

Role of Education in Empowering Women:A Case Study

Bhajan Chandra Barman

Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Netaji Nagar College, West Bengal, India

E-Mail: bhajanbarman@gmail.com

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Abstract - According to Census Report 2011, nearly 50% of the population of our country are women. They have a great contribution in society. Therefore, we cannot deny the importance of them. In spite of great contribution in society, the women are less empowered in every field of society. The conception of empowerment is based on the notion of power; empowerment by definition means “enabling”, “giving, receiving or obtaining power” or “giving the official or legal authority or the freedom to do something”. In addition, empowerment is defined as the equalization of power and the more efficient use of resources. Women's education leads to empowerment. There are two reasons behind selecting the topic “Role of Education in Empowering Women” for the present study. Firstly, there has been no found any comparative study in the review of literature regarding the measurement of empowerment between educated and uneducated women. Secondly, no literature has been found on education and women empowerment in the study area. The present paper fulfills this research gap. Dinhata block-II of Cooch Behar district, West Bengal has been selected for the purpose of the study. The study is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data have been collected from a field survey in Dinhata block-II of Cooch Behar district, West Bengal. Secondary data have also been collected from various journals, articles, working papers and education related website. For study purpose it has been selected 200 women from the study area. Among them 100 are educated and the rest 100 women are uneducated. A structured interview schedule was prepared and used for collecting data from the respondents in the study area. To analyse the results a simple statistical technique like percentage has been used. To compare the results, Chi-square test has been used. In the present study, it has been considered nine indicators to measure empowerment between educated and uneducated women. From the results and discussion it has been observed that educated women are more empowered as compare to uneducated one. Chi-square Test shows the significance difference between educated and uneducated women regarding empowerment. Thus, it can be conclude that education is very important factor in empowering women.

Keywords: Education, Women empowerment, Mobility, Sustainable development, Decision

I. INTRODUCTION

According to Census Report 2011, nearly 50% of the population of our country are women. They have a great contribution in society. Therefore, we cannot deny the importance of them. In spite of great contribution in society, the women are less empowered in every field of society. They are still considered as a burden of society. Their cycle of deprivation set in early in life and takes many different

forms. Even as young children, girls are often discriminated against and deprived of access to nutrition, education and many other basic entitlements. They are often expected to carry out household work at the cost of their schooling. Their overall growth and development are considered secondary to the male children in the household. Without an adequate education, girls are often forced into early marriage and may become victims of abuse and trafficking. If this scenario does not change, there will be little or no progress in society.

Women's education leads to significant social development. Some of the most notable social benefits include decreased fertility rates and lower infant mortality rates, and lower maternal mortality rates. Closing the gender gap in education also increases gender equality, which is considered important both in itself and because it ensures equal rights and opportunities for people regardless of gender. Women's education has cognitive benefits for women as well. Improved cognitive abilities increase the quality of life for women and also lead to other benefits. One example of this is the fact that educated women are better able to make decisions related to health, both for themselves and their children. Cognitive abilities also translate to increased political participation among women. Educated women are more likely to engage in civic participation and attend political meetings, and there are several instances in which educated women in the developing world were able to secure benefits for themselves through political movements. Evidence also points to an increased likelihood of democratic governance in countries with well-educated women.

There are also benefits relating to the woman's role in the household. Educated women have been found to experience less domestic violence, regardless of other social status indicators like employment status. Women with an education are also more involved in the decision-making process of the family and report making more decisions over a given time period. In particular, these benefits extend to economic decisions. Besides the intrinsic value of increasing a woman's agency, having women play a more active role in the family also brings about social benefits for family members. In a household where the mother is educated, children and especially girls are more likely to attend school. In households where a mother is not educated, adult literacy programs can indirectly help to teach mothers the value of education and encourage them to

send their children to school. There are also a number of other benefits for children associated with having an educated mother over an educated father, including higher survival rates and better nutrition.

II. A BRIEF REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There is a number of uncountable national as well as international literature regarding women empowerment and education. In the present study, a brief review of literature is pointed out.

Paranjape (1989) revealed in his study entitled "Women's Education status in Women and Development" that there is a link between the empowerment of women and their educational and economic status. At present women are not empowered in the economic, social, political areas and in the field of education. Hence, there is a need to empower them socially, economically and politically through education, capacity-building, skill development and improving awareness regarding various issues.

Mira Seth (2001) depicted from her study entitled "Women and Development, the Indian Experience" and concluded that future of the girl child gets further endangered if her mother is illiterate, for an educated mother will always educate her daughter but an illiterate mother may not.

Lakshmi Narayana and Rajesh (2002) pointed out from their study entitled "Curbing social Evils through Empowerment of women" that one of the strategies for the empowerment of women in education that build a positive self-image and boosts self-confidence among them and develops their ability to think critically.

