



*Journal of Advances and  
Scholarly Researches in  
Allied Education*

*Vol. VII, Issue No. XIV,  
April-2014, ISSN 2230-7540*

**A CRITICAL STUDY ON EDUCATION AND  
WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN URBAN VILLAGES**

AN  
INTERNATIONALLY  
INDEXED PEER  
REVIEWED &  
REFEREED JOURNAL

# A Critical Study on Education and Women Empowerment in Urban Villages

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**Abstract – Human society consists of both men and women. Irrespective of the nature and form of society and its social structure the woman has always been its integral and inseparable part. Women constitute the half of the world population, yet, they are not treated at par with men in many aspects of life. Indian women suffer systemic discrimination at every stage, correlated with low female literacy, female infanticide, declining sex ratio, nutritional deprivation throughout the life, unequal employment opportunities and reduced access to health care.**

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## INTRODUCTION

Studies show that Women's contributions in the home and workplaces are undervalued and overlooked. They have their traditional roles of child bearing and child rearing. Everywhere in the world men place most of burdens of raising children and maintaining the home on women, they do not consider it as work. But men control women's bodies, especially their sexual and reproductive capacities and women's labour. Starting from education to employment women are deprived in every aspect of life. Education is limited to women in general and poor women belonging to lower castes in particular. Parents generally prefer to send their male children to schools rather than female children. In many countries girls are more undernourished than their brothers. They are forced to work harder, provided less schooling and denied equal access to medical care. They are overruled by their father and elder brother in parent's house. At the workplace their occupational choices are limited, sometimes they are less paid for the equal job with men. At the time of marriage, generally they have no say regarding their lives. This has created a kind of syndrome that women do not look upon themselves as independent persons; they rather consider themselves as belonging to their husbands. The situation is compounded by several sexual repression, purdah, and harassment in working place, offices. Women are denied the property right in almost all communities and income groups. Crime against women is increasing day by day. India's gender development index rank is 103 out of 137 countries.

There are linkages between women's lack of power at all levels and the poverty experienced by them. The causes of women's poverty falls into two categories; those which result from belonging to poor families and those which relate to women's subordination within the

family, the community, and the wider economic and political spheres. Among the Hindu upper castes in northern India, women are denied the right to join in gainful employment.

Women work within the household is considered as housework and is unpaid. According to Carr, Chen Jhabvala in India, women work for longer hours than men; 69 hours for women as 57 hours for men. Discrimination towards women and their weaker position in family bring powerlessness to them. Women experience powerlessness in multiple social, political and economic institutions. The root cause of this inferior position of women is the lack of education among them. It means the lack of self-reliance and self-confidence which do not let them to come out of their problems. The first step towards the elimination and the empowerment of women lies in educating them on the existence and extent of their legal rights. The roots of present work are therefore laid in this crucial dilemma. It studies impact of level of education on women empowerment in selected four urban villages of Delhi.

After Independence the role of education as an agent of social change and economic development was given a serious attention. The National Committee on Women's Education, in its report has expressed great dissatisfaction at the slower progress of women's education. Desai and Krishnaraj "revealed that in 1962 a committee was appointed by the National Council for Women's Education. Two years later, the Kothari Commission spoke of the need for equalization of educational opportunities".

Kochhar says that National Policy on Education-1968 stressed the importance of women's education. It was emphasized that the education among girls and women should receive emphasis, not only on

grounds of social justice, but also because it accelerates social transformation. Different programmes were chalked out with the aims and objectives to educate women e.g. Functional Literacy for Women, Rural Functional Literacy Programme, Special Programme for Women etc. The National Adult Education Programme (NAEP) was launched in 1978 with the aim of bringing those in the age groups of 15 to 35 years within the boundary of literacy. The National Policy on Education and later the Ramamurthy Commissions laid special emphasis on equalizing educational opportunities. In the 8th plan Govt. put special attention on women's education.

## OBJECTIVE

The main purpose of the present study is to examine the inter-linkages between education and women empowerment. It has been translated into following objectives.

1. To measure the level of education of women along with their social background.
2. To derive an operational definition of empowerment and measure it quantitatively.
3. To examine the role of education and other socio-demographic characteristics in empowerment of women.

These basic objectives were set in the light of certain hypotheses which will also be tested during the course of this study. These hypotheses are listed as below:

## HYPOTHESIS

1. There is positive relationship between educational level and empowerment of women.

In general it has been found that education will have positive effect on the empowerment of women. Under normal situation testing this hypothesis has no significance. However the social structure of the communities living in urban villages of Delhi is fairly closed. The hypothesis will help in assessing whether this relationship has been able to cross this barrier or not.

2. There is a positive relationship between educational levels of the family members and empowerment of women.
3. There would be inverse relation between education – empowerment linkage and the caste hierarchy. Since, caste is the proxy of education and economic wellbeing of the social group, the female in the high caste may not enjoy as much economic independence as the female of low caste with same education background. In this case the low caste women show a higher degree of relationship between

education and empowerment than the female of the high caste.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Education is perceived as one of the important inputs for the development of women. Jag Mohan has edited a book which is the collection of writings and speeches.<sup>1</sup> Indian women's education is a specific aspect of this book. The education of Indian women has been sadly neglected in the past. Though the percentage of literacy among women has increased, the disparity between boy's and girl's education is still very great. She has explained that the main obstacles for women's education are social and economic. Acker & others had observed that during the preceding ten to fifteen years there had been marked improvement in access of females to education throughout the world. In many educational systems women are still underrepresented in higher education and girls still have less secondary and primary education than boys. Individual or family decision on girls or women's education is responsible for this situation.

