

Understanding the Influence of Educational and Employment Factors on Women's Empowerment

Atin Kumar Maity¹, Dr. Mahesh Kumar²

¹ Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of Sociology, Asian International University, Manipur, India.

² Research Supervisor & Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Asian International University, Manipur, India.

Abstract

The primary objective of this study is to review the overall status of women; in particular, it places special emphasis on the impact of education and employment on women's empowerment in Purba Medinipur. Although many regions of Purba Medinipur are resource-rich, they remain highly underdeveloped, leaving numerous women deprived of fundamental amenities such as opportunities for education and employment—factors that are, nonetheless, absolutely indispensable for their economic and educational self-reliance. A cross-sectional, descriptive, and empirical study was conducted using a survey method to collect data from educated and employed women in the Purba Medinipur district. The findings reveal a highly significant positive correlation between education and employment and women's empowerment in areas such as decision-making, resource control, and having a voice. Education enables women to secure employment, and employment fosters their financial independence and economic strength, ultimately leading to their empowerment. Empowered women, in turn, reach out to empower other women. The research outcomes will undoubtedly assist future researchers in understanding the impact of education and employment on women living in Purba Medinipur, enhancing their ability to make strategic life choices that benefit themselves and their families. The findings offer insights into the status of women in Purba Medinipur.

Keywords: Women's empowerment, Education, Employment

Introduction

As a feminist who deeply believes in gender equality, I hold that where equality exists, there is prosperity, sustainable development, hope, and a life enriched with love, honor, sincerity, and devotion. Guided by this belief and the consideration of key indicators, this research aims to explore the effects of women's education and employment on their empowerment in Purba Medinipur. It is essential to enhance girls' and women's education while eliminating barriers to their employment to stimulate growth, address income inequality, and alleviate poverty. An empowered woman possesses self-confidence, critically evaluates her environment, and exerts control over decisions that positively influence her life (Gupta & Aggarwal, 2020).

I regard education and employment as crucial factors that undoubtedly lead women toward empowerment. These elements serve as exceptional tools for effective national development and act as dynamic agents of change; they also form the foundation for improving the status of women. Thus, educating a man is educating an individual, while educating a woman is educating a generation.

Education significantly transforms the lives of girls and women for the better, as it reduces poverty, helps create role models within communities, and opens up substantial employment opportunities, all while fostering leadership. Employment is defined as the condition of having paid work. It is argued that through employment, (Kumari, 2024) various income-generating activities and events enhance women's economic standing and strengthen their status within both the family and society.

A thorough examination of literature reveals a range of obstacles that have historically impeded, and will likely continue to impede, women's empowerment. However, I propose that true change can only occur when women themselves choose to reject disempowerment permanently. Women need to make choices that align with their needs, enabling them to achieve social, educational, and economic empowerment. I firmly believe that each individual is accountable for her own life and must develop the skills necessary to confront challenges and attain success. Freedom cannot be realized if one is not willing to make choices. Women are pivotal to sustainable development, provided they are afforded the opportunity and capacity to pursue higher education, engage in the workforce, and work outside the home. This is crucial in the 21st century for their empowerment, and I am confident that sustainability will follow.

It is essential to shift public attitudes and societal views regarding women's rights and gender equality, including equal opportunities in employment and education. We must also encourage and support a healthier work-life balance in the workplace, address wage disparities, combat discrimination, and confront violence against women. By doing so, we can work towards establishing an equitable society that is economically, educationally, and socially empowered.

Review of Literature

(Keller and Mbewe, 1991) A process through which women organize and shape themselves, enhancing self-sufficiency and asserting their right to make choices and manage resources. This empowerment helps them challenge their subordination. The essence of women's empowerment (WE) illustrates women's ability to take charge of their destinies, expanding choices, increasing mobility, and making decisions to shape their lives. Scholars emphasize the importance of both the process and its outcomes in empowerment.

(Kabeer, 1997) women are viewed as essential agents of feminist social change; thus, empowering them is a process aimed at cultivating these agents of change. Three dimensions of empowerment are identified: resources, agency, and achievements. According to Kabeer, agency refers to the motivation and purpose that individuals bring to their activities, reflecting their own sense of agency and inner power. This inner power can be fostered through development programs designed to promote empowerment, enabling women to critically analyze problems and issues, make informed decisions, and understand their rights. Achievements represent the results and outcomes that individuals attain by utilizing their agency and resources, which in turn enhances their available resources and sense of agency.

