursued social issues, there isn't any community report which hasn't mentioned the presence of women. Based on available documents at this age, women were literate and interested in science; great men taught their wives and relatives at their home. These women not only contributed at speech and sermons but also held gatherings in their home. Some of them wrote some books about literature, jurisprudence, astronomy and Islamic laws; taught them and became famous (Hejazi, 1997: 175-180).

A study on Iranian women's situation during Mongol period presents that they had the main roles in society and economy and, men perform a second role (Baiani, 1973: 79-111).]

During Safavie period women learnt literature, history and mathematics and they were also interested in poetry and they were active in constructing arena. It seems that during Afsharid and Safavid periods, women were property owners and when men were absent, they took charge of their tribe and family (Hejazi, 2006). In Qajar Dynasty, the most common ways of educating girls were tutors and Maktab Khaneh( a kind of traditional school) girls and boys were educated together until 7 years old and after that lettered women instructed girls if they had luck to continue their studies. The first girl schools, at this period, were founded by religious missionaries in Iran (The Organization of cultural heritage, 2002, 9) . In Qajar period, women were participating in social and economical activities; activities that took new form in Democratic movement era and women supported it in different ways (The Organization of cultural heritage,2002). According to the first census statistics, during Pahlavi period, the percentage of lettered women was % 8 in 1956 and % 26.2 in 1973. Also the percentage of women, that were above 10 and were active concerning economical issues, was% 9.2 in 1956 and %12 in 1971 (Organization of planning and buduting,1973).

The opportunities of Iranian women to attend university, increased after Islamic revolution. As Figure 1 shows the number of women who have registered in Iran top 100 universities is more than men in 2007.

Insert Figure 1 Here

After the Islamic revolution of Iran, importance of house for women and their role on creation of ideal Islamic society, were enforced; women's activity that were performed at house was praised and encouraged.

Having new banks, Insurance companies and industries, number of women that were employed in governmental offices increased. After the war of Iraq against Iran, re-establishing requirements caused occupation growth but men inability and unwillingness to perform works which was known womanly, as well as inflation made women continue their participation in job market (Rostami, 2000: 13).

In general, based on researches done during 1974-2003, it can be concluded that values which empowered women's position in Iranian society, such as increasing women's role on family decision making, represents a new change that has turned Iranian society to a womanly one. Increasingly presence of women in society and the change of values, gently causes formation of womanly values in society (Islamic Cultural Ministry, 2004, 76).

### **3. Women Psychological Empowerment**

Does education and work empower women? And if so, what are the conditions? There are lots of theoretical and practical studies that stress educational and employment opportunities as critical means for women to attain control over their lives. Knowledge is power and the lack of knowledge is poverty and misery. Therefore, the main factor that emancipated women from poverty is knowledge.

Based on many researches, key aspect of empowerment process is education and capacity making. Educated women, who work out, perform important role in family decision making. Formal education to build skills and abilities that an individual needs to feel competent is critical for enhancing psychological empowerment (Spreitzer, 1996). Educated women are more likely to have control over their earning. Education, employment and earning increase women's financial independence therefore they are regarded as powerful means of empowerment.

Based on resource theory, women's contribution of their wages to the family should increase their negotiating power. The gender literature, on the other hand, suggests that women who maintain a hold over their own earnings are more likely to be empowered (Papanek and Schewede, 1988; Wilson-Moore, 1989). Facilitating women's access to money is an effective means for achieving women's empowerment, in the presence of other activities. There are things to do to empower women like teaching them self-esteem, gender awareness, earning merit and assurance and gaining proper knowledge and skill. Nowadays in society, gender awareness causes actions which give more power to women.

Many women and men in Iran are aware of the benefits that they and their society at large can derive from women taking on a bigger role in generating income. They are willing to consider fostering activities or ventures that achieve this, while assuming that women will continue to perform their traditional work and conform to existing gender roles.

