

# Empowerment of Women through Education: A Sociological Inquiry

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## ABSTRACT



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Women have subordinated status in the society; cause behind women's subordination is gender and gender relations in society. Women face inequality and vulnerability in all sectors viz. economic, social, political, education, health care, nutrition and legal. As women are oppressed in all spheres of life, they need to be empowered in all areas. In this direction education can be a potent tool in improving the status and condition of women in society, because it to gain knowledge, help her to get status, self- image and self -confidence. Education is important to everyone, but it is especially significant for girls and women, because educational achievements of women can have effects within the family and across generations. It influences cognitive, economic, political, psychological and physical dimensions of empowerment of women. Thus the prime objective of this article is to analyze the role of education in empowerment of women.

**Keywords:** Women's Empowerment, Women's Education.

### Introduction

It is long drawn opinion that "women have been suppressed for long in a male dominated social order that has created stereotypes putting women in secondary position." Indian constitution guaranteed equality to women. Many others efforts are being made by government/ non- government agencies for the betterment of women, and many policies and programs have been started for their betterment. Despite that women in India are still marginalized in many ways. Women face inequality and vulnerability in all sectors viz. economic, social, political, education, health care, nutrition and legal. As women are oppressed in all spheres of life, they need to be empowered in all walks of life. In this direction education can be a potent tool in improving the status and condition of women in society, because it enables to women to gain knowledge, help her to get status, self- image and self -confidence. Education is important to everyone, but it is especially significant for girls and women, because educational achievements of women can have effects within the family and across generations. Since independence, a great variety of researches have been undertaken on problems related to women. From the concise survey of literature on 'women studies in India' reflect the expressed rationale of a study to narrow the common focus on role of education in empowerment of women in terms of cognitive, economic, political, psychological and physical dimensions. Thus it appears necessary to focus on empirical study on role of education in empowerment of women.

### Research Questions

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

1. What is the socio- economic background of women?
2. What are the dimensions of empowerment of women?
  - a. Cognitive dimension of empowerment of women
  - b. Economic dimension of empowerment of women
  - c. Political dimension of empowerment of women
  - d. Psychological dimension of empowerment of women
  - e. Physical dimension of empowerment of women
3. What is the relationship between education and different dimensions of empowerment of women?

### 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.

**Methodology**

At the first stage 18 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. Interview schedule, interviews, case- study methods have been used. Information related to Ghaziabad city were collected from secondary source like Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteers and Internet. 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. For understanding the empowerment, a tool developed by the researcher has been used for measuring the different dimensions (cognitive, economic, political, psychological and physical) of empowerment of women.

**Findings****Education and Empowerment of Women****Education and Cognitive Dimension of Empowerment**

According to Stromquist "Cognitive dimension refers to women having an understanding of the condition and cause of their subordination at the micro and macro level. It involves making choices that may go against cultural expectations and norms." Through cognitive dimension of women's empowerment we have tried to analyze women's awareness about these gender inequalities. To observe women's empowerment it is important and necessary to recognize their awareness about causes and conditions of their subordination. To measure cognitive dimension, some questions were asked from the respondents.

The facts show that education has a positive relationship with the awareness of subordination. The awareness about their subordination increased with the increasing order of education. The facts related to second question reveal that illiterate and low educated respondents accept that they don't feel subordination because some other variables like nature of occupation, class and need of occupation reflect the data. All the respondents in this category are from wage-based and low category of occupation, where they are forced to do job to serve.

The data show that they are only 13 respondents who accept that they did not observe that parents become unhappy when a girl is born, are from the category of highly educated. It shows that majority of the respondents feel subordination on this issue. There are respondents who mentioned that "we have a single girl child and want no more children."

The facts related to the question "do you feel subordination in matter of education", shows that they all respondents who said that they do not feel subordination are medium and highly educated. It shows that education accelerate to education, and having positive relationship between the variables. The facts of the question related to subordination on marriage and spouse selection on reveals that the a very miniature part of the sample is not feel subordination are highly educated, and second important fact is that education and awareness about their rights to marriage and spouse selection are positively related. The fact related to the issue of subordination in movement outside to home shows that the freedom of movement outside to home increased with the increasing order of education.

