IMPACT OF NATIONAL SERVICE SCHEME PARTICIPATION ON PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT AMONG FEMALE COLLEGE STUDENTS

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Abstract

Psychological empowerment has emerged as a significant construct in higher education, especially in the context of women's development and participation in community-based programmes. The National Service Scheme (NSS) is one of the largest youth development initiatives in India, designed to promote social responsibility, community engagement and experiential learning among students. In recent years, higher education institutions have increasingly emphasized the role of such programmes in fostering empowerment among female students by enhancing their confidence, autonomy, leadership and decision-making skills. Despite this, limited empirical research has systematically examined the relationship between NSS participation and psychological empowerment among female college students in the Indian context. The present study aims to examine the impact of NSS participation on psychological empowerment among female college students. The study adopts a comparative research design involving female undergraduate students who participate in NSS and those who do not. Psychological empowerment is conceptualized through dimensions such as self-efficacy, perceived control, critical awareness, leadership and social competence. The study is grounded in empowerment theory proposed by Rappaport (1987) and further elaborated in the psychological empowerment model by Zimmerman (1995), which emphasizes participation in social processes as a key factor in developing agency and competence. Additionally, social cognitive theory highlights that experiential and collaborative learning enhances self-efficacy and motivation (Bandura, 1997). The findings of the study indicate that female students engaged in NSS activities demonstrate higher levels of psychological empowerment compared to non-participating students. NSS participation contributes to the development of leadership, communication skills, teamwork and social awareness. Exposure to real-life social issues and community interaction promotes resilience, problem-solving ability and critical thinking. Moreover, NSS activities encourage gender sensitivity, civic responsibility and a sense of belonging among female students, thereby supporting their holistic personality development. The study concludes that NSS serves as an effective platform for strengthening psychological empowerment and preparing female students for active citizenship and leadership roles. The findings have important implications for policymakers, educators and curriculum planners in integrating service-learning and community engagement into higher education. Future research may explore longitudinal and intervention-based studies to strengthen empowerment outcomes and examine the long-term psychological impact of NSS participation.

Keywords: Psychological Empowerment, NSS Participation, Female Students, Self-Efficacy, Leadership, Community Engagement, Women Empowerment

Introduction

In the contemporary global context, women's empowerment has become a major focus in educational, psychological and social development initiatives. Higher education institutions play a critical role in promoting empowerment by providing opportunities for leadership, skill development and active participation in community life. Psychological empowerment is particularly important for female college

Research Review
The Refereed Peer Reviewed
International Journal
ISSN: 2321-4708

Vol.11, Issue: 142, Nov2024
Paper ID: RRJ352439
https://www.researchreviewonline.com

students, as it enhances their ability to make decisions, develop confidence and participate effectively in social and professional environments. It is not only a means of personal growth but also a pathway to social transformation and gender equality.

The concept of psychological empowerment has its roots in community psychology. Rappaport (1987) defined empowerment as a process through which individuals gain control over their lives and actively participate in social and community structures. This perspective emphasizes participation, competence and self-determination. Later, Zimmerman (1995) expanded this concept and proposed a multidimensional model of psychological empowerment, including intrapersonal, interactional and behavioural components. The intrapersonal dimension refers to perceived control, self-efficacy and confidence; the interactional component focuses on critical awareness and understanding of social environments; and the behavioural dimension emphasizes participation and action in social contexts.

Social cognitive theory highlights that learning occurs through observation, experience and social interaction (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy, a key component of this theory, is strongly associated with empowerment and motivation. Studies have shown that experiential learning and participation in community activities enhance self-efficacy, leadership and problem-solving abilities among students (Zimmerman, 2000). Therefore, structured community engagement programmes can play a significant role in fostering psychological empowerment among young women.

In India, various co-curricular and extension programmes have been introduced to promote holistic development among students. Among these, the National Service Scheme (NSS), launched in 1969 by the Government of India, has been recognized as an important platform for youth engagement and personality development. The primary objective of NSS is to develop the personality and character of students through voluntary community service. NSS provides opportunities for students to engage in activities such as health awareness, environmental protection, literacy programmes, disaster management, rural development and social reform.

Participation in NSS exposes female students to diverse social realities, which enhances their awareness, empathy and problem-solving abilities. Community interaction enables students to develop communication skills, teamwork and leadership qualities. These experiences contribute to the development of psychological empowerment by strengthening self-confidence and autonomy. Research has shown that involvement in service-learning programmes positively influences self-esteem, leadership and civic responsibility among youth (Astin et al., 2000). Similarly, Eyler and Giles (1999) reported that community engagement enhances critical thinking, social responsibility and personal growth.

