

# AWARENESS ON LEGAL PROVISIONS FOR SAFETY OF WOMEN AND DECISION-MAKING CAPACITY OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS

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## **Abstract**

*Education helps every person to acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes required to lead an efficient life. Education and employment helps a lot to improve the status of women. Education helps men and women claim their rights and realize their potential in economic, political and social arenas and develops the decision making capacity. Awareness on Legal Provisions for Safety of Women provides with the ability to make social and family changes and to increase their control of their own lives and decision that affect them. This makes girls to understand the significance of equality, liberty, fraternity and also exploitation if any. This study was conducted on a representative sample of 360 Adolescent Girls from aided, unaided and Government Schools belong to both Urban and Rural area in Kottayam district. The Inventory on the Awareness on Legal Provisions for Safety of Women and Decision Making Capacity Scale prepared by the investigator was used for data collection. The results shows that there is a positive relationship between awareness on Legal Provisions for Safety of Women and the decision making capacity of adolescent girls.*

**Key words:** Legal Provisions, Decision Making Capacity, Safety of women, Women empowerment, Education, Adolescent girls, etc.

## **Introduction**

In every society, women profoundly influence the lives and well being of their families and their surrounding communities. In most cultures, women are the primary managers of natural resources-including food, shelter and consumption of goods-within the family unit. Women around the world, in the context of cultural traditions, are victims of violence, such as bride burning, dowry, suicide, female infanticide, female infanticide, etc. in some countries like India.

Women's education was badly neglected in the past. Her position in the Vedic period was good but after that, it was a dark age for her. Her social position deteriorated during medieval period. During the British rule men's education was modernized and promoted, but nothing was done to promote women's education. It was in 1870 that some efforts were made to initiate girls' education in India. In 1901, the literacy among women was only 0.8. It was after the political awakening of the country and by the acts of Gandhiji the girls' education was given due importance. But, we have made considerable progress in providing for girls and women's education since independence. We can't ignore the role of women in maintaining the peace and co-operation among people. Knowledge in child development, nutrition, health, and cleanliness is a must for each and every woman for her bright future.

Prof. Amartya Sen, the Nobel Prize winner, emphasized that unless women are empowered, issues like health, literacy, and population will remain unsolved problems of the developing countries and especially the Indian subcontinent. Empowerment refers to enabling people to take charge of their own lives. For women, empowerment emphasizes the importance of increasing their power and taking control over decisions and issues that shape their lives. Empowerment is the expansion of assets and capabilities of

women to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives.

Education helps every person to acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes required to lead an efficient life. Education and employment helps a lot to improve the status of women. Economic independence of women raises their status with that of men. New Education Policy (1986) stressed that education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women. Major emphasis will be laid on women's participation in vocational, technical and professional education at different levels.

Education liberates women from the clutches of inequalities. It is a force to reduce gender inequalities and access to mobility, share in decision-making and contributes to national development. Education enhances women's productivity in the farm and non-farm sectors. In the home, women's education has a greater effect on family welfare than men's education. Over and above all, visualize the only strong means to empower women is 'Education'.

### **Legal Provisions for Safety of Women**

India is a country which is always known to empower women to the maximum extent. Even our seas and oceans have been named after women. We come from a country which respects mom more than god himself. But the present day scenario where rapes and murders and abductions are on an increase tells us a different story. True there are lots of laws protecting the rights of women but they are not as effective as of now just because of the simple fact that there is no such awareness amongst people and the law is not intimidating enough to scare the wrong doers. Women are the wealth of the nation and it becomes our sacred duty to protect them against all harm.

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- The Employees State Insurance Act, 1948
- The Plantation Labour Act, 1951
- The Family Courts Act, 1954
- The Special Marriage Act, 1954
- The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955
- The Hindu Succession Act, 1956 with amendment in 2005
- Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956
- The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 (Amended in 1995)
- Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961
- The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971
- The Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1976
- The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976
- The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006
- The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 1983
- The Factories (Amendment) Act, 1986
- Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986
- Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987
- The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005

## Objectives of Education for Girls and Women

- To develop sense of internal strength and self-confidence to face life
- To improve the performances by delegating responsibility
- To give authority and autonomy to choose and to make self-decisions
- To enhance the participation in decision-making at all levels
- To influence the direction of social change
- To contribute towards national development

## Decision Making Capacity

Decision making is the process of making a choice between a numbers of options and committing to a future course of action. From a cognitive perspective, the decision making process must be regarded as a continuous process integrated in the interaction with the environment. From the normative perspective, the analysis of the individual decision is considered with logic of decision making and rationality and the invariant choice it leads to. A decision theory is a theory about how a decision made. From time to time, human beings are always involved in the process of making decisions.

