

# Socioeconomic Status of Women and Demonetization

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## Abstract

This study is an attempt to analyze the socioeconomic status of women in the Tricity (Chandigarh, Mohali and Panchkula). The major objective of this study is to find out how the process of demonetization has enhanced the problems faced by women in a society, which is not gender sensitive. For this study both primary and secondary data were collected. A random sample of 1000 women was taken for the survey. This reveals that 99.2 percent respondents have hidden savings and on an average a woman in the tricity had savings of min Rs. 82,170. Due to lack of financial empowerment, a huge amount of money was kept at home by the women's. If this money would have been deposited in banks, the government could have used it for the development of the economy and women's savings would have also grown by the interest they could have earned.

**Keywords: Demonetization, Hidden savings, Socioeconomic status, Stree dhan.**

## Introduction

In most developing and developed countries across the world, status of women in the past has always been at a lower level, even though many continuous efforts have been taken by governmental and non-governmental organizations. Still there remains a long distance to be covered in equalizing the status of men and women in every societal structure. In Indian society, status of women is heavily dependent on many different variables that include geographical location, educational status, social status etc. Despite major changes that have taken place in this women empowerment era, Indian women still continue to face many restrictions in their social and economic life. During demonetization these restrictions came out with different faces and one of its faces was disclosure of hidden savings or stree dhan by the Indian women. They used to save from the money their husbands gave them every month to run the house. This saving grew into a significant reserve over time. Often concealed from the husband and other family members, it became her treasure. Now this treasure became a big problem for them due to demonetization. Here in this study we try to find out the socioeconomic status of women through the process of demonetization.

## Review of Literature

Available studies in different settings on the relationship between socioeconomic factors and women's status shows mixed result, and a number of them report reasons to expect variations in the effects of women's socioeconomic characteristics on different aspects of their life. For example some studies indicate that poverty is a strong predictor of domestic violence, others show that it is an insignificant factor (Kishor and Johnson 2006).

At the world level, women and girls together carry two-third of the burden of the world's work, yet receive only a tenth of the world's income. They form 40 percent of the paid labour force. Though women constitute half of the world's population yet they own less than one percentage of the world's property (UNDP Human Development Report 1995).

According to UN Report (2005): "Women constitute half the world's population, perform nearly two-third of its work hours, receive one-tenths of the world's income and own less than one-hundredth of the world's property".

Bhattacharya et al., 2009 in their study shows that there is a relationship between employment status of women to marital violence. They collected data from rural Uttar Pradesh. They explained how the participation in work and ownership of property decrease the rate in marital violence. They tried to establish a clear and effective relationship, especially between employment status and spousal violence in their study.

Yount and Carrera (2006) studied 2074 married women to know about domestic violence and wife abuse. They found that household living standard and fewer years of schooling than the husband, cause physical and psychological violence on women. They found a positive relationship between marital resources and domestic violence in Cambodia. Duflo E. (2011), in his study argues that the inter relationships of the Empowerment and Development are probably too weak to be self sustaining and that continuous policy commitment to equality for its own sake may be needed to bring about equality between men and women.

Waghmode et al. (2011) provided in their study that subordinate status of women is the main reason of violence on women in India. They emphasize on physical, psychological and sexual abuse of women. They referred that it is not a

recent concern but is deeply rooted over the years. They used secondary data to analyze statistical explanation on domestic violence in India.

Doepke et al. (2011), in their study suggested that money in the hands of mothers (as opposed to their husbands) benefits children. This study developed a series of non-cooperative family bargaining models to understand what kind of frictions can give rise to the observed empirical relationships.

In the study by Singh and Rajyalaxmi (1993), they have discussed about the status of tribal women in terms of their demography, health, education and employment. Since independence, various protections have been given to the tribal population by the Constitution of India. The study highlighted some aspects of tribal work; tribal women work equally with their male counterparts with lower pay and sexual exploitation. Tribal women don't have property rights, they have lower literacy rate than the scheduled caste and general population. Tribal women are not healthy and suffer from malnutrition and various diseases. The study highlighted the need to improve the status of the tribal girl, to bring about change in the status of tribal woman.

Furuta and Salway (2006) reported that in Nepal educated women were more able to use subtle means to impose their ideas and that at the same time they were in more communicative marital relationships, which increased their influence in the household.