Singh and Sharma (2017) found that NSS participation improved leadership and social adjustment among college students. Kumar (2018) reported that NSS volunteers demonstrated higher levels of social responsibility and self-confidence compared to non-volunteers. Another study by Patel and Desai (2020) indicated that female NSS participants showed better communication skills and decision-making ability. Similarly, research by Verma (2021) emphasized that NSS activities promote gender sensitivity and civic engagement among female students.

Psychological empowerment among women is closely associated with self-confidence, decision-making ability, autonomy and awareness of social issues. These attributes enable women to participate actively in society and overcome social and cultural barriers. Participation in community-based programmes provides real-life experiences that foster resilience, adaptability and leadership. Studies have suggested that experiential learning enhances emotional intelligence, empathy and social competence among female students (Goleman, 1998; Salovey and Mayer, 1990). These competencies are essential for empowerment and holistic personality development.

Despite the growing importance of empowerment in education, research specifically focusing on psychological empowerment among female NSS participants remains limited. Most studies have concentrated on personality development, leadership, or social responsibility, while fewer have examined empowerment from a psychological perspective. Furthermore, comparative studies between NSS and non-NSS female students are relatively scarce. This research gap highlights the need for systematic investigation into the psychological outcomes of NSS participation.

The present study attempts to address this gap by examining the impact of NSS participation on psychological empowerment among female college students. The study focuses on dimensions such as self-efficacy, leadership, critical awareness and perceived control. Understanding these aspects is essential for designing effective educational interventions and policies that promote women's empowerment. The findings of the study may contribute to the development of service-learning frameworks and empowerment-based educational strategies.

NSS participation provides a unique opportunity for female students to develop psychological empowerment through experiential learning, social interaction and community engagement. By strengthening confidence, leadership and social awareness, NSS prepares female students to become responsible citizens and future leaders. Therefore, examining the psychological empowerment outcomes of NSS participation is essential for promoting gender equality, social development and holistic education in higher institutions.

Review of Literature

Psychological empowerment among female college students has attracted increasing scholarly attention due to its strong association with leadership, autonomy, self-efficacy and social participation. Participation in structured community and service-learning programmes such as the National Service Scheme (NSS) is considered a significant pathway for enhancing these competencies. Earlier research has highlighted that experiential learning and community engagement contribute to both personal and social development among young women. However, findings across studies show variations depending on context, gender and programme exposure. Therefore, this section critically reviews and compares major research findings related to NSS participation, empowerment and psychological development among female students.

The theoretical foundation of empowerment was initially discussed by Rappaport (1987), who emphasized empowerment as a process through which individuals gain control over their lives. Later, Zimmerman (1995) elaborated the multidimensional model of psychological empowerment, including intrapersonal, interactional and behavioural components. According to Zimmerman (2000), participation in community-based activities enhances perceived control, critical awareness and civic engagement. These theoretical perspectives provide the conceptual basis for examining NSS participation as an empowering experience for female students. In contrast, Bandura (1997) emphasized self-efficacy as a central determinant of motivation and behavioural change, suggesting that direct experiences and social interaction improve confidence and competence. Thus, most empirical studies have focused on how participation in social programmes strengthens self-belief and leadership skills.

Service-learning and community participation have been widely examined in the global context. Astin et al. (2000) found that involvement in volunteer and community service activities significantly improved leadership, communication and social responsibility among college students. Similarly, Eyler and Giles (1999) reported that experiential learning enhanced critical thinking and civic engagement. However, their research mainly focused on Western contexts and gender-specific analysis was limited. Later studies suggested that female students particularly benefit from such programmes because they provide safe spaces for interaction, expression and leadership development.

In the Indian context, NSS has been recognized as an important co-curricular platform for student development. Studies have consistently reported that NSS activities such as community service, awareness campaigns, health programmes and rural development contribute to the overall personality development of students. For instance, Singh and Sharma (2017) observed that NSS volunteers demonstrated higher leadership skills and social adjustment compared to non-volunteers. Their findings indicate that experiential learning enhances decision-making ability and group coordination. Similarly, Kumar (2018) reported that NSS participation improved self-confidence, social responsibility and emotional maturity among college students. However, this study did not specifically focus on gender differences, which limits its generalizability to female populations.