Decision making is the process of reducing any hesitation or uncertainty about the available options in order to attain a practical and sensible choice. Part of making decisions is gathering information before making the best choice. Sometimes, people can still be unsure of the decisions made due to lack of sufficient research and knowledge of the alternatives. With good amount of knowledge, the risk probability of one decision is reduced. Decision making is an integral part of our life. We have take decisions throughout our lives and sometimes, decision making can be a very tough and challenging process. It can leave us perplexed and often wondering, as to what is the right choice. Education is significant, because it enables us to take the right decisions and prevents losses.

## Need and Significance of the study

This study gives an immense help to the educational experts in framing curriculum by giving equal importance to both sexes. The text book can prepare, projecting a positive image of women. New values can be incorporated by way of identifying areas of sex bias in the textual material and giving suggestions to the teacher's discussion, debates through exercises, questions, discussions, debates etc. This study may help the policy makers to improve women's opportunities outside the home and increase their bargaining power within households by training teachers, revising school curriculum and by educating parents to prevent continuing gender stereo types, boosting female enrolment rates and thus filling the gender gap.

Awareness on Legal Provisions for Safety of Women provides with the ability to make social and family changes and to increase their control of their own lives and decision that affect them. Awareness on Legal Provisions makes the girls to understand the significance of equality, liberty, fraternity and also exploitation if any. Every day, people are undated with decisions, big and small. Understanding how people arrive at their choices is an area of cognitive psychology that has received attention. People make decisions about many things. They may take personal decisions, career decisions etc. Quite often, the decision making process is fairly specific to the decision being made. Some choices are simple and seen straight forward, while others are complex and require a multistep approach to make the decision.

A teacher makes literally hundreds of professional decisions every day. Some decisions affect classroom management, others affect instructional management. Some types of decisions occur in frequently; others occur several times each day. When trying to make good decision a person must wait for the positives and negatives of each option, and consider all the alternatives. We can conclude that if the girls get more awareness about their provisions, they will become more powerful and they can take appropriate decisions in their life. So awareness is very important in every female student.

Decision making is an integral part of our life. Good decision leads to fruitful life. Decision making capacities are taking correct decisions at the correct times in the correct direction so as to become successful. Thus all decisions will not lead to success. Most of the women do not prefer to take decisions on important

matters. They are not independent in decision making. The main problem is lack of awareness and lack of confidence. Good and bad decisions in life sometimes shape or change our future. Some decisions we make are of our own choosing, but many others are forced upon us. Right decision is the most important aspect of making decisions. Right decisions usually conclude an issue, but wrong decisions call for more and more decisions in order to rectify the mistakes of initial decision.

An understanding of what Decision making involves, together with a few effective techniques, will help to produce better decisions. Decision making is the process of reducing any hesitation or uncertainty about the available options in order to attain practical and sensible choice. With good amount of knowledge, the risk probability of one decision making is reduced. Before we make a decision think about the style and that would be best for the decision we need to make. Making a decision implies that there are alternative choices to be considered, and in such a case we want not only to identify as many of these alternatives as possible but to choose that one that (1) has the highest probability of success or effectiveness and (2) the best fits with our goals, desires, lifestyles, values and so on.

The present paper is entitled as a study on “Relationship between Awareness on Legal Provisions for Safety of Women and Decision Making Capacity of Adolescent Girls”.

### **Major objective of the Study**

1. To find out the relationship between awareness on Legal Provisions for Safety of Women and Decision Making Capacity among the adolescent girls of Kottayam District with respect to; Locality, Level of education (Secondary & Higher Secondary) and Type of management

### **Hypothesis of the study**

- i. There exists a significant relationship between the means of scores Awareness on Legal Provisions for Safety of Women and Decision Making Capacity among the adolescent girls of Kottayam District with respect to their Locality, Level of Education and Type of Management of the schools.

### **Methodology in Brief**

The investigator selected the Descriptive Survey Method and carried out in three phases. The first phase includes the selection of variables and preparation of the tool used in the study. In the second phase, includes selection of sample involved in the study and collection of data. In third phase, includes analysis of data using suitable statistical procedures to draw conclusion.