Awareness about their legal rights increased with the increasing order of education. Respondents with the medium and high education have more awareness than the illiterate and low level of education. The facts on the last question related to awareness of the respondents about declining sex ratio in India show positive relationship between the variables.

**Education and Economic Dimension of Empowerment**

"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." Education is the most potent tool for improving the world. Empowering women and equipping countries for all-around economic development, according to (Ruqia, 2018), is a crucial point.

The results indicate 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 high categories of education and enhance the decision making in all aspects of life.

#### **Education and Political Dimension of Empowerment**

According to Stromquist "Political Dimension of empowerment of women refers to that women have the capability to analyze, organize and mobilize for social change." Educated women are more likely to participate in public participation and attend political meetings and there have been several cases where qualified women in developing countries have benefited from political campaigns. Data also shows that highly educated women's countries have a higher likelihood of democratic governance (Chandra, 2018)

The facts indicate that there is no significant relationship between the respondents' education and voting participation. Respondents with low education shows more interest than the medium and highly educated women. But education shows a positive impact on voting independency, it increased with the increasing order of education. Data also reveals that education has positive and significant impact on other variables of political dimension like- talking habit of politics, contesting election, participation in the activities of political bodies, respondents' interest in contesting election, awareness about reservation in PRA, awareness about women's development schemes and awareness about political matters.

Thus it can be said that education is a potential tool to emancipate women in political areas however it is also a noticeable point that highly educated women are not interested in voting participation but they have high level of political awareness that is important to accelerate the process of women's empowerment.

#### **Education and Psychological Dimension of Empowerment**

According to Stromquist : "The psychological dimension includes the beliefs that woman can act at personal and societal level to improve their individual realities and that of the society in which they live." Some important questions asked to the respondents to measure their psychological empowerment. The results indicate that education has a significant relationship with the respondents' freedom of expressing their personal desires. It increased with the increasing order of education. Respondents' education and other questions also show a significant relationship between them. It suggests that education directly or indirectly strengthens the inner capacity to take decision and having their own stands on concerning issues.

#### **Education and Physical Dimension of Empowerment**

According to Stromquist "Physical dimension refers to having control over one's body and sexuality and the ability to protect oneself against sexual violence." It means this dimension related to women's health reproductive choice and sexual health and rights.

The facts show that illiterate low educated respondents reported more that husbands force sexual relations. Nearly all of the respondents reported that they had faced eve-teasing in their life. There is significant relationship between the variables. Respondents are from medium and high level of education took action against accused. Another important finding is that highly educated women have more awareness about the laws related to prohibition of sexual exploitation. Maximum number of the respondents having autonomy for having of child are highly educated (77/93), and also education level shows a positive relationship with the decision about family planning, the number of the respondents who took decision with their husbands increased as the level of education is increased. Education also influenced the respondents' decision about their health. Education shows positive impact on respondents' interest of seeking treatment for their general illness. Medium and highly educated women seek treatment more than the

illiterate and respondents with low level of education. Highly educated women seek allopathic treatment more than the illiterate and low level of education. There is also a significant number of respondents who take decision alone 42 are highly educated. Respondents who reported wife battering are from illiterate and low educated categories.

On the basis of above discussion it can be said that the different questions of physical dimension shows a positive co relationship with education. Education is an important factor that influenced respondents' decision making, autonomy and awareness about physical dimension of women's empowerment.

### **Main observation**

#### **hypotheses**

1. The first hypothesis was - women with high education having more awareness and understanding of the condition and causes of their subordination than the women with low education. It has been proved by the study that the awareness and understanding of the condition and causes of their subordination has decreased as the level of education has increased.
2. Feeling of parents become unhappy at the birth of girl child is higher among the illiterate, low and medium educated than the higher educated respondents. All the respondents feel that parents become unhappy at the birth of girl child, very small segment of highly educated respondents reported that they don't feel so.
3. Education is positively related to active participation in decision- making in the family. Participation in decision making increased as the level of education increased. Thus it is proved.
4. Education helps a girl in finding suitable partner. Majority of the respondents accepted it. It is proved by the present study.
5. Political awareness is higher among highly educated women than the uneducated or lower educated women. The level of political awareness increased with the increasing order of education. It is proved.
6. Voting- participation is high among the respondents of high level of education than the low and medium level of education. Present study do not shows the same trend, thus it is rejected.
7. Highly educated women have more freedom in expressing personal desires than the respondents of uneducated and with low level of education. It is proved.
8. Highly educated women have more autonomy to go to the market and visit their friends and relatives than the uneducated or low educated. It is also proved by the present study.
9. Women with high level of education having more autonomy in family planning than the uneducated or low educated. It is proved.
10. The case of wife- battering and sexual violence is higher among the uneducated and lower educated women than the highly educated women. The present study reveals that wife-battering cases are higher among uneducated and respondents with low level of education, whereas the cases of sexual exploitation are more among the highly educated women

