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OCCUPATIONAL PATTERN OF RURAL WOMEN

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ABSTRACT-

This research investigates the occupational patterns of 150 rural women in Dhar district, Madhya Pradesh, spanning primary, secondary, and tertiary sectors. It focuses on income sources and employment types. The study unveils a spectrum of employment sources, from traditional agrarian roles in the primary sector to emerging positions in secondary and tertiary sectors, indicating evolving opportunities while traditional practices endure. The paper analyses sector-wise distribution, offering insights into prevalent employment types. It examines income dynamics considering education, societal norms, and technology's influence. By illuminating factors shaping women's economic roles, this research enriches comprehension of rural women's economic landscape. It emphasizes intricate occupational patterns among Dhar's rural women, capturing the blend of tradition and modernity in income sources and employment types. Findings inform policies to enhance economic empowerment, advancing inclusive and sustainable development.

INTRODUCTION

The occupational landscape of rural women is a pivotal lens through which the dynamics of rural economies and societies can be comprehensively understood. Their roles within these economies have undergone substantial transformations over time, influenced by cultural norms, technological progress, educational opportunities, and evolving economic structures. The intricate interplay of these factors shapes the occupational patterns of rural women, often leading to a distinct distribution across primary, secondary, and tertiary sectors. In many traditional agrarian societies, rural women have traditionally been associated with agricultural and household activities, primarily due to their limited access to education and prevailing gender norms. These roles were deeply rooted in the socio-cultural fabric and were seen as essential for the sustenance of rural households and communities. However, as societies transitioned towards modernization and industrialization, new avenues of employment emerged, and women's participation in various sectors

underwent significant changes. Education has proven to be a powerful catalyst in altering the trajectory of women's employment in rural areas. It has played a dual role – breaking down barriers that once confined women to traditional roles and creating opportunities for them to diversify their occupational choices. As women gained access to education, their aspirations expanded beyond traditional roles, leading to increased participation in non-agricultural sectors such as services, trade, and other forms of paid employment. Empirical evidence from various contexts indicates a strong correlation between education levels and the sectors in which rural women are employed. Low levels of education tend to align with engagement in the primary sector, predominantly agriculture. The physical nature of agriculture and the limited skill requirements often make it accessible to those with minimal formal education. However, as education levels rise, rural women are more likely to transition to the secondary and tertiary sectors, contributing to administrative roles, professional services, and trade. Furthermore, the expansion of education has empowered women to challenge traditional gender norms and venture into sectors previously dominated by men. This shift not only diversifies women's employment but also contributes to gender equality by challenging gender stereotypes and fostering a more inclusive workforce. The phenomenon of rural women transitioning from agriculture to non-agricultural sectors is particularly evident in the context of developing countries. As economies progress, opportunities beyond farming emerge, and women's participation in these sectors becomes integral to achieving sustainable development goals. This transition has implications for both rural economies and women's empowerment, as it can potentially lead to increased income, improved working conditions, and enhanced decision-making power for women within their households and communities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Meher (2018) The workforce's growth in non-agricultural activities surpasses that in agriculture. Particularly, the growth rate of female workers in non-agricultural fields exceeds that of their male counterparts. A minor yet noticeable shift is observed from agriculture to non-agriculture sectors for both rural and urban females. Consequently, the employment share in secondary and tertiary sectors is gradually increasing. A central finding is the structural transformation characterized by a decline in agricultural employment for both male and female workers. After an extensive review of numerous research articles and papers addressing the distribution of occupations, a coherent perspective has emerged. Noteworthy reviews by scholars such as Abbott (1910), Pinchbeck (1968), Butler (1969), Holcombe (1973), and Tentler (1979) have provided historical evidence from the nineteenth century, suggesting that women's engagement in wage-based work historically had an adverse impact on men's wages. However, alternative viewpoints, such as that of Armstrong and Armstrong (1978), propose a distinct interpretation. They posit that the presence of women in the labor market was preceded by relatively low wages, challenging the notion that women's participation caused wage decline. In the context of the occupational patterns of women in different sectors within rural areas, the insights from these past studies offer valuable perspectives. Treiman and Terrell's (1975) and Snyder and Hudis's (1976) longitudinal analyses of the relationship between gender composition and wages stand out. They both conclude that female labor force participation negatively influences men's wages, while the evidence for gender-specific recruitment into lower-paying occupations is less pronounced.

