

Achieving Economic Empowerment through Education in Murshidabad District of West Bengal, India

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Abstract:

The perspectives of various socio-economic and demographic groups are the main subject of this study, which examines the connection between education and women's economic empowerment. APL (above poverty line) and BPL (below poverty line) households, males and females, general and other social categories, and rural and urban households are among the groups whose attitudes regarding the influence of education on women's economic empowerment are to be identified. Examining the connection between women's economic empowerment and education is another goal of the study. Hypotheses were developed to direct the inquiry, suggesting that there were no notable distinctions or connections between the groups under study. This study commented that education is essential for improving women's financial security and the advancement of society as a whole. In order to create more inclusive educational and empowerment programs for women from a variety of social backgrounds, legislators, educators, and social reformers are anticipated to find great value in the findings.

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Introduction:

A significant driver of women's economic liberation is education. It provides women with the opportunities, information, and abilities needed to get over past obstacles and take an active role in the workforce. Women who have an education are better able to make decisions about their lives and futures, become financially independent, and develop self-confidence. Women who are economically empowered contribute significantly to the prosperity of their families, communities, and countries in addition to raising their own standards of living. But in many regions of the world, obstacles including persistent poverty, discrimination based on gender, and restricted access to education still impedes women's advancement. In addition to highlighting education's importance in advancing gender equality and sustainable development, this essay examines the crucial role that education plays in empowering women economically.

Significance of the Study:

One of the most effective ways to change a person's work habits, mental processes, and behaviors is through education. People have been constantly changing from the beginning of time due to the necessity of adapting

and surviving through real-world experiences. Humans mostly learned from their natural surroundings and via direct interaction with nature during the early phases of civilization. People were mostly helpless and reliant on trial and error because there was hardly any formal schooling. Humans developed over time as a result of the information they acquired from their experiences and activities. A major advancement in human evolution may be seen in their progression from the stage of food gathering to food production. Their success has always been largely attributed to informal education and hands-on learning. Man became the most advanced creature in the natural world through formal and experience education as mankind continued to increase its knowledge and comprehension.

Brief Review of Literature:

Rachmawati, E., Fountain, J., & Mackay, M. (2021) provides valuable information regarding the outcomes of community empowerment, especially in the economic aspect, utilizing a quantitative method. The results indicate that tourism has contributed to enhancing the earnings of individuals employed within the tourism industry. According to the study of Chompa, M. Y. (2022) it has been concluded that socio-economic development refers to the advancement of social and economic conditions within a community. Women play a vital role in our society, representing half of the overall population; for a country's sustainable development, it is crucial to ensure equal participation and full utilization of both women and men. A nation's progress can only be realized when women are empowered and their social and economic standing is enhanced; this can be achieved through the implementation of targeted social and economic policies aimed at the comprehensive development of women.

Nosheen, M., Iqbal, J., & Ahmad, S. (2023) investigates how gender affects vulnerability to climate change in Pakistan, a country that is particularly at risk. The findings indicate notable health inequalities between genders, with women experiencing greater adverse effects from heatwaves, cold spells, and drought conditions. The livestock sector encounters challenges such as water shortages and lack of pasture, which impact the livelihoods of women in rural areas. In a study of Aderemi, T. (2013) results showed positive changes in educational metrics, including increased female enrollment in primary schools, a higher adult literacy rate, improved primary school completion rates, and better outcomes on the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examinations during the NEEDS initiative, although the overall progress was limited.

Delimitation:

Delimitations of the study are as follows-

- The study sample comprises middle-aged adult females.
- The research sample was obtained from the Murshidabad area in West Bengal, comprising a total of 610 participants for the current study.
- The study sample primarily comprises rural and semi-urban inhabitants

Objectives:

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

Hypothesis:

⁰H₁: No significant difference in attitude exists between APL & BPL households towards the impact of education on economic empowerment of women;

⁰H₂: No significant difference in attitude exists between male and female towards the impact of education on economic empowerment of women;

⁰H₃: No significant interrelationship exists between education and economic empowerment of women.

