

Status of Empowerment of Women and their Associated Factors in Rural Areas of Varanasi District, Uttar Pradesh, India

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Received Sept 12, 2017

Accepted Oct. 14, 2017

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Women empowerment is the key to strengthen their participation in the decision-making which is the most important key to socio-economic development. Women empowerment involves the building up of a society, a political environment, wherein women can breathe without the fear of oppression, exploitation, apprehension, and discrimination. This is not surprising since women are the ones that bear children are typically the primary caregivers in households. An understanding of the status and empowerment of women in society and within their households is thus critical to promoting change in reproductive attitudes and behaviour, especially in patriarchal societies. **Objective of the Study:** The objective of the study to find out the status of empowerment of women in rural areas of Varanasi district. **Methodology:** This is a cross sectional study conducted among the women of reproductive age group between 15-49 years in rural areas of Varanasi district, Uttar Pradesh, with sample size of 523. Pre-tested & structured interview schedule was used for collection of basic information about respondents. Women Empowerment Scale was used to measure the status of women empowerment. **Finding of the Study:** Findings of the study shows that ~70% women empowered in term of mobility and ~77% women have freedom from family domination. When we talk of economic security, only 20% women was empowered in term of economic security. Only 16% respondents economically contributed in her family expenses. About decision-making, women sole decision making in contest of household is very low. Only 33% women was free take decision about their own health alone and ~15% was free to move their family or friends without any permission. **Conclusion:** Women Empowerment is the vital instrument to expand women's ability to have resources and to make strategic life choices. Women empowerment is the key to strengthen their participation in the decision-making which is the most important key to socio-economic development. Government initiatives alone would not be sufficient to achieve this goal. Society must take initiative to create a climate in which there is no gender discrimination and women have full opportunities of self-decision making and participating in social, political and economic life with a sense of equality.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Women's Decision-Making Ability, Women's Mobility, Freedom from family domination, Economic Security.

The Empowerment of Women has become one of the most important concerns of 21st century not only at national level but also at the international level. Women empowerment is the key to strengthen their participation in the decision-making which is the most important key to socio-economic development. But practically women empowerment is still an illusion of reality. We observe in our day to day life how women become victimized by various social evils. Women Empowerment is the vital instrument to expand women's ability to have resources and to make strategic life choices. Empowerment of women is essentially the process of upliftment of economic, social and political status of women, the traditionally underprivileged ones, in the society. Women constitute almost 50% of the world's population but India has shown disproportionate sex ratio whereby female's population has been comparatively lower than males. As far as their social status is concerned, they are not treated as equal to men in all the places.

Women are the prime targets of programmes that aim at improving maternal and child health and achieving other desired demographic goals. This is not surprising since women are the ones that bear children and are typically the primary caregivers in households. An understanding of the status and empowerment of women in society and within their households is thus critical to promoting change in reproductive attitudes and behaviour, especially in patriarchal societies (Dyson and Moore, 1983) [1]. Notably, the National Population Policy 2000, specifically identified the low status of women in India as an important barrier to the achievement of population and maternal and child welfare goals (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, 2000). Government initiatives alone would not be sufficient to achieve this goal. Society must take initiative to create a climate in which there is no gender discrimination and women have full opportunities of self-decision making and participating in social, political and economic life of the country with a sense of equality [2]. In this context this study was carried out to find out the status of empowerment of women in rural areas of Varanasi district.

Methodology

This is a community based cross-sectional study design based on primary data at individual level. The study was conducted among the women of reproductive age group (15-49 years) in rural areas of Varanasi district, UP. Women who are mentally ill and not willing to participate were excluded from the study. Considering 10% non-response rate the total sample size was calculated as 523. The data was collected during the period of 15 March to 30 August 2015. Pre-design and Pre-tested interview schedule was used for data collection. Women Empowerment Scale (Nanda, Geeta. 2011. Compendium of Gender Scales, FHI 360/C-Change) was applied to measure the status of women empowerment. Types of items included in this scale are women mobility, women freedom from family domination, Women economic security and contribution to family support. The SPSS trial version 21.0 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) was used to analyze the data. The study protocol was approved by the Institutional Review Board, Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi and written informed consent was taken from the participants prior to data collection.