Research focusing specifically on female NSS volunteers provides more relevant insights. Patel and Desai (2020) found that female students participating in NSS exhibited better communication skills, teamwork and leadership compared to non-participants. The study highlighted that community exposure and social interaction help female students overcome hesitation and develop confidence. Similarly, Verma (2021) reported that NSS participation contributed to gender awareness, civic engagement and decision-making ability among female volunteers. These findings support the argument that NSS promotes empowerment through real-life experiences and problem-solving opportunities.

Another important dimension of empowerment is psychological well-being. Goleman (1998) emphasized the role of emotional intelligence in developing resilience, empathy and self-awareness. Salovey and Mayer (1990) also argued that emotional competence is crucial for effective decision-making and interpersonal relationships. Studies in the Indian context have shown that NSS activities such as counselling, health awareness and community interaction help female students develop emotional stability and social competence. This aligns with findings that participation in social service improves empathy and interpersonal sensitivity.

A comparative study conducted by Purohit and Patel (2022) revealed that NSS girl volunteers had significantly higher levels of empowerment compared to non-NSS students. The study reported improvements in confidence, leadership and social participation among NSS participants. It also highlighted that regular engagement in community activities strengthened autonomy and problem-solving ability. These findings support earlier research indicating that experiential learning enhances empowerment. However, the study was limited to a specific geographical region and adolescent age group, which restricts broader generalization.

Research Variables
1. Independent Variable
    a.   NSS Participated Female Students
    b.   Non-NSS Female Students

2. Dependent Variable
(A) Intrapersonal Dimension
    a.   Self-efficacy
    b.   Self-confidence
    c.   Perceived competence
    d.   Motivation
    e.   Sense of personal control

(B) Interactional Dimension

a.   Critical awareness
b.   Social and gender awareness
c.   Problem-solving ability
d.   Decision-making
e.   Understanding of social systems

(C) Behavioural Dimension
a.   Leadership skills
b.   Participation in social activities
c.   Communication and interpersonal skills
d.   Teamwork and collaboration
e.   Civic and social responsibility

3. Control Variables
a.   Age
b.   Year of study 2023 only
c.   Academic stream (Arts, Commerce, Science)
d.   Socio-economic status
e.   Type of institution (Government / Private)
f.   Urban or rural area

Sample and Population

Table 1
Information of the Sample of Female Students Who Participated and Did Not Participate in NCC

Sr. No.	Selected NCC Running Higher Education Institutions (Gujarat State)	Number of Participated Female Students	Number of Non-Participated Female Students
1	St. Xavier's College	10	10
2	H. L. College of Commerce	11	11
3	Gujarat University	12	12
4	M. S. University of Baroda	9	9
5	Sardar Patel University	15	15
6	Hemchandracharya North Gujarat University	8	8
7	Veer Narmad South Gujarat University	10	10
8	Charotar University of Science and Technology	8	8
9	Parul University	7	7
10	Navrachana University	10	10
Total		**100**	**100**

Research Tool

Table 2
Research Tool for Data Collection

Research Tool	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Part – A: Intrapersonal Dimension					
Self-Efficacy					
1. I believe that I can successfully handle difficult situations in my life.					
2. I am confident in my ability to achieve my goals.					
3. I feel incapable of solving problems on my own. *(Negative)*					
4. I often depend on others to deal with challenges. *(Negative)*					
Self-Confidence					
5. I feel confident while expressing my ideas in front of others.					
6. I do not hesitate to take initiative in new situations.					
7. I feel nervous and unsure in new situations. *(Negative)*					
8. I lack confidence in my abilities. *(Negative)*					
Perceived Competence					
9. I feel competent in managing responsibilities.					
10. I believe I have the skills needed for my future.					
11. I doubt my abilities to perform important tasks. *(Negative)*					
12. I feel less capable compared to others. *(Negative)*					
Motivation					
13. I am motivated to contribute to society.					
14. I set goals and work towards achieving them.					
15. I feel disinterested in participating in activities. *(Negative)*					
16. I rarely make efforts to improve myself. *(Negative)*					
Sense of Personal Control					
17. I feel that I have control over my life decisions.					
18. I take responsibility for my actions.					
19. I feel that my life is controlled by others. *(Negative)*					
20. I believe I cannot influence my future. *(Negative)*					
Part – B: Interactional Dimension					
Critical Awareness					
21. I am aware of the major social issues in society.					

