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DEVELOPING AN INSTRUMENT TO MEASURE AUTONOMY: URBAN MIDDLE-CLASS WOMEN IN DELHI

Mythri Prasad-Aleyamma and Swati Dutta

ABSTRACT

This article develops an instrument to measure women's autonomy in India, specifically focusing on urban women from households that have access to economic resources. It points toward the importance of understanding and measuring the autonomy of women among India's rapidly growing middle classes. The article develops two kinds of measures based on a primary survey of women in Delhi. First, a Relative Autonomy Index (RAI), which is an adaptation of the RAI developed by Ana Vaz et al. (2013, "Measuring Autonomy: Evidence from Bangladesh." OPHI Working Papers 38a. Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, Oxford University), asks questions designed to understand specific characteristics and circumstances of life for middle-class women in North India. The second is an ambient measure that indexes important aspects of family, peer group, and resource use. The adapted RAI is then examined in relation to the ambient measure, as well as to measures of psychological well-being and self-efficacy, in addition to being tested for validity and reliability.

KEYWORDS

Agency, autonomy, empowerment, gender inequality, feminist economics, women and development

JEL Codes: B54, B23, O1

HIGHLIGHTS

- The study adapts the Relative Autonomy Index for urban middle-class women in India.
- It adds lifestyle and family norms to measure autonomy beyond income and assets.
- The validated index links women's autonomy to psychological and subjective well-being.

- Education, age at marriage, and occupation increase women’s relative autonomy.
- The study calls for more nuanced measures of women’s agency within interpersonal dynamics.

INTRODUCTION

The measurement of women’s autonomy in the Global South poses conceptual questions that are often intractable in an empirical setting. Literature on women’s autonomy and empowerment in India includes a range of measurements, dimensions, and determinants of women’s autonomy. These studies highlight that correlates of women’s autonomy are women’s earnings and family income, dowry and assets owned, spousal education, caste, religion, and region (Dyson and Moore 1983; Jejeebhoy and Sathar 2001; Anderson and Eswaran 2009). India has traditionally been a patriarchal society where women’s status has been subordinated to that of men in both private and public spaces. In particular, women face discrimination when accessing material resources, healthcare, and nutrition. Women also have lower autonomy in decision making and lower agency in terms of education, employment, and political participation. Studies have found that empowerment and autonomy among women are key catalysts to better healthcare access and utilization (Iyer, Sen, and George 2007; Mistry, Galal, and Lu 2009; Rustagi 2010; Arokiasamy and Goli 2012; Goli and Pou 2014). Akhilesh Yadav et al. (2019) have examined the dynamics of women’s autonomy, particularly their decision-making abilities, drawing insights from the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4). Their analysis highlights the persistent lack of autonomy and low capacity to make independent decisions, particularly regarding their healthcare and mobility, despite high levels of involvement in decision making with their husbands. Another study found that higher autonomy is associated with a decrease in the odds of unintended pregnancy, highlighting the importance of empowering women in household decision making (Ram, Kumar, and Kumari 2022).

This literature also reveals that Indian women share many of these constraints to autonomy with their counterparts in other developing countries. Women in developing countries often face constraints to their autonomy in healthcare decision making, with studies primarily focused on reproductive health showing that factors such as age, education, and income play a significant role (Osamor and Grady 2016). Women’s autonomy in sexual and reproductive health decisions is closely linked to media exposure and socioeconomic factors, as evidenced by a study analyzing data from Nepal. Factors such as media exposure, higher education, wealth quintile, and certain ethnic backgrounds were found to positively influence women’s autonomy in this context, highlighting the

importance of addressing socioeconomic barriers and enhancing media exposure to empower women in decision making regarding their sexual and reproductive health rights (Nepal et al. 2023).

It is widely acknowledged that one key strategy for reducing gender disparities and enhancing development outcomes is to increase women's voice and agency (Vaz, Pratley, and Alkire 2016). This article examines urban women's control over personal decisions, domain-specific autonomy, and their ability to change aspects of their lives at the individual and community levels, and how all of this has impacted their psychological and subjective well-being. Thomas de Hoop et al. (2014) looked at autonomy and its impact on subjective well-being of the women who participated in Self Help Groups (SHGs) in Odisha. The study found positive impacts on autonomy, but analyses of heterogeneous effects suggested the negative impact of SHG membership on subjective well-being in villages with relatively conservative gender norms. Patriarchal norms are remarkably resilient and reproduce and adapt when faced with institutional shifts and modern forms of power, like the state-led Self-Help Groups, as pointed out by J. Devika and Binitha V. Thampi (2007) in their study of Kudumbashree in Kerala. Our study relocates the study of autonomy to the urban sphere, where we are interested in self-help groups in a different form known as "kitty parties" that cater to middle-class women. Are these urban settings dens of conservative gender ideologies? We do not make any inferences to that effect except to show through our qualitative analysis that women describe their lives in terms of negotiation and compromise in the wider context of patriarchal rule.

In pursuing measurement of autonomy in an urban setting in India, we are inspired by the seminal work of Naila Kabeer (1999) that highlighted the need to integrate structural parameters of individual choice in the analysis of women's empowerment. Access to resources – material, human, and social – is a precondition for autonomy and agency. But what happens when there is substantial *proximity* to resources in the form of increased household income? A related, but little acknowledged, question is the epistemic relationship between women's empowerment and the logic of development. Women's empowerment has been conceptualized as a question within the larger debates on development tracing its relationship with the stage of development that an economy is in. This has created a conceptual coupling of poverty and empowerment where the exclusive focus on poor women camouflaged deeper and more pervasive patriarchal structures. The measure of autonomy we create is an index of autonomy that controls for proximity to resources – the women who participated in the survey were all from households that had an income level that could take care of necessities and could ensure a comfortable life in an Indian metropolis like Delhi.