Considering the occupational dynamics of rural women in various sectors, Contreras, and Plaza (2010) assert that cultural attributes wield a significant impact on female labor supply. Notably, a recent study in Chile by Montenegro (2001) discovers a positive correlation between higher education levels and income among both men and women in the top quintiles. Applying these insights to the occupational landscape of rural women across sectors and education levels, it is evident that historical trends align with findings from earlier studies. The dynamic between women's participation and wages has multifaceted implications, particularly in rural settings. The intersection of education and sectoral employment underscores the complexity of women's economic engagement. The varied perspectives presented in these studies enhance our comprehension of the intricate interplay between education, sectoral distribution, and income generation for rural women, thus contributing to a comprehensive understanding of their economic roles and opportunities.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Rural women's pivotal role in shaping socio-economic dynamics contrasts with the insufficient attention they receive in research, particularly in areas like Dhar district. This study fills this void, investigating how limited education and opportunities impact their occupational patterns. While broader studies explore women's economic roles, rural contexts' nuances often go unaddressed. The intricate rural environment, shaped by unique cultural norms, limited resources, and diverse access to education, necessitates focused exploration. Research scarcity regarding rural women's occupational trends limits our understanding of their nuanced experiences and distinct challenges.

Dhar district encapsulates typical rural challenges, with constrained educational prospects and entrenched gender norms relegating women to conventional roles. Scarce diverse employment options limit their contributions and potential. Insufficient investigation perpetuates restricted opportunities and deepens gender disparities in rural settings. This research probes rural women's occupational patterns in Dhar district, unveiling latent challenges arising from the interplay between education and opportunities. It explores how limited education influences sector choices and hurdles due to restricted non-agricultural access. Challenges extend beyond economics, encompassing psychological and social barriers like self-perception and societal expectations. Understanding these hurdles informs targeted interventions, bridging education and employment gaps. Such efforts promote gender equality, economic empowerment, and holistic community progress. This study illuminates these issues' multifaceted dimensions, contributing to the discourse on rural women's economic empowerment and sustainable advancement. This research addresses the prominent research void in understanding rural women's occupational challenges in Dhar district. Unveiling their experiences underscores the urgent need for strategies boosting educational access, expanding job prospects, and enhancing rural women's socio-economic status.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

1. To study the association between education and the occupational patterns of rural women.
2. To investigate the influence of women's educational attainment on their access to job opportunities.

METHODOLOGY AND TOOLS

The methodology employed for investigating the occupational patterns of rural women in the Dhar district encompassed several key steps. A purposive sampling approach was used to select 150 representative participants. Data collection involved structured interviews and surveys to gather information on education levels and employment sectors. The Chi-Square test was then used to analyse the relationship between education and sectors, with a focus on significance levels. Visualization was achieved through a pie chart representing sector-wise distribution. Ethical considerations were prioritized, and the study acknowledged limitations such as potential biases and the district's specificity. Overall, the methodology combined quantitative analysis and visualization to provide insights into rural women's occupational patterns.