Findings of the Study

Socio-Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The background characteristics of respondent's presents in Table No. 1 in terms of percentage distribution by age, religion, caste, education, occupation and wealth status. Mean age of respondents is 25.75 ± 4.12 , while minimum age of respondents is 17 years and maximum age is 42 years. The age distributions of respondents is 6.3% in the age group 15-20 years to 81.1% in the age group 21-30 years and rest of belong to >30 years of age group. Among all respondents, 99% of women were currently married while 1% are separated or widowed. The mean age of marriage of respondents is 17.85 ± 2.71 , with minimum age of marriage is 6 years and maximum age of marriage was 25 years. Majority of respondents (~90%) belong to Hindu religion while remaining are from other religion. The distribution of respondents by caste shows that 46.3% respondents are from other backward class, 42.4% from SC and ST category and remaining 11.3% respondents belong to general caste category.

The distribution of the respondents by their completed years of education data reveals that 22.8% women had no school education or formal education, 54% of women attained education up to high school and above. While only 21% women had graduate and higher level of education. Only 20.8% women were employed and rest of them working as home makers. Approximately 45% women were got married before the age of 18 Years. Socio-economic class of the family were classified on the basis of Per Capita Income (PCI) according to BG Prasad socioeconomic classification (i.e. modified version May - 2014). The distribution of respondents on the basis of their socio-economic class of the family data were shows that, only 1.2 percent respondents belonged to higher class family and 8.6 percent respondents were from upper middle class family. While 36.9 percent respondents belonged to the lower middle class and rest of 42.8 percent respondents were from lower class family. Only 10.5 percent respondents belonged to middle class family. For further statistical analysis some variable groups (e.g. women's education, employment and socio-economic status of the family) were merged.

Table No. 1 Distribution of Respondents on the basis of Socio-Demographic Profile

	Particulars	Frequency (N)	Proportion (%)
Age (years)	≤ 20	33	6.3
	21-30	424	81.1
	> 30	66	12.6
	Total	523	100.0
Religion	Hindu	482	92.2
	Others	41	7.8
	Total	523	100.0
Caste	SC/ST	222	42.4
	OBC	242	46.3
	Others	59	11.3
	Total	523	100.0
Education	Illiterate / Just Literate	119	22.8
	Primary / Middle	122	23.3
	Secondary / Senior Secondary	172	32.9
	Graduate / Above	110	21.0
	Total	523	100.0

Employment Status	Not Employed	414	79.2
	Employed	109	20.8
	Total	523	100.0
Husband's Education	Illiterate / Just Literate	97	18.7
	Primary / Middle	117	22.6
	Secondary / Senior Secondary	192	37.1
	Graduate / Above	112	21.6
	Total	518	100.0
Husband's Occupation	Service	98	18.9
	Business	189	36.5
	Agriculture	56	10.8
	Labour	153	29.5
	Unemployed	22	4.2
	Total	518	100.0
Type of Family	Joint Family	368	70.4
	Nuclear Family	155	29.6
	Total	523	100.0
Socio-Economic Class of the Family	I (Upper Class)	6	1.2
	II (Upper Middle Class)	45	8.6
	III (Middle Class)	55	10.5
	IV (Lower Middle Class)	193	36.9
	V (Lower Class)	224	42.8
	Total	523	100.0

Women's participation in decision making

The ability of women to make decisions that affect the circumstances of their own lives is an essential aspect of empowerment. In order to assess women's participation in decision-making, the information were collected from married women on their participation in different types of decisions: related to their own child, making household purchases for daily needs, making large household purchases, decision related to their own health care, and visiting their family or relatives. Women were asked who usually makes each decision: 'mainly you, you and your husband jointly, mainly your husband, or someone else i.e. other family members?' The women decision making ability is directly associated with women age, education, employment and number of living children etc.

Table No. 2 Women's participation in decision making

Women's participation in decision making- Percent distribution of married women who usually participate in decision making on various issues...(N=523)								
Women Participation in...	A person who decides...							
	Mainly Wife		Husband and Wife Jointly		Mainly Husband		Other Family Members	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Decisions...								
Related To Child Birth								
The number of children you will have	68	(13.0)	322	(61.6)	125	(23.9)	8	(1.5)
No. of Male & Female Child to have	68	(13.0)	319	(61.0)	128	(24.5)	8	(1.5)
Whether to use family planning	69	(13.2)	303	(57.9)	140	(26.8)	11	(2.1)
Spacing between the children	68	(13.0)	315	(60.2)	130	(24.9)	10	(1.9)
Unwanted pregnancy (whether to have or not)	70	(13.4)	304	(58.1)	140	(26.8)	9	(1.7)
Related To Female Child								
Daughter's ideal level of education	45	(8.6)	315	(60.2)	145	(27.7)	18	(3.4)
Daughter's going outside the home	45	(8.6)	311	(59.5)	148	(28.3)	19	(3.6)
Daughter's ideal age of marriage	44	(8.4)	311	(59.5)	145	(27.7)	23	(4.4)
Related To Male Child								
Son's ideal level of education	46	(8.8)	310	(59.3)	148	(28.3)	19	(3.6)