Padmanabhan (2002) conducted a study on "Literacy: Gateway to Women Empowerment" and found that the women movements are the outcomes of their awareness to seek secure and protect their rights. Literacy is the only source of their empowerment and even to learn to put signature is considered to be a source of empowerment because it enhance their self-image and their self-confidence. He concluded that women self-help groups are women organizations aimed at creating awareness among women. The members of SHG are bold enough to open account in the banks, approach officials in the government departments.

Ramanujam and Thenmozhi (2006) stated that as education is a major source of power, women should be given proper education, It develops the personality of women exposing them to the word of books, peers, teachers and public at large. It is being increasingly felt that empowerment of women will enable a greater degree of self-confidence, a sense of independence and capability to resist discrimination imposed by the male dominated society.

A study conducted by Surekha Rao (2007) revealed that the socioeconomic and demographic background of women is needed to be developed in order to improve their family

standards. To improve the family standards, more enrollments of girls in schools must be ensured. This will improve their educational background. Efforts should be made by the municipalities and the NGOs to control the school drop-outs among the girls.

Matheswaran (2008) explored in his study "Women Empowerment for Sustainable Development through Self-Help Group Movement in Tamilnadu" that self-help groups through education plays an important role to change the quality of life of the women. Education for women is necessary for an understanding and control over social, economic and political force and also to improve their quality of life. Education helps women to know of themselves and their children and understand the society as a whole. Based on his discussion, he concluded that education particularly distance education is an enabling factor for women's empowerment and sustainable development.

From the above review of literature it is found that education plays an important role for empowering women. There are two reasons behind selecting the topic "Role of Education in Empowering Women" for the present study. Firstly, there has been no found any comparative study in the review of literature regarding the measurement of the empowerment between educated and uneducated women. Secondly, no literature has been found on education and women empowerment in the study area. The present paper fulfills this research gap.

III. CONCEPT OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND ITS INDICATORS

The concept of empowerment was first presented in the 1970s by Third World Feminists and Women's Organizations. The aim of the concept was to give a framework and facilitate the struggle for social justice and women's equality through a transformation of economic, social and political structures on both national and international levels. The conception of empowerment is based on the notion of power; empowerment by definition means "enabling", "giving, receiving or obtaining power" or "giving the official or legal authority or the freedom to do something". In addition, empowerment is defined as the equalization of power and the more efficient use of resources (Claassens 1993). Empowerment is defined as the processes by which women take control and ownership of their lives through expansion of their choices (UN 2001).

According to Batliwala (1994) empowerment is a process of challenging existing power relations and of gaining greater control over the sources of power. The author has described that empowerment is the enhancement of power.

Kabeer (2001) defined empowerment as "the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them". Women empowerment means to let women survive and let them live

life with dignity, humanity, respect, self-esteem and self-reliance.

According to Pillai (1995), women empowerment is an active, multidimensional process which enables women to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres of life. Power is neither a commodity to be transacted nor can it be given away as alms.

Hashemi and Schuler (1993) identified six dimensions of empowerment based on activities women identified as important for their day-to-day functioning: (i) sense of self and vision of the future; (ii) mobility and visibility;(iii) economic security; (iv) decision making power in the household; (v) participation in non-family groups; (vi) interact

In the present study, some empowerment indicators have been used such as household decision regarding buying and selling, mobility and social related indicators and political indicator like self-voting power.

IV. OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this article are:

1. To measure empowerment between educated and uneducated women with the help of some indicators.
2. To analyse the role of education in empowering women.

V. METHODOLOGY

A. Selection of the Study Area

Dinhata block-II of Cooch Behar district, West Bengal has been selected for the purpose of the study. This block has been selected for the study because so far no study has been undertaken in this block to assess the impact of education on women empowerment. As a result we think that the study has been more representatives by selecting Dinhata block-II of Cooch Behar district as the study area for our case study purpose.

B. Sources of Data

The study is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data have been collected from a field survey in

Dinhata block-II of Cooch Behar district, West Bengal. Secondary data have also been collected from various journals, articles, working papers and education related website.

C. Sample Size and Sampling Technique

For study purpose it has been selected 200 women from the study area. Among them 100 are educated and the rest 100 women are uneducated. Here educated women are those women who can read and write clearly. On the other hand, uneducated women are those women who are not able to read and write.

D. Method for Data Collection

A structured interview schedule was prepared and used for collecting data from the respondents in the study area.

E. Statistical Tools

To analyse the results a simple statistical technique like percentage has been used. To compare the results, Chi-square test has been used.

VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There are so many indicators which affect the empowerment of the women. In the present study, it has been considered nine indicators to measure empowerment between educated and uneducated women. These are analysed below one by one.

