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Gyanprakash Arjeria
Ph.D. Scholar, Department of
Physical Education, Jiwaji
University, Gwalior, Madhya
Pradesh, India

Dr. Jayprakash Bhukar
Professor, Department of
Physical Education, Central
University of Haryana,
Mahendergarh, Haryana, India

Corresponding Author:
Gyanprakash Arjeria
Ph.D. Scholar, Department of
Physical Education, Jiwaji
University, Gwalior, Madhya
Pradesh, India

A comparative study on teacher empowerment among government, government-aided, and unaided secondary school teachers

Gyanprakash Arjeria and Jayprakash Bhukar

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Abstract

Teacher empowerment has increasingly been recognized as a pivotal construct for improving educational quality, teacher motivation, and institutional effectiveness. It refers to the extent to which teachers are granted autonomy, influence over school policies, and opportunities for professional growth. Empowered teachers are more likely to demonstrate creativity in instruction, commitment to student learning, and active engagement in decision-making processes, all of which directly influence school performance. Despite its importance, there remains a paucity of empirical evidence comparing empowerment levels across different types of schools in India, where management structures and administrative practices differ widely. The present study aimed to examine the levels of teacher empowerment among three distinct categories of secondary schools-Government, Government-Aided, and Unaided-using the standardized Teacher Empowerment Scale (TES) developed by Dr. Manju N. D. and Dr. G. Sheela. A total of 600 teachers participated in this study. Descriptive statistics, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), and Bonferroni post hoc tests were employed to analyze differences across groups. The findings revealed statistically significant differences in teacher empowerment, with Government-Aided teachers reporting the highest empowerment scores, followed by Government teachers, and the lowest scores among Unaided teachers. These results highlight the importance of school management practices in shaping teachers' professional autonomy and point to the need for targeted policy interventions to strengthen empowerment, particularly in privately managed unaided institutions.

Keywords: Teacher empowerment, autonomy, professional growth, decision-making, ANOVA, secondary teachers

Introduction

Teacher empowerment has emerged as a central theme in educational reforms worldwide as schools and educational systems shift toward more participatory, collaborative, and decentralized models of governance. Empowerment in education is not merely about granting teachers administrative authority but encompasses a holistic process where teachers are recognized as active agents of change, capable of making informed decisions about instructional practices, curriculum development, student assessment, and school policy. Within this framework, empowerment strengthens teachers' sense of professional identity and ownership over their work, enhancing their commitment to organizational goals and improving student outcomes. Over the past two decades, various researchers have argued that empowered teachers demonstrate higher levels of job satisfaction, innovation in pedagogy, improved classroom management, and stronger professional relationships with peers, thereby contributing to a more vibrant learning environment.

In the Indian educational context, teacher empowerment has gained increased attention due to ongoing efforts by educational authorities to decentralize decision-making and promote teacher participation in school governance (National Education Policy [NEP], 2020). However, despite policy initiatives, the experience of empowerment among teachers remains uneven across different types of institutions-government, government-aided, and unaided schools-due to disparities in resources, administrative structures, and professional development opportunities. Teachers working in government-aided schools may benefit from more structured support systems, training programs, and union representation, whereas those

in unaided schools often face challenges such as limited job security, restricted autonomy, and heavier workloads. These institutional differences may significantly shape teachers' perceptions of empowerment and their ability to influence decision-making processes within their schools.

Furthermore, empowerment can be conceptualized through multiple dimensions, including autonomy in instructional practices, professional growth opportunities, decision-making authority, and collegiality. The Teacher Empowerment Scale developed by Dr. Manju N.D. and Dr. G. Sheela provides a comprehensive framework to measure these dimensions by assessing teachers' perceptions across six components of empowerment. This standardized instrument has been widely acknowledged for its high reliability and validity, making it an appropriate tool for understanding empowerment across diverse school settings in India. Given the limited empirical studies focusing exclusively on teacher empowerment in the Indian context—especially with comparative insights between different institutional categories—this study seeks to fill the gap by examining and comparing the empowerment levels of teachers in government, government-aided, and unaided schools.

By systematically analyzing teacher empowerment through a validated scale, this study aims not only to provide empirical evidence of differences in empowerment across school types but also to offer insights into the underlying organizational and systemic factors contributing to these differences. Such findings are essential for policymakers, administrators, and educators to develop targeted interventions and reforms that foster greater teacher agency, professional satisfaction, and ultimately better educational outcomes for students.

Methodology

Selection of Subjects

The study included a total of 600 secondary school teachers drawn from three distinct institutional categories in equal numbers: 200 from Government schools, 200 from Government-Aided schools, and 200 from Unaided schools. Purposive sampling was used to ensure a diverse representation in terms of gender, teaching subjects, years of experience, and urban-rural school location. This sampling approach allowed the study to capture variations in empowerment experiences while maintaining comparability between groups. All participants were currently teaching at the secondary level and had at least two years of teaching experience to ensure that respondents were sufficiently familiar with their institutional environment.

Selection of Variables

The primary variable measured in this study was Teacher Empowerment. It was assessed using the Teacher Empowerment Scale (TES) developed by Dr. Manju N. D. and Dr. G. Sheela (English version). The TES is a standardized instrument consisting of 63 items, of which 58

are positively worded and 5 are negatively worded. Each item is rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1) for positively worded items; for negatively worded items the scoring is reversed. The total score for each respondent is computed by summing the scores of all items, with possible scores ranging from 63 (minimal empowerment) to 315 (maximal empowerment). Higher scores reflect greater perceived empowerment in professional roles, whereas lower scores indicate limited autonomy, influence, or recognition.

