

EFFECT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC DETERMINANTS ON EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

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Abstract: Women's empowerment is the single most important factor in contributing to equality between women and men. In this paper, an attempt is made to explore the determinants that have an influence on women empowerment in Bhagalpur District of Bihar. Sample consisted 200 women beneficiaries of 10 NGOs of Bhagalpur district. The factor analysis was performed on ten (10) variables to identify the influencing factors on empowerment. Multiple regression analysis was used to identify the relationship between the empowerment factors and the impact of independent variables. The empirical results showed that that Age (X_1), Marital Status (X_3), Annual Income (X_5), Mass Media (X_6), Social participation (X_7), and Constraints (X_9) had significant association with empowerment of women at 1 percent level of probability and negative and significant relationship between caste (x_2) and participation (x_{10}). The results of multiple regression analysis indicated that co-efficient of determination (R^2) was 0.6651 which was found to be highly significant ($F=37.54$). Path coefficient analysis was attempted to know the direct and indirect effects through other related variables apportioning the correlation coefficient and it was found that direct effect of marital status (0.4736), age (0.2825) and annual income (0.18822) was substantial.

Keywords: Women beneficiaries, NGOs and women empowerment.

Introduction

Women represent around 50% of the world population, and in many regions of the developing world, their contribution is immense in all the sectors of development. But still in today's world, women's position is not the same as their counterparts. (Dhanonjoy, 2013). Women are doing more hour of work than men but they earn little because 60% of total unpaid work is done by them (UN, 2007). Despite their hard work and contributions to world economy, women have only one percent of the total world assets in their names (Al Mug hairy, 2004). Although the present world has taken much more attention in achieving the equity of power between men and women, the women in developing world are still in darker position. To ensure the empowerment among the women it is necessary to change long back traditional socio-cultural norms along with redefining the concept of patriarchal societal

pattern. The constitution of India grants equity to women in various strata of society by means of reservation and ensuring better involvement in various development projects. But a large number of women are either ill equipped or not in a position to propel themselves out of their traditionally unsatisfactory socio-economic conditions (Deshpande et. al. 2010).

Empowerment is observed to be one of the major concerns when addressing the issue of human rights and development (Tripathi, 2011). Duflo (2012) asserts that economic development and women's empowerment are meticulously interlinked: development helps in sliding down inequality between men and women, whereas, women's empowerment accelerates the process of development. Empowerment of women facilitates for sustainable rural development by the uplifting the economic, social and political status of women in India. Empowering the women in these aspects is necessary to convert the idle society into self-sustainable society (Tauffiqu et.al 2015).

Many strategies and programmes have been designed and implemented for empowerment of women Literature suggests that NGO interventions positively contribute to women empowerment (Ahsan Ullah 2003:21). NGO's central goal is empowering the powerless women folk or helping them to bloom their hidden potentialities, that is power of thought, power of word, and power of organization, with a view to helping them to participate in the socio-economic development for their emancipation from less human condition to more human condition (Haider and Aktar 1999: 57). Taking this gloomy picture of women's situation into account, this study was undertaken with the following specific objectives

1. To examine the demographic and socio-economic condition of women and their families.
2. To study the relationship between empowerment and personal characteristics of women beneficiaries of selected NGOs

Material and Method: The study was conducted in Bhagalpur district of Bihar selected purposively. A multi-stage random sampling technique was used for study in selecting 10 NGOs which were conducting activities for women. Stratified proportionate random sampling technique was used for selecting the respondents from the beneficiary population of these NGOs. Two hundred beneficiaries selected as sample of respondents from these 10 NGOs and were interviewed with the help of a standardized schedule. Correlation matrix was used to study the interrelationship between empowerment and the selected 10 quantitative variables such as age, caste, education, marital status, annual income, social linkage, mass media exposure, participation and constraints

Results and discussion

Socio-economic profile

The beneficiaries of NGOs differed in age, Caste, Education, Annual family income; Work experience with the NGOs. The data (Table 1) showed that the beneficiaries of the NGOs under study were a heterogeneous lot in terms of their age. The highest concentration of beneficiaries is in the age group of 26-35 years (44.50%), followed by 46-55 (25.50%) years. Information with respect to caste showed that the beneficiaries constituted highest percentage (63.0%) of the schedule caste followed by backward castes (28.0%). A perusal of the caste composition of selected respondents makes it clear that our sample size comprises of a sizeable number of deprived class. Most of the beneficiaries (75.0) were married. However, there were 11.0 per cent unmarried beneficiary respondents and 14.0 per cent widow. Assessment of beneficiaries with respect to education indicated that majority of the beneficiaries (60.5%) were illiterate and the percentage of beneficiaries who had passed primary, middle, class X and class XII were 5 per cent, 12.5 per cent, 13 per cent and 9.0 per cent, respectively. The distribution of beneficiaries according to family income is depicted that a majority of the beneficiaries came from the relatively poorer section of society, with one-third (30.5%) of them belonging to families with annual income upto Rs. 24,000 only. The annual income of about half of the respondents (44.5%) were between Rs. 24,001 to Rs. 36,000 only. Income above Rs. 36,000 was 11.55 per cent only. Work experience with the NGOs is very important variable. In this context more experience in the NGOs is expected to prove more beneficial for the women beneficiaries of the NGOs. The selected beneficiaries have been classified according to their length of experience in NGOs. It was also inferred that more than half of the beneficiaries (67.0%) had low level of mass media exposure and the majority of the women beneficiaries (83.0%) were members of one society (17.0%) beneficiaries were not member of any society.

