



# A STUDY ON EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN RELATION TO THEIR EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

**Dr. Sabita Nayak**

Associate Professor in Education

Nalini Devi Women's College of Teacher Education, Bhubaneswar

## Abstract

Education is rightly acknowledged as the most effective tool for empowerment. Empowerment is a process in which women gain control over their own lives by knowing and claiming their rights at all levels of society and are fully involved in the economic, political and social decision making process. The present investigation intends to study empowerment of women in relation to their educational background. The main objective of the study is to compare the level of economic, political and social empowerment among more educated and less educated women. Descriptive survey method was adopted for conducting this study. The sample for the present study consisted of 100 women, selected on the basis of simple random sampling. Out of these 100 women, 50 women belonged to more educated and other 50 belonged to less educated category. A questionnaire was prepared and administered to study the empowerment level of women. Simple percentages were calculated for analyzing data. Findings reveal that more educated women are economically socially and politically more empowered than the women who are less educated.

**Keywords:** Women empowerment, economic empowerment, social empowerment, political empowerment, educational background.

## Introduction

Education is widely acknowledged as an important means in developmental strategies to improve the condition of women. It has been universally witnessed that when women are educated, there is significant improvement in their status within the family and in the society. The concept of 'empowerment' emerged along with the increasing attention to women's education. A concept paper for the Panel on "Girls' and Women's Education, Women's Empowerment and Population Issues" prepared in 1993 by the United Nations Population Fund focused on the important issue of education as a means to women's empowerment. According to the Human Development Report (2000) of the United Nations Development Programme, there is no country that treats its women on par with its men in terms of a complex measure that include life expectancy, wealth and education. Deprivation of girls and women can be more meaningfully checked by looking at capability deprivation in terms of mortality, undernourishment, medical neglect or illiteracy instead of looking at family income, which may be distributed unequally and in favour of the male members of the family.

Broadly speaking, “empowerment refers to a process by which the disempowered individuals and groups gain the power to control their life and the ability to make strategic life choices”. One of the most important elements in the empowerment process is raising the awareness of women of their own subordinate position. Empowering women is seen as a way to change gender roles and to enhance their capabilities of creating change and making decisions about crucial issues affecting their own lives.

Though there has been focus on the education of women for decades, women still have unequal opportunities in terms of lesser access to and lesser participation in the educational system. In the employment sphere, women’s participation is abysmally low. Women work, but their work is not visible in statistics. Women working at home or in family holdings are considered either as non-workers or supplementary workers (Mukherjee, 2004). Women in India are employed more in poorly paid on unskilled jobs characterized by the absence of upward mobility on opportunity (World Economic Forum, 2010). A number of research studies have shown very crucial benefits of educating girls and women. (Thenmojhi,2006; Lakshminarayan, 2002; Harpalani,1993; Kantamma, 1990). Literacy rates over periods; the percentage of boys and girls finishing primary school, middle school and high school; and the percentage of men and women in post-secondary and higher education are indicators of the spread of education. Better-educated mothers are more informed about the value of health care and, in fact, tend to demand provision of more health care.

Education in the real sense is about enhancing the capabilities of people to understand and deal with the world they live in. As the NPE, 1986 states, “Education can be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women”. The Policy states that government should use education as a means to achieve gender equality and as a tool to correct centuries of discrimination. In order to achieve this, the system of education would have to play a positive, interventionist role in the empowerment of women.

### **Rationale of the study**

For overall development of society, women need to be empowered. Education is the base for women’s empowerment. It empowers the women achieve success in social, political, economic and in all other spheres of the society. Education will equip women to accomplish their activities effectively, enhance their status & stability in the society. So it is rightly said that educated women are really empowered women.

Although a number of researches are conducted on the relation between women’s empowerment and education, but all these studies have given emphasis on specific aspects of empowerment like – Family Welfare, Political participation, employment, Marriage or status of women etc. In the present investigation the investigator makes an attempt to study the empowerment of women in a wholesome manner, which will analyse their “Social empowerment, Economic empowerment and Political empowerment altogether. The study also intends to seek answer to the question: whether educational background of women is directly related to their level of empowerment ? On the basis of the above assumption the present investigation was stated as “A STUDY ON EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN RELATION TO THEIR EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND”.

### **Objectives**

- i) To study the relationship between education and women’s empowerment.
- ii) To compare the level of Economic Empowerment among more educated and less educated women.
- iii) To compare the level of Social Empowerment among more educated and less educated Women.
- iv) To compare the level of Political Empowerment among more educated and less educated women.

## Operational Definition of key terms

### Women Empowerment

Empowerment is a process in which women gain control over their own lives by knowing and claiming their rights at all levels of society and are fully involved in the economic, political and social decision making process.

### Social Empowerment

Social empowerment is the extent of women's involvement in family decision making process, freedom to mix up with others and ability to prevent domestic violence.

### Economic Empowerment

Economic empowerment is the extent of freedom to work as to contribute to family income and the level of their desire to be self-dependent.

### Political Empowerment

Political empowerment is the extent to which a woman is free to participate in voting process directly and their desire to become political leaders. It also includes their awareness about different rights which should be claimed by them.

### Educational Background

It includes more educated and less educated category only.

More Educated – Women having education above Class X.

Less Educated – Women having education till Class X.

