

Role of Education in Women's Empowerment With Special Reference to Nadia District of West Bengal

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Abstract

Education is a basic requirement and a fundamental right for citizens of any nation. Education is the key factor for women empowerment, prosperity, development and welfare. Discrimination of women from womb to tomb is well known. There is continued inequality and vulnerability of women in all sectors and women oppressed in all spheres of life, they need to be empowered in all walk of life. In order to fight against the socially constructed gender biases, women have to swim against the system that requires more strength. Such strength comes from the process of empowerment and empowerment will come from the education. The present paper aims to create the awareness among the women about different empowerment and identifying the impact of education in women's overall empowerment in Nadia district of West Bengal. Totally 230 women respondents between 20-60 age group were selected for the study. Findings of the study shows that educational qualification play significant role in women empowerment and it concludes that if women's empowerment is to be effected, it can be carried out only through the medium of education. Hence, it is of foremost importance to raise the level of education amongst women.

Key words : Women, empowerment, Discrimination, opportunities, predictors, psychological

1. Introduction

Women are the most important factor of every society. Even though everybody is aware of this fact, yet nobody is ready to accept this fact. As a significance of this growing tendency of underestimating women such as to make them occupy a secondary position in society and to deny them of their basic rights, the need for empowering women was felt. Today we enjoy the benefits of being citizens of a free nation, but we really need to think whether each of the citizens of our country is really free or enjoying freedom, in the true sense of the term. The Structure of our nation doesn't discriminate between men and women, but our society has destitute women of certain basic rights, which were bestowed upon them by our Constitution. Due to such current situation, it is needed to make women free from all the fetters and to empower them as well. Education is a powerful tool for reducing inequality as it can give people the

ability to become independent. Education is regarded as an important milestone of women empowerment because it enables them to face challenges in every sphere of life. Women's empowerment is not limited only for the Indian society. If we deliberate the global aspect in this regard, we see that women are being given equal treatment in developed nations. It is education through which we realize this fact. When American women realized this, they opposed this unfairness which was dispensed out to them by way of a huge movement, through which they asked for equal rights. For eliminating this injustice, the UNO (United Nations' Organization) framed an agreement which is called 'The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women' (CEDAW), which further led to the formation of Women's Commission.

From this background, we come to know that women's empowerment has now become a topic of global discussion. Seeing all the aspects of this discussion, we will realize that education is the only means for empowerment of women. Therefore, literacy should spread amongst women. The literacy rate amongst the women in the post Independent Era is not as per the expectations. For becoming a Super Power, each element of our society should contribute in the nation building process. But women, who are a major factor of this society, aren't literate then we can't expect to become a Super Power. Therefore, it is urgent for us to know the importance of women's education,

2. Review Of Literature

The term "empowerment" has been overused, misused and coopted (Stromquist, 2002; Stacki and Monkman, 2003). It is commonly deployed as a synonym for enabling, participating, and speaking out. The notion that education leads to women's empowerment has gained popularity, although we still have much to learn about how education actually empowers women (Stromquist, 2002; DaCosta, 2008; Murphy-Graham, 2008). Nevertheless, in the past 10 years, the goal of women's empowerment (often linked with women's education) has received serious attention, as well as funding by donors and international agencies (Unterhalter, 2007; Mosedale, 2005; Malhotra et al., 2002; Papart et al., 2002; Oxaal and Baden, 1997). At the core of the word empowerment is power. The idea of power as capacity is at the core of the conceptualization of empowerment in this paper, where I view women's empowerment as a process through which women can recognize their inherent worth and their power within and begin to participate on equal terms with men in efforts to dismantle patriarchy and promote social and economic development. Women's empowerment is a pivotal step towards establishing gender equality. Gender equality is manifest through equitable sharing of responsibilities by men and women. Gender

equality is not synonymous with gender parity, and does not mean that men and women are the same or need to split work exactly in half. Rather, it characterizes social conditions and relationships in which a vision of mutuality and cooperation shapes interactions and enables men and women to reach their full potential (hooks, 2000). Education is the best option to give details about the rights and freedom and it also help in the movement of women empowerment (Shinde, 2015).

3. Hypothesis Of The Study

1. There is no significant difference exist between educational qualifications with regards to different types of empowerments.

H₀₂: Different level of empowerments do not play significant role in predicting overall empowerment.

4. Methods

An official Census 2011 detail of Nadia, a district of West Bengal has been released by Directorate of Census Operations in West Bengal. In 2011, Nadia district had a population of 5,167,600 of which male and female were 2,653,768 and 2,513,832 respectively. Average literacy rate of Nadia in 2011 were 74.97. If things are looked out at gender wise, male and female literacy were 78.75 and 70.98 respectively. This study is basically descriptive in nature. 230 women respondents between 20-60 age groups were selected for the study from Nadia district. Convenient sampling method was used for data collection and well-structured questionnaire was used as data collection tool. Survey method was used to collect the questionnaires. Respondents were asked to select the options based on their opinions in 5 point Likert scale. The research instrument includes questions related with different type of empowerment like personal empowerment, educational empowerment, economic empowerment, social empowerment, psychological empowerment, technical empowerment, political empowerment and demographic characteristics like age, educational qualification, family income, employment type and marital status.

