

## In Search of Psychological Empowerment in Relation to Education among Women in Murshidabad District of West Bengal, India

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### Abstract:

*Education is essential for women's welfare, advancement, prosperity, and empowerment. From conception to death, women continue to face discrimination. Every aspect of society needs to empower women, as they continue to face prejudice, vulnerability, and oppression. In order to overcome the gender prejudices that society imposes on them, women must swim against the system that demands greater power. Empowerment is a process that starts with education. Rural development will also result from women's empowerment. Studies reveal that women with higher levels of education typically have higher levels of self-efficacy, self-confidence, and autonomy—all of which are critical components of psychological empowerment. Women can acquire critical thinking and problem-solving skills through education, which is essential for overcoming difficulties in life and promoting personal growth. Additionally, educated women are better able to advocate for their rights, challenge social norms that limit them, and support positive social change and societal transformation. Education has a mixed impact on psychological empowerment. Educational quality, family dynamics, economic conditions, and cultural norms all significantly influence the extent to which education fosters psychological empowerment. Social or economic barriers may hinder women's ability to fully benefit from educational advantages, highlighting the need for environments and policies that support gender equality.*

**Keywords:** Education, Self-Efficacy, Self- confidence, Autonomy, Psychological Empowerment.

### Introduction:

In common parlance, empowerment is treated as a way to create a social milieu that supports individuals in making important decisions and exercising their choices in a way that promotes societal change. Gaining knowledge, power, and experience strengthens the innate ability. In the modern period, women's empowerment has become a major problem. We should treat women and men equally in terms of health, work, education, and all other areas. Women's education is essential to the advancement of society. The general public and socially excluded groups may have similar views about the importance of education for women's psychological empowerment. Sociological or pedagogical investigations might explore this idea. This would highlight how important education is everywhere in promoting gender equality and female empowerment. There is no discernible or substantial relationship between education and women's

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psychological empowerment. This notion seems at odds with the majority of studies that link empowerment and education.

### **Significance of the Study:**

Governments around the world deal with the issue of women's empowerment. This has constituted the central aim of all official agendas. In India, we work toward achieving gender parity and women's empowerment, which is a 2030 sustainable development goal. The establishment of a socially friendly atmosphere that facilitates individual or collective decision-making for societal advancement is the first step toward realizing women's empowerment. Examining women's empowerment through a psychological lens can achieve this. Organizations consider positive psychological resources like self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience as essential for their behavior and effectiveness. APL and BPL households perceive education as positively impacting psychological aspects such as women's self-esteem, independence, and decision-making capacity. Regarding the contribution of education to women's psychological empowerment, men and women have similar viewpoints. Education often enhances a person's sense of self-worth, independence, and confidence, known as psychological empowerment.

### **Brief Review of Literature:**

**Gutierrez (1990)** examined how organizations support women's autonomy and the interests of other social groups in addition to altering power dynamics. This study also demonstrated that low-income women may engage with decentralized organizations with ease, forming their own opinions and voicing their demands. In this way, women gain empowerment.

**Fakir (2016)** talked about the potential advantages of teacher leadership, along with potential obstacles and chances to put teacher leadership into effect. The study concludes that teacher leadership has the potential to significantly impact school development, teacher effectiveness, motivation, and retention; however, for teacher leadership to be successful, certain prerequisites must be met. In a study, **Hessami & Fonseca (2020)** demonstrated how practitioners and policymakers determine what constitutes a development aim when they say "empowerment," typically in reference to women or the impoverished and how do they assess how much of it has been accomplished.

### **Delimitation**

Delimitations of the study are as follows-

The study's sample consists of female middle-aged adults;

The research sample was drawn from the Murshidabad district in West Bengal.

The sample size has been limited to 610 for this study.

The majority of the study's sample comprises people who live in rural and semi-urban areas

### **Objectives**

1. To find out the difference in attitude between APL & BPL households towards the impact of education on psychological empowerment of women;
2. To find out the difference in attitude between male and female towards the impact of education on psychological empowerment of women;

3. To find out the interrelationship between education and psychological empowerment of women.

## Hypothesis

<sup>0</sup>H<sub>1</sub>: No significant difference in attitude exists between APL & BPL households towards the impact of education on psychological empowerment of women;

<sup>0</sup>H<sub>2</sub>: No significant difference in attitude exists between male and female towards the impact of education on psychological empowerment of women;

<sup>0</sup>H<sub>3</sub>: No significant interrelationship exists between education and psychological empowerment of women.