(Kondal, 2014) A study was conducted titled "Women Empowerment through Self-Help Groups in Andhra Pradesh, India" to investigate the effects of SHGs on women's empowerment in Gajwel Mandal of Medak District. The research indicated that involvement in Self-Help Groups significantly enhanced the socio-economic status of women by improving their financial independence, entrepreneurial skills, and decision-making authority. SHGs offered a platform for women to tackle shared challenges through collective action and mutual assistance. The results demonstrated a beneficial impact of SHGs on women's empowerment at individual, family, and community levels, underscoring their role as an effective means for poverty reduction and social progress.

Education

Education is an essential means of empowering women, as it equips them with the knowledge of their rights and encourages them to pursue careers that further women's empowerment. The higher education system is not only crucial for human resource development but also acts as a catalyst for socio-economic progress (Deepa S R & Sonia Delrose Noronha, 2024). Communities that have a significant number of university graduates or well-educated individuals often experience enhanced social status and increased opportunities for civic participation, fostering a more active and engaged populace.

The rise in women's education significantly boosts their earning potential, but its impact extends far beyond financial gains. It empowers women to make informed choices about their family size and how they manage their households. Educated women are also more likely to have the freedom to choose their partners based on love and mutual respect, rather than societal pressures. This educational background often leads to increased opportunities for women to occupy influential positions in various sectors of society (Gouri, 2025).

Women who pursue higher education tend to marry later in life, are more inclined to adopt family planning practices, and often prefer to have fewer children. Consequently, they frequently experience motherhood at a later stage, which is a critical factor in managing population growth effectively. This dynamic not only enhances their personal lives but also contributes to the overall well-being of society as a whole. By implementing efficient population management strategies (Mutinda et al., 2025), families can more effectively navigate their financial duties, ensure they have access to superior healthcare, and optimize educational opportunities. This is especially important in developing countries, where these elements are essential for combating child labor.

Scope of Women's Employment

The importance of women's employment is underscored by the multifaceted roles women play in managing domestic responsibilities. These responsibilities include not only the upbringing and development of children but also ensuring their nutrition, health, and overall well-being. When women are empowered, it is not just a benefit for them individually; it significantly contributes to the comfort and welfare of their entire families (Machio et al., 2024). Furthermore, empowering women is vital for the advancement of society as a whole. It enhances the value, quality, and potential of the human resources available for national development, ultimately leading to a more prosperous and equitable future for all.

When women participate in self-earning activities, they often find themselves in positions of greater empowerment, allowing them to influence decision-making, access assets, and manage their earnings effectively. Moreover, women who engage in entrepreneurship or various entrepreneurial endeavors, regardless of whether they are in urban or rural areas, tend to enjoy enhanced political and economic empowerment. Consequently, involvement in the labor market is an essential approach to bolstering women's empowerment (Dey & Devi, 2019) and strengthening their negotiating power, both in their homes and within the larger community.

Relationship between Education and Women's Empowerment

There is a notable positive correlation between the education of women and their empowerment within the family environment. Education is a fundamental right that should be available to everyone, but it is especially significant for girls and women. This is because education empowers them to make informed decisions about their health and enables them to provide better care for their families. As a result, this

leads to healthier lifestyles and improved overall family well-being (Azra Batool & Shahida Batool, 2018). The benefits of women's education extend beyond personal growth, as it plays a crucial role in fostering empowered families and healthier communities.

Empowering women through education is a vital step towards achieving gender equality (Kusumawardhani & Wardhani, 2025) and improving societal conditions. However, several challenges persist, such as the societal preference for male children over female children, which often leads to discrimination against girls in educational settings and the workforce. Additionally, entrenched gender biases continue to hinder women's access to equal opportunities in both education and employment, while patriarchal practices further exacerbate these issues. Therefore, prioritizing women's education is essential, as it not only enriches human capital but also enhances overall productivity. Most importantly, educated women play a crucial role in driving economic growth, which ultimately contributes to the development of the nation as a whole.

It is crucial for the government, along with a range of societal networks including parents, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other civil society groups, to show a robust commitment to empowering girls and offering them effective support from an early age (Kumar et al., 2021). This support must be woven into the fabric of educational institutions and also be present at the household level. By doing so, we can ensure that girls are equipped with the necessary resources and encouragement to excel both academically and personally, fostering an environment where they can truly thrive.

Study Objectives

- To understand the status of women in Purba Medinipur.
- To examine the influence of employment on women's empowerment in Purba Medinipur.
- To assess the role of education in empowering women in Purba Medinipur.