### Objectives of the study

1. To study the socio-economic status of women in tricity.(Chandigarh, Mohali and Panchkula)
2. The study tries to find out how the process of demonetization has enhanced the problems faced by women in a society which is not gender sensitive.
3. To assess the awareness about women empowerment in tricity.
4. To suggest some policy interventions.

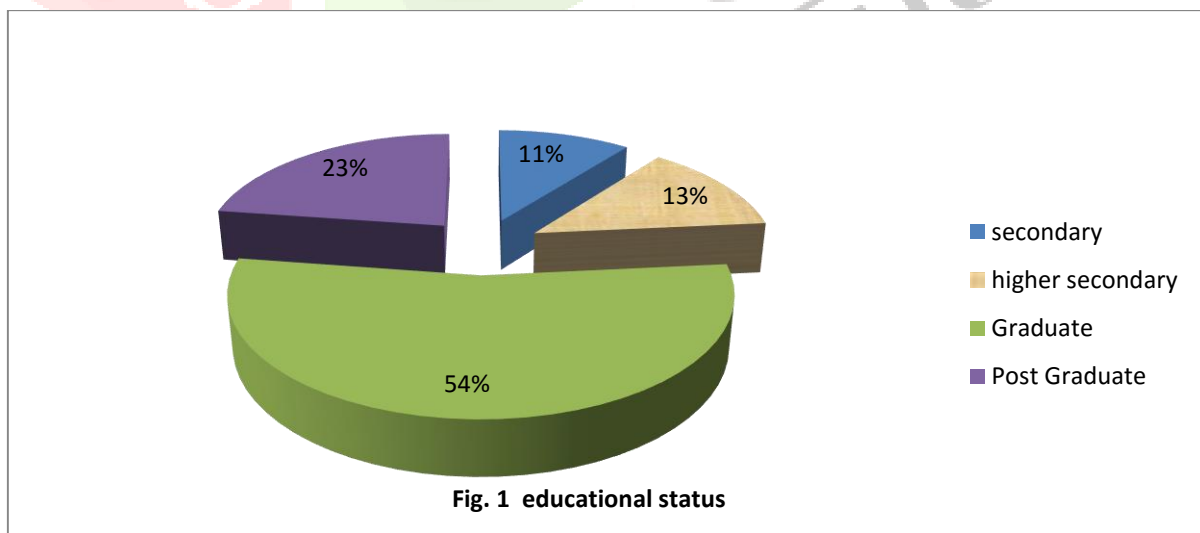
### Research Methodology

Keeping in mind the above objectives and limitations of the study, we have selected the sample population of 1000 married women from the tricity using random sampling method. Structured questionnaire with multiple choices and Interview schedule were the main tools of data collection. However, some open ended questions were also included in the questionnaire. Simple methodology of ratios and percentages is used to explain the variables dealt with.

### Result Analysis and Discussion

#### Age and Educational Status of the Respondents

In the study, age of respondents is between 25-50 years. All women are educated, their educational status is shown in fig. 1 (We know that Chandigarh has high literacy rate of 87.77 percent according to census 2011).



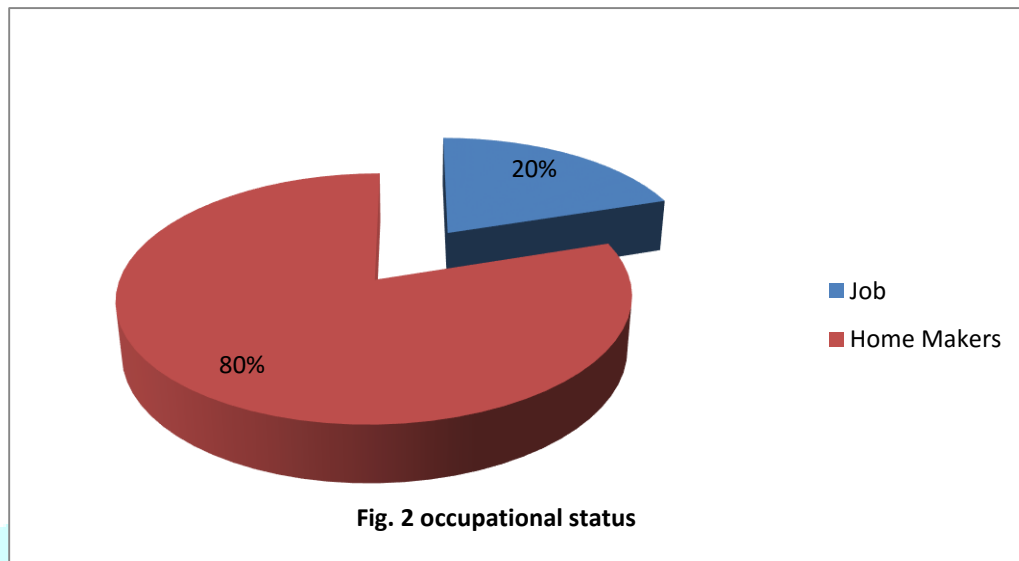
High literacy rate is clearly shown in the above figure, 54 percent respondents were graduate, 23 percent were post graduate, 13 percent completed higher secondary education and rest 10 percent respondents just completed their secondary education.