#### **Review of Literature Bearings of the empirical research**

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 different 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.

Ranjana kumari (1989:21-35) has found that neither education nor employment seem to empower women to resist harassment. Findings of our study also confirm the exploitation against women is increasing day by day.

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. Wodon et al., (2018) states that the right to education has been recognized as a "multiplier right" in international law and policy, allowing right-holders to exercise a wide range of human rights when fully realized. Results on all the dimensions reveals the same.

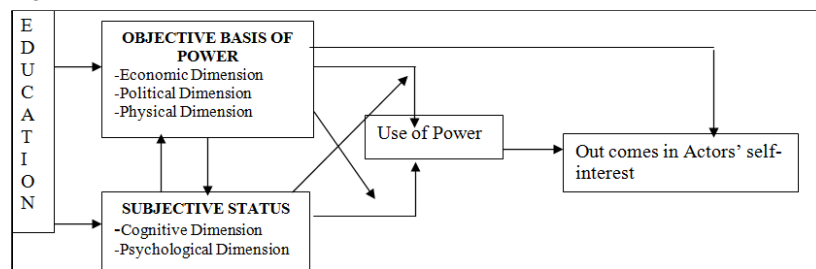
(Chandra, 2018) observed that educated women are more likely to participate in public participation and attend political meetings and there have been several cases where qualified women in developing countries have benefited from political campaigns. Data also shows that highly educated women's countries have a higher likelihood of democratic governance. Findings of the study confirm that political predication (except voting participation) increases with the increasing level of education.

Dixen (1971), Harman (1970), Knowles and Anker (1975), Nayer (1974), Smith (1977), Sundram (1977) highlights that a more important factor linking female education and reduced fertility is the effect of education in delaying marriage. Present study also reveals the same kind of impact of education on fertility.

**Bearing on the conceptual/ theoretical framework**

Stromquist (1995) argues that a "full definition of empowerment must include cognitive, psychological, political, economic and physical components." She explains that there is general agreement that these components are inter- related.

This classical presentation has provided the conceptual/ theoretical bases for the present research work, and same concept has been used to measures the empowerment. Findings of present research work confirm that all these five dimensions are interrelated. We can demonstrate the relationship in following manner-



Objective basis of power (economic dimension, political dimension, physical dimension) and subjective status (cognitive dimension, psychological dimension) appears to influence each other, and interactively influence the extent to which women exercise power. Similarly, the interaction implies that higher level of cognitive and psychological dimensions may influence the magnitude of the effect of resources on power use.

Arrows from one variability or group of variables to another indicate a caused effect of the one on the other. Arrows from variables or group of variables to an arrow indicate interaction effects). Similarly, the interaction implies that higher level of cognitive or psychological dimension may influence the magnitude of the effect of resources on power use. Having higher autonomy on economic, political or physical dimension, cognitive or psychological dimensions may make women more able and willing to do what is necessary to use the 'rights' allowed by the rules law and norms. Exercising power contributes to outcomes in women's self- interest.

**Conclusion**

Thus on the basis of the above discussion we can say that the variables of socio-economic background and different dimensions of women's empowerment are interrelated. Education is a potent tool in the empowerment of women. It influences economic, political and physical dimensions. Simultaneously it also influences to cognitive and psychological dimensions. The gaining of education also affected by the respondent's class, locality, parents education, and these variables also influence economic, political, physical dimensions as well as to cognitive and psychological dimensions.

Thus education is positively related with each dimensions of empowerment. 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. Education and occupation give rise to a new consciousness among women and accelerate the process. 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 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. We have left out various research areas of the dimensions of empowerment in depth. Thus call for further inquiry.

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