Empowerment means to grant or delegate power to someone (Conger and Kanungo 1988: 474). Empowerment refers to "the process of influencing over events and important conclusions for an individual or a team" (Fawcett et al., 1994:471). The term power means the capacity to obtain a desirable result (Russell, 1974). Empowerment is a process whereby an individual believes in his or her efficacy. Empowerment tends to be more talked about at the cognitive level than realized in practice. It is not a personal characteristic but it is a dynamic process that reflects an individual's opinions about person-environment relationship (Mishra and Spreitzer, 1998:579; Siegall and Gardner, 1999:705). Thus the true benefits of empowerment will not be discovered unless people first perceive themselves as being powerful (Siegall and Gardner, 1999: 705). Empowerment of women means acquiring the power to think, acting freely, developing a sense of self-worth, a belief in one's ability to make desired changes and the right to control one's life, exercise choice, bargaining power, and fulfilling their potentiality as equal members of society. Generally empowerment is any process and activity by which women control their lives. Empowerment-related literature can generally be

grouped into four categories. Individual-oriented that includes personal feelings, personal power, self-determination, and other cognitive variables (Baird, 1994; Fulford and Enz, 1995; Spreitzer, 1995), result-oriented studies that have examined successful cases of empowerment (Berman, 1995; Burbidge, 1995). Operation-oriented literature that explains the quality of meeting empowerment through organizational de-layering, employee involving, establishing commitment, teaming, and intervening (Bogg, 1995; Lashley, 1995; Nixon, 1994; Osborne, 1994). Trait-oriented research is characterized by exploring the preconditions of control and power, trust and inclusion, accountability, honesty, and risk taking (Anfuso, 1994; Foster-FishmanandKey, 1995). In this article we emphasize the first one; psychological empowerment. Thomas and Velthouse (1990) and Spreitzer (1995,1996) think that empowerment consists of some psychological states that are necessary for empowerment to succeed. Our psychological empowerment model has six dimensions: Impacts / self-determination, being meaningful, Professional growth, independence/decision-making, Competence/self-efficacy and Trust. The acronym of dimensions is IMPACT. These components all contributed to a person sense of empowerment.

*3.1 Impact / self-determination*, which refer to an individual, are perceived degree of influence over outcomes in one's work and family environments. People must believe that their behavior will influence on what happens around them. In other words, an individual must have the opportunity to exert influence in order to have an impact on outcomes at work (Spreitzer, 1995). The term Choice for women means providing women with genuine opportunities to have not only their voice heard, but giving them real power to control and influence over work processes and results. Self-determination refers to everyone's internal need to control the environment (Conger and Kanungo, 1988). It is also defined as women's need to choose, to initiate and regulate actions or to choose the process and work behaviors at work; and should be perceived as an opportunity to make a choice.

*3.2 Being meaningful*, if a work is going to be done by women managers or employees they should feel that it is a valuable work. They evaluate the job based on their own values and feel that they are doing something meaningful.

*3.3 Professional growth* refers to personal development in job and profession. Empowered women feel more professional growth in their career as employee or managers.

*3.4 Independence/decision-making*, Empowerment is related to independence. Empowered women are expected to be independent and make decision on their own. The argument of the empowerment supporters is that women should be empowered to make more decisions about their own lives.

*3.5 Competence and self efficacy* points at one's work role efficacy or personal mastery; women must feel that they are competent to engage in the behaviors required by the organization or family. Empowerment is about self-actualization and competence. Competence and self-efficacy refer to enable the women to be confidence in their capacity to make the choices. The useful exercise of every other kind of power depends on competence. Competence is acquired through formal training or education (Forrester, 2000). Self-efficacy construct is an aspect of empowerment that combines intention and belief in one's ability into a personal outcome expectation (Bandura, 1982; Mischel, 1973). It reflects the extent to which women have been both personally engaged by the organization and mobilized sufficiently to project expectations for themselves into the future.

*3.6 Trust*, Empowerment is connected with trust. Trust creates an atmosphere for empowerment and grows in such an atmosphere. Trust requires values like solidarity and maturity. Empowerment cannot be installed like software but must be grown. We can't empower women, but we can create an environment in which they can empower themselves (Willis, 1999: 73).

These factors can be viewed as the essential prerequisites to motivate empowering behaviors in women's life or work. Since organizations play an important role in developing women's awareness of and trust, lots of women take advantage from them. By solving problems, gaining experience, and working together, women will become aware of their own subordinate position in society and become more capable of changing it (Himmelstrand, 1990:112; Scheyvens, 2003, 27). Women need to be empowered with skills, knowledge, and confidence to determine the development path they wish to follow and to challenge the entrenched organizational structures which hamper them.

Regarding the above-mentioned discussion, hypothesis of research are formulated as follow:

**H1: formal education leads to psychological empowerment of women.**

**H2: organizational work leads to psychological empowerment of women.**

Based on the research hypotheses, the conceptual model of the research will be as followed.