#### Occupational Status and Financial freedom

Women's economic participation plays a vital role in their position and financial freedom. Women who are engaged in good occupational activities are commonly given greater freedom, than those who are not, for their

participation in family expenditure. But in most of the cases it was found that even though they earn for their family, yet they do not get any kind of importance as earning members of the family. Also, they are not able to enjoy financial freedom like the male members of their families. They have to take permission from their husband to spend their own earnings. Their role in decision taking is very minimal.

The figure shows that only 20 percent women are engaged in different type of pay jobs while the other 80 percent are house makers. The latter serve their family and spend most of their time in household work but are not given the respect they deserve.

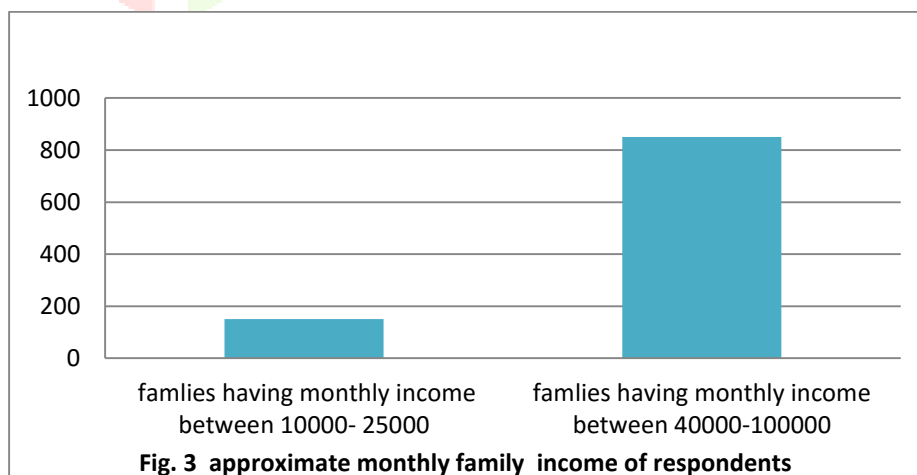


When questioned about their financial freedom, only 1 percent women said that they are enjoying financial freedom, while the rest 99 percent do not have any financial freedom. Only 4.5 percent of working women and 0.12 percent of housewives enjoy financial freedom.

Due to lack of financial freedom women keep hidden savings, which is also called '*stree-dhan*' (out of household expenditure budget). According to survey 99.2 percent respondents have hidden savings. It is important to keep these kinds of savings as it gives them complete control over their usage in accordance with their requirement. Thus, they do not have to explain their personal expenditure to anyone in the family.