The measurement of women's empowerment continues to pose challenges to scholars and policymakers. As Kabeer (1999) points out, disembedded from their context, indicators of autonomy and empowerment can be misleading and lend themselves to a variety of different and contradictory meanings. Studies have shown that a woman's relative income can have a positive effect on the level of autonomy she enjoys in the household and personal decision making (Mishra and Sam 2016). Another strand points toward a consistent positive association between completing secondary education and beyond and indicators of empowerment (Kabeer et al. 2013; Hanmer and Klugman 2016). Our effort was to combine these insights to current measures of autonomy by adapting them to the context of urban women from households that have crossed economic barriers. We construct an adapted *Relative Autonomy Index* (RAI; Vaz et al. 2013; Vaz, Pratley, and Alkire 2015) that measures autonomy of middle-class women through psychometric methods. Following Ana Vaz et al. (2019: 3), when we measure the autonomy of a woman, what we measure is "the extent to which the motivation for her behavior in a specific domain is fairly autonomous as opposed to somewhat controlled. Thus, the RAI can be taken as a direct measure of the individual's ability to act on what she values." To further elucidate these relationships between autonomy and other behavioral aspects, the article links psychological and subjective well-being to these measures of autonomy. It also constructs an *Ambient Measure* that evaluates the context in which the question of autonomy is posed. In addition to this, the article discusses questions of autonomy and well-being based on qualitative interviews.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Solava Ibrahim and Sabina Alkire (2007: 383) point out that "the concept of empowerment is related to terms such as agency, autonomy, self-direction, self-determination, liberation, participation, mobilization and self-confidence." Agency and autonomy can be measured with respect to the different domains of life. In this study, we will examine women's control over personal decisions; domain-specific autonomy; and the ability to change aspects of one's life at the individual and community levels. We exclusively focus on autonomy of women from households with middle to high income as the literature that focuses on the processes and practices of autonomy among women from well-off families is scant. The exclusive focus on poor women from the Global South in the literature on women's empowerment fails to recognize the pervasiveness of patriarchal relations that transcend class boundaries and display remarkable resilience in the face of structural transformation in the economy. This study aims to address this lacuna by measuring middle-class women's sense of autonomy as they perceive it.

In this article, we look at gender as embedded not only in individuals but throughout social life (Risman 2004). Empowerment includes cognitive and psychological elements, such as a women's understanding of her condition of subordination and the causes of such conditions (Dandona 2012). Gender empowerment is a multi-dimensional process which enables women to realize their potential and power in all spheres of life. Empowerment means individuals acquiring the power to think and act freely, exercise choice and fulfill their potential as full and equal members of society. The ability of women to make decisions that affect the circumstances of their own lives is an essential aspect of empowerment. Empowerment is intimately connected to women developing agency in the face of patriarchal social relations. Agency can be seen as the capacity and ability of the subject to resist, negotiate, and transform certain forms of power that work on the subject both internally and externally (Hinterberger 2013).

Drawing on Amartya Sen, Sabina Alkire (2008) points out that agency involves a plurality of goals and aims. Further, it may be other-regarding in the sense that goals that pertain to others, including those of community or family, may be more important for a person than those directly concerning his/her own well-being. She argues that agency is related to goals that people value and have reasons to value. These two aspects of agency, that it should reflect what people value and that it *could be* other-regarding, have special significance as far as women are concerned. What women value might be influenced by patriarchal rules and customs. This is not unrelated to the regard for family and community and their interests. There might be complex pathways between how women value their individual goals and interests of the community/family on the one hand and patriarchal social relations on the other.

In thinking through these questions, we were informed by those strands of feminist literature in South Asia that interrogated the experiences of women from different caste and religious backgrounds on the one hand and the stability of notions of "community" on the other. South Asian feminist literature, especially autobiographies and biographies, have emphasized the pervasiveness of patriarchal violence and the ways in which caste and religion co-constitute the specific form of patriarchal oppression and violence in South Asia. As Sharmila Rege (2003) points out, while dowry deaths and violent control and regulation of their mobility and sexuality by the family are more frequently experienced among upper caste women, Dalit women are more likely to face the collective and public threat of rape, sexual assault, and public violence at the workplace and in public. The normative and structuring role that patriarchy plays is revealed through testimonies of everyday life in South Asia from the perspective of women and trans women. The meaning of autonomy and agency of women

is embedded in the material context of family, caste, and community (see also Loomba and Lukose 2012; Raj 2013).

We work with a definition of autonomy as a specific aspect of empowerment that creates pathways toward self-directed action and transformative forms of agency (Kabeer 2005; Hossain, Asadullah, and Kambhampati 2019). Female autonomy is the capacity for a woman to achieve well-being and a role in decision making. Most of the previous literature used proxy variables like education, ownership and control over assets, employment status, and control over income to measure female agency. However, these variables need not be accurate representations of empowerment (Vaz et al. 2013; Vaz, Pratley, and Alkire 2015). Further, previous research on decision making questions captures a woman's self-reported decision making on her earned income, health, and freedom to visit relatives and friends (Kishor and Subaiya 2008). However, these do not examine whether a woman values making or not making certain decisions. It also does not capture constraints to agency that might arise outside the household. The study incorporates the methods proposed by Ana Vaz, Pierre Pratley, and Sabina Alkire (2015) and Vaz et al. (2013) and adapts them to the question of autonomy in the context of women from urban middle-class families in India.

The authors are aware that middle class is a term that is fraught with ambiguities and definitional opaqueness. But our attempt was to use household income as a proxy of economic barriers to autonomy. There is no official definition of the middle class in India; thus, quantifying this demographic group yields varying results. A McKinsey Global Institute study using National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) data used the definition of real annual household disposable incomes between 200,000 and one million rupees (Ablett et al. 2007). At the other end of the spectrum, a study by Martin Ravallion (2008) estimated using the median poverty line in seventy countries as a lower bound (US \$2) and the United States poverty line (US \$13) as an upper bound. Ravallion (2008) stated that "the developing world's middle class was defined as those who were not deemed 'poor' by the standards of developing countries but were still poor by the standards of rich countries." The Credit Suisse report (Credit Suisse 2015) has estimated the middle class on the basis of their wealth rather than their income. The more relevant definition for the Indian context was given by Abhijit V. Banerjee and Esther Duflo (2008), which was similar to Ravallion's (2008) definition. Banerjee and Duflo (2008), in the context of developing countries, considered the income range of \$2 to \$10 to be classified as the middle class. The study has used a more realistic and contemporary lower boundary of Rs 75,000 per month income to define "middle-class households in Delhi" along with ownership of houses or rented houses in a housing society, the number of rooms in these houses, and ownership of other valuable assets like a car, among others. Taking

into consideration these past definitions and our knowledge of living in New Delhi, it appears that 75,000 rupees (1,046 US \$1,046 at the average exchange rate in 2018) is a lower boundary that keeps a household free from economic want and leaves room for additional expenses that make life comfortable after accounting for rents, taxes, and the necessities of life.

STUDY DESIGN

This study is based on a primary survey. The main purpose of the investigation was twofold. First, the aim was to collect an informational basis adequate to build a direct domain-specific indicator of relative autonomy. The second objective was to allow the empirical investigation to address the association between such an indicator and the subjective and psychological well-being of the women. The field survey was conducted in Delhi, the capital of the Union of India. The population that was in focus was married women from households that have middle to high incomes in urban areas. By focusing on women who are educated and who belong to households that have middle or high incomes, the study aimed to quantify the specific factors and processes through which middle-class women's autonomy was activated. The respondents were to have a minimum education of class 12 and a minimum household monthly income of Rs. 75,000 and a maximum of Rs. 2.5 lakhs (1 lakh is equal to 100,000 Rs). Further, information was collected regarding ownership of apartments/houses, vehicles, and other assets to confirm the class characteristics of the respondents. We restrict our sample to married women in the age group of 18–49 years.