The study was designed with the following variables; Legal Provisions for Safety of Women and the Decision Making Capacity of Adolescent Girls. The first includes the constitutional provisions for women's safety, Indian Penal Code (IPC). The Sub variables of Legal Provisions for Safety of Women are; NIRBHAYA Project, She Taxi Project, Constitutional Provisions, Indian Penal Code (IPC), National Commission For Women, State Commission For Women, etc. Decision Making Capacity of Adolescent girls. It is the capacity to stand trial in a court of law, and the ability to make decisions that relate to personal care and finances (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2011). The Sub variables of Decision Making Capacity are; Vigilance, Hyper vigilance, Defensive avoidance, Rationalization, Buck passing, etc. Procrastination

In the present study the sample taken had been stratified with regard to locale, level of education and type of management. The investigator conducted the present study on a representative sample of 360 Adolescent Girls from aided, unaided and Government Schools belong to both Urban and Rural area. For the present study, the Inventory on the Awareness on Legal Provisions for Safety of Women and the Decision Making Capacity Scale prepared by the investigator was used for data collection. The statistical techniques used in this study are both descriptive and inferential statistics.

## ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA

### Relationship between Awareness on Legal Provisions for Safety of Women and Decision Making Capacity among the adolescent girls

The main objective of the study is to find the correlation between Awareness on Legal Provisions for Safety of Women and Decision Making Capacity among the adolescent girls. For the analysis of the objective the investigator has formulated the null hypothesis as

Ho: "There exists no significant relationship between Awareness on Legal Provisions for Safety of Women and Decision Making Capacity among the adolescent girls with respect to the locality, level of education and type of Management".

The data pertaining to this objective was analyzed using Karl Pearson's Product Moment Correlation 'r'. The 'r' value was set as 0.098 at .05 level of significance for degrees of freedom 358. The data is presented in the following tables.

Table 1

*Relationship between Awareness on Legal Provisions for Safety of Women and Decision Making Capacity among adolescent girls*

Variables	Number	Degrees of Freedom	Calculated 'r' value	Remarks
Awareness Legal Provisions for safety of women	360	357	0.444	Significant at .05 level
Decision Making Capacity				

From the table 1, it is clear that the obtained 'r' value 0.444 shows a positive correlation between Awareness on Legal Provisions for Safety of Women and Decision Making Capacity. The investigator concludes that there exists a significant relationship between Legal Provisions for safety of women and Decision Making Capacity among the adolescent girls.

Table 2

*Relationship between Awareness on Legal Provisions for Safety of Women and Decision Making Capacity among Adolescent girls from urban area*

Variables	Number	Degrees of Freedom	Calculated 'r' value	Remarks
Awareness Legal Provisions for safety of women	201	199	0.458	Significant at .05 level
Decision Making Capacity				

From the table 2, it is clear that the obtained 'r' value 0.458 shows a positive correlation between Awareness on Legal Provisions for Safety of Women and Decision Making Capacity among Adolescent girls from urban area. The investigator concludes that there exists a significant relationship between Legal Provisions for safety of women and Decision Making Capacity among the Adolescent girls from urban area.



Table 3

*Relationship between Awareness on Legal Provisions for Safety of Women and Decision Making Capacity among Adolescent girls from rural area*

Variables	Number	Degrees of Freedom	Calculated value	'r'	Remarks
Awareness Legal Provisions for safety of women	159	157	0.451		Significant at .05 level
Decision Making Capacity					

From the table 3, it is clear that the obtained 'r' value 0.431 shows a positive correlation between Awareness on Legal Provisions for Safety of Women and Decision Making Capacity among Adolescent girls from rural area. The investigator concludes that there exists a significant relationship between Legal Provisions for safety of women and Decision Making Capacity among the Adolescent girls from rural area.

Table 4

*Relationship between Awareness on Legal Provisions for Safety of Women and Decision Making Capacity among Adolescent girls from secondary school*

Variables	Number	Degrees of Freedom	Calculated value	'r'	Remarks
Awareness Legal Provisions for safety of women	198	196	0.344		Significant at .05 level
Decision Making Capacity					

From the table 4, it is clear that the obtained 'r' value 0.344 shows a positive correlation between Awareness on Legal Provisions for Safety of Women and Decision Making Capacity among Adolescent girls from secondary school. The investigator concludes that there exists a significant relationship between Legal Provisions for safety of women and Decision Making Capacity among the Adolescent girls from secondary school.