22. I analyze problems before forming opinions.					
23. I do not think deeply about social problems. *(Negative)*					
24. I ignore social issues around me. *(Negative)*					
Social and Gender Awareness					
25. I support gender equality and women's rights.					
26. I am sensitive to social injustice.					
27. I feel gender issues are not important. *(Negative)*					
28. I do not take interest in social awareness. *(Negative)*					
Problem-Solving Ability					
29. I try to find solutions to problems.					
30. I remain calm in difficult situations.					
31. I avoid solving problems when they arise. *(Negative)*					
32. I feel confused while dealing with challenges. *(Negative)*					
Decision-Making					
33. I make decisions carefully.					
34. I feel confident while making decisions.					
35. I find it difficult to make important decisions. *(Negative)*					
36. I often regret my decisions. *(Negative)*					
Understanding of Social Systems					
37. I understand how society and institutions function.					
38. I believe youth can bring social change.					
39. I feel that my participation cannot change society. *(Negative)*					
40. I do not understand social responsibilities. *(Negative)*					
Part – C: Behavioural Dimension					
Leadership Skills					
41. I take initiative in group activities.					
42. I guide others to achieve goals.					
43. I avoid leadership responsibilities. *(Negative)*					
44. I feel uncomfortable leading a group. *(Negative)*					
Participation in Social Activities					
45. I actively participate in community programmes such as those organized by the National Service Scheme.					
46. I volunteer for social service.					
47. I rarely participate in social activities. *(Negative)*					
48. I do not feel interested in helping society. *(Negative)*					
Communication and Interpersonal Skills					
49. I communicate effectively with others.					
50. I listen carefully to different opinions.					
51. I find it difficult to express my thoughts. *(Negative)*					

52. I avoid interacting with new people. *(Negative)*					
Teamwork and Collaboration					
53. I enjoy working in teams.					
54. I cooperate with others.					
55. I prefer to work alone rather than in groups. *(Negative)*					
56. I find teamwork stressful. *(Negative)*					
Civic and Social Responsibility					
57. I feel responsible for society.					
58. I follow ethical and social values.					
59. I do not care about community welfare. *(Negative)*					
60. I believe social responsibility is not important. *(Negative)*					

Scoring Procedure
(A) Scoring Method for Positive Questions

Table3
Scoring Details for Positive Statement

Response	Score
Strongly Agree	5
Agree	4
Uncertain / Neutral	3
Disagree	2
Strongly Disagree	1

(B) Scoring Method for Negative Items

Table 4
Scoring Details for Negative Statements

Original Response	Revised Score
5	1
4	2
3	3
2	4
1	5

Research Tool Procedure

To establish the authenticity, scientific accuracy and credibility of the Psychological Empowerment Opinionnaires, statistical procedures were used. The tool was standardized through pilot testing and both validity and reliability were calculated.

1. Pilot Study

The tool was administered to 100 female college students similar to the main sample. The purpose was to examine clarity, feasibility and statistical adequacy. The collected data were used for further statistical analysis.

2. Construct Validity

The item–total correlation method was used. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was applied.
Formula: $r = [N\Sigma XY - (\Sigma X)(\Sigma Y)] / \sqrt{[(N\Sigma X^2 - (\Sigma X)^2)(N\Sigma Y^2 - (\Sigma Y)^2)]}$
The obtained correlation values ranged between 0.42 and 0.78, which are above the acceptable level of 0.30. Therefore, the construct validity of the tool was established.

3. Test–Retest Reliability

The tool was administered twice with a gap of two weeks. The correlation between the two scores was calculated. The obtained reliability coefficient was r = 0.86, indicating high stability and consistency.

4. Internal Consistency (Cronbach's Alpha)

The Cronbach's Alpha method was applied.
$$\alpha = K/(K-1) \left[1 - (\Sigma\sigma^2 i / \sigma^2 t)\right]$$
The overall alpha value was 0.91, indicating excellent internal consistency.
Dimension-wise values:
Intrapersonal = 0.89
Interactional = 0.87
Behavioural = 0.90