Sampling procedures

Supervisors and enumerators who were female masters degree students from universities in Delhi were trained in the administration of the questionnaire. They were from backgrounds similar to the respondents, from middle-class and upper-middle-class families in Delhi. The survey team was instructed on the questionnaires to ensure an overall understanding of the main questions, as well as how to spot-check the responses through qualitative discussions. A pilot survey was conducted in the month of April 2018, and data collection was conducted during June to August 2018.

Stage 1: Stratification within the city: At the outset of our sampling, we accessed the property tax classification of the apartment complexes that are known as housing colonies; this information is available at the Municipality of Delhi database.¹ It categorizes housing colonies into property classes A to H based on ten parameters including capital value of land, rental value, road access, and other physical amenities (Joshi, Pradhan, and Sidhwani 2016). This was used as a proxy for different class categories of high,

upper middle-, and lower middle-income households. The categories of A and B were used as a proxy for identifying the upper-middle income and categories C and D for middle income.

Stage 2: Selection of Locality: From these four categories of housing colonies (A, B, C, D), we listed the wards where more than ten housing colonies (belonging to A, B, C, D) fall, randomly chose eight wards from the listing, and trained enumerators to approach Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) of housing colonies that fall within each selected ward.

Stage 3: Listing of the Households: In the next step, the listing of the households was done based on the information on the presence of married women who are household heads, spouses of household heads, and daughters/daughters-in-law of household heads or members within the age group of 18–49 and the highest education of the married women in the household. Further information was also collected regarding whether they owned their apartments, cars, or other four-wheel vehicles to justify the high- and middle-income classes.

Stage 4: Identification of the Sample Households: After listing, we selected seventy-five households from each ward and arrived at the sample of 600 households from the eight wards.

Variables

The purpose of the RAI is to understand the domains in which women generally make decisions and what motivates them to make those decisions. The present study includes the following domains, which are important in the context of urban areas: household domestic duties (cooking and cleaning), taking up employment, participating in kitty parties (women's saving clubs typically associated with upper middle-class women in India, similar to chit funds, commonly held in the afternoons on a monthly basis), having children, bringing home women's parents to live with them, requiring permission to go out, household big purchases, and living with in-laws. In arriving at these domains of decision making, we adapted the ones that were used by Vaz, Pratley, and Alkire (2015) to suit urban conditions in North India.

The survey also collects indicators on the decision-making power of the women as well as their psychological and subjective well-being. Indicators for decision-making power of the women include deciding how much to spend from the household's overall income, household's minor purchases, household's major purchases, when to have children, and children's education among others. These variables are binary in nature. The mean score is calculated for overall decision-making power.

Psychological well-being related indicators are given in Appendix Table A4, which addresses satisfaction in three domains: autonomy, competence and relatedness. Psychological well-being was measured on a 5-point scale:

1 = not at all satisfied to 5 = very satisfied. Based on these we have developed the psychological well-being score for each domain. Subjective well-being was adopted from International Wellbeing Group (2006). The domains were living standards, health, sense of achievement in life, relationships, community connectedness, and security. Satisfaction was measured on a 5-point scale: 1 = not at all satisfied to 5 = very satisfied.

By taking the average of these domains, the average score of Psychological and Subjective Well-Being (PSWB) of the individual is calculated.

Our survey module also includes an understanding of the self-efficacy of women on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = not at all sure to 5 = completely sure) regarding whether a woman could ask her husband to do regular household duties, ask her husband to do household duties if she wanted to, visit a friend or a family member, ask her husband to do household duties if she wants his help, and he is not doing anything else at that time. A mean score is also generated for self-efficacy of the women.

Construction of the index, validity, and reliability

We have used quantitative methods to calculate the Relative Autonomy Index. There are three dimensions in our autonomy data. Each of these dimensions reflects one of the latent characteristics that we are attempting to measure: external, introjected, and autonomous motivations. The study has used a fixed scoring scheme to compute the Relative Autonomy Index. This employed a weighted sum of Likert scale scores. Statements reflecting external regulation were scored -3 per level of agreement, whereas statements indicating introjected regulation scored -2 per level of agreement. Statements reflecting autonomous regulation scored $+3$ per level of agreement. The type of motivation was asked in a 5-point scale: 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The final RAI score was the weighted sum of the Pearson's scores in the motivation subscales.

- External motivation – Behavior is controlled by specific external contingencies and people behave to attain desired consequences due to tangible rewards or to avoid punishment.
- Introjected motivation – Control of behavior comes from contingent consequences administered by individuals to themselves
- Autonomous: Motivated by and reflecting your own values and/or interests (adapted from Deci and Ryan 2002)

Construct validity and factor analysis

The study has used construct validity to determine how well a test measures what it is supposed to measure. Construct validity was assessed using factor

analysis. For each domain of decision making, exploratory factor analysis with rotate axis was conducted. The Bartlett's test of sphericity and Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure were used to check if there is sufficient correlation between variables and if factor analysis is appropriate with our data.

Convergent validity

Convergent validity is performed by comparing the final RAI score across characteristics expected to vary with empowerment status (age, education, decision-making power, self-efficacy).

Reliability test

The reliability test is used to understand the consistency or stability of measurement. Test–retest reliability was checked by re-interviewing 200 selected women from the same sample. Further, Cronbach's alpha is used to check the internal consistency of data.

Correlation between RAI and other indicators of women's autonomy

The study has tried to investigate the relationship between relative autonomy and decision-making power, age, and education of women. This study has also explored the relationship between RAI and psychological well-being and subjective well-being of individuals based on the Pearson correlation.

Determinants of RAI

A multivariate linear regression model is used to understand the determinants of RAI in the context of an urban area. Here, the dependent variable is the RAI score, and the independent variables are age of the respondent, education of the respondent, occupation status of the respondent, age at marriage, monthly income of the household, family type, and the respondent's decision-making power, among others.

$$\begin{aligned}
 RAI_i = & \alpha + \beta_1 Age_i + \beta_2 Edu_i + \beta_3 Occupation_i + \beta_4 hhincome_i \\
 & + \beta_5 Agemarriage_i + \beta_6 no\ children_i + \beta_7 spousal\ agegap_i \\
 & + \beta_8 family\ type_i + \beta_9 decision\ making_i + \beta_{10} social\ group_i \\
 & + \beta_{11} ownership\ of\ house_i + e_i
 \end{aligned} \tag{1}$$

Further study has also explored the impact of RAI on the individual's psychological and subjective well-being. However, there may be reverse causality from psychological and subjective well-being to the relative

autonomy of the women. It may be possible that women with better psychological well-being have more autonomy and value their own judgments. It should be borne in mind that this article is not looking at the causality between RAI and the well-being of the women.