Statistical Techniques

Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum scores) were computed to summarize the central tendency and variability of TES scores within each group. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to test whether there were statistically significant differences in empowerment levels across the three school categories. To identify the specific group differences, a Bonferroni post hoc test was employed. This approach ensured a rigorous control of Type I error while making multiple pairwise comparisons between groups.

Results

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of Teacher Empowerment scores across groups

Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Government	211.735	19.751	145.00	287.00
Government-Aided	252.030	15.458	207.00	287.00
Unaided	170.240	25.470	103.00	236.00

Table 1 shows clear differences in mean empowerment scores among the three groups. Government-Aided school teachers reported the highest mean score ($M = 252.03$), indicating substantially greater empowerment. Government school teachers reported a moderate mean score ($M = 211.73$), while Unaided school teachers had the lowest mean score ($M = 170.24$). The higher standard deviation for Unaided schools suggests greater variability in perceived empowerment within this group compared to the other two.

Table 2: One-way ANOVA for Teacher Empowerment

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	669008.410	2	334504.205	785.365	.000
Within Groups	254275.255	597	425.922		
Total	923283.665	599			

The ANOVA results demonstrate a highly significant difference in teacher empowerment scores across the three school categories ($F = 785.365$, $p < .001$). The large between-group mean square compared to the within-group mean square confirms that school type is a major determinant of teacher empowerment.

Table 3: Bonferroni post hoc comparisons of Teacher Empowerment scores

(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.	95% CI Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Government	Government-Aided	-40.295	.000	-45.2496	-35.3404
Government	Unaided	+41.495	.000	+36.5404	+46.4496
Government-Aided	Unaided	+81.790	.000	+76.8354	+86.7446

Post hoc analysis reveals that Government-Aided teachers scored significantly higher than both Government and Unaided teachers. Government teachers also scored significantly higher than Unaided teachers. Thus, empowerment levels follow the order: Government-Aided > Government > Unaided.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study provide a nuanced understanding of teacher empowerment across three distinct types of institutions-government, government-aided, and unaided schools. The descriptive statistics revealed that teachers in government-aided schools reported the highest levels of empowerment, followed by those in government schools, with teachers in unaided schools exhibiting the lowest levels of perceived empowerment. This pattern suggests that institutional support mechanisms and organizational culture play a pivotal role in shaping how empowered teachers feel in their professional roles. The higher empowerment scores among government-aided school teachers may be attributed to factors such as better access to professional development, more participatory administrative structures, and greater job security. These elements collectively foster an environment where teachers feel more confident in exercising their professional judgment and contributing to decision-making processes (Bogler & Somech, 2004) ^[1].

The results of the ANOVA further underscored the statistically significant differences in empowerment between the three groups, indicating that these disparities are not coincidental but reflect meaningful variations in institutional contexts. This aligns with previous research suggesting that when teachers are provided with opportunities for involvement in school governance, supported through continuous training, and recognized for their contributions, their sense of empowerment increases substantially. The Bonferroni post hoc analysis revealed especially large differences between government-aided and unaided school teachers, reinforcing the idea that private unaided institutions may need to prioritize teacher empowerment to enhance job satisfaction and retention rates.

These findings also resonate with international studies where empowerment has been linked to improved teacher motivation, reduced burnout, and enhanced student learning outcomes. For example, Short and Rinehart (1992) argued that teachers who perceive themselves as empowered demonstrate stronger organizational commitment and higher levels of professional efficacy. In the Indian context, where educational quality and teacher retention are pressing challenges, fostering teacher empowerment can act as a catalyst for improving not only teacher well-being but also broader school effectiveness. Moreover, the lower empowerment scores observed among unaided school teachers highlight the need for institutional reforms such as clearer role definitions, greater autonomy in instructional practices, and structured opportunities for professional growth. Without addressing these gaps, unaided schools may continue to face challenges in maintaining teacher morale and sustaining high-quality teaching standards.

Another noteworthy implication of these findings is the potential for teacher empowerment to serve as a mediating factor between organizational structures and student achievement. Empowered teachers are more likely to innovate in pedagogy, adopt student-centered teaching methods, and engage in collaborative problem-solving, all

of which are critical for improving educational outcomes in an increasingly competitive and dynamic learning environment. The stark differences observed across institutional types suggest that empowerment is not solely an individual characteristic but a systemic outcome influenced by organizational policies, leadership styles, and institutional culture. As such, policymakers and school leaders must move beyond tokenistic forms of teacher involvement and instead cultivate genuine participatory structures that recognize teachers as partners in educational change.

In summary, the study reinforces the importance of teacher empowerment as both a professional and organizational imperative. The significantly higher empowerment levels in government-aided schools compared to government and unaided schools underscore the value of institutional support, participatory decision-making, and professional development opportunities. Future research could build on these findings by exploring specific dimensions of empowerment-such as instructional autonomy or professional growth opportunities-in greater detail and examining their direct effects on teacher performance and student achievement. Such efforts will contribute to a deeper understanding of how empowerment can be systematically integrated into educational reforms to strengthen India's school system.

Conflict of Interest: Authors declare no conflict of interest

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