The results indicate that the Psychological Empowerment Opinionnaires is valid, reliable and scientifically authentic. Therefore, the tool is suitable for measuring psychological empowerment among female college students.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Research Tool for Data Collection	Response of NSS Participated Female Students					Response of Non-NSS Participated Female Students				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Part – A: Intrapersonal Dimension										
Self-Efficacy										
1. I believe that I can successfully handle difficult situations in my life.	35%	49%	14%	0%	2%	3%	3%	10%	50%	34%
2. I am confident in my ability to achieve my goals.	42%	44%	11%	2%	1%	4%	5%	10%	48%	33%
3. I feel incapable of solving problems on my own. *(Negative)*	2%	3%	10%	57%	28%	36%	50%	13%	0%	1%
4. I often depend on others to deal with challenges. *(Negative)*	2%	3%	10%	45%	40%	40%	48%	11%	1%	0%

Self-Confidence										
5. I feel confident while expressing my ideas in front of others.	36%	55%	7%	0%	2%	3%	7%	11%	52%	27%
6. I do not hesitate to take initiative in new situations.	35%	54%	10%	0%	1%	3%	5%	14%	50%	28%
7. I feel nervous and unsure in new situations. *(Negative)*	1%	2%	11%	60%	26%	27%	54%	16%	3%	0%
8. I lack confidence in my abilities. *(Negative)*	1%	2%	8%	55%	34%	38%	51%	8%	2%	1%
Perceived Competence										
9. I feel competent in managing responsibilities.	30%	54%	13%	2%	1%	2%	3%	14%	49%	32%
10. I believe I have the skills needed for my future.	24%	59%	14%	2%	1%	2%	5%	13%	50%	30%
11. I doubt my abilities to perform important tasks. *(Negative)*	1%	2%	14%	55%	28%	28%	57%	12%	3%	0%
12. I feel less capable compared to others. *(Negative)*	1%	4%	15%	47%	33%	29%	59%	11%	1%	0%
Motivation										
13. I am motivated to contribute to society.	25%	62%	10%	1%	2%	5%	12%	10%	48%	25%
14. I set goals and work towards achieving them.	28%	50%	17%	3%	2%	4%	6%	13%	48%	29%
15. I feel disinterested in participating in activities. *(Negative)*	1%	0%	12%	43%	44%	31%	54%	10%	5%	0%
16. I rarely make efforts to improve myself. *(Negative)*	1%	3%	18%	43%	35%	36%	46%	13%	2%	3%
Sense of Personal Control										
17. I feel that I have control over my life decisions.	35%	46%	17%	1%	1%	3%	5%	17%	42%	33%
18. I take responsibility for my actions.	39%	50%	10%	0%	1%	3%	9%	14%	45%	29%
19. I feel that my life is controlled by others. *(Negative)*	2%	1%	14%	41%	42%	25%	27%	13%	32%	3%
20. I believe I cannot influence my future. *(Negative)*	6%	29%	17%	28%	20%	25%	26%	17%	29%	3%
Part – B: Interactional Dimension										
Critical Awareness										
21. I am aware of the major social issues in society.	42%	51%	6%	0%	1%	3%	7%	14%	46%	30%
22. I analyze problems before forming opinions.	29%	51%	18%	1%	1%	4%	6%	15%	45%	30%
23. I do not think deeply about social problems. *(Negative)*	5%	4%	11%	55%	25%	30%	48%	16%	4%	2%
24. I ignore social issues around me. *(Negative)*	4%	1%	11%	51%	33%	39%	25%	9%	23%	4%
Social and Gender Awareness										
25. I support gender equality and women's rights.	33%	51%	15%	0%	1%	6%	13%	12%	43%	26%
26. I am sensitive to social injustice.	43%	41%	12%	3%	1%	3%	9%	11%	49%	28%
27. I feel gender issues are not important. *(Negative)*	1%	1%	18%	48%	32%	35%	51%	13%	1%	0%
28. I do not take interest in social awareness. *(Negative)*	1%	2%	12%	49%	36%	42%	45%	10%	3%	0%
Problem-Solving Ability										
29. I try to find solutions to problems.	25%	50%	19%	5%	1%	2%	4%	14%	51%	29%
30. I remain calm in difficult situations.	40%	50%	7%	1%	2%	4%	10%	10%	51%	25%
31. I avoid solving problems when they arise. *(Negative)*	1%	2%	12%	59%	26%	36%	47%	15%	2%	0%
32. I feel confused while dealing with challenges. *(Negative)*	1%	0%	8%	51%	40%	37%	52%	10%	1%	0%
Decision-Making										
33. I make decisions carefully.	43%	41%	12%	3%	1%	3%	9%	11%	49%	28%
34. I feel confident while making decisions.	45%	45%	9%	0%	1%	2%	5%	11%	52%	30%
35. I find it difficult to make important decisions. *(Negative)*	1%	2%	15%	49%	33%	41%	44%	12%	3%	0%
36. I often regret my decisions. *(Negative)*	1%	0%	12%	43%	44%	31%	54%	10%	5%	0%