Insert Figure 2 Here

Due to the mentioned subjects above, it can be expected that education and occupation cause women empowerment; it means they can have important effect on family and organization and are determinant at decision making, they cause women have meaningful role and they don't feel they are performing insignificant work, also they cause growth of

women's vocation and enjoy independence at decision making, gain competency and self-efficacy which are necessary to adopt important decisions and can generate trust in the light of power.

#### 4. Methodology

Regarding the purpose the present research is a practical one and regarding the data collection method it is a descriptive one which is a branch of field study, therefore the connection between the variables is causative. The method of performing the research has been observing method that its greatest advantage is that you can generalize the results.

*4.1 Research variables:* formal education and organizational employment are the independent variables and empowerment was the dependent variable.

*4.2 Society and statistic sample:* the statistic sample includes women in Tehran. The samples were provided randomly. The number of participants based on Morgan Table is estimated 600 people. 27 out of 621 which is 4.3% were not having a diploma, 190 people that is 30.6% were holding diploma, 5 people that is 0.8% had post diploma degree, 330 people that is 53.1% were holding BSc, 56 people that is .09 % were holding M.S degree and 13 people that is 2.1% were PhD holders. 454 people that is 73.1% didn't have any management experience and 167 people that is 26.9% had management experiences.

*4.3 Data collection means and its clarity and stability:* In this study we used a questionnaire survey to collect data. For this purpose, a scale was designed for empowerment variable by means of discovery component analysis with 13 version of SPSS software. Necessary accuracy was made when questions of questionnaire were designed so that they are simple and clear enough. The first Questionnaire was made up of 34 questions 4 of which were eliminated because of low factor loading. Likert scale with a five-point scoring format was used for items [Strongly disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neutral (3), Agree (4), Strongly agree (5)].

Education and occupation are independent variables and empowerment is the dependent variable. Random sampling was used in current and 600 questionnaires were completed by women in Tehran city. Based on Morgan table statistics sample size contained 621 person as 4.3%(27 person) under diploma, 30.6(190 person) diploma, 0.8%(5 person)post diploma, 53.1%(330 person) B.S, 0.9%(56 person)M.S. and 2.1%(13person) had doctorate.73.1%(454 person) have not had any management precedent but 26.9%(167 person)have had it.

From 800 questionnaires which were distributed, 630 questionnaires were restored, 9 questionnaires were discarded to defect and 621 questionnaires have been used on analysis. The rate of the questionnaires which were fully completed was 78% which is a satisfactory rate. The 30 questionnaires were distributed for determination of reliability. Coefficient of Chronbach's Alpha of the women empowerment scale is 0.8945 which is a proof of instrument reliability. Also content and factor validity were utilized to examine the validity of the questions. We utilized experts' opinions to evaluate the questionnaires' content validity. At this step, several interviews were performed and necessary reformations were made; hence we confined the questionnaire evaluates same trait which we wanted to evaluate Test of the questionnaire factor validity were made with confirmatory factor analysis and utilization of 8.53 LISREL software package. Table1 demonstrates results of the confirmatory factor analysis.

Insert Table 1 Here

The LAZEL output of Table 1 shows that, the model to measure empowerment is a good one because the K2 value, RMSEA value and the proportion of K2 to its free degree was little and also the values of GFI and AGFI were above 90%. Ale T values are meaningful. The results, on the whole expresses that this questionnaire is creditable and clear to a high extent.

*Findings:* Evaluation of correlation between variables was tested by Spearman rating correlation test using SPSS software. Causal relationship between independent and dependent variable of research was tested by structural equation model using LISRELL 8.53 software. In this research we utilized Spearman test because the variables are qualitative.

It is perceived that relationship between income, education and empowerment of women in Tehran is positive and meaningful; it means whatever women's income and education increase, they feel more empowered.

Structural equation model is used for evaluation of causal relation which is mentioned in the hypothesizes; this is the final step of confirmatory factor analysis, which already is performed on the evaluating research scale , and also by means of fit indexes of the model shows validity of the conceptual model which is purposed.