Tools Used in the Study:

Subject: Measurement of Women Empowerment

1. **Name of the Questionnaire:** Education and Women Empowerment
2. **Name of Developer:** Standardised Questionnaire (Paul, 2017)
3. **Description of Questionnaire:** It consists of sixty (60) items. The respondents are being instructed to give answer in five point scale of Likert i.e., strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree. The scoring key are as follows:

Table - 1: Particulars of Scale of Questionnaire Measuring Women's Empowerment

Particulars	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
All questions	1	2	3	4	5

Analysis Pertaining to Hypothesis ⁰H₁: No significant difference in attitude exists between APL & BPL households towards the impact of education on economic empowerment of women;

Table -2: Comparing Mean, SD, t-value, and SED value about the level of economic empowerment according to economic status of the respondents

Variables	APL (N=300)		BPL(N =310)		t-value	df	SED	Critical Value	Decision
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD					
Economic Empowerment	105.21	4.28	98.04	2.37	22.40	608	0.32	2.58	Null hypothesis rejected, significant diff. exists (P < .01)

Source: Calculation based on Field Survey, 2023-24

Table 2 compares the mean, SD, t-value, and SED value for economic empowerment levels based on respondents' economic position. The mean value of the APL family is 105.21, while the BPL family is 98.04. It is also obvious that the mean score of the APL household family is greater than the BPL household. This indicates that empowerment levels vary depending on the family's economic condition. The t-value for the above table is 22.40, which is greater than the table value at the 0.01 level of significance. So, the null hypothesis is rejected, whereas the alternative hypothesis is accepted. This suggests that there is an attitude difference between APL and BPL households about the impact.

Analysis Pertaining to Hypothesis ⁰H₂: No significant difference in attitude exists between male and female towards the impact of education on economic empowerment of women;

Table -3: Comparing Mean, SD, t-value, and SED value about the level of economic empowerment according to gender of the respondents

Variables	Male (N =210)		Female (N = 400)		t- value	df	SED	Critical Value	Decision
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD					
Economic Empowerment	102.62	4.10	94.02	2.52	30.71	608	0.31	2.58	Null hypothesis rejected, significant diff. exists (P < .01)

Source: Calculation based on Field Survey, 2023-24

Table 3 shows that the mean values of economic empowerment for men and women are 102.62 and 94.02, respectively, with SD values of 4.10 and 2.52. The estimated t-value is 30.71, which exceeds the table value at the 0.01 level of significance. So, the null hypothesis is rejected, whereas the alternative hypothesis is accepted. This suggests that there is a considerable disparity in attitudes between men and women regarding the impact of education on women's economic empowerment.

Analysis Pertaining to Hypothesis ⁰H₃: No significant interrelationship exists between education and economic empowerment of women;

Table - 4: Particulars Explaining the Interrelationship between Education and Economic Empowerment

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r- value	t _r value	df	Critical Value	Decision
Education	610	7.24	5.03	0.81	58.74	608	2.58	Null hypothesis rejected, significant relation exists (P < .01)
Economic Empowerment	610	99.34	31.41					

Source: Calculation based on Field Survey, 2023-24

Table 4 demonstrates a significant correlation between education and the economic empowerment of women. The average values for Education and Economic Empowerment are 7.24 and 99.34. The t-value is 58.74, which exceeds the crucial value. So, the null hypothesis is rejected, whereas the alternative hypothesis is accepted. That suggests there is a strong link between education and economic empowerment for women.

Conclusion:

Women's economic empowerment is greatly aided by education, which gives them confidence, knowledge, and skills. Women can become financially independent and actively engage in the workforce thanks to it. Economic, gender, social, and regional groups may have different opinions, but education is still a powerful unifying element for empowerment. There are still issues including lack of access, poverty, and discrimination. Initiatives for inclusive and focused education are required to overcome this. Women's empowerment via education benefits not only individuals but also families, communities, and the advancement of the country as a whole.

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