Methodology

This research primarily aims to evaluate the effects of education and employment on the empowerment of women. To achieve this goal, a cross-sectional design (Lindell & Whitney, 2001) was adopted, which involved conducting an empirical study and utilizing a survey method through a self-administered questionnaire. This questionnaire was adapted from several research articles and modified into a five-point Likert scale, thus making it quantitative in nature. The dependent variable, women's empowerment, consists of three sub-constructs, each containing between 2 to 8 questions. Meanwhile, education and employment are treated as independent variables, with each variable including 5 to 7 questions. A non-probability convenience sampling technique was used, and the significance level for the study was set at a 95% confidence level, which is appropriate for social science research.

The target population comprised educated women who are either employed or self-employed, representing a variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds, both single and married. These women were selected from various organizations, including banks, NGOs, universities, government and private colleges, and businesswomen in Purba Medinipur. A total sample size of 116 was collected to gather the necessary data.

Women's empowerment has been assessed as a dependent variable through a set of 12 carefully formulated questions. Its Cronbach's alpha value is 0.81, which indicates a high level of reliability for this measure. In this study, education is treated as an independent variable and is assessed through 6

specific questions. The resulting Cronbach's alpha of 0.87 indicates strong reliability. Employment is also considered an independent variable in this research, comprising 7 targeted questions. The calculated Cronbach's alpha of 0.69 reflects a satisfactory level of reliability.

Discussion

Regression analysis was employed to assess the influence of employment and education on women's empowerment, with women's empowerment serving as the dependent variable and education and employment as the independent variables. In this study, 125 questionnaires were distributed to employed and educated women in Purba Medinipur, of which I received 116 completed questionnaires, resulting in a response rate of 92.8%.

Variables	Unstandardized Beta	Standard Error	Standardized Beta (β)	t	Sig.
Constant	0.976	0.2	-	4.880	0.00
Education	0.490	0.053	0.462	9.327	0.00
Employment	0.227	0.038	0.293	5.920	0.00

Table 1: Regression Analysis

The coefficient of determination, denoted as R-squared, assists in elucidating variance, with the R-squared value for the two predictors being 0.439. This suggests that the variables of education and employment account for 43.9% of the variation in women's empowerment, which serves as the dependent variable.

For Education as an independent variable affecting women's empowerment ($\beta = 0.462$, $t = 9.327$, $p < 0.05$), the result indicates that education has a positive and significant effect on women's empowerment. The beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.462$) shows a moderately strong positive relationship between education and women's empowerment. This means that higher levels of education are associated with greater women's empowerment.

For Employment as an independent variable affecting women's empowerment ($\beta = 0.293$, $t = 5.920$, $p < 0.05$), the interpretation is that employment has a positive and significant effect on women's empowerment. It is observed that as employment increases, women's empowerment also tends to increase.

Research has shown that education is a crucial factor with a profoundly positive effect on women's empowerment. This indicates that education dismantles barriers and obstacles, facilitating positive change. Educated women are more likely to engage in decision-making processes, exercise control over their resources and assets, and feel liberated to express their thoughts, share ideas, and voice their opinions. This empowerment leads to greater freedom of expression, enhances job opportunities, and encourages entrepreneurial ventures, ultimately contributing to an increase in the country's Gross Domestic Product.

The findings indicate that employment, which is a crucial factor, has a positive correlation with women's empowerment by enhancing their involvement in decision-making, as well as their control over resources and assets, including personal savings and accounts, while having limited control over land and property. This empowerment subsequently boosts women's bargaining power within the household and their freedom of expression. Further supported by the positive relationship between employment

and women's empowerment, this asserts that employment enhances women's bargaining power, enables them to contribute to the family budget, and helps them cultivate internal strength, such as self-respect and self-confidence, thereby empowering them. However, women still face significant limitations regarding ownership of land and property due to familial status and cultural influences.

Conclusion

The research reveals a positive correlation between education and the empowerment of women, which significantly impacts patriarchal and traditional societies where families often do not prioritize secondary and higher education for women, especially young women. Education equips women with knowledge of their rights, enables them to contribute to society, secure jobs in the formal sector, alleviate poverty, and manage household expenses. Educated women are more adept at utilizing resources to foster sustainable positive changes in society; they should be granted greater control over resources like land and property ownership.

Furthermore, an educated woman possesses a stronger voice, making it essential to protect and enhance women's rights to freedom of expression. This will promote tolerance and reduce discrimination against women in society, as education is the key to dismantling barriers and overcoming obstacles. The primary factors for women's empowerment are education and employment, which should be utilized for the sustainable development of communities, provinces, and the country. This is why we must empower our women.

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