As it is seen, firstly, hypotheses of the research are confirmed because t-values are meaningful which means formal education and income have significant effect on women's empowerment. Second, validity and appropriate fitness of the model is confirmed because its  $\chi^2$  value, RMSEA and  $\chi^2$  ratio into degree of freedom, are low and its GFI and AGFA are more than 90%. As  $\chi^2$  value and  $\chi^2$  ratio into degree of freedom in the attachment shows model has appropriate fit, and RMSE (Note 1) is less than 0.05 and GFI (Note 2) and AGFA (Note 3) are more than 90% and also all the t-values are meaningful in 99% confidence level. These outcomes demonstrate the questionnaire of the research has high validity and reliability;

R<sup>2</sup> of the model is 61% that means the model of the research expresses 61% amount of women empowerment in Tehran. Standard coefficient of education into empowerment is 0.18 and its t-value is 3.27 which' more than 1.96 and it's significant. Also standard coefficient of income into empowerment is 26% and its t-value is 4.87 which are significant.

## 5. Conclusion

In this research, we tried to study the role of education and occupation on women empowerment in Tehran. We wanted to know if the impact of education and occupation on empowerment was as the same as western culture or it's different. The whole result of research shows education and organizational job cause psychological empowerment in Tehran. The result is compatible with Iran's history and Iranian women. Whenever they have had opportunity to educate, have used it for promotion of society and family welfare and not just for themselves.

Living in metropolises like Tehran makes it inevitable to use the ability and talents of women in fast trends of life and technology. Undoubtedly women have the ability and capacity to be empowered. The Outcome of this research shows that income and job have remarkable influence on women empowerment in Tehran city ( $p<0.01; t=4.87, 0.26$ ). As mentioned, practical and theoretical studies at western societies has represented that education and job brings women empowerment but the role of culture and norms are determinant as it could counteract this effect. For instance, Powerful patriarchal norms can stifle women's empowerment plans. Although common assumption poses that Iranian patriarchal culture is an impediment to women empowerment, our findings demonstrate that employment and empowerment have strong relationship in Tehran city and income is very important. It's undeniable that religion is one of the most powerful components of Iranian culture. The majority of Iranians are religious. Islam doesn't privilege men to women. It doesn't disagree with men and women equity in rights but disagrees with their similarity. Shiite jurisprudence has given financial freedom to women; this freedom wasn't given to women in many countries like Greece, Rome and German till recent centuries. Islam rid woman from man's slavery and servitude at home and out; it obliges man to secure financial requirement of the family and in this way, rides women of any obligation to secure them or their family expenditure.

In modern world, using women's human force is inevitable; undoubtedly they have ability and capacity to participate in society. As mentioned, education and formal employment are prerequisite of women empowerment. Research results demonstrates formal education has meaningful effect on women empowerment in Tehran ( $p<0.01; t=3.27, 0.18$ ). However, researcher expected that education coefficient has more impact than income coefficient, but country high unemployment rate and women's low expectancy for finding a job, have caused lower education coefficient than income coefficient in our model.

Iranian women have been able to allocate high percentage of university entrance, in long time the society can benefit from this strong potential to make a developed country. Based on human history, woman have had very important roles in forming human culture, therefore Iranian policy makers should look at this event as an opportunity not a threat. Of course, this jump of Iranians women's attendance at university should be coordinate with other institution in society and empowered women shouldn't be sacrificed for high speed development. On one hand higher education increases the opportunity of employment, on the other hand it could be said that employment plays an effective role in continuing their studies and job promotion. Unfortunately for Iranian women, rate of employment have not harmonized with growth of higher education rate; women's achievement to higher education hasn't led to more participation, employment or wider rang of job for them.

Evaluation of whole employment trend of country by Iranian statistics center demonstrates that though whole employment rate has increased from 86.9% to 87.55%, during 1376- 1381, women's employment rate had decreased from 85.6% to 80.23% during these years (Gaeni,1385).this trend is an alarm for public policymakers; women may lose their motives if it is going to continue and they aren't going to plan for woman's effective participation in society. The large number of Iranian men and women are aware of benefits that they and their society at large scale will gain if women accept major role on income production. They are eager to increase women's participation in society with the assumption that women are going to continue their traditional work according to their gender roles; therefore policymaker have to change cultural and normal models of the society via empowerment process gradually.