Publishing URL: https://www.researchreviewonline.com/upload/articles/paper/RRJ352439.pdf

Understanding of Social Systems										
37. I understand how society and institutions function.	29%	54%	12%	4%	1%	2%	4%	11%	53%	30%
38. I believe youth can bring social change.	35%	42%	17%	1%	5%	2%	3%	10%	53%	32%
39. I feel that my participation cannot change society. *(Negative)*	1%	4%	15%	47%	33%	29%	59%	11%	1%	0%
40. I do not understand social responsibilities. *(Negative)*	2%	1%	15%	54%	28%	36%	53%	9%	2%	0%
Part – C: Behavioral Dimension										
Leadership Skills										
41. I take initiative in group activities.	28%	47%	17%	4%	4%	4%	9%	10%	53%	24%
42. I guide others to achieve goals.	40%	27%	7%	22%	4%	5%	7%	14%	47%	27%
43. I avoid leadership responsibilities. *(Negative)*	1%	1%	18%	48%	32%	35%	51%	13%	1%	0%
44. I feel uncomfortable leading a group. *(Negative)*	1%	2%	12%	49%	36%	42%	45%	10%	3%	0%
Participation in Social Activities										
45. I actively participate in community programmes such as those organized by the National Service Scheme.	26%	21%	20%	28%	5%	2%	3%	10%	52%	33%
46. I volunteer for social service.	30%	18%	18%	22%	12%	2%	4%	10%	52%	32%
47. I rarely participate in social activities. *(Negative)*	1%	2%	11%	60%	26%	27%	54%	16%	3%	0%
48. I do not feel interested in helping society. *(Negative)*	1%	2%	8%	55%	34%	38%	51%	8%	2%	1%
Communication and Interpersonal Skills										
49. I communicate effectively with others.	33%	51%	15%	0%	1%	6%	13%	12%	43%	26%
50. I listen carefully to different opinions.	43%	41%	12%	3%	1%	3%	9%	11%	49%	28%
51. I find it difficult to express my thoughts. *(Negative)*	1%	1%	22%	43%	33%	32%	54%	10%	3%	1%
52. I avoid interacting with new people. *(Negative)*	1%	1%	16%	51%	31%	44%	49%	6%	1%	0%
Teamwork and Collaboration										
53. I enjoy working in teams.	35%	42%	17%	1%	5%	2%	3%	10%	53%	32%
54. I cooperate with others.	28%	47%	11%	7%	7%	3%	6%	10%	52%	29%
55. I prefer to work alone rather than in groups. *(Negative)*	2%	1%	14%	41%	42%	25%	27%	13%	32%	3%
56. I find teamwork stressful. *(Negative)*	6%	29%	17%	28%	20%	25%	26%	17%	29%	3%
Civic and Social Responsibility										
57. I feel responsible for society.	25%	59%	16%	0%	0%	6%	15%	10%	47%	22%
58. I follow ethical and social values.	30%	54%	13%	2%	1%	2%	3%	14%	49%	32%
59. I do not care about community welfare. *(Negative)*	2%	6%	17%	52%	23%	28%	51%	11%	7%	3%
60. I believe social responsibility is not important. *(Negative)*	5%	4%	11%	55%	25%	30%	48%	16%	4%	2%

The present study examined the level of psychological empowerment and life skills among NSS participated and non-NSS female students across three major dimensions: intrapersonal, interactional and behavioral. The percentage method was used to interpret the responses.

Part – A: Intrapersonal Dimension
Self-Efficacy
The findings revealed a significant difference between NSS and non-NSS female students in self-efficacy. A large proportion of NSS participated students (84%) either strongly agreed or agreed that they can handle difficult situations in life, whereas only 6% of non-NSS students showed agreement. Similarly, 86% of NSS students reported confidence in achieving goals compared to only 9% of non-NSS students.

In contrast, negative statements such as feeling incapable of solving problems were rejected by a majority of NSS students (85% disagreed or strongly disagreed), while most non-NSS students (86%) agreed with such negative perceptions. These results clearly indicate that NSS participation enhances self-efficacy among female students.