### **Delimitation of the study**

- i) The study was confined to 100 women, of Baliana Block, Khurda District.
- ii) It was limited to more educated and less educated women.
- iii) The family income of all the selected women ranged from Rs.20,000/- to 40,000//- per month.

### **Method of Study**

The researcher adopted “Descriptive Survey” method for conducting the study.

### **Sample of the Study**

The population of this study consists of all the literate women population of Baliana Block, Khurda, Odisha. The sample was selected on the basis of the simple random sampling procedure by using table of random numbers. Out of these 100 women 50 women belonged to more educated category and other 50 women belonged to the less educated category.

## Tools used in the study

To study the empowerment level of women the investigator prepared a questionnaire, consisting of 40 items on different aspects such as Economic Empowerment, Social Empowerment and Political Empowerment.

## Procedure of Data Collection

The investigator administered the questionnaire among the selected sample of 50 less educated women and 50 more educated women by personal visits for collecting data.

## Analysis and Interpretation

After the collection of data, the investigator organized the data in logical order. Simple percentages were calculated for analyzing data.

## Major Findings

The major findings from analyzed data on three different aspects of empowerment are as follows: -

### Economic Empowerment

- Greater percentage of more educated women belonged to higher income level than less educated women.
- The more educated women were more aware about the various governmental programmes for making women economically independent than the less educated women.
- Both more educated and less educated women supported in greater percentage that women's earning contributed in raising the standard of living of the family. But the findings show that the percentage was greater among the more educated women than the less educated women. This shows that the higher the educational level of women the more they wanted to be economically independent.
- Findings show that the more the level of education of women, the more they were interested to keep an account of the family income, expenditure and savings along with their husbands in comparison to less educated women.
- Both more educated and less educated women supported that economic development of women would add to the national development of women. But more educated women strongly agreed on this point than the less educated women.

### Social Empowerment

- Findings on treating both boy and girl equally show that the more educated women do not discriminate between the son and daughter and provide equal opportunity to both as compared to the less educated women.
- Regarding women exploitation findings reveal that both more educated and less educated women considered that women are exploited till now.
- Regarding physical or mental torture the findings reveal that the family members of all the respondents showed right kind of behaviour towards them with exception of only few respondents. This shows that they enjoy a better position in the family.
- The findings show that more educated women opposed the wrong decision of their husbands. This shows that more educated women are more courageous to raise their voice against anything wrong.

- Findings reveal that all the respondents regard women's contribution is more in keeping the family and environment neat and clean. This shows that women in general, are more aware about environmental cleanliness.

### Political Empowerment

- According to the findings, the higher the educational level the greater is the participation in political affair.
- As per findings all respondents of more educated women supported the reservation policy. The respondents responded very well and favoured the reservation policy, which they claimed to their interest. But still some respondents of less educated women category did not know about the policy. This shows that more educated women are better aware about the various government policies made for women.
- Findings reveal that more educated women showed more positive attitude towards women's participation in politics than less educated women.
- More educated women strongly agreed than the less educated women that political development of women would lead to the development of the nation.

### **Educational Implication**

- (1) It is important to reform the curriculum, making it more gender sensitive so that gender relations can be improved. Such gender sensitive curriculum should aim at eliminating gender stereotypes and construct new ways of establishing social relations between men and women.
- (2) Textbooks need to be written so as to contain a number of crucial issues concerning gender in order to provide the school girls with female role models. At the same time, it can be argued that development of a gender sensitive content in textbooks alone is not sufficient in generating change – transmission is equally important. Therefore, teachers trained in gender issues are required in the improvement of gender relations through the transmission of knowledge, skills and values in the schools.
- (3) Adult education programmes for rural women should be so designed as to enable them to address the specific problems of women like performance of the daily domestic chores. For additional income generation, programmes with focus on skill development and up gradation of skills should form the principal thrust of adult education programmes.

### **Conclusion**

It is impossible to realize the goal of Education for all (EFA), until and unless we are willing to squarely address the gender dimension of education, planning and administration. An integrated and holistic approach is essential to generate an environment of change. It is essential to enhance women's access to education, primary health care, public distribution system and natural resources management. Simultaneously, their capabilities need to be enhanced to meet the challenges presented by this unequal society. Above all, educational institutions are powerful ideological institutions that can play pivotal role in ensuring a gender just societal order.

## References

1. Harpalani, B.D. (1993). Level of women Education and its impact on family welfare programme. Indian Educational Abstracts, Vol-2, No-1, January-2002.
2. Kantamma, K. (1990). Status of women in relation to education, employment and marriage. In M.B.Buch (Ed.) Fifth survey of Research in Education. NCERT: New Delhi, 110.
3. Nath, K. (2004, July). Women and Empowerment: Role of Education. Paper presented at Asia Pacific Conference; Bangkok.
4. India Education Report, edited by R. Govinda, (2002) NIEPA, Oxford University Press.
5. Human Development Report (2000) UNDP, New York.
6. National Policy of Education (1986), Ministry of Human Resource Development, New Delhi.
7. World Economic Forum (2010), Women's Empowerment: Measuring the Global Gender Gap, Geneva, Switzerland.
8. Mukherjee, M. (2004) Women and work in the shadow of Globalization, Indian Journal of Gender studies, Vol.II, No.3, September-December.