$$\begin{aligned}
 PSWB_i = & \alpha + \beta_1 Age_i + \beta_2 Edu_i + \beta_3 Occupation_i + \beta_4 hhincome_i \\
 & + \beta_5 Agemarriage_i + \beta_6 no\ children_i + \beta_7 spousal\ agegap_i \\
 & + \beta_8 family\ type_i + \beta_9 decision\ making_i + \beta_{10} RAI_i + \beta_{11} social\ group_i \\
 & + \beta_{12} ownership\ of\ house_i + e_i
 \end{aligned} \tag{2}$$

Ambient measure

Ambient measure evaluates the context in which the question of autonomy is posed. It is a measure that attempts to expose the resilience of patriarchal norms in a modern and urban context. The normative and structural aspects of patriarchy rooted in caste and purity regimes are hard to capture quantitatively as they are the very atmosphere and ambience in which women pursue their goals and intentions. The ambient measure is designed to capture the material-ideological context and is calculated based on three attributes/traits: family traits, friendship/peer group traits, and economic and social traits. These three indexes would be calculated using Multiple Correspondence Analysis that is appropriate for discrete data as measuring ambient traits involves observing the presence and absence of characteristics. The score at dimension 1 is considered for further analysis. The correlation between RAI and this measure was computed to ascertain the material context and was further proof of the validity of the adapted RAI.

Family traits: The study was focused on traits in families that create a conducive atmosphere for women to live their lives freely. This involved looking into the enforcement of curfews for women, the presence of women who explicitly challenged gender roles in the extended family, and the frequency of disputes regarding work sharing and living arrangements. The study attaches value to the emergence of conflicts and disputes in families as these are manifestations of expressions of dissent and difference. A household where disputes emerge, different opinions are expressed, and relationships are reconsidered and dissolved is thought of as a household that is likely to encourage the autonomy and empowerment of women. The intergenerational and transformative aspect of this attribute is reflected in the questionnaire we have created (Appendix Table A3).

Peer group: Peer group is defined as extended networks and intensive engagements that women form with other people. Peer groups involving men and non-family members will have a greater value than those with only family members and women. This is tricky terrain because

peer groups with family members might have a greater economic role, whereas peer groups with friends will have a greater meaning in terms of autonomy. Quantification was done by developing measures to evaluate the effectiveness and intentionality women bring into these groups.

Social and economic traits: This trait captures women's access and effective ownership of social and economic resources by asking questions about use and access to such resources. These questions do not measure social and economic resources or status but allow us a sense of the facility with which women use resources. The questions that were relevant in understanding this ambient trait would be the trajectory of employment of these women and, in the case of unemployed/non-earning women, how they use their economic resources to the end of developing autonomy and enhancing relationships and projects. This measure is not based on perception, but on the presence or absence of certain attributes and traits in the family and peer group.

RESULTS

Demographic and socioeconomic characteristics

The survey collected information from a random sample of 600 households. Tables 1 and 2 present the basic demographic and economic status of the respondents. Among them, 88 percent were Hindu, and the rest were from Muslim, Sikh, Christian, and Jain religions. Out of the total surveyed households, 88 percent have reported belonging to the general category, 7 percent have declared belonging to Other Backward Caste (OBC), and the rest belonged to Scheduled Caste (4.17 percent). The overrepresentation of Hindu upper caste (General category) and the underrepresentation of OBCs, Muslims, and Dalits among the middle-class in Delhi is not unexpected, as inequality has been shown to be along the lines of caste and religion in India (Mosse 2018; Deshpande 2017; Thorat and Madheswaran 2018). The underrepresentation of Muslims in the sample also stems from their residential segregation (Sachar Committee Report 2006). Raphael Susewind (2017: 298) points out regarding the segregation of Muslims in Delhi, citing Laurent Gayer (2012) that “the dynamics of “enclavement” in this locality [...] have as much to do with class as they do with religion.” The majority of the respondents were in the age group of 31–53 years (34 percent), followed by the age group of 41–5 years (27 percent). Most of the respondents had graduation (39 percent) or postgraduation degrees (32 percent). In terms of the occupational status of the respondents, almost half of the respondents have reported that they were unemployed (44 percent), meaning they were out of the labor force/not working for income or wages, and around 38 percent of the respondents have reported that they have either government or private jobs.

Table 1 Basic demographics of the respondents (%)

<i>Age (years)</i>	
20–25	2.58
26–30	14.11
31–35	33.91
36–40	19.79
41–45	26.90
Caste	
Scheduled Caste (SC)	4.17
Scheduled Tribes (ST)	0.52
Other Backward Castes (OBC)	7.32
General	87.98
Religion	
Hindu	88.64
Muslim	1.55
Sikh	3.79
Jain	2.41
Christian	3.27
Others	0.34
Family type	
Nuclear Family	65.75
Extended Family with parents-in-law	30.12
Extended family with their own parents	1.55
Others	2.58

Source: Field Survey, 2018 (April to August).

Family structures were diverse, with one-third residing with extended family members and the remainder in nuclear families. Around 40 percent came from affluent households earning over one lakh rupees monthly, while 33 percent of the respondents had monthly income that was between 75,000 rupees to one lakh. Finally, 65 percent owned their homes, with the rest in rented or employer-provided housing.

Relative autonomy index in the context of urban Delhi

A fixed scoring method was used to construct a relative autonomy index which assessed the autonomy of the women (Table 3). Positive scores indicate autonomous behavior of women, whereas negative scores indicate either external or introjected behavior of women. By using the equal gap method, we have categorized women as low, medium, and high in their autonomy scores. It is seen that 33 percent of the respondents belonged to the low relative autonomy score, 46 percent belonged to medium autonomy

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Table 2 Education and economic status of respondents (%)

<i>Education status</i>	
Below graduation	17.21
Graduate	38.73
Postgraduate	31.67
Professional Degree and Higher Research	12.39
<i>Activity status</i>	
Government job	17.73
Private job	19.62
Own Business	6.54
Student	3.10
Unemployed/unpaid household work	44.41
Others/VRS	8.6
<i>Household Income</i>	
75,000	25.65
75,000–100,000	33.73
100,000–150,000	22.38
150,000–250,000	18.24
<i>Home Ownership status</i>	
Owned	65.40
Employer provided/Govt provided	18.24
Rented/leased Accommodation	16.35

Source: Field Survey, 2018 (April to August).

score, and 21 percent belonged to high autonomy score. It is also seen that with the increase in the education level and with any government or private job, the percentage of women with a high relative autonomy score also increased. This confirms earlier studies where employment was seen to have a crucial role in increasing women's participation in decision making within the household (Khatwani 2017). With an increase in household income, the percentage of women with high relative autonomy increased. It is interesting that even among the relatively well-off, an increase in wealth can have a positive role in women's autonomy. As expected, more women in nuclear families have a high relative autonomy score. This signals the persistence of the adverse effects of patri-local extended families on women's autonomy.