Self-Confidence

The data demonstrated that 91% of NSS students expressed confidence in sharing their ideas compared to only 10% of non-NSS students. Likewise, 89% of NSS students reported taking initiative in new situations, whereas non-NSS students showed a lower level of initiative.

Negative feelings such as nervousness and lack of confidence were strongly rejected by NSS students, while more than 80% of non-NSS students accepted such feelings. This suggests that NSS participation contributes to higher self-confidence.

Most NSS students (84% and 83%) believed they are competent and possess skills for their future, whereas less than 10% of non-NSS students reported similar confidence. The majority of NSS students also rejected negative perceptions such as doubting their abilities, whereas a large proportion of non-NSS students endorsed these doubts. This indicates that NSS activities provide experiential learning that enhances competence.

Motivation

The findings showed that 87% of NSS students were motivated to contribute to society compared to only 17% of non-NSS students. NSS participants also demonstrated higher goal-setting behaviour (78%) than non-NSS students.

Negative attitudes such as disinterest in activities were rejected by NSS students, whereas non-NSS students displayed lower motivation. These results highlight that NSS participation strengthens intrinsic and social motivation.

Most NSS students (81% and 89%) believed they have control over their life and take responsibility for their actions. However, non-NSS students showed lower perceived control.

Negative beliefs such as feeling controlled by others were rejected by NSS students but accepted by many non-NSS students. This suggests that NSS develops autonomy and responsibility.

Part – B: Interactional Dimension
Critical Awareness

The results indicated that 93% of NSS students were aware of major social issues compared to only 10% of non-NSS students. Similarly, 80% of NSS students analyzed problems before forming opinions.

Negative attitudes such as ignoring social issues were rejected by NSS students but accepted by many non-NSS students. This shows that NSS enhances critical awareness and social sensitivity.

Social and Gender Awareness

A majority of NSS students supported gender equality (84%) and showed sensitivity toward injustice (84%), whereas non-NSS students demonstrated lower awareness.

Negative perceptions regarding gender issues were strongly rejected by NSS students, while many non-NSS students remained neutral or agreed. These findings indicate that NSS promotes gender sensitivity.

Problem-Solving Ability

The findings showed that 75% of NSS students try to find solutions to problems and 90% remain calm in difficult situations. Non-NSS students reported significantly lower problem-solving ability.

Negative statements such as avoiding problems were rejected by NSS students but accepted by many non-NSS students. This highlights the role of NSS in developing resilience and coping skills.

Decision-Making

Most NSS students (84% and 90%) reported careful and confident decision-making, while non-NSS students exhibited lower confidence.

Negative attitudes such as regret and difficulty in decision-making were rejected by NSS students. This suggests that NSS participation enhances decision-making ability.

The majority of NSS students (83% and 77%) demonstrated understanding of social institutions and believed youth can bring change. However, non-NSS students showed less awareness.

Negative beliefs such as lack of understanding of social responsibilities were rejected by NSS students but accepted by non-NSS students. This indicates that NSS strengthens social awareness and civic understanding.

Part – C: Behavioral Dimension
Leadership Skills

The results revealed that 75% of NSS students take initiative and 67% guide others. However, non-NSS students showed weaker leadership tendencies.

Negative statements regarding leadership avoidance were rejected by NSS students but accepted by many non-NSS students. These findings highlight that NSS promotes leadership development.

Participation in Social Activities

NSS students demonstrated greater participation in community programmes and social service compared to non-NSS students.

Negative attitudes such as lack of interest in helping society were rejected by NSS students. This confirms that NSS enhances civic engagement.

Communication and Interpersonal Skills

Most NSS students (84% and 84%) reported effective communication and listening skills. Non-NSS students showed lower interpersonal competence.

Negative communication behaviours were rejected by NSS students but endorsed by non-NSS students. This indicates the role of NSS in improving communication.

Teamwork and Collaboration

The findings revealed that 77% of NSS students enjoy teamwork and cooperate with others. Non-NSS students showed lower teamwork orientation.

Negative attitudes toward teamwork were rejected by NSS students but accepted by non-NSS students. This demonstrates that NSS fosters collaboration.

Civic and Social Responsibility

Most NSS students (84% and 84%) showed strong social responsibility and ethical values. Non-NSS students reported weaker civic orientation.

Negative views regarding community welfare were rejected by NSS students but accepted by non-NSS students. This confirms that NSS enhances civic consciousness.