### Family income and the amount of hidden savings

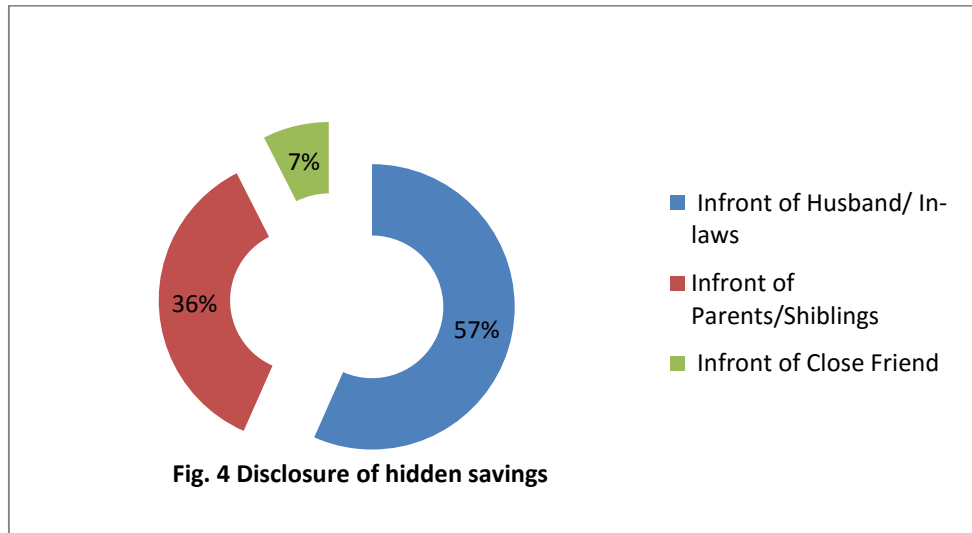
Monthly family income of respondents is approximately between 10,000-100000. Income of 150 families lie between 10000-25000 and 850 families have income between 40000-100000. All women had savings according to their family income. The amount of savings was minimum 10000 to maximum 630000 and on an aggregate they saved Rs.8,15,12400. Thus, we can say that on an average a woman in the tricity has savings of minimum Rs. 82,170.



The announcement of demonetization on November 8, 2016, by our Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi was like a thunderclap to these women because all their savings were done in Rs.500 or Rs.1000 notes. They were confused, helpless and scared as that cash was the safety net for financially insecure women. Now, they had to disclose their savings in front of their husband and other family members.

### Disclosure of hidden savings and reactions of their family members

Now the big question arose whom should they disclose their savings to. For this disclosure, 57 percent women trusted their husbands/in-laws, 36 percent women disclosed it in front of their parents/siblings and remaining 7 percent women took help from close friends.



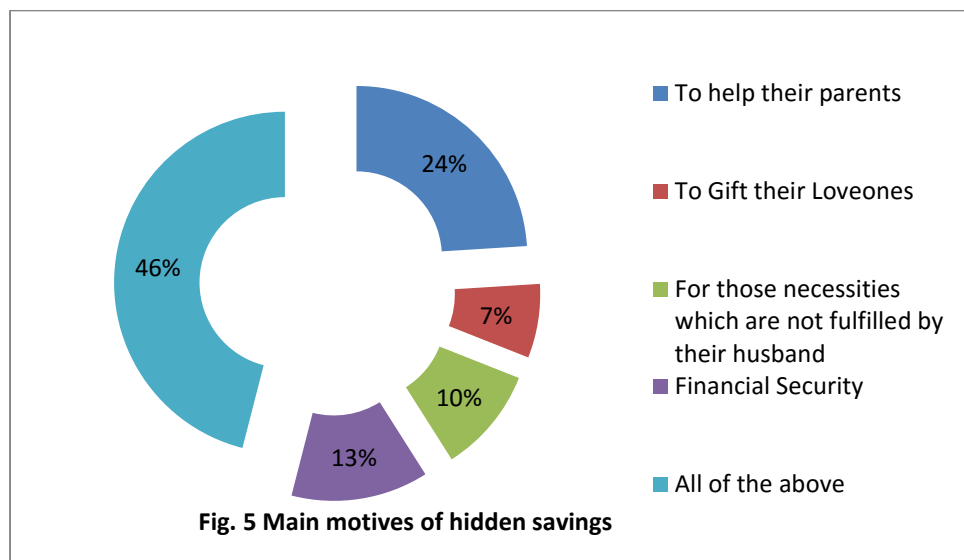
In the survey, it was found that 70.56 percent relatives were supportive, 8.87 percent were surprised and 20.57 percent (of the husbands) were angry after knowing about the hidden savings of their wives. Some women had to face physical and emotional violence due to anger of their husbands. In spite of all this only 1.15 percent women got their savings back, while 98.85 percent didn't get a single penny from their husbands/ in-laws.

Women who trusted their parents, siblings and close friends for this disclosure, got 100 percent of their savings back. Now these women are happy and relaxed. They are still enjoying the pleasure of their secret savings.

Those women who didn't get their savings back and those who got their savings back, from their husbands, both felt sad and financially insecure because most of them had to lose their savings and others lost the freedom to use their savings freely. Now they have to take permission from their husband to use their money.