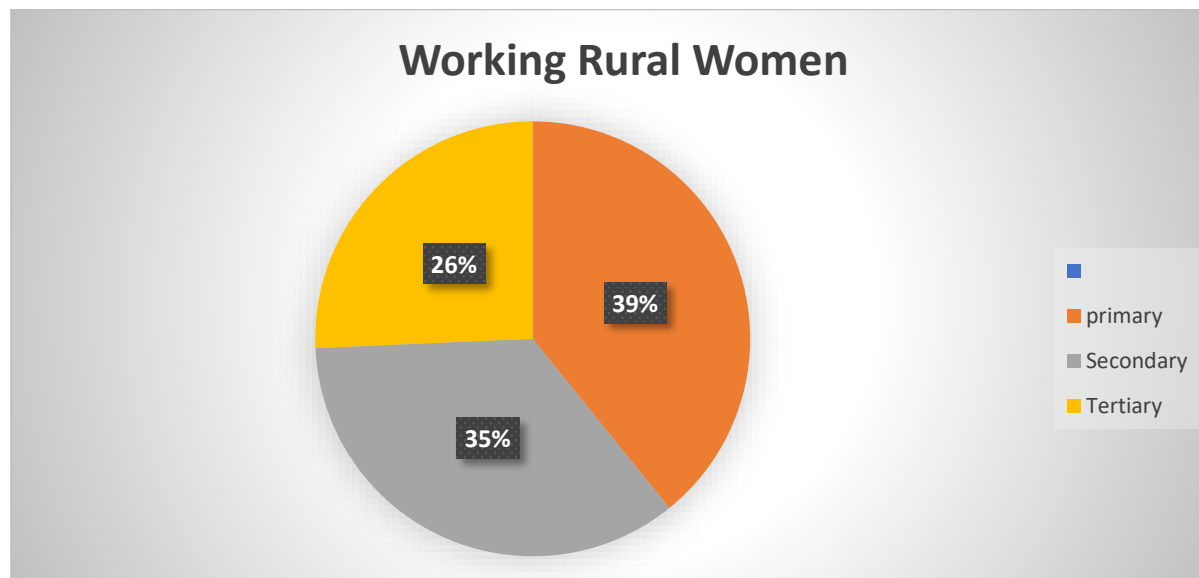
DATA ANALYSIS

Table: 01
No. of women working in different Sectors

Sectors	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Primary	58	38.7	38.7	40.0
Secondary	52	34.7	34.7	74.7
Tertiary	38	25.3	25.3	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

The primary sector has the highest frequency, with 58 women (38.7% of the total sample), followed by the secondary sector with 52 women (34.7%). The tertiary sector, which includes service-oriented roles, had 38 women (25.3%). When considering the valid percentages, the primary sector accounts for 38.7% of the total, followed by the secondary sector at 34.7%, and the tertiary sector at 25.3%. In cumulative terms, the primary sector encompasses 40.0% of the total distribution, while the secondary sector accounts for 74.7%. The tertiary sector completes the distribution with 100.0%. This data distribution showcases the varying proportions of rural women engaged in different sectors within the Dhar district. The dominance of the primary and secondary sectors indicates a substantial involvement in traditional and emerging roles, respectively. The lower percentage in the tertiary sector suggests a comparatively smaller but still significant presence in service-based employment.

Figure:01



The primary sector represented with a slice corresponding to 58 out of 150, which is approximately 38.7% of the total. The secondary sector a slice representing 52 women, or around 34.7%. The remaining 38 women in the tertiary sector represented by a slice accounting for roughly 25.3%.

Table:02

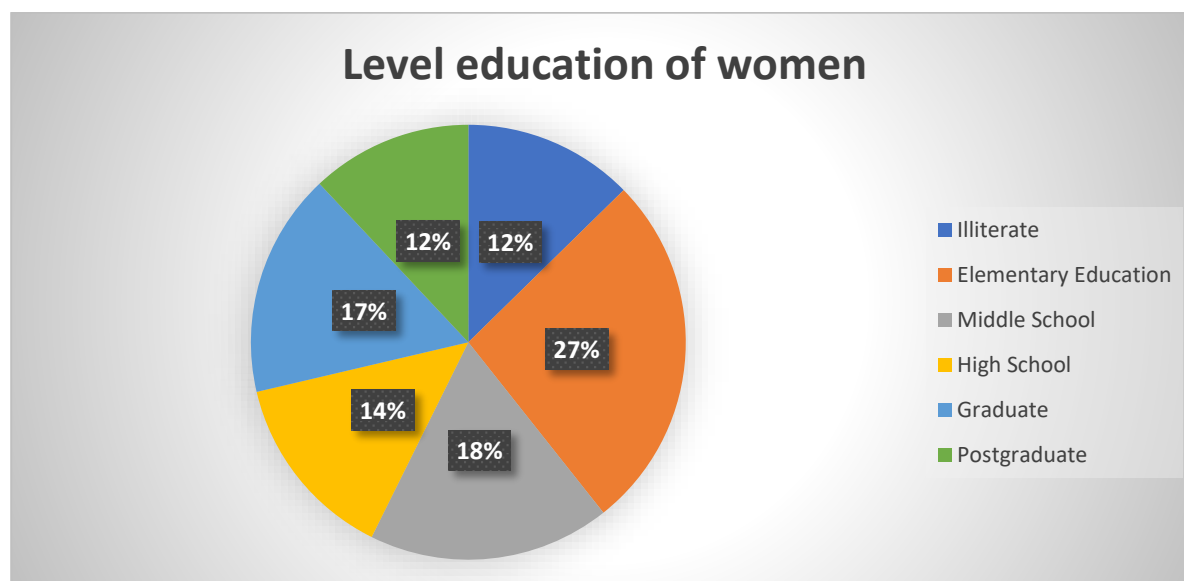
Level of Education of Rural Women

	Level of Education	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Illiterate	19	12.7	12.7	12.7
	Elementary Education	40	26.7	26.7	39.3
	Middle School	27	18.0	18.0	57.3
	High School	21	14.0	14.0	71.3
	Graduate	25	16.7	16.7	88.0
	Postgraduate	18	12.0	12.0	100.0
	Total		150	100.0	100.0

The data reveals the educational distribution of 150 rural women in the sample. Starting with 19 (12.7%) being illiterate, 40 (26.7%) have elementary education, followed by 27 (18.0%) at the middle school level. High school-educated women constitute 21 (14.0%), while 25 (16.7%) have graduated, and 18 (12.0%) have postgraduate degrees. The cumulative percentages indicate the progression: illiterate (12.7%), elementary education (39.3%), middle school (57.3%), high school (71.3%), graduate (88.0%), and postgraduate (100.0%).

