

Education and Economic Empowerment of Women: A Sociological Inquiry

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Abstract

In nearly every country, women work longer hours than men, but are usually paid less and are more likely to live in poverty. India's economy is doing well and we are right to celebrate that. But what we do not like to acknowledge, let alone address, is another fact: our economy, and society, is still extremely biased against women. Perhaps paying attention to such inconvenient truths would distract us as we march towards superpower status. It is believe that if women gain economic strength they gain both a visibility and voice in the home, workplace and the community. The economic dimension of empowerment of women refers to women have access to and control over productive resources, thus ensuring some degree of financial autonomy. Thus the prime objective of this article is to analyze the role of education in gaining the access and control over productive resource, financial autonomy and decision making.

Key Words: *Economic Empowerment, Education*

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Introduction

In nearly every country, women work longer hours than men, but are usually paid less and are more likely to live in poverty. India's economy is doing well and we are right to celebrate that. But what we do not like to acknowledge, let alone address, is another fact: our economy, and society, is still extremely biased against women. Perhaps paying attention to such inconvenient truths would distract us as we march towards superpower status. In the latest gender gap index report released by the world economic forum (WEF), India keeps company with the worst in the world. Among the 128 countries that have been evaluated by the WEF, India is ranked 114, followed among others by Yemen, Chad, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Even China, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Botswana fare much better than us.

Many of the most successful and stable organizations in the south-Asian regions have, over the years, come to the conclusion that promoting women's empowerment in their economic lives is the best base for achieving overall empowerment (Carr et al. 1996). It is believed that if women gain economic strength they gain both a visibility and voice in the home, workplace and the community. Thus the economic empowerment of women is being regarded these days as a *sin-qua-none* of progress for a country; hence the issue of economic empowerment of women is paramount importance to political thinkers, social scientists, reformers, politicians and administrators. The economic dimension of empowerment of women refers to women have access to and control over productive resources, thus ensuring some degree of financial autonomy.

2. Women, Education and Empowerment:

We trace the meanings of 'women's empowerment' through an exploration of several definitions, as articulated by feminists- scholars, women's organizations and multilateral institutions. Antrobus (1989) states that "empowerment is a process that enables a powerless women to develop autonomy, self-control and confidence and, with a group of women and men, a sense of collective influence over oppressive social conditions. J.S. Apte 1995, states that 'power' is the key word of the term 'Empowerment' which means 'control over material assets, intellectual resources and ideology. The material assets over which control can be established of any type- physical, human, financial, such as land, water, forests, people's bodies and agencies, labor, money and access to many. Knowledge, information, idea can be included in intellectual resources. Control over ideology, signifies the ability to generate, capacity to propagate, capacity to sustain and institutionalize specific sets of beliefs,

principles, values, attitudes action and behaviors. Jaya Kothani Pillai (1995) “empowerment is an active, multidimensional process which enables women to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres of life. All over the world, the movement for improving women’s status has always emphasized education as the most significant tool for social change and development of society and nation. “When the demand for women’s education started in 18th century, it was more in the light of women’s right, for access to knowledge and not as a national economic asset. “*Education is one of the most important means of empowering women with the knowledge skills and self- confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process.*” —ICPD Programme of Action, para 4.2

3. Objectives:

In the above background the study has focused on the following questions:

1. To analyze the socio- economic background of women.
2. To analyze the Economic dimensions of empowerment of women.
3. What is the relationship between educations and economic dimensions of empowerment of women.

4. Area of Study:

For the purpose of present study an urban area Ghaziabad city of western U.P. nearby Capital Delhi has been selected as specified focused area of study. It is an ancient city located on Grand Trunk Road 19 km east of New Delhi. As its boundary is adjacent to Delhi, it act as the main entrance of U.P., and that is why it is also called Gateway of U.P. Ghaziabad is a growing industrial city, it becomes the industrial hub of UP as well as an educational hub of NCR.

As of 2011 India census Ghaziabad had population of 1,636,068, male constitute 869,257 and female 766,811. Ghaziabad has an average literacy rate of 100.54%. The male literacy rate is 93.31% and female literacy rate is 108.67%. The sex ratio of the city is 882.

5. Methodology:

At the first stage 9 cases would be identified for analysis of different social categories on the basis of caste, class and education. At the second stage, in the present research work a total number of 200 respondents have been selected through purposive and stratified random sampling. Stratified sampling is a mixture of both random sampling and purposive sampling. Under this method the whole population is first divided into number of strata than a certain number of the sample is taken from each stratum on random basis. *The universe is defined by only Hindu*

population. Because if we took Muslim population than it become more difficult and more complicated to measure the variations occurring due to this difference. There by the study has been limited to Hindu Women.