Correlation of Independent variable with Dependent variable

The association between independent variables of the beneficiaries of the NGOs i.e., Age (X_1), Caste (X_2), Marital Status (X_3), Education (X_4), Annual Income (X_5), Mass Media (X_6), Social participation (X_7), Perception (X_8) and Constraints (X_{10}), and the dependent variable i.e. Empowerment of women (Y) was computed. The degree of association expressed through correlation coefficients (r value), Regression Coefficient (b), Standard Error (SE) and t - value are presented in Table 2.

It was observed that Age (X_1), Caste(X_2), Marital Status (X_3), Annual Income (X_5), Mass Media (X_6), Social participation (X_7) and Constraints (X_9) and Participation (X_{10}) had significant association with empowerment of women at 1 percent level of probability. The association of Education (X_4), and Perception (X_8) with empowerment of women was found non-significant. However, unlike others, caste, education and participation of the respondents were negatively associated with their empowerment.

Regression

The results of multiple regression analysis has been presented in Table 3 which indicated that co-efficient of determination (R^2) was 0.6651 which was found to be highly significant ($F=37.54$). This implied that 66.51 percent variation in empowerment of women was explained by 10 independent variables of the study. The rest of the variation may be due to other factors some of which might be covered elsewhere not included in the structured frame of the schedule.

The variables like Age (X_1), Marital Status (X_3), Education (X_4), Annual Income (X_5), and Perception (X_8) showed significant contribution to empowerment of women at one per cent probability. The contribution of these variables were such that change in them by one unit led to change in adoption to the tune of 1.8349, 2.8165, 3.4559, 2.8170, and 2.7250 units, respectively. On the other hand, contribution of variables like Caste (X_2) and Mass Media (X_6) on the empowerment of women was positive but significant at 5 per cent level of probability. However, Age (X_1), Marital Status (X_3), Education (X_4), Mass media (X_6) Social participation (X_7) and Perception (X_8) and Participation (X_{10}) were found to contribute negatively. Only annual income showed positive contribution significant at 1 per cent probability.

The respondents and the personnel of the NGOs were re contacted to know the reasons of negative contributions of above seven variables out of ten to the empowerment of women. It was learnt that very few things mattered for a person who was economically downtrodden. For a woman who is illiterate or having some education in a village school, belonging to any caste, married or unmarried with little or no social participation and even having positive perception about a NGO who supported her to some extent, only one thing mattered in an important way and that was her income. The negative regression coefficients therefore implied that so many other factors and situations influencing the status of the women.

Path analysis

Path Coefficient analysis was attempted to know the direct and indirect effects through other related variables apportioning the correlation co-efficient. The results of path analysis are presented in Table 4 revealed that among the independent variables which had greater positive and direct effect on empowerment of women, in decreasing order, were marital status (0.4736), age (0.2825) and annual income (0.18822). The direct effect of caste (-3788) was also substantial but in negative direction. This implied that the rate of empowerment was possibly faster as well as more in degree, among the women who were relatively more disadvantaged. Caste based reservations in democratic institutions; especially 50 percent reservation in the positions of the Gram Panchayats in Bihar, has open up a new vista conducive for empowerment of women in rural areas.

With respect to 24 substantial indirect effects of independent variables, 6 variables passed through age (X_1), further 6 variables passed through participation (X_{10}), five variables passed through Caste (X_2), three variables passed through mass media, two variables passed through annual income and one variable each passed through marital status (X_3) and constraints (X_9).

Conclusions

On the bases of results, we may conclude from correlation, regression and the path values that all the ten independent variables of the study played influential role in empowerment of women in one way or the other. It was found that there exists positive and significant association with age, marital status, annual income, social linkage, mass media and constraint and negative and significant relationship between caste and participation. The negative regression coefficients implied that so many other factors and situations influencing the status of the women. The variables which had maximum indirect effects on empowerment of women were Caste and marital status. This is natural as the two formed the basis of selection of beneficiaries in most of the Government welfare programmes. Since NGOs also got fund for their projects mostly from the Government for socio- economic uplift of the downtrodden population, expression of the same in the results only validate the findings.