## Variables of the Study

**Dependent Variable:** Women Empowerment

**Independent Variable:** Education

The present study also included several Socio-economic and demographic variables like this:

1. Economic status (APL and BPL)
2. Gender (Male and Female)

## Data Source & Methodology

The data was collected from 610 households in West Bengal's Murshidabad district in 2023-2024. For data collection, a self-structured questionnaire was used. Students't test and Product Moment Correlation were used to analyze the data.

## Analysis & Discussion

**Analysis Pertaining to Hypothesis <sup>0</sup>H<sub>1</sub>: No significant difference in attitude exists between APL & BPL households towards the impact of education on psychological empowerment of women;**

**Table -1: Comparing Mean, SD, t-value, and SED value about the level of Psychological empowerment according to Economic status**

Variables	APL		BPL		t-value	df	SED	Critical Value	Decision
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD					
Psychological Empowerment	107.38	5.29	99.32	3.74	20.15	608	0.40	2.58	Null hypothesis rejected, Significant diff. exists (P < .01)

**Source: Calculation based on Field Survey, 2023-24**

Table 1 makes it evident that the APL and BPL groups' mean scores and SD differ from one another. The upper table's t-value is 20.15, which is higher than the critical value at 0.01 level. Thus, the alternative hypothesis is accepted and the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that there is a substantial attitude gap between APL and BPL households about the contribution of education on women's psychological empowerment.

**Analysis Pertaining to Hypothesis <sup>0</sup>H<sub>2</sub>: No significant difference in attitude exists between male and female towards the impact of education on psychological empowerment of women**

**Table -2: Comparing Mean, SD, t-value, and SED value about the level of Psychological empowerment according to gender**

Variables	Male		Female		t-value	df	SED	Critical Value	Decision
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD					
Psychological Empowerment	103.79	3.19	97.45	2.15	28.82	608	0.22	2.58	Null hypothesis rejected, Significant diff. exists (P < .01)

**Source: Calculation based on Field Survey, 2023-24**

The mean scores and SD for the male and female groups differ, as shown in table 2. The above table's t-value is 28.82, which is higher than the critical value at 0.01 level. Thus, the alternative hypothesis is accepted and the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that there is a substantial attitude gap between men and women on the contribution of education to women's psychological empowerment.

**Box- 1: Education: A Landmark Event of Afrin for Psychological Empowerment**

Afrin is from a middle-class family in West Bengal's Murshidabad district. Her spouse teaches at a reputable local school. She finished her degree after getting married, yet she continued to learn. She has a master's degree and is working toward a doctorate. She was now hired by a nearby high school as a mistress. With great passion and the unwavering support of her spouse and teachers, she is likewise striving to advance in her career. Hopefully, with God's blessings, her desire will soon come true. Afrin now has the freedom to pursue psychological empowerment, achieving an optimistic outlook on life, psychological well-being, modernizing sense, self-efficacy, and self-esteem. This incident is a striking illustration of how Afrin's psychological empowerment is influencing teaching.

**Analysis Pertaining to Hypothesis <sup>0</sup>H<sub>3</sub>: No significant interrelationship exists between education and psychological empowerment of women**

**Table -5: Particulars Explaining the Interrelationship between education and psychological empowerment**

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r-value	t <sub>r</sub> -value	Decision
Education	610	7.24	5.03	0.83	36.55	Null hypothesis rejected, Significant relation exists (P < .01)
Psychological Empowerment	610	99.35	28.52			

**Source: Calculation based on Field Survey, 2023-24**

Table 3 reveals that the computed t<sub>r</sub> value is 36.55, being significant at 0.01 level. Thus, the alternative hypothesis is accepted and the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that there is a strong correlation between women's psychological empowerment and education.

## Conclusion:

Education is an essential tool for women's psychological empowerment. It gives individuals the information, abilities, and self-assurance needed to challenge traditional gender conventions, make wise decisions, and take charge of their personal and professional lives. Women who are educated are better equipped to become economically independent, have more self-esteem, and participate more actively in domestic and societal decision-making. To sum up, while education is a powerful tool for women's psychological empowerment, it also requires corresponding social changes to create an environment where women can reach their full potential. To maximize the empowerment effects of education, it is imperative to remove structural barriers, ensure that all women have access to high-quality education, and support gender-sensitive educational systems.

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