

Women employment and empowerment - An analysis with special reference to Keonjhar, Odisha

VIJAYETA PRIYADARSHINI* AND LIPSA DASH¹

Department of Home Science, Govt. Women's College, KEONJHAR (ODISHA) INDIA

¹Department of Home Science, Sambalpur University, BURLA(ODISHA) INDIA

ABSTRACT : Women development plays an important role in nation's economy. The society can march towards development only when it accepts the women participation, grants responsibility and utilizes her ability. India has witnessed a positive transformation in women's employment and economic development. Present study was conducted among 110 working women of Keonjhar district of Odisha. Various degree of empowerment was observed in fields of social, financial, legal empowerment. The study revealed that decision making was most restricted in financial matters.

KEY WORDS : Employed women, Empowerment, Socio-economic empowerment, Legal awareness

View Point Article : Priyadarshini, Vijayeta and Dash, Lipsa (2016). Women employment and empowerment - An analysis with special reference to Keonjhar, Odisha. *Internat. J. Home Sci. Extn. & Comm. Manage.*, **3** (1): 31-36.

Article History : Received : 01.10.2015; Revised : 17.12.2015; Accepted : 28.12.2015

INTRODUCTION

The concept of "empowerment" traces its history in the mid-17th century with the legalistic meaning "to invest with authority". Thereafter, this concept was modernized to mean "to enable or permit". Empowerment is a multidimensional process, occurring at different levels, and in different ways depending on individuals, communities, the environments in which they live which should enable the individuals or a group of individuals to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres of life. Empowerment of woman may also mean equal status to the woman, opportunity and freedom to develop her. Empowering women socio-economically through increased awareness of their rights and duties as well as access to resources is a decisive step towards greater

security for them (Antony, 2006).

Empowerment of women in India :

According to Census-2011, India has reached the population of 1210 million, as against 301 million in 1951, of which 58,64,69,174 (48.5 %) were females. The population of India accounted for 17.5 per cent of the total world population and occupied second place. The sex ratio was 930 in 1971 and it has increased to 940 according to 2011 Census. The female literacy also increased from 18.3 per cent in 1961 to 74.0 per cent in 2011 and a decrease in male-female literacy gap from 26.6 per cent in 1981 to 16.7 per cent in 2011. Women empowerment in India is heavily dependent on many different variables that include geographical location

(rural/urban), educational status, social status (caste and class) and age. Policies on women empowerment exist at national, state and local levels in many sectors including health, education, economic opportunities, gender based violence and political participation (Kumuda, 2014). The scope and coverage of the schemes launched has been expanding that include initiatives for economic and social empowerment of women and for securing gender equality. In spite of the effective implementation of all the above schemes and programmes, there are significant gaps between policy achievements and actual practice at the community level.

Employment and empowerment :

The most common argument says that women's participation in income-generating activities will lead to women's empowerment because by having access to resources a woman can improve her bargaining position, thereby allowing for greater control over decisions and life choices. If a woman has income of her own, she presumably has a greater ability to take care of herself and is therefore less dependent on her husband or others for survival. Her ability to negotiate within the household should increase not only because she has more to offer the household, but also because she has an improved fallback position. Greater bargaining power in the household is seen as empowering because it affords a woman greater control over her and her family's life. Other arguments suggest that working may contribute to empowerment because it allows women to participate in the public sphere, to interact with a wider network of individuals and because it can increase self-esteem or self-worth.

On the other end of the spectrum, there are arguments that say that working is not enough to empower women because the barriers that stand in the way of women's control over their lives and equality are just too great to be overcome by employment alone. Here, the point is that structural factors like poverty, and not choice, lead women into paid employment thereby limiting its potential for empowerment. On top of this, the job opportunities that are available to most women in India and other developing countries are limited. Both gender ideologies and women's lower education levels mean that the jobs available to most women require little skill, pay poorly, afford no security and involve poor working conditions. This, combined with the fact that participation in income-generating activities does not erase women's

domestic responsibilities, suggests that most working women face a triple burden of domestic responsibilities, employment and the burden of ensuring their family's survival.

While it does not appear to be the case that working is a ticket to empowerment, working does have the potential to increase women's autonomy and importance in the domestic sphere; however, the process by which employment could lead to empowerment is much more complex than the above arguments recognize and involves a number of important factors, both in terms of the conditions under which employment takes place and the type of empowerment that we are considering.

METHODOLOGY

Objectives:

The present study examined the empowerment of women by addressing three dimensions: economic empowerment, personal and social empowerment and lastly legal empowerment. The objectives were

- To portray the demographic and employment profile of the employed women.
- To measure the socio- economic and legal empowerment of employed women.