Construct validity, reliability, and test–retest

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) validated the RAI, confirming a three-dimensional structure consistent with the Self Determination Theory. Factor analysis revealed distinct dimensions of external, introjected, and

Table 3 Status of relative autonomy in Delhi (%)

	<i>Low</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Education</i>			
Below graduate	43	47	10
Graduate	38	42	20
Postgraduate	25	49	26
Professional degree and higher research	22	44	34
<i>Activity status</i>			
Government job	15	52	33
Private job	10	58	32
Unemployed	62	28	10
Others	53	35	12
<i>Household type</i>			
Nuclear	28	43	29
Extended	35	48	17
<i>Household monthly Income</i>			
75,000	48	40	12
75,000–100,000	42	40	18
100,000–150,000	24	52	24
Above 150,000	18	51	31
Total	33	46	21

Source: Field Survey, 2018 (April to August).

autonomous motivation across decision-making domains. The Bartlett's test of sphericity and the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure were used to check if there is sufficient correlation between variables and if factor analysis is appropriate with our data. According to the Kaiser Criterion, in all the domains of decision making, there are three factors. On an average across domains, the first factor accounts for approximately 45 percent of the variance, the second factor explains 30 percent of the variance, and the third factor explains 25 percent of the variance (Table 4). Factor analysis confirms that the three factor solutions were more consistent across all the domains. We generated scores henceforth referred to as external motivation, internal motivation, and autonomous motivation. A statement of these dimensions is given in Appendix Table 1. However, factors are different in each of the domains. For example, in employment, in taking decisions on big household purchases and in having children, women have made decisions autonomously whereas in cooking, participating in kitty parties, and asking permission to go out, women are mostly motivated by external factors. Furthermore, bringing respondents' parents to stay in their homes, staying with in-laws, and cleaning mostly

Table 4 Variance extracted from factor loading

	% of variance		
	<i>External</i>	<i>Introjected</i>	<i>Autonomous</i>
Cooking	45	30	25
Cleaning	33	47	20
Took up employment	15	37	48
Participated in a kitty party	42	35	23
Having children	38	17	45
Bringing my own parents	16	45	39
Asking permission to go out	47	31	22
Household big purchase	17	38	43
Staying with in-laws	39	40	21

Source: Field Survey, 2018 (April to August).

fall into introjected motivation. To summarize, while autonomy was evident in certain domains, like employment and significant household purchases, external motivations predominated in others, such as seeking permission to go out or participating in reproductive activities like cooking. These are self-evident to anyone familiar with gendered roles and expectations in India, but in the context of measurement of autonomy, it lends credence to the soundness of the construct.

Cronbach's Alpha coefficients demonstrated acceptable to good internal consistency within most motivation subscales, affirming the reliability of the RAI (Appendix Table A2).

The study also revisited the 200 respondents to check whether their responses in RAI domain were consistent with the previous response. Test-retest analysis further confirmed the consistency and reliability of responses within the RAI domains, with high canonical correlations indicating stability over time (Appendix Table A3).

Correlations within areas of decision making

We have calculated the bivariate correlation between the RAI score and other predictive indicators of women's empowerment to validate our RAI score (Table 5). It is seen that with the increase in age, women have a better relative autonomy score. Furthermore, with the increase in education level, there is an increase in relative autonomy in most of the domains. Additionally, women with better decision-making power also have a high relative autonomy score. However, the correlation between the RAI and self-efficacy to ask the husband to help with household duties is relatively low. The observed discrepancy in the correlation between the RAI and

Table 5 Correlation between Relative Autonomy Index and other empowerment indicators

	<i>Age</i>	<i>Self-efficacy</i>	<i>Decision making power</i>	<i>Education</i>
Cooking	0.38***	0.08	0.29*	0.39*
Cleaning	0.37**	0.09	0.31**	0.32**
Having employment	0.43***	0.17**	0.27*	0.47*
Participated in Kitty party	0.10	0.02	0.15**	0.25**
Having Children	0.21**	0.15**	0.18**	0.38**
Bringing own parents	0.19**	0.08	0.13**	0.23**
Staying with in laws	0.15*	0.09	0.25**	0.15**
Asking permission to go out	0.30**	0.07	0.28**	0.18**
Deciding on big household purchases	0.47***	0.008	0.28**	0.18**
RAI	0.52**	0.29**	0.54***	0.44***

Source: Field Survey, 2018 (April to August).

Note: ***, **, * denote significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent levels, respectively.

self-efficacy in requesting the husband's assistance with household duties warrants further examination. A potential explanation for this finding is the possibility of limitations in the design of the questionnaire. It is plausible that the questions assessing self-efficacy in household negotiations may not fully capture the complex interplay of cultural norms and relational dynamics that influence women's agency in this context. Therefore, the low correlation observed may reflect the inadequacy of our current measures rather than a true absence of an association between self-efficacy and autonomy.

Social and cultural norms play a significant role in shaping women's behavior and perceptions within the household. In many cultural contexts, traditional gender roles may constrain women's ability to assert their needs and preferences, impacting their perceived self-efficacy in requesting assistance from their husbands. Thus, while self-efficacy is an essential component of autonomy, its association with relative autonomy scores may be influenced by wider socioeconomic factors that affect women's agency in the domestic sphere.

The study found positive associations between RAI scores and indicators of psychological and subjective well-being, with autonomy in various domains correlating with higher levels of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Employment, participation in social activities, and autonomy in decision making were associated with increased subjective well-being among women. However, staying with in-laws and seeking permission to

Table 6 Pearson correlation between the Relative Autonomy Index and subjective and psychological well-being indicators

<i>RAI dimension</i>	<i>Subjective well-being</i>	<i>Psychological Well-being</i>		
		<i>Autonomy</i>	<i>Relatedness</i>	<i>Competence</i>
Cooking	0.1	0.18*	0.13*	0.16*
Cleaning	0.12	0.17*	0.18*	0.19*
Having employment	0.36***	0.35***	0.59***	0.48***
Participated in Kitty party	0.31**	0.21**	0.38**	0.18**
Having Children	0.37**	0.19**	0.06	0.08
Bringing own parents	0.18**	0.42***	0.17**	0.05
Staying with in laws	0.07	− 0.25**	0.17**	0.02
Asking permission to go out	− 0.05	− 0.28***	0.21**	0.22**
Deciding on a big household purchase	0.12*	0.35***	0.12*	0.13*

Source: Field Survey, 2018 (April to August).

Note: ***, **, * denote significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent levels, respectively.

go out were negatively associated with autonomy, indicating the impact of familial and societal norms on women's well-being (Table 6).