### Main motive of hidden savings and Future planning

All these women (i.e. 100 percent) have planned to make such type of savings in the future as well. By this time 28.32 percent women have planned to use secret bank accounts for their savings, 67.13 percent prefer cash (again) and 4.55 percent give importance to gold for their future savings. All the respondents had different motives behind keeping such savings. The survey shows that about 24 percent saved the money to help their parents (this is because whenever they want to help their parents, their husband and in-laws show displeasure indirectly) and 7 percent women saved to gift their loved ones (some respondents told us that whenever they want to gift someone on their parental side the budget of their husband/in-laws automatically shrinks, but their in-laws and husbands want expensive gifts from their parents). Further, 10 percent respondents said that they had to keep such savings to fulfill their needs and their children's basic demands as their husbands refuse to do so and called these demands as extravagance, 13 percent saved for their financial security and self respect (some respondents said that they had to borrow money from their parents during financial crises of their husband and now their husbands are least interested in repaying the loan, but these women want to repay those loans for their self-respect). The remaining 46 percent respondents gave all of the above reasons behind keeping secrete savings. Here, the dominating reasons for savings are their financial security and providing help to their parents.



### Banking habits and financial empowerment for women

Surprising facts were that out of 992 women, who had hidden savings, 90.8 percent women already had bank accounts before demonetization but still they had cash savings at their home. For this they gave different reasons, one of the most prominent reason given by 87.70 percent women was that their bank accounts were operated by their husbands. This shows that even educated women are not financially empowered and perceive any bank-related chore as a “man’s job”. The families of 11.42 percent respondents don’t allow them to be financially independent and won’t let them go to a bank alone to operate their own account i.e. restricted mobility was another reason for keeping savings at home. Only 0.88 percent respondents kept cash for emergency.

### Cashless economy and Digital payments

In the survey sample of one thousand women, 90.70 percent women are having bank accounts and ATM cards but 70 percent of these women are not in favor of cashless economy, only 30 percent women favor cashless transactions. This is mainly because small payments like payment to the vegetable vendor, the milkman, etc., can’t be made digitally. Out of these 90.70 percent women who are having bank accounts and ATM’s, 63 percent women still make their payments in cash, 27 percent use digital mode and 10 percent use both the methods.

The reason for relying on cash payment given by 92.52 percent respondents, who were not in the favor of cashless transactions, was lack of knowledge of cashless transactions and the rest 7.48 percent gave the reason of low connectivity.

### Findings

1. Demonetization exposed the social and economic status of women in the Indian society.
2. Most of the women are not aware of women empowerment therefore they are facing lots of problem in their social and economic life.
3. Due to lack of financial empowerment a huge amount of money was kept at home, by the women’s. If this money would have been deposited in banks, the government could have used it for the development of the economy and women’s savings would have also grown by the interest they could earn.
4. Liquidity of money (cash) is the first choice of women for their savings as they think that it is the only thing which helps them during their hard time.
5. Cashless economy won’t be possible due to lack of knowledge and connectivity.
6. Most women are not bank friendly as the male members dominate them and suppress their economic freedom.
7. Restricted mobility and lack of decision making power is the reason for lower social status of women in the society.

### Suggestions

1. Women empowerment could only be achieved if their economic and social status is improved.
2. Awareness programs needs to be organised for creating awareness among women.
3. Programs and acts, developed for women empowerment, should be strictly implemented to curb the mal-practices against women.
4. The work of a house maker should be recognized and they should be paid for this so that they can achieve financial empowerment.



5. Housewives should be trained about how to use Mobile banking facilities.
6. Girls should be made aware about the banking system during their middle school, so that they do not have to depend on their male counterparts.
7. The role of educating the girl child should be emphasized. This will make the girls well informed citizen of the country apart from empowering them with jobs and all consequential benefits.
8. State legal services authorities should conduct awareness programs for enabling the women to exercise their legal rights.

## Conclusion

The study shows the problem faced by the women, during demonetization, due to low socioeconomic status. Most of the women do not have financial freedom. Majority of them are dependent on their husband to access their bank accounts. Lack of financial empowerment compels them to keep huge amount of hidden cash savings, at their home, which is a big loss for any economy. If this money would have been deposited in banks, the government could have used it for economic development.

Therefore, without socioeconomic equality for women, the impact of efforts for development cannot be fully realized. India must value women as a human resource asset and not liability. Socio-economic development can do both, empower women and raise the status of the Indian economy.

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