Research design:

The study was conducted in Keonjhar district of Odisha. 110 working women were selected as the sample for the study. Convenience sampling technique was used to collect the data. Both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered through questionnaire. The survey tool for this study was a well structured survey questionnaire method through face-to-face interview by the investigator.

OBSERVATION AND ASSESSMENT

The results obtained by the present investigation is presented in Table 1 to 6.

Table 1 depicts the personal profile of the respondents who fall under different category of age groups, educational qualification, number of family members, Type of family and family monthly income.

Women's wages may be a significant part of increasing women's empowerment by giving women a greater sense of control and value in their home. Women's wage contributions to their families can make them more valuable to the household and being able to

control those wages could mean a greater say in decisions. This relationship between employment and women's empowerment, specifically, how much of her family's total earnings she contributes, is one aspect of women's participation in the workforce that most researchers agree is important to empowerment. The extent to which a family relies on the income of a woman can influence the power and control that the working woman has in her household because it increases her value in the household and it improves her fall back position by decreasing her dependence on male family members.

A look at the table reveals that in the decision making areas like keeping money, buying goods for home, purchases for children, buying of gold/silver jewellery women take leading part than men. In cases like buying or selling land, saving and buying of gold/silver jewellery the decisions were taken by women jointly with husband or other members of the family. Respondents with children informed that in the family, it was taken for granted that mothers were supposed to get the things needed by the children as they had better knowledge in that domain. But regarding giving on credit and somehow in keeping money the decisions were found to be taken

by the husband or other male member of the family. The overall result indicate women are well empowered in money matters in their respective families but are yet to taken major role in important financial matters.

The reality of empowerment is valued greatly in terms of economic power that an individual exercises in their sphere of living. Majority of our plans and programmes are directed to empower women economically so that other empowerments can be easily achieved. Data in above table explains the variables of economic empowerment of the respondents. The least empowerment area reported was saving independently (16.36%). In response to the reason behind such the respondents gave replies as in, they should not do so without seeking advise from husband/family, they lack knowledge regarding financial matters, such things taken care by husband/family etc. The response to the question whether or not the respondents were consulted for any major financial expenditure, the positive answer was found to be the highest one (79.09%) and majority of them felt the reason being an earning member of the family.

In our society social section is the top most factors that regulate social empowerment of women. The

Table 1 : Demographic profile of the respondents			(n = 110)	
Personal factor	Category	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)	
Type of place of residence	Urban	45	40.9	
	Rural	65	59.1	
	Total	110	100	
Age	Between 21-30 years	34	30.90	
	Between 31-40 years	65	59.07	
	Above 40 years	11	10.03	
	Total	110	100	
Educational level	Illiterate	08	7.27	
	Higher Secondary	12	10.9	
	Under Graduate	49	44.54	
	Post Graduate/ Technically qualified	41	37.27	
	Total	110	100	
Marital status	Married	90	81.81	
	Unmarried	20	18.19	
	Total	110	100	
No of family members	2 - 3 members	14	12.72	
	4 - 5 members	62	56.38	
	Above 5 members	34	30.90	
	Total	110	100	
Type of family	Nuclear family	13	11.81	
	Joint family	97	88.19	
	Total	110	100	

Table 2 : Frequencies of employment characteristics

Variables	Frequency	%
Current employment status		
Working	110	100
Not working	0	0
Occupation		
Not working	0	0
Teaching	06	5.45
Professional/Technical/Managerial	26	23.63
Clerical	17	15.45
Sales/Services	09	8.18
Skilled manual	04	3.63
Unskilled manual	18	16.36
Agriculture	30	27.3
Contribution to family earnings		
None	15	13.63
Less than half	63	57.27
Half or more	32	29.1

Table 3 : Financial decision making

Areas of decision	Independently		Husband or others		Jointly with husband or others	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Keeping money	56	50.9	39	35.45	15	13.63
Buying goods for home	72	65.45	13	11.81	25	22.72
Purchases for children (Number of married respondents= 90)	73	81.11	8	8.88	9	10.01
Buying or selling land	3	2.72	11	10	96	87.28
Buying of gold/silver jewellery	37	33.64	10	9.09	63	57.27
Saving	25	22.72	30	27.27	55	50
Give on credit	11	10	68	61.81	31	28.19