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## Notes

Note 1. Root Mean Square Error of Approximation

Note 2. Goodness of Fit Index

Note 3. Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index

Table 1. Results of the confirmatory factor analysis

<b>Number</b>	<b>Questions</b>	<b>Standard coefficient</b>	<b>t-values</b>
1	I am sure my family members are honest with me.	0.66	13.45
2	I am sure my family members share important information with me.	0.47	6.3
3	I am sure my family members keep their promise.	0.73	14.43
4	I can determine plans for my family.	0.46	9.89
5	I have an important role in the responsibility of supervising my family.	0.57	9.77
6	I decide about new event on my family.	0.48	9.02
7	I can act as I wish.	0.85	17.68
8	I decide about family attitudes.	0.37	8.83
9	I freely decide about whatever I do.	0.75	14.84
10	I participate at decision making in family budgeting.	0.47	5.39
11	I am a decision maker at family.	0.61	10.10
12	Not only my husband but also my relatives take advantage of my decisions.	0.44	9.67
13	My opinions are used by my family members.	0.54	9.65
14	I have important effect on whatever happens in family.	0.72	14.73
15	I believe I help my family members to become independent.	0.39	3.34
16	I believe that I am able to do works.	0.57	9.14
17	I believe that I am very effective and impressive.	0.47	9.55
18	I believe that I am empowering my family members.	0.54	9.65
19	I have strong information about my work.	0.46	8.84
20	I believe that work is an opportunity for my growth.	0.83	17.66
21	I feel that I have the opportunity to impress other people.	0.73	14.89
22	I feel that I perform different work.	0.39	3.03
23	I believe that I am good on everything which I do.	0.57	9.33
24	My work is important to me.	0.44	9.71
25	My work is meaningful for me.	0.55	9.77
26	I am sure that I have the ability to do my job.	0.49	8.84
27	I am sure about my capabilities for doing tasks at work.	0.84	17.38
28	I have full commands over the skills which are needed for performing my job.	0.74	14.74
29	I am free to determine how to perform my work.	0.63	14.52
30	Generally I feel independent doing my work.	0.57	11.32
<b>All of the t-values are meaningful at level of p&lt;0.01</b>			

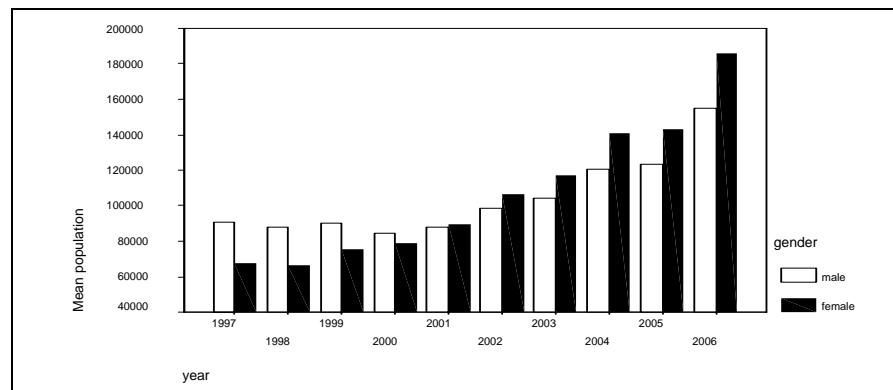


Figure 1. Iran top 100 universities gender-base percentage of students

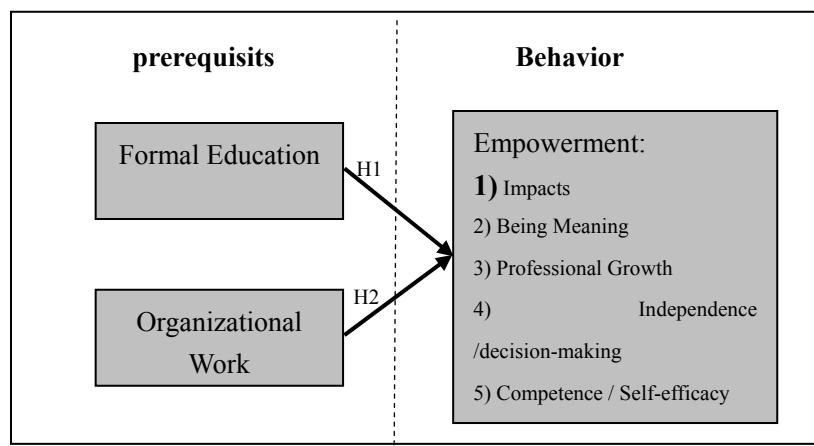


Figure 2. IMPACT model of women empowerment