In the present study interview schedule, quasi- participant observation, interviews have been used. Information related to Ghaziabad city were collected from secondary source like Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteers and Internet. Empirical data were collected with the help of specific research techniques of observation, interview, and personal- records if any. Quasi- participation observation and case- study methods were also used for collecting first hand data.

In the present study two major methods were adapted to process and analyze the data methodically, quantitative and qualitative. Simple statistical techniques like association and co- relation have been used to indicate the extent of relationship between the respondents' education and different dimensions of empowerment of women.

6. Finding:

The socio-economic background has been studied in terms of respondents' age, caste, class, education, occupation, land ownership of family, source of family income, family- size, family-type, husband's education, husband's occupation. The facts on these variables are presented in the following table:

Table -1. Socio-Economic Profile of Respondents in Ghaziabad

Indicators	Respondents %N=200	No.
1. Age Group (years)		
1. 20-30	31	62
2. 31-40	36	72
3. 41-50	21.5	43
4. 51-above	11.5	23
2. Caste		
1. General	34.5	69
2. OBC	38	76
3. SC	27.5	55
3. Education		
1. Illiterate	9.5	19
2. Low (up to 8 th)	13	26
3. Med. (9 th - 12 th)	22	44
4. High (graduate & above)	55.5	111
4. Occupation*		
1. House –wife (no outside occupation)	48	96
2. Wage-based	16	32

7. Family- Type		
1. Joint	29	58
2. Nuclear	71	142
8. Family-Size		
1. Up to 4	64	128
2. 5 to 8	30	60
3. 9 and above	6	12
9. Family-Income		
1. Up to 10,000	21	42
2. 11000-20,000	15.5	31
3. 21000-30,000	10	20
4. 31000-40,000	13.5	27
5. 41000-50,000	19	38
6. 50,000-above	21	42
10. Respondent's Income		
1. Nil	34	68
2. Up to 5000	21	42
3. 5100-10000	6	12
4. 11000-15000	7	14
5. 16000-20000	6	12
6. 21000 and above	26	52
11. Husband- Education		
1. Illiterate	3.5	07
2. Low (up to 8 th)	15	30
3. Med. (9 th - 12 th)	10.5	21
4. High (graduate & above)	71	142
12. Husband-Occupation		
1. Wage-based	22.5	45
2. low- category	25.5	51
3. Med. category	31	62
4. High category	21	42
13. Father-Education		
1. Illiterate	11.5	23
2. Low (up to 8 th)	18	36
3. Med. (9 th - 12 th)	15.5	31
4. High (graduate & above)	55	110
14. Mother-Education		
1. Illiterate	19	38
2. Low (up to 8 th)	18.5	37
3. Med. (9 th - 12 th)	37	74
4. High (graduate & above)	25.5	51
15. Standard of Living		
1. Low	20.5	41
2. Medium	25.5	51
3. High	54.0	108

**Respondents' occupation has been clubbed together in five main categories.*

3. low- category	15	30
4. Med. category	12	24
5. High category	9	18
5. Marital Status		
1. Married	96	192
2. Divorced/Separated	2.5	05
3. Widow	1.5	03
6. Age at Marriage		
1. Below to 18	10.5	21
2. 19 to 25	69	138
3. 26 to 33	20.5	41
4. Above to 33	00	00

The first category consists of unpaid workers, involved as a part of the family labor in the fields, family trades, crafts etc. and has no cash contribution to the family income. The second category consists of the paid workers on regular or irregular basis and makes some financial contribution to the family income like- laborers, skilled laborers, peon, watchman etc. The third category consists of persons like schoolteachers, clerks and small petty businessmen etc. The fourth category consists of persons like college teachers, inspectors or other occupations considered equal. The fifth category is made of those respondents who are very bright in their fields and earn heavy amounts from their occupations, like- doctors, engineers and big business persons etc.

In this connection following questions asked to the respondents to measures economic dimension of empowerment of women. Facts on these questions are presented in the following tables.