5. Findings Of The Study:

**Table 1:
Demographic characteristics of the respondents**

Demographic characteristics	Options	Frequency	Percentage
Age	20 - 29 Years	126	54.78
	30 – 39 Years	45	19.56
	Above 40 Years	59	25.65
Educational Qualification	Arts & Science (UG)	106	46.09
	Arts & Science (PG)	45	19.57
	Professional (UG)	38	16.52
	Diploma	31	13.48
	Illiterates	10	4.35
Marital Status	Married	117	50.87
	Unmarried	98	42.61
	Widow	15	6.52
Employment Type	House wife	129	56.09
	Employed	101	43.91
Monthly Income	Below Rs.20,000	130	56.52
	Rs.20,001 – Rs50,000	79	34.35
	Above Rs 50,001	21	9.13
	Total	230	100

Table no 1 concludes that 54.78 percent respondents were between 20-29 years old, 19.56 respondents were between 30-39 years old and 25.65 percent respondents were above 40 years. 46.09 percent respondents have under graduation level educational qualification in the field of art and science, 19.57 percent respondents have post graduation level educational qualification, 16.52 percent respondents have professional qualification, 13.48 percent respondents have diploma whereas 4.35 percent respondents are illiterate. 50.87 percent respondents were married and 42.61 percent respondents were unmarried. 56.09 percent respondents were housewives and 43.91 percent respondents were employed in government and private sectors. 56.52 percent respondent's monthly income was less than Rs.20000.

**Table 2:
Descriptive statistics and Cronbach alpha coefficients**

Different type of empowerment	Mean	SD	Cronbach alpha coefficients
Personal empowerment	3.24	0.94	0.774
Social empowerment	3.28	0.95	0.763
Economic empowerment	3.39	0.92	0.821
Educational empowerment	2.96	1.19	0.811
Psychological empowerment	3.09	1.13	0.753
Technical empowerment	3.18	1.00	0.916
Political empowerment	3.21	1.17	0.774
Overall empowerment	3.86	0.94	0.713

Table no 2 shows that “Economic empowerment” and “Social empowerment” are the top ranked empowerments with the mean value of 3.39 and 3.28. “Psychological empowerment” and “Educational empowerment” are the last ranked empowerments with the mean value of 3.07

and 2.96. Cronbach alpha coefficient ranges from 0.713 to 0.916; it shows that reliability coefficients for above factors are more than 0.60, which is an acceptable value (Malhotra, 2004). So, the items constituting each variable under study have reasonable internal consistency.

Table 3:
Effects of educational qualifications on different types of empowerment.

Different types of empowerment	F value	P value	Result
Personal empowerment	3.50	0.008**	H ₀ Rejected
Social empowerment	2.11	0.078*	H ₀ Rejected
Economic empowerment	6.26	0.000**	H ₀ Rejected
Educational empowerment	5.74	0.000**	H ₀ Rejected
Psychological empowerment	4.96	0.001**	H ₀ Rejected
Technical empowerment	5.05	0.001**	H ₀ Rejected
Political empowerment	4.13	0.003**	H ₀ Rejected
Overall empowerment	7.29	0.000**	H ₀ Rejected

** Significant at 1 percent

* Significant at 5

Percent Since p value for all type of empowerment is less than 0.05, hence null hypothesis is rejected and it concludes that there is significant difference exist between educational qualifications with regards to different types of empowerments.

Table 4:
Impact of different types of empowerments on overall empowerment

Different empowerments	Beta	t	Sig.
Personal empowerment	0.12	1.62	0.105
Social empowerment	0.06	0.84	0.404
Economical empowerment	-0.16	-1.85	0.065
Educational empowerment	0.42	6.70	0.000***
Psychological empowerment	0.54	5.59	0.000***
Technical empowerment	0.10	1.30	0.195
Political empowerment	-0.33	-4.52	0.000***
Multiple R	0.773		
R ²	0.598		
Adjusted R ²	0.592		
F value	94.973		
P value	0.000***i)		

*** Significant at 1 percent

That above table, it was observed that the overall empowerment explained 60 percent of the variance for the criterion measure. It entailed that 40 percent of overall empowerment was explained by something other than above mentioned empowerment types. Summary of Regression Analysis shows that different types of empowerment were treating as predictors and overall empowerment as criterion variable. It was observed that the overall regression model was significant ($F=94.973$, $p<0.000$). Educational psychological and political empowerment are the main significant predictors for overall empowerment.

6. Conclusion:

The above study was carried out in Nadia district, from the state of West Bengal. From the above findings, overall empowerment and other related empowerment types are also relatively influenced by the respondent's educational qualification. Regression analysis shows that educational empowerment, political and psychological empowerments were the significant predictors for overall empowerment. The process of empowering entails much more than awareness of alternative, women's rights and the nature of the requirements. With more education women have greater access to employment opportunities and increase the ability to secure their own economic resources. This study helps to create the awareness about empowering women. Present study suggest that General awareness programme should be taken among the women of rural area to sensitizes them about the modern development of science and technology so that they could give up superstitious believes and attitudes. Women should be trained up in different vocational courses like handloom and textile, poultry farms, fish farming, piggery, dairy farm, food and nutrition, fashion and designing, beauty parlour etc. Women reservation policy should strictly be maintained in all aspects like appointment in govt. and semi govt. offices, admission in to the educational institutions, participating in the politics etc. Most of the educated women feel that, they can able to

achieve more than men. The lack of education becomes the obstacles in getting empowerment. Taking an overview of all the above aspects, we come to know that the transformation is very much needed, accepting at the same time that its pace may be less than the desired pace. Hence, if women's empowerment is to be effected, it can be carried out only through the medium of education. Hence, it is utmost important to raise the level of education amongst women.

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