Desai & Krishnaraj explained that by the middle of the nineteenth century the newly emergent middle class got interested in the education of girls. Lakhs of girls enroll in the primary level of education but very few go to the secondary level. Poverty, engaged in the household work and early marriage of girls are different factors affected for lower percentage of girls in school. Mali (1989)<sup>4</sup> highlighted the problems of women education. He explained that at the primary, secondary, or higher educational levels girls are far behind the boys. He stressed on the problems of women's education in rural India.

Guha explained the socio-economic determinants of female literacy. In India female literacy is lower than male literacy. Boys have much higher chance of getting education than girls. Occupational structure of the family, per capita income, number of working members, age at marriage, etc. are determinants of women education.

According to Karl Empowerment is not a end product, it is a process which comes through women development. There are five levels of equality for empowerment. Welfare is the first level of basic needs and services. The second level involves equality of access to resources, such as education opportunities. The third level is conscientisation where women take the action to close the gender gaps. Participation is the fourth level when women are taking decisions along with men and control is the ultimate level of equality and empowerment. They are able to take decisions on their lives and lives of their children.

In the opinion of Kanhere recent women studies are talking about the notion of power which gives women the equality and opportunity with men by trying to remove their disadvantages such as illiteracy. Women's autonomy is synonymous to women

empowerment. It is the decision making power over their own lives and activities.

Karl reviewed that a study entitled 'Empowerment of women in South Asia' identifies empowerment through economic interventions to increase women's economic status, the education, literacy, provision of basic needs, services and fertility control. According to Batliwala empowerment increases women's power both in the private and public sphere of their lives. It is a transformation from traditional gender relation to more equal gender relation. The changes are seen into food distribution, health care, access to education, credit, employment, public policies and programmes, women's legal rights and their participation in decision making both in private and private and public domain.

Carr, Chen, Jhabvala have observed that in a study on empowerment of women in rural Bangladesh, by Sydney Schuler and Syed Hashemi has focus on empowerment. They conclude that there are six specific components to female empowerment in Bangladesh; sense of self and vision of a future; mobility and visibility; economic security; status and decision making power within the household; ability to interact effectively in the public sphere; and participation in non-family groups.

### **Educational Levels of Women and Their Background Characteristics**

In India education is considered to be the most important means of social mobility. From the beginning of this century, it was realized that the spread of education among women was the only means through which improvement in their status is possible. Hence education has been identified as an important factor in women's emancipation. In this study the sample women of the four urban villages have different levels of education. Illiteracy is a common phenomenon among them. Some women have lower levels of education of primary and middle level while some have attained secondary or higher secondary levels of education. Few of the women in the villages however, have obtained college level or university level of education but none have technical education in any of the four urban villages.

In the present study one of the objectives is to see the different levels of education of women. In Kondli village, which is far from the heart of the city, 45.28 percent sample women are illiterate and 22.64 percent have secondary or higher secondary level of education. In Palam Gaon which is also located at a distance from the central area of the city, 28.72 percent sample women are illiterate while 29.78 percent have passed out secondary or higher secondary education.

In terms of explaining social and political participation of empowerment education along with duration of marriage are notable factors for both Kondli and other three villages. Aggregated empowerment also shows similar results. The second section of analysis shows that in case of physical mobility for high caste age and education are important. The result is not significant for intermediary and lower caste.

The explaining power of different independent variables is not very strong in explaining decision making power. Only significant result is found among higher caste group when women's education and duration of marriage are important variables. For socio-political and general awareness explanation is found to be relatively higher and in all the three caste groups education emerges as the most dominant variable followed by duration of marriage in case of intermediary lower caste group and age of women is important variable for higher caste.

For social and political participation results are although significant but not very strong except in the case of intermediary caste. Again education and age of women appear to be most important here. Education has been emerged to be significant variable in all the three caste groups along with duration of marriage in explaining aggregated empowerment. It is interesting an10ng lower caste group the variable difference in years of education from before marriage to after marriage has affected empowerment to some extent.

Education is an important variable in explaining different aspects of women empowerment along with duration of marriage. As education increases women's awareness, reasoning power make them able to take right decisions at right moment. Duration of marriage would mean their secured and established life in husband's family.

Working status of women is an important aspect in terms of empowerment of women which has inter-relationship between education of women and to some extent education of husband and education of head of household. At the lower level of education of women or head of household or husband, the percentage of working women are found higher while it comes down at the level of middle and secondary or higher secondary education. But the higher level of education of women or head of household or husband i.e. graduation or above shows higher percentage of working women.

The first hypothesis is related to the positive relationship between empowerment and education. The educational level of women show very consistently higher positive correlation with all the aspects of empowerment i.e. physical mobility, decision-making power, sociopolitical and general

awareness, social and political participation and aggregated empowerment for other three villages.

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