Table 4 : Economic empowerment

Areas of decision	Frequency	%
Free to meet own economic needs	54	49.09
Free to spend money	39	35.45
Free to spend personal income	34	30.9
Consulted in major expenditure	87	79.09
Consulted in investment	61	55.45
Independent in saving	18	16.36

Table 5 : Social empowerment

Areas of decision	Frequency	%
Planning own activity	21	19.09
Mobility	32	29.09
Visit friends and family	24	21.81
Take part in discussion on family matters	91	82.72
Respected in family matters	103	93.63
Free to attend religious functions	67	60.9
Sense of self confidence	100	90.9

Table 6 : Legal empowerment

Areas of awareness	Frequency	%
Age of marriage	108	98.18
Widow remarriage act	78	70.9
Dowry prohibition act	110	100
Right to property	63	57.27
Divorce act	88	80
Domestic violence act	18	16.36

empowerment was found to be in taking part in discussion on family matters (82.72%), respected in family matters (93.63%), feeling a sense of self confidence (90.9%). In terms of mobility, the data demonstrate that there are significant constraints on women's freedom of movement. Only 29.09 per cent of women go to the market without permission and even less, about 22 per cent, go for a visit to friends or family without permission. When asked the reason the major response from the married respondents was being a married woman they were supposed to go for a social visit to a friend or relatives home with husband and for the unmarried respondents the major cause was their parent's concern for their safety. On the contrary 60.9 per cent of respondents reported that they found no difficulties in attending religious functions independently as the religious ceremonies were supposed to be attained by the women and most of the times absence of husband was not taken with raised eyebrows. Only 19.09 per cent of women replied they plan their own activity and for the rest 80 per cent they could not plan their own things as they need to take into consideration the plans of their family. It is clear that on this dimension, women's social empowerment is extremely limited.

For protection and security of women and to have equal rights in the society, the state as well as the central Government is enacting a number of laws. The women need to know them in order to enjoy equality in society. In assessing the legal empowerment of the respondents, the above result was obtained. The respondents were very well aware about the Dowry prohibition act (100%) and about the legal age of marriage (98.18%). 70.9 per cent of the respondents were aware about the Widow Remarriage act and 80 per cent had a good knowledge regarding the Divorce Act. Till now many women are not aware about their equal right in parental property and the data revealed that 57.27 per cent of the respondents had knowledge about the right to property Act. The least awareness was found as to awareness

about Domestic violence Act (16.36%).

Conclusion :

Women have limited decision making power in some major areas, limiting mobility, limited control over resources. Employment can play an important role in the process of improving women's empowerment, but there are numerous barriers to overcome, and employment, even under all the right conditions, is only one piece of the problem. In order for employment to be more empowering to women and for women's empowerment to be facilitated in general, the structural barriers to women's rights and equality must be addressed in the household, the community, the state, the nation and around the globe. Women need to not only act differently, but to think differently, to value themselves more, and to really believe that they are equal. Of course the challenge lies not just in individual women, but also in society and so while promoting individual women's empowerment is incredibly important, it is not enough to change the environment for women in India or in other developing countries. Globally and at a local level, women must be empowered in the home, in the community, in the economy and in politics.

REFERENCES

- Antony, V. (2006).** Education and employment - The Key to Women Empowerment, *Kurukshetra*, **54** (4) : 2006.
- Awais, M., Alam, T. and Asif M. (2009).** Socio-economic empowerment of tribal women: An Indian Perspective. *Internat. J. Rural Studies (IJRS)*, **16** (1) :
- Chandra, R. (2010).** Women empowerment in India – Milestones and challenges.pdf.
- Kumuda, D. (2014).** Women empowerment in India-a changing scenario. *Internat. J. Scientific Res.*, **3** (8) :
- Murthy, S. (2001).** "Women and Employment", Deepak Parnami Publication, Jaipur.
- Nagaraja, B. (2013).** Empowerment of women in India: A critical analysis. *IOSR J. Humanities & Soc. Sci.*, **9** (2) : 45-52.
- Palaneeswari, T. and Sasikala, S.V. (2012).** Empowerment of rural women through self-employment – A study with special reference to Thiruthangal in Virudhunagar district. *EXCEL Internat. J. Multidisciplinary Management Studies*, **2** (6) : 58-68
- Shettar, R.M. (2015).** A Study on issues and challenges of women empowerment in India. *IOSR J. Business & Management*, **17** (4) : 13-19.

West, B.S. (2006). Does employment empower women? An analysis of employment and women's empowerment in India.pdf.

■ **WEBLIOGRAPHY**

<http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment/facts-and-figures>.

3rd
Year
★★★★★ of Excellence ★★★★★