Table-2: Economic Dimension of Empowerment of Women

S.N.	Indicators	%	No.
1.	Nature of the respondents' work		
	A. House-wife	48	96
	B. Working women	52	104
	Total	100	200
2.	Decision about doing job/service		
	A. Personal	30.8	32
	B. Parents	27.9	29
	C. Husband	39.4	41
	D. Any other	01.9	02
	Total	100	104

S.N.	Indicators	%	No.
3.	Constraint faced in doing of job A. Yes B. No Total	37.6 62.4 100	53 88 141
4.	Constraint faced in: A. Parents' House B. In-laws House C. Both Total	20.8 66.0 13.2 100	11 35 07 53
4.	Indicate the reason for you are working A. Self- existence B. Family needs C. Both D. Any other Total	10.6 59.6 29.8 00 100	11 62 31 00 104
5.	Do you have full autonomy in spending of your income A. Yes B. No Total	26.9 73.1 100	28 76 104
6.	What do you do with your income? A. Save B. Contribute to household C. Spend on personal income D. all of the above Total	1.9 32.7 2.9 62.5 100	02 34 03 65 104
7.	Participation in daily uses items: A. Alone B. Husband C. Both D. Any other Total	55 4.5 35 5.5 100	110 09 70 11 200
8.	Decision about education and admission of children: A. Alone B. Husband C. Both D. Any other Total	2.5 31 66.5 00 100	05 62 133 00 200
9.	Decision about marriage related issues of children: A. Alone B. Husband C. Both D. Any other Total	00 32 64.5 3.5 100	00 64 129 07 200
10.	Do you observe that male is getting more salary than the female for the same work/job? A. Yes B. No Total	69.2 30.8 100	72 32 104

The fact of the above table indicates that out of respondents, 52% respondents are working and 48% are housewives. The facts related to the question did they feel constraint in doing job, shows that a large segment of the respondents accept that they felt. Most of the respondents faced constraint in doing job within in – laws family. Responses regarding the question indicate the reason for working, maximum number of the respondents reported that they are working for family needs, there are very few number said that they are working for self-existence.

The distribution of the respondents’ response regarding to the question “do you have full autonomy in spending of your income”, a large segment of the respondents accepted that they do not have. Participation in daily uses items, indicate that majority of the respondents have autonomy (alone or with their husbands) while the question of decision about education and admission of the children, shows that a very few only 2.5% respondents have decision independently but there are a large number (66.5%) who participate in decision making with their husbands. There are no respondents who take decision alone on marriage related issues of the children, but there is very large number of the respondents who participates with their husbands. Majority of the respondents accepted that they observed that male get more salary than the female for the same job in all kinds of occupations.

Table-3: Education and Economic Dimension of Empowerment

SN	Indicators	Education-Level				Total
		Illiterate	Low (Up to 8)	Med. (IX-XII)	High Grad. & above)	
1.	Nature of the respondents’ work					
	A. House-wife	06	10	27	43	96
	B. Working women	13	16	17	58	104
	Total	19	26	44	111	200
2.	Decision about doing job/service					
	A. Personal	01	02	03	26	32
	B. Parents	00	00	03	26	29
	C. Husband	1	14	10	05	41
	D. Any other	2	00	01	01	02
Total	0	16	17	58	104	
3.	Constraint faced in doing of job					
	A. Yes	2	3	7	1	53
	B. No	1	2	7	8	88
	Total	3	5	4	9	141
4.	Constraint faced in:					
	A. Parents’ House	0	2	5	2	11
	B. In-laws House	0	0	7	7	35
	C. Both	0	0	5	5	07
	D. NO	3	2	3	0	88
Total	3	5	4	4	141	
5.	Indicate the reason for you are working					
	A. Self- existence	0	0	0	1	11
	B. Family needs	3	4	3	2	62
	C. Both	0	2	4	5	31
	D. Any other	0	0	0	0	00
Total	3	6	7	8	104	

6.	Do you have full autonomy in spending of your income					
	A. Yes	00	00	02	26	28
	B. No	13	16	15	32	76
	Total	13	16	17	58	104
7.	What do you do with your income?					
	A. Save	00	00	00	02	02
	B. Contribute to household	13	13	03	05	34
	C. Spend on personal need	00	01	00	02	03
	D. all of the above	00	02	14	49	65
	Total	13	16	17	58	104
8.	Participation in daily uses items:					
	A. Alone	02	11	19	78	110
	B. Husband	02	02	02	03	09
	C. Both	15	11	19	25	70
	D. Any other	00	02	04	05	11
	Total	19	26	44	111	200
9.	Decision about education and admission of children:					
	A. Alone	00	00	01	04	05
	B. Husband	17	14	12	19	62
	C. Both	02	12	31	88	133
	D. Any other	00	00	00	00	00
	Total	19	26	44	111	200
10	Decision about marriage related issues of children:					
	A. Alone	00	00	00	00	00
	B. Husband	17	16	20	11	64
	C. Both	02	10	22	95	129
	D. Any other	00	00	02	05	07
	Total	19	26	44	111	200
11	Do you observe that male is getting more salary than the female for the same work/job?					
	A. Yes	13	16	12	31	72
	B. No	00	00	05	27	32
	Total	13	16	17	58	104

The above table indicates that respondents who are illiterate, low educated and medium educated reported that they are working for family needs and the respondents who said that they are working for self-existence or for both family needs as well as for self-existence are belong the category of highly educated.