Son's going outside the home	46 (8.8)	309 (59.1)	148 (28.3)	20 (3.8)
Son's ideal age of marriage	45 (8.6)	309 (59.1)	146 (27.9)	23 (4.4)
Related To Household				
When to make a daily purchase	51 (9.8)	64 (12.2)	86 (16.4)	322 (61.6)
When to make a major purchase	12 (2.3)	76 (14.5)	105 (20.1)	330 (63.1)
When to make a major selling	8 (1.5)	77 (14.7)	102 (19.5)	336 (64.2)
Related To Yourself				
Own health care	174 (33.3)	205 (39.2)	119 (22.8)	25 (4.8)
Visits to her family or relatives	82 (15.7)	223 (42.6)	123 (23.5)	95 (18.2)

Table No. 2 shows the percent distribution of married women according to the person in the household who usually makes specific decision. There is no decision for which a majority of women alone are the main decision makers. Only 33 percent of women make decisions about their own health care mainly by themselves and only 15 percent make decisions about visits to their own family or relatives by themselves. Women are least likely to make decisions mainly by themselves about major household purchases (2%). This proportion is as low as 9 percent for India as a whole (NFHS-III, 2005-06). Joint decision making is most common for decisions about visits to the respondent's family or relatives followed by decisions about number of children to have. It is very common for decisions about daily and major household purchases was taken by other family members like grandparents or other elder members of the family.

Status of Women Empowerment

The status of Women Empowerment cannot be visualized with single dimension rather multidimensional assessment in terms of various components of women's life and their status would bring a clear conception. So, this paper tries to give a basic idea about the status of empowerment of women in terms of mobility, freedom from family domination and economic security. The women empowerment scale was used to measure the status of women's empowerment. The type of item included in this scale was women's mobility, freedom from family domination, economic security and contribution to family support.

On the basis of scale analysis the study shows that ~70% women empowered in term of mobility. Almost every woman had visited the market and hospital/clinic/doctor. Among them 62 percent women had visited market alone and 55 percent women had visited hospital/clinic/doctor alone. Only 11 percent women had ever gone for cinema/movie and 99 percent women had ever gone outside the village or community. Only 25 percent women had visited alone outside the village or community (Table 3.A). More than 75 percent women have empowered in term of freedom from family domination. Overall 0.6 percent respondents were said that husband took their money without her consent, 0.8 percent respondents were said that jewellery was taken from them against their will, 19 percent respondents were said that they were prevented from visiting their parent's homes by their husband/other family members. While 7 percent respondents were said that they were prevented from working outside the home by their husband/other family members (Table 3.B). When we talk of economic security, only 20% women was empowered in term of economic security. Under economic security sub item scale only 19% women have any productive assets in term of cattle or sewing machine. ~52% women have cash saving either in the form of large or small amount (Table 3.C). Only 16% respondents economically contributed in her family expenses (Table 3.D).

Table 3.A Women's Mobility (N=523)

Women Empowerment Scale - Women's Mobility (%)		
Women's Mobility subscale items	Frequency (F)	Proportion (%)
1. Have you ever been to the bazaar?	520	99.4
2. Have you ever been there alone?	324	62.0
3. Have you ever been to the hospital/clinic/doctor?	518	99.0
4. Have you ever been there alone?	285	54.5
5. Have you ever gone to the cinema?	57	10.9
6. Have you ever been there alone?	1	0.2
7. Have you ever gone outside the village?	516	98.7
8. Have you ever been there alone?	131	25.0
Status of Empowerment on the basis of Women's Mobility		
Empowered Women*	364	69.6
Not Empowered Women	159	30.4

** Scoring procedures- Each respondent was given 1 point for each place she had visited and an additional point if she had ever gone there alone. The scale ranged from 0 to 8 and was employed as a continuous variable. A woman with a score of 4 or better was classified as empowered.*

Table 3.B.Women's Freedom from Family Domination (N=523)

Women Empowerment Scale - Women's Freedom from Family Domination (%)		
Women's Freedom from Family Domination subscale items	Frequency (F)	Proportion (%)
1. Husband / other family member took your money when you didn't want him to.	3	0.6
2. Husband / other family member took your land / jewellery / poultry / livestock when you didn't want him to.	4	0.8
3. Husband / other family member prevented you from visiting your parents.	98	18.7
4. Husband / other family member prevented you from working outside the home.	37	7.1
Status of Empowerment on the basis of Women's Freedom from Family Domination		
Empowered Women*	406	77.6
Not Empowered Women	117	22.4