Table 5

*Relationship between Awareness on Legal Provisions for Safety of Women and Decision Making Capacity among Adolescent girls from higher secondary school*

Variables	Number	Degrees of Freedom	Calculated value	'r'	Remarks
Awareness Legal Provisions for safety of women	162	160	0.549		Significant at .05 level
Decision Making Capacity					

From the table 5, it is clear that the obtained 'r' value 0.549 shows a positive correlation between Awareness on Legal Provisions for Safety of Women and Decision Making Capacity among Adolescent girls from higher secondary school. The investigator concludes that there exists a significant relationship between Legal Provisions for safety of women and Decision Making Capacity among the Adolescent girls from higher secondary school.

Table 6

*Relationship between Awareness on Legal Provisions for Safety of Women and Decision Making Capacity among Adolescent girls from government school*

Variables	Number	Degrees of Freedom	Calculated value	'r'	Remarks
Awareness Legal Provisions for safety of women Decision Making Capacity	119	117	0.596		Significant at .05 level

From the table 6, it is clear that the obtained 'r' value 0.596 shows a positive correlation between Awareness on Legal Provisions for Safety of Women and Decision Making Capacity among Adolescent girls from government school. The investigator concludes that there exists a significant relationship between Legal Provisions for safety of women and Decision Making Capacity among the Adolescent girls from government school.

Table 7

*Relationship between Awareness on Legal Provisions for Safety of Women and Decision Making Capacity among Adolescent girls from aided school*

Variables	Number	Degrees of Freedom	Calculated value	'r'	Remarks
Awareness Legal Provisions for safety of women Decision Making Capacity	196	194	0.458		Significant at .05 level

From the table 7, it is clear that the obtained 'r' value 0.458 shows a positive correlation between Awareness on Legal Provisions for Safety of Women and Decision Making Capacity among Adolescent girls from aided school. The investigator concludes that there exists a significant relationship between Legal Provisions for safety of women and Decision Making Capacity among the Adolescent girls from aided school.

Table 8

*Relationship between Awareness on Legal Provisions for Safety of Women and Decision Making Capacity among Adolescent girls from unaided school*

Variables	Number	Degrees of Freedom	Calculated value	'r'	Remarks
Awareness Legal Provisions for safety of women Decision Making Capacity	45	43	0.114		Significant at .05 level

From the table 8, it is clear that the obtained 'r' value 0.114 shows a positive correlation between Awareness on Legal Provisions for Safety of Women and Decision Making Capacity among Adolescent girls from unaided school. The investigator concludes that there exists no significant relationship between Legal Provisions for safety of women and Decision Making Capacity among the Adolescent girls from unaided school.

## Major finding of the study

1. There exists a significant relationship between Legal Provisions for Safety of Women and Decision Making Capacity among the adolescent girls.
2. There exists a significant relationship between Legal Provisions for Safety of Women and Decision Making Capacity among the adolescent girls from urban area.
3. There exists a significant relationship between Legal Provisions for Safety of Women and Decision Making Capacity among the adolescent girls from rural area.
4. There exists a significant relationship between Legal Provisions for Safety of Women and Decision Making Capacity among the adolescent girls from secondary schools.
5. There exists a significant relationship between Legal Provisions for Safety of Women and Decision Making Capacity among the adolescent girls from higher secondary schools.
6. There exists a significant relationship between Legal Provisions for Safety of Women and Decision Making Capacity among the adolescent girls from government schools.
7. There exists a significant relationship between Legal Provisions for Safety of Women and Decision Making Capacity among the adolescent girls from aided schools.

## Conclusion

The relationship between Awareness on Legal Provisions for Safety of Women Decision Making Capacity of Adolescent Girls is revealed in this study. Majority of the adolescent girls have moderate awareness on legal provisions for safety of women and decision making capacity. So the government should conduct awareness classes in schools. Majority of the adolescent girls have moderate Decision Making Capacity so proper care should be given for the development of good Decision Making Capacity. There is a positive relationship between Legal Provisions for Safety of Women and Decision Making Capacity among the adolescent girls. The study point out the need of psychologists and councilors in educational institutions for giving children proper training for awareness on Legal Provisions for Safety of Women. The teachers should be good role models for spreading out the awareness on Legal Provisions for Safety of Women and girl children.

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