Empirical estimation of RAI

The multivariate regression estimates of the determinants of RAI are presented in Table 7. Our results indicate that women who are older tend to be more autonomously motivated than other women, *ceteris paribus*. Even when controlling for other variables, older women (above 40 years old) tend to have higher relative autonomy. To see the effect of age at marriage of the women after controlling for other independent variables, the study found that there is a positive relation between RAI and women's age at marriage, but the significance level was only 10 percent. The analysis also supports that women's education is associated with higher relative autonomy. Women's relative autonomy seems to be positively related to their employment status. Self-efficacy of women, also, has a positive relationship with women's autonomy. Further it is seen that women in nuclear families tend to have higher relative autonomy. However, the spousal age gap, ownership of a house, and number of children are not significant in our analysis.

The multivariate regression estimates of the impact of RAI on PSWB are presented in Table 8. Our result indicates that education has a positive and significant impact on PSWB. The result also indicates that the higher the

Table 7 Determinants of RAI: Multivariate regression model

<i>Independent variables</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>
Social group (SC, ST, OBC as base)	
General	0.08*
Age	
20–25 (base)	
26–30	– 0.08
31–35	– 0.16**
36–40	– 0.14**
41–45	0.20***
Age at marriage	0.26*
Number of children	0.06
Spousal age gap	0.07
Education	
Below graduate (base)	
Graduate	– 0.09
Postgraduate	0.19***
Occupation	
Unemployed (base)	
Employed	0.16***
Business	0.08
Monthly Income	
75,000 (base)	
75,000–100,000	0.07
100,000–150,000	0.19***
Above 150,000	0.20**
Family type	
Nuclear	0.30**
Ownership of house (rented as base)	
Owned	0.07
Employer provided/Govt provided	0.05
Self-efficacy	0.20***
Respondent's mother's education (secondary and below as base)	
Higher secondary and above	0.86
Constant	1.09**
R ²	0.40
Number of observations	600

Note: ***, **, * denote significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent levels, respectively.

household per capita income, the higher the PSWB of women. It is also found that PSWB is higher among the women who stayed in houses owned by the families that they are part of instead of ones rented or provided by

the employer. PSWB is also higher among the women who are employed. The result also showed that RAI is strongly positive and significant in influencing PSWB. However, PSWB is lower among women who are living in nuclear families. The higher the spousal age gap, that is, the older the husband, the lower the PSWB of women. This result is in line with evidence from other studies that found a large age gap between husband and wife to be a significant part of exogamous marriage regimes in North India that have a restrictive effect on women's choices and well-being (Chakrabarti 2019).

Ambient measure

The ambient measure evaluated the family, peer group, and social circumstances from a gender relations point of view. It valued women's ability to explore relationships outside the family and initiate and negotiate conflict apart from material conditions. It is instructive to look at Appendix Table A5. While 35 percent own property alone, only 24 percent have gone out without or unsupervised by their family members in the past six months. In constructing this index based on questions that are not exhaustive but illustrative and responsive to the conditions of urban women in India, the authors were inspired by what they have observed over the years in middle-class households in urban India during field research that signaled rapid improvements in standards of living but persistence of gendered norms and expectations. For example, in asking the question "Have you expressed a difference of opinion with your spouse in the presence of extended family?", we were motivated by our observation that many women who are otherwise autonomous in terms of their choices and decisions might defer to older men in their households and would desist from freely expressing their opinions. In asking questions like "Have you gone out unsupervised by family members in the past six months (not for work)?" or "Have you had a meeting (coffee/to discuss work/old friend) with male friend(s) in the past six months or after marriage, whichever is later?" (28.35 percent said yes), we were interested in the mobility practices of women (Phadke, Khan, and Ranade 2011) in these middle-class households and how that correlates with the RAI. To give another example, while 51.24 percent of the women owned a car or a motorcycle, only 34.82 percent could drive. Some of these questions come from the recognition that women negotiate patriarchal contexts to translate their financial or occupational status to attain material aims. For example, "Have your parents substantially (more than a lakh) helped you financially after marriage to buy a house, land, a car, or any other asset?" (22.88 percent said yes) is a question that can point to both coercive and consensual practices of engagement with women's natal families. But we feel that such engagement itself has some positive effects on the women's lives.

Table 8 Impact of RAI on PSWB: Multivariate regression model

<i>Independent variables</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>
Social group (SC, ST, OBC as base)	
Others	0.16*
Age	
20–25 (base)	
26–30	– 0.10
31–35	– 0.21**
36–40	– 0.19**
41–45	0.20***
Age at marriage	0.30***
Number of children	0.08
Spousal age gap	– 0.09*
Education of respondents	
Below Graduate (base)	
Graduate	– 0.10
Postgraduate	0.20***
Occupation	
Unemployed (base)	
Employed	0.20***
Business	0.02
Monthly Income	
75,000 (base)	
75,000–100,000	0.03
100,000–150,000	0.10***
Above 150,000	0.30**
Family type	
Nuclear	– 0.06
Ownership of house (rented as base)	
Owned	0.20**
Employer provided/Govt provided	0.20
Self-efficacy	0.19***
Respondent's mother Education (Secondary and below as base)	
Higher secondary and above	0.09
RAI	0.29***
Constant	1.80**
R ²	0.56
Number of observations	600

Note: ***, **, * denote significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent levels, respectively.

The RAI score is negatively correlated with all three traits of the ambient score, thus pointing to a possibly complex and non-linear relationship between indicators of autonomy and indicators of economic and social resources and family and peer group traits (Table 9). It points to the possibility that when there is family pressure, in most of the domains, women make decisions motivated by external factors or introjected regulation. There is a significant positive relationship between the ambient trait “peer group”, which captures broader patterns of involvement in social life, and the RAI domain “participated in kitty party,” which is on expected lines highlighting the supportive role of peers in the neighborhood. The positive relationship between the peer group index and autonomy in having children also indicates the significance of peer support. The negative relationship between access to socioeconomic assets and the relative autonomy in different domains confirms the results in the existing literature that argue that increased access to assets may not translate into agency and the perception of autonomy in the same way for different individuals, given different structures of constraints (Kabeer et al. 2013; Hanmer and Klugman 2016). These results point to the need to develop more robust measures of social networking and peer group support in the urban context that leads to positive outcomes in autonomy. Another related question has to do with the pathways between actual autonomy and a perception of a lack of autonomy. To put it differently, can a woman attain autonomy without experiencing a lack of autonomy first? This alerts us to questions of consciousness in relation to autonomy where awareness and articulation of choice and resistance becomes important (Raj et al. 2021) The qualitative analysis that follows throws some light on some of the processes and affective modes that underpin this difference between perception and experience.