A small segment of the respondents reported that they have full autonomy in spending of her income are highly educated (excepted 2 respondents of medium category of education). It suggests that education shows positive impact on having autonomy of spending their income. Education and participation in daily uses items shows positive relationship between the two variables. Highly educated women participated more in comparison to other categories. Participation of respondents' in decision making about education and admission of the children no respondents took decision alone but participates in decision making with their husbands increased with the increasing order of education. All categories of respondents feel that male get more salary than the female for the same jobs. All the illiterate and low educated respondents reported that they observed male get more salary than the female for the same jobs whereas a very few respondents mentioned that they don't felt so, are from medium and high categories of education. Thus it can be concluded that education helps in gaining of education and enhance the decision making in all aspects of life.

7. Discussion and Conclusion: After arriving at the above findings we may observe the following trends and look at the similarities and variations.

Pratima Chaudhary and H.C. Upadhyay (1991:11-17) have found that higher education has been successful in bringing about changes relating to marriage, family and decision- making among women. Our findings also confirm these changes. Indicators of economic dimensions show that education has a very significant impact on attitude and decision making. **Shireen J. Jejeebhoy** (1996) has found that at least three direct dimensions of autonomy- decision- making, mobility and access to economic resources are closely related in all settings. Highly stratified setting of rural U.P., autonomy continues to be shaped by traditional factors (status, notably, co-residence with mother-in-laws, size of dowry, age, parity), education do tend to enhance autonomy also. Our findings also confirm the same. **S. Sahay** (1998) states that there is a close relation between education and women's dignity. Women's education helps to improve their awareness and ability. Our findings also suggest that education is the most important instrument for achieving cognitive, economic, political, psychological and physical empowerment. **K.M. Kapadia** (1966:266-267) analyzed that "the rapid strides in higher education during the last twenty five years have exercised their impact in two ways, first by creating conditions for a women to be self or reliant and secondly by creating stronger emotional bonds between her and her husband. Findings of the present study also confirm the same. The awareness about their subordination increased with the increasing order of

education. They are more aware about their self- identity in family and outside the family also.

Socialist feminist analysis attempts to synthesize various forms and theories of oppression and domination- describe the multifaceted system of oppression based on arrangements of production, class, age, ethnicity, sexual preference and global position, as well as gender- a system oppressing all women and most men. And most recently, third wave feminists focus on the implications these differences – class, age, ethnicity, sexual preference and global position- for relations among women at both the micro and the macro levels. This classical presentation has provides the conceptual/ theoretical bases for the present research work, and same concept is used to describe the system of oppression. Findings of present research works confirm the same that women does not consist a homogenous group, thus their cognitive, economic, political, psychological and physical dimension of empowerment varies on the basis of class, caste, age, locality and education etc.

Education is a potent tool in the empowerment of women. Education enables women to gain more knowledge about the cause and condition of their subordination, help her to get status, self- image and self- confidence. It confirms that education is the basic step in women's equality. It also enables them to achieve job and supplements for caring of the family. It enhances women's decision- making in the family and outside to the family.

Thus we can say journey is very difficult because women is not a homogenous category and there are difference between women on the basis of castes, class, creed etc. but this journey in itself a goal. Education and occupation give rise to a new consciousness among women and accelerate the process. The good news about women is that we have a long way and not only a great deal of awareness but also action is taking place in the area of engendering women and creating A 'gender just' society. The bad news is that we are still far away from reaching the goal of equality in gender issues.

8. Limitations and Suggestions:

The study has been limited to a small part of urban area (only 200 respondents), therefore findings can be generalized only for a small local universe. The present study has tried to measure empowerment on five dimensions- cognitive, economic, political, psychological and physical dimensions. The study has been limited to Hindu women. Thus an extended sociological inquiry of Muslim women will give us a picture of empowerment of Muslim women. Therefore for a better generalization a larger study, among the Hindu and Muslim women with alternate perspectives covering wider area and more respondents are required for deeper sociological understanding.

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