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Table 1: Background of the Beneficiaries

Sl. No.	Variables	Frequency (N=200)
Age		
1.	Below 25 years	24(12.0)
	26-35 years	89(44.5)
3.	36-45 years	35(17.5)
4.	46-55 years	49(24.5)
5.	Above 55 years	03(1.5)
Caste		
1.	Forward	18(9.0)
2.	Backward	56(28.0)
3.	Scheduled Caste	126(63.0)
Marital status		
1.	Married	150(75.0)
2.	Unmarried	22(11.0)
3.	Widow	28(14.0)
Education		
1.	Illiterate	121(60.5)
2.	Schooling	10(5.0)

	primary	
3.	Schooling middle	25(12.5)
4.	Schooling Class-X	26(13.0)
5.	Intermediate Class-XII	18(9.0)
6.	Graduate	0(0)
Annual family income		
1.	Up to 24,000	73(36.5)
2.	24,001 to 36,000	89(44.5)
3.	Over 36,000	23(11.5)
4.	No response	15(7.5)
Benefits received		
1	Vocational education & training	120(60.0)
2	Health & Medical service	40(20.0)
3	Education	20(10.0)
4	Counseling, general awareness	20(10.0)
Work experience with the NGOs		
1.	Unto 5 years	48(24.0)
2.	5-10 years	144(72.0)
3.	Above 10 years	8(4.0)
Mass media exposure		
1	Low mass media exposure	134(67.0)
2	Medium mass media exposure	51(25.5)
3	High mass media exposure	15(7.5)
Social participation		
1.	No member of any society	34(17.0)
2.	Member of one society	166(83.0)
	Total	200

Table 2: Relationship of Independent Variables with Women Empowerment

Sl. No.	Independent variable	Correlation Coefficient (r-value)
1.	Age (X_1)	0.7257**
2.	Caste (X_2)	-0.6907**
3.	Marital Status (X_3)	0.8617**
4.	Education (X_4)	-0.0420
5.	Annual Income (X_5)	0.7661**

6.	Mass media (X ₆)	0.5784**
7.	Social participation (X ₇)	0.7750**
8.	Perception (X ₈)	0.0803
9.	Constraints (X ₉)	0.7663**
10	Participation (X ₁₀)	-0.5355**

**Significant at 0.01 level; *Significant at 0.05 level; NS = Non-significant

R = 0.8156**

Table 3: Multiple regression coefficient analysis between Independent and Dependent Variables

Sl. No	Independent variable	Regression Coefficient (b)	Standard Error (SE)	t-value
1.	Age (X ₁)	-1.8349	7.5548	-0.2429
2.	Caste (X ₂)	0.5225**	0.0941	5.5517
3.	Marital Status (X ₃)	-2.8165	1.4843	-1.8976
4.	Education (X ₄)	-3.4559**	0.8233	-4.1974
5.	Annual Income (X ₅)	2.8170**	0.7596	3.7084
6.	Mass media (X ₆)	-0.5679	0.8493	-0.6687
7.	Social participation (X ₇)	-0.2153	0.2917	-0.7381
8.	Perception (X ₈)	-2.7250*	1.1874	-2.2950
9.	Constraints (X ₉)	0.3876**	0.1243	3.1176
10.	Participation (X ₁₀)	-0.4098*	0.1816	-2.2564

**Significant at 0.01 level; *Significant at 0.05 level; NS = Non-significant 1.972, 2.601

R² = 0.6651**

F = 37.54

Table 4: Path analysis showing direct, indirect and substantial indirect effects

Variable	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Substantial Indirect Effect		
			I	II	III
Age (X ₁)	0.2825	0.2884(X ₃)	0.1708 (X ₂)	-0.0446 (X ₁₀)	0.0269 (X ₆)
Caste (X ₂)	-0.3788	-0.2636 (X ₃)	-0.1274 (X ₁)	0.0848 (X ₅)	0.0505 (X ₉)
Marital Status (X ₃)	0.4736	0.2108 (X ₂)	0.1721 (X ₁)	-0.0449 (X ₁₀)	0.0384 (X ₆)
Annual Income (X ₅)	0.1882	0.1707 (X ₂)	0.0322 (X ₃)	-0.0264 (X ₁)	0.0175 (X ₁₀)
Mass media (X ₆)	0.0614	0.2962 (X ₃)	0.1780 (X ₂)	0.1237 (X ₁)	-0.0524 (X ₁₀)
Social participation (X ₇)	0.0346	0.3217(X ₃)	0.2952 (X ₂)	0.1616 (X ₁)	-0.0489 (X ₁₀)
Constraints (X ₉)	0.0078	0.0592 (X ₃)	0.0210 (X ₂)	-0.0192 (X ₁)	0.0068 (X ₆)
Participation (X ₁₀)	0.0877	0.2425 (X ₃)	0.2182 (X ₂)	-0.1438 (X ₁₀)	0.0376 (X ₅)