COMPROMISE AND SACRIFICE OR NEGOTIATION? QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENTS OF AUTONOMY

Out of the 600 interviews conducted using the questionnaire, some turned out to be in-depth qualitative interviews as the questions prompted the respondents to reflect on their living arrangements, relationships, and social status. The authors followed up these interviews with another round of interviews during the test-retest stage. Twenty of these in-depth interviews were chosen for further analysis based on the field researcher’s level of familiarity and rapport with the respondents. In terms of sociodemographic aspects, many of these interviews were with Hindu upper caste women, an affiliation that most of the respondents self-identify with (88 percent). These interviews revealed the complexity of the questions that we had set out to answer regarding autonomy and brought to the fore the negotiations that underpinned the women’s pursuit

Table 9 Pearson correlation between Relative Autonomy Index (RAI) and ambient measure

	<i>Ambient measure</i>		
	<i>Family</i>	<i>Peer Group</i>	<i>Access to and use of social and economic resources</i>
Cooking	− 0.21**	0.03	− 0.13**
Cleaning	− 0.19**	− 0.02	− 0.08
Having employment	− 0.08	− 0.09	− 0.02
Participated in Kitty party	0.09	0.27**	− 0.07
Having Children	− 0.09	0.11**	− 0.02
Bringing own parents	− 0.11	0.04	− 0.11**
Staying with in laws	− 0.16**	− 0.02	0.03
Asking permission to go out	− 0.08	0.03	− 0.03
Deciding in big household purchase	− 0.13**	0.13**	− 0.005
RAI	− 0.07	− 0.10*	− 0.21**

of autonomy. They also reveal the importance of retaining sensitivity to processes and practices. Names have been changed to protect anonymity, but surnames/caste names have been retained.

Compromise and sacrifice figured in the conversations whenever we raised questions about autonomy. Negotiating gender roles within the family required great facility in not only compromising but also in communicating that they are compromising their own personal goals. Sacrifice could denote an extreme compromise and a giving up of dreams, but it could also be evoked in further negotiations as a trope. A related word that repeatedly came up was “frustration.” When asked why she was not employed, Sapna Arora, a resident of North Delhi, reflected upon the compromise that had to be made and how it results in frustration: “Nowadays women are frustrated because they cannot accomplish what they actually want in life.” Another question regarding asking permission for working full time elicited the response that asking permission is better, as there would not be any fight later: “There is no point in fighting, therefore compromise is better.” Another respondent Deepti Kalra said: “I didn’t want to be a housewife, I wanted to work but somehow I landed up as a housewife because my in laws didn’t let me work after the baby but now when I look back, I wish I had a job. It is a major cause of my frustration.” Shweta Singla who quit her job to get married said that it was her brother who pressured her to quit the job to get married. Ankita Gupta, another respondent said that she does not need to get permission as she doesn’t do anything that her husband finds uncomfortable. Even a “love marriage” wasn’t protection against a loss of autonomy in marriage, as Vineeta Kapoor

found out: “I got married really early, it was a love marriage, and I didn’t know what was coming after it. Taking care of the family, I didn’t have time for myself and this is one of the many reasons I am frustrated, I could have done something, but I didn’t do it.” Others also reminisced how their plans to study after marriage did not materialize.

Frustration was a significant emotion that many respondents expressed in relation to the experience of being discouraged from pursuing their dreams. It would be rewarding to examine the affective coordinates of “frustration” further to determine its relation to autonomy. It was possible to see throughout the interviews that expressing frustration and understanding it as part of the women’s collective experience were important elements in their self-perception, and in that sense, they were not unrelated to the enactment of self-awareness and autonomy. Frustration at the lack of autonomy indicates critical consciousness, as elaborated by A. Raj et al. (2021) who adapted the term originally coined by Paulo Freire (1968 [2000]) to analyze issues regarding the measurement of women’s empowerment.

Working women had a different experience as they reflected on the support they received from husbands and extended family. They emphasized that support is multifaceted and changes according to the life course of the woman. While childcare may be important at the start of the marriage and family, it is the willingness to move or let the woman move (within or outside the city) to where her job is that is crucial in later stages. The patrilocal extended families in which many women lived exerted their moral power and often discouraged the women from working. Sapna Arora said that “women do not have enough job opportunities and resources which would help them look after family and the job they want to do. On the other hand, men have no such responsibility; they can go outside and work and then come home and sleep.” However, there were many women who received support from husbands and in-laws. Anshika Kaur, for example, said, “I have full support of my husband; that is why I am able to work, because I know that if I have to leave early, he will make breakfast for the family.” Anshika lived in a nuclear family. Neha Dewan, who worked in the corporate sector, said: “Support from in laws is very important; I feel at ease when I know that my child will be taken care of by my mother-in-law when he reaches home from school and this helps me continue my work.” Almost all of these women came from families that were affluent and upper caste and yet these families were different in the ways women experienced patriarchy and autonomy. Women’s ideas about their autonomy were bound up with their caste positions as Ruchika Sharma, a resident of Northeast Delhi recounted: “I have seen women who had to start eating non-vegetarian food so as to fit into their marital homes.”

These conversations often revealed that mobility and the ability to undertake paid work outside the home depended on a complex

negotiation process often unrelated to differences in household income among middle-class families. These voices of women from relatively affluent backgrounds underline the incapacities some of them face despite household economic prosperity and the careful calibration of domestic life and paid employment that is expected of them.

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to develop an index to measure the autonomy of women in households that had overcome economic barriers. To achieve this, it leveraged the Relative Autonomy Index (RAI), a well-established framework commonly utilized to assess women's autonomy, particularly in contexts of poverty and marginalization. While the RAI offered a solid foundation, it became evident that modifications were necessary to align with the nuances of autonomy within urban middle-income households in India.

Urban middle-class households represent a distinct socioeconomic demographic, influenced by factors such as education, employment, and lifestyle choices. Consequently, the domains and indicators that we used to evaluate autonomy needed to be adapted to accurately capture the complexities of this group. Traditional norms prevalent in Indian society, such as patrilocal residence and co-living arrangements with in-laws, play a significant role in shaping women's autonomy within these households. However, these dynamics were not adequately reflected in the original RAI framework, prompting the need for adjustments.

Moreover, the inclusion of lifestyle indicators such as kitty parties, prominent social gatherings among urban middle-class women in India, was deemed essential. These gatherings signify more than mere socialization; they serve as platforms for networking, empowerment, and the expression of agency, thereby contributing to women's social autonomy. By incorporating such elements into the adapted RAI, the relevance and comprehensiveness of the index were enhanced, capturing the realities of autonomy within urban middle-income households.