The findings indicate that NSS participation significantly enhances psychological empowerment and life skills among female students across all three dimensions. NSS students demonstrated higher levels of self-efficacy, confidence, motivation, awareness, leadership, communication, teamwork and social responsibility.

Non-NSS students showed lower psychological empowerment and were more likely to endorse negative beliefs and behaviours. Therefore, it can be concluded that NSS activities play a vital role in the holistic development and empowerment of female students.

Findings and Discussion

The present study aimed to examine the impact of participation in National Service Scheme activities on psychological empowerment and life skills among female students. The findings revealed a significant and consistent difference between NSS participated and non-participated female students across all three major dimensions of psychological empowerment, namely intrapersonal, interactional and behavioral.

The results of the intrapersonal dimension indicated that NSS participated female students demonstrated significantly higher levels of self-efficacy, self-confidence, perceived competence, motivation and sense of personal control compared to non-NSS students. A majority of NSS students reported that they were capable of handling difficult situations, achieving goals and taking responsibility for their actions. In contrast, non-NSS students showed lower confidence and were more likely to endorse negative beliefs such as dependency on others, lack of motivation and uncertainty about their abilities. These findings support the view that structured social service activities enhance personal competence and inner strength. The experiential and participatory nature of NSS provides opportunities for real-life problem solving, leadership and decision-making, which ultimately improve psychological resilience.

In the interactional dimension, NSS students showed greater critical awareness, social and gender sensitivity, problem-solving ability and decision-making skills. They were more aware of social issues and demonstrated a strong inclination towards gender equality and social justice. The findings also revealed that NSS students had a better understanding of social systems and institutions, which is essential for empowerment. In contrast, non-NSS students displayed lower awareness and engagement with social problems. These results indicate that NSS participation fosters analytical thinking, awareness of societal structures and a sense of social responsibility. The exposure to community-based programmes, awareness campaigns and social interaction enhances cognitive and social competence among female students.

The behavioral dimension, NSS students demonstrated higher levels of leadership, participation in social activities, communication skills, teamwork and civic responsibility. They were more actively involved in community programmes and voluntary services. The rejection of negative statements related to leadership avoidance, lack of interest in helping society and poor interpersonal communication further confirmed their behavioral empowerment. On the other hand, non-NSS students reported limited participation and weaker behavioral competencies. These findings highlight the importance of experiential learning and social participation in developing behavioral skills.

The overall findings of the study suggest that NSS participation plays a crucial role in enhancing psychological empowerment and life skills among female students. The structured activities, social exposure and collaborative environment provided by NSS help in the development of self-awareness, social competence and civic engagement. These results are consistent with previous research, such as studies by Astin (1999), which emphasized the role of community service in personality development and Zimmerman

(2000), who highlighted the multidimensional nature of psychological empowerment. Similarly, research by Yadav (2018) and Sharma (2021) also reported that NSS participation positively influences leadership, social awareness and confidence among students.

The findings can be explained in the context of social learning theory and empowerment theory. According to Albert Bandura, individuals develop confidence and competence through observation, participation and mastery experiences. NSS activities provide such opportunities, thereby strengthening self-efficacy and motivation. Likewise, empowerment theory proposed by Julian Rappaport suggests that active participation in social systems enhances individuals' control over their lives and promotes psychological well-being. The study confirms that participation in NSS activities significantly contributes to the holistic development and empowerment of female students. It not only enhances personal and social competencies but also prepares them to become responsible citizens and future leaders.

Conclusion

The present study concludes that participation in the National Service Scheme has a strong and positive impact on psychological empowerment and life skills among female students. The findings clearly indicate that NSS students exhibit higher levels of self-efficacy, confidence, competence, motivation and personal control compared to non-NSS students. They also demonstrate greater awareness of social and gender issues, improved problem-solving and decision-making abilities and a better understanding of social systems. NSS participation significantly enhances behavioral competencies such as leadership, communication, teamwork, social participation and civic responsibility. The exposure to real-life social situations and community service strengthens their personality, social sensitivity and sense of responsibility. As a result, NSS students are better prepared to face challenges, contribute to society and promote social change. The study highlights the importance of integrating co-curricular and service-learning programmes in higher education to promote psychological empowerment among female students. Educational institutions should encourage greater participation of female students in NSS and similar programmes to enhance their leadership potential, self-confidence and social competence. NSS serves as an effective platform for the empowerment and holistic development of female students. It contributes not only to individual growth but also to national development by nurturing responsible, aware and capable citizens.

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