Household decision is one of the main indicators of women empowerment. When a woman involved in the household decision-making then she is definitely more empowered because generally male member of a family take household decision. From the table I it is found that in case of educated women 26.25 per cent are able to take household decision themselves. On the other hand, only 11.25 per cent uneducated women can take household decision themselves. Chi-square test shows that there is significant difference between educated and uneducated women regarding their role in household decision making.

TABLE I HOUSEHOLD DECISION REGARDING BUYING AND SELLING

Decision	Educated Women	Uneducated Women
Self	21(26.25)	9(11.25)
Husband	28(35.0)	34(42.25)
Jointly by self & husband	28(35.0)	27(33.75)
Others	3(3.75)	10(12.5)
Total	80(100)	80(100)

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Note: Figures given in parentheses indicate percentage
Chi-square (χ^2) = 9.158, Table value at 5% with 3 degree of freedom (d.f.) is 7.815

A. Mobility and Social Awareness Related Indicators

Mobility refers to the free movement by women without being restricted. It is measured in terms of women being travelled to different places alone. Mobility of a woman increases if she is educated which leads her to be

empowered. To measure empowerment between educated and uneducated women and Chi-square (χ^2) = 27.1, 13.98, 21.81, 19.46, 26.0. Table value at 1% with 1 degree of freedom (d.f.) is 6.635. And uneducated women it has been considered mobility and social related indicators.

TABLE II MOBILITY & SOCIAL RELATED INDICATORS

Indicators		Educated Women	Uneducated Women
Go to town freely & alone	Yes	60(75.0)	41(51.25)
	No	20(25.0)	39(48.75)
Go to Panchayat/ BDO office /bank/children school/health centre freely & alone	Yes	55(68.75)	37(46.25)
	No	25(31.25)	43(53.75)
Awareness against social exploitation	Yes	60(75.0)	33(41.25)
	No	20(25.0)	47(58.75)
Awareness regarding health & hygiene	Yes	57(71.25)	40(50.0)
	No	23(28.75)	40(50.0)
Awareness regarding family planning	Yes	60(75.0)	30(37.5)
	No	20(25.0)	50(62.5)

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Note: Figures given in parentheses indicate percentages

Chi-square (χ^2) = 27.1, 13.98, 21.81, 19.46, 26.0. Table value at 1% with 1 degree of freedom (d.f.) is 6.635

From table II, it is found that 75 per cent, 68 per cent educated women can go to town, bank, BDO office and health centre freely without any permission of their husbands respectively. On the other hand, these figures are 51.25 per cent and 48.75 per cent for uneducated women respectively. Most of the women cannot go to bank, post office or BDO office freely without any permission of their husbands. In case of awareness against social exploitation it is found that 75 per cent educated women and 41.25 per cent uneducated women raise their voice against social exploitation such as drug addiction, injustice and domestic violence. Again, from the table it is found that 71.25 per cent educated and 50 per cent uneducated women are aware of health and hygiene. Again, in case of family planning it is found that educated women are more aware as compared to uneducated one. Chi-square test shows that there is

significant difference between educated and uneducated women regarding their go to town, bank, BDO office and awareness against social exploitation, health and hygiene family planning.

B. Decision Regarding the Right of Self Voting

A question was asked to the respondents to know whether they can decide regarding self-voting or not. From table 3 it is observed that 66.25 per cent educated women and 38.75 per cent uneducated women cast their votes themselves. Chi-square test shows that there is significant difference between educated and uneducated women regarding their rights of self-voting.

TABLE III REGARDING THE POWER OF SELF-VOTING

Power of self-voting	Educated Women	Uneducated Women
Self	53(66.25)	31(38.75)
Husband	17(21.25)	29(36.25)
Jointly by self & husband	7(8.75)	15(18.75)
Others	3(3.75)	5(6.25)
Total	80(100)	80(100)

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Note: Figures given in parentheses indicate percentages

Chi-square (χ^2) = 12.3. Table value at 1% with 1 d.f. is 11.341

VII. CONCLUSION

The paper is on the role of education in empowering women. It has been considered nine indicators for measuring women empowerment in the present study. With the help of these indicators, empowerment has been measured for educated and uneducated women. From the above results and discussion it is observed that education is one of the main indicators of empowerment. It is one of the most powerful tools to change the status of women in the family as well as in the society. Inequalities between men and women reduce through education. When a woman is educated, her ability is developed and along with her outlook is also expanded. She is respected by all. She can understand her rights and duties well. When a woman involved in the household decision-making then she is definitely more empowered because generally male member of a family take household decision. It is observed that educated women are more empowered as compared to uneducated one. Chi-square test shows that there is significant difference between educated and uneducated women regarding empowerment. Thus, it can be concluded that education plays an important role in empowering women. However, education alone cannot improve the status of women, unless the women themselves grow conscious of their own dignity and genuine needs.

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