The adapted RAI underwent rigorous validation processes to ensure conceptual validity and reliability. Through statistical analysis, including Cronbach's Alpha, the study confirmed that the subscales within most domains demonstrated acceptable to good levels of reliability, further validating the adapted framework's efficacy in measuring women's autonomy within this specific context. The autonomy scores were significantly correlated with indicators of psychological and subjective well-being. This is unlike the results of Vaz, Pratley, and Alkire (2015) who found that relative autonomy is weakly correlated with psychological well-being and has no clear relationship with subjective well-being in Chad. However, the adapted RAI was negatively correlated with many sub-indices

of the ambient measure that quantified family and peer group traits and socioeconomic status. This is not counter intuitive as literature has shown that there is no straightforward relationship between women's self-perception of autonomy and their material conditions. These questions were designed to capture the operational elements of a higher household income and educational attainments to see if these two factors translated to increased mobility and the power of women to assert their will in an intrahousehold setting in everyday matters.

The previous literature found that women with better autonomy have access to better maternal healthcare, reproductive health behavior, fertility, as well as child nutrition and lower child mortality (Jejeebhoy 1995; Malhotra, Vanneman, and Kishor 1995; Kishor and Gupta 2009). In this article, we add to this literature by asking the question of whether a woman is making the decisions autonomously or if she is forced into a specific decision; that is, this study considers the relative autonomy of women and the determinants of their relative autonomy. Another lingering question is whether the relative autonomy of women has an impact on their psychological and subjective well-being. Our result indicates that women's education, age at marriage, and occupation have a positive impact on their relative autonomy. On the other hand, the results also reflect that the relative autonomy of women is significantly and positively associated with PSWB after controlling for other socio-demographic conditions. This result is also supported by Mahbub, M. Hossain, Niaz Asadullah, and Uma Kambhampati (2019).

The article is limited to the extent that it does not offer any new conceptual understanding of empowerment or autonomy but only extends and adapts RAI to an urban middle-class context. This is important for two reasons: 1. It points to the need to understand the urban transformation that is underway in the Global South and its implications for women's autonomy. 2. It makes an attempt to adapt the Relative Autonomy Index to measure middle-class women's autonomy in these new urban contexts where household income is not a barrier to well-being.

Additionally, we acknowledge the importance of voice as a fundamental aspect of autonomy. Voice represents an individual's ability to express their desires and needs within interpersonal relationships, including within the household. While our study focused on decision-making power as a component of autonomy, the findings do not diminish the significance of voice. Rather, they highlight the need for more nuanced measures to capture women's agency within interpersonal dynamics.

The brief remarks based on a qualitative study brought this to the fore the importance of women's voice. They characterized their pursuit of autonomy as "negotiation and compromise." A measurement of intrinsic features such as choice, autonomy and well-being requires nuanced measurement strategies that are responsive to specific regions

and population groups. Qualitative understandings of specific contexts and conceptual innovation are essential to creating meaningful measures of autonomy and empowerment. One of the ways the qualitative interviews complement the measurement exercises that we have undertaken is by pointing to the importance of the values women hold and the way they interact with the extent to which they feel that they have autonomy. Some of the women who complained of being frustrated with their lives were the ones who had exercised their will in selecting a life partner or choosing when to have children. This feeling of being frustrated is not unrelated to a desire to change the conditions of their lives.

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NOTE

- ¹ The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has created an exclusive portal for online submission of property taxes in Delhi. This portal has, among other things, property categorization for all colonies in Delhi. This list can be accessed on <http://www.mcdpropertytax>.

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APPENDIX

Table A1 Statement of external, introjected, and autonomous domains of RAI

<i>Autonomous</i>	<i>Introjected</i>	<i>External</i>
Because I think it is valuable	So that others don't think poorly of me	Because I will get in trouble if I don't
Because personally think it is the right thing to do, whether or not others agree	Because I want people to like me	Because I get a reward or benefit if I do them
Because I enjoy it		Because that is what other people tell me to do
Because I think it is important for me, personally		
Because I think it is valuable		

AN INSTRUMENT TO MEASURE AUTONOMY

Table A2 Cronbach's Alpha

Cooking	0.89
Cleaning	0.87
Having employment	0.92
Participated in Kitty party	0.94
Having Children	0.87
Bringing own parents	0.88
Staying with in laws	0.82
Asking permission to go out	0.77
Deciding in big household purchase	0.85
RAI	0.85

Source: Field Survey, 2018 (April to August).

Table A3 Canonical correlation for test-retest of the RAI dimension

Cooking	0.99
Cleaning	0.90
Having employment	0.94
Participated in Kitty party	0.97
Having Children	0.97
Bringing own parents	0.99
Staying with in laws	0.92
Asking permission to go out	0.91
Deciding in big household purchase	0.92

Source: Field Survey, 2018 (September).

Table A4 Items for psychological well-being

Relatedness

I get along with people I come into contact with
 I do not have much social contact
 People in my life always care about me
 I like to Interact with people

Autonomy

I know I can decide for myself how to live my life
 I don't feel pressured in my life
 People told me I am good at what I do
 I generally share ideas with others
 I always have to do what I am asked to do
 There are lot of opportunities for me to decide how to do things in my life

Completeness

I have been learning new skills
 I am able to show my capability
 Most of the time I feel a sense of accomplishment from what I do

Source: Adopted from Samman (2007), psychological and subjective well-being indicators.
https://ophi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/emma_samman_fullpaper.pdf.

AN INSTRUMENT TO MEASURE AUTONOMY

Table A5 Ambient measure

<i>Family</i>	<i>%</i>
1. Have you been told that you must return home by a specific time in the evening?	26
2. Do you need permission to go out alone?	34
3. Do you need to inform your husband or anyone regarding your place/time of visit?	84
4. Is there a divorced/separated woman in the immediate natal (<i>maika</i>) family or husband's family (defined as mother, daughter, mother-in-law, and daughter in law)?	15
5. Have you had a fight with your husband in the past week?	39.8
6. Have you lived separately due to a fight?	11.4
7. Have you lived away from your husband and children (excluding fights and pregnancy?)	24.8
8. Have you expressed a difference of opinion with your spouse in the presence of extended family?	58.2
Peer Group	
9. Have you gone out unsupervised by family members in the past six months (not for work)?	24.38
10. Are you part of a committee/chit fund/kitty party?	21.89
11. Are you part of a women's group that is not neighborhood based?	17.91
12. Have you gone out for shopping/coffee etc. with women friends any time?	67.66
13. Have you had a meeting (coffee/to discuss work/old friend) with male friend(s) in the past six months or after marriage whichever is later?	28.35
Economic and Social Resources Use	
14. Do you have job/business?	56.71
15. If you are a stay-at-home mom, do you have a project that you do? (not necessarily earning)	11.94
16. Do you own property alone? (land, house etc.)	35.32
17. Do you have any asset that could help you generate income?	27.86
18. Do you own a car or a motorcycle?	51.24
19. Do you drive?	34.82
20. Are you a member of a trade union/political party?	7.46
21. Have your parents substantially (more than a lakh) helped you financially after marriage to buy house, land, or car, or any other asset?	23.88
22. Have you visited a foreign country?	32.84
23. Do you post your photos on social media?	70.64