This distribution emphasizes a range of educational backgrounds. Exploring how education influences job opportunities for these women, especially in relation to the sectors they are engaged in, can provide valuable insights into the role of education in shaping their economic prospects and overall empowerment.

Figure: 02



In the pie chart, the largest segment corresponds to women with elementary education, accounting for 40 out of 150, which is approximately 26.7% of the total. Following closely, the middle school-educated group represents the second largest segment, consisting of 27 women or approximately 18.0%. The illiterate category is represented by a slice corresponding to 19 women, or around 12.7%. Moving on, the high school-educated group forms a slice accounting for 21 women, or approximately 14.0%. The graduate level, with 25 women, is depicted by a segment constituting roughly 16.7%. Lastly, the postgraduate-educated women are represented by a slice encompassing 18 women, which is approximately 12.0% of the total.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

H0: There is no significant relationship between the level of education and occupational pattern of women.

H1: There is significant relationship between the level of education and occupational pattern of women.

Table:03
Sector * Education Crosstabulation

Count		Sector				Total
		0	primary	Secondary	Tertiary	
Education	Illiterate	0	16	3	0	19
	Elementary Education	1	23	16	0	40
	Middle School	0	14	12	1	27
	High School	1	3	15	2	21
	Graduate	0	1	4	20	25
	Postgraduate	0	1	2	15	18
Total		2	58	52	38	150

The crosstabulation illustrates the relationship between sectors of employment and education levels among 150 rural women. It shows how women with different education levels are distributed across primary, secondary, and tertiary sectors. Among illiterate women, 16 are in the secondary sector and 3 in the tertiary sector. For those with elementary education, 1 is in the primary sector, 23 in the secondary sector, and 16 in the tertiary sector. Middle school-educated women have 14 in the secondary sector, 12 in the tertiary sector, and 1 in the secondary sector. High school-educated women include 1 in the primary sector, 3 in the secondary sector, 15 in the tertiary sector, and 2 in the secondary sector. Among graduates, 1 is in the secondary sector, 4 in the tertiary sector, and 20 in the secondary sector. Postgraduates have 1 in the secondary sector, 2 in the tertiary sector, and 15 in the secondary sector. The crosstabulation provides insights into how education levels correspond with employment sectors, contributing to a holistic understanding of the workforce distribution.

Table:04

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.266E2 ^a	15	.000
Likelihood Ratio	131.520	15	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	77.533	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	150		

The results of the chi-square tests indicate a significant relationship between the level of education and the occupational pattern of women in the context of the given dataset. The Pearson Chi-Square value is 126.6 with 15 degrees of freedom, yielding a p-value of .000. Similarly, the Likelihood Ratio value is 131.520 with a p-value of .000. Both p-values are well below the conventional significance level of 0.05, indicating strong evidence against the null hypothesis. The Linear-by-Linear Association test, with a value of 77.533 and a p-value of .000, also aligns with the rejection of the null hypothesis. The substantial significance levels in all three tests suggest that the observed relationship between the level of education and the occupational pattern of women in the dataset is unlikely to have occurred by chance. Additionally, it is worth noting that 33.3% of the cells have expected counts less than 5, with the minimum expected count being .24. This can potentially impact the reliability of the chi-square test results. Considering these results, we reject the null hypothesis (H₀) that there is no significant relationship between the level of education and the occupational pattern of women. Instead, we have sufficient evidence to support the alternative hypothesis (H₁) that a significant relationship indeed exists between these two variables. This implies that the level of education plays a role in shaping the occupational pattern of women in the given context.

CONCLUSION

This study shed light on the importance of education as a determinant of occupational choices and lay the foundation for further exploration and policy considerations in empowering women within their economic pursuits. The influence of education on their occupational choices, with certain sectors being favoured by women with specific educational backgrounds. These insights emphasize the complex interplay between education, employment, and the economic landscape of rural women, providing valuable implications for targeted interventions aimed at enhancing their economic opportunities and empowerment.

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