** Scoring procedures-A woman was classified as "empowered" and coded as 1 if she said that none of these things had happened to her. The category "not empowered," was coded as 0.*

Table 3.C. Women's Economic Security (N=523)

Women's Economic Security and Contribution to Family Support (%)		
Economic Security and Contribution subscale items	Frequency (F)	Proportion (%)
1. Do you, in your own name, own any land, your homestead land, or your house?	39	7.5
2. Do you yourself own any productive assets (e.g., cattle or sewing machine)?	98	18.7
3. Do you have any cash savings?	272	52.0
4. Have you ever used your savings for business or money-lending?	19	3.6
Status of Empowerment on the basis of Women's Economic Security		
Empowered Women*	105	20.1
Not Empowered Women	418	79.9

** Scoring procedures- Two variables were used in an earlier analysis. Economic security was based on a scale from 0 to 4. One point was assigned for each of the following: if a woman owned her house or homestead land; owned any productive asset; had her own cash savings; and her savings were ever used for business or money-lending. A woman with a score of 2 or better was classified as empowered.*

Table 3.D Women Contribution to Family Support*

Of your total household expenses, what proportion is met through your own earnings?

Proportion is met through your own earning	Frequency (N=523)	Proportion (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Most	3	0.6	0.6
Half	17	3.3	3.8
Some	64	12.2	16.1
None**	439	83.9	100.0
Total	523	100.0	-

** Contribution to family support measured whether the respondent said she provided all, most, half, or some of her family's support, as opposed to very little or none.*

*** Most, half & some are those respondents who are engaged in any occupation and their earning are in the form of money so that they are economically contributed in her family expenses while None are those respondents who are only home maker, they are not economically contributed in her family expenses.*

Correlates of Status of Women's Empowerment

• Results of Simple Binary Logistic Regression Analysis

Results of binary logistics regression shows that women's mobility were significantly associated with respondents age (OR=35.65, 95%CI=10.1-124.97, $p<0.05$), employment status (OR=4.95, 95%CI=2.57-9.54, $p<0.05$), socio-economic class of the family (OR=3.70, 95%CI=1.35-7.00, $p<0.05$), type of family (OR=2.80, 95%CI=1.75-4.50, $p<0.05$) and their decision making ability ($p<0.05$). Women's having bank or other saving account (OR=2.02, 95%CI=1.38-2.94, $p<0.05$) and associated with SHGs or NGOs (OR=16.80, 95%CI=2.28-123.80, $p<0.05$) were also found significantly associated with women's mobility.

Women's freedom from family domination was found significantly associated with women's education, socio-economic class of the family and their decision making ability. Women having secondary and above level were more likely have freedom from family domination (OR=2.16, 95%CI=1.29-3.60, $p<0.05$) than the women with lower level of education. Similarly, the women belonged to the higher socio-economic class were more likely to have freedom from family domination (OR=3.95, 95%CI=1.39-11.23, $p<0.05$) then those women belonged to the lower socio-economic class. Women having decision making ability related to their own health care (OR=7.75, 95%CI=4.31-13.95, $p<0.05$) and visits outside the family or relatives (OR=4.79, 95%CI=2.27-10.10, $p<0.05$) were also more likely have freedom from family domination. Women's having bank or other saving account (OR=1.71, 95%CI=1.13-2.60, $p<0.05$) and associated with SHGs or NGOs (OR=5.25, 95%CI=1.24-22.21, $p<0.05$) were also more likely to have freedom from family domination.

Women's economic security were also significantly associated with respondents age (OR=4.34, 95%CI=1.18-15.91, $p<0.05$), education (OR=2.08, 95%CI=1.15-3.77, $p<0.05$) and their employment status (OR=5.86, 95%CI=3.65-9.40, $p<0.05$). Socio-economic class of the family were significantly contributed in women's economic security (OR=3.25, 95%CI=1.75-6.04, $p<0.05$). Women's decision making ability related their own health care (OR=9.53, 95%CI=3.95-22.99, $p<0.05$) & visits outside the family or relatives (OR=3.06, 95%CI=1.58-5.95, $p<0.05$), association with SHGs or NGOs (OR=5.21, 95%CI=2.60-10.43, $p<0.05$) and having bank or other saving account (OR=2.42, 95%CI=1.52-3.86, $p<0.05$) were also significantly influenced the women economic status (Table 4.A).

Table 4.A Result of simple binary logistic regression analysis in relation status of women's empowerment

Independent Variable	Women's Mobility		Freedom from Family Domination		Women's Economic Security	
	OR	95 % CI	OR	95 % CI	OR	95 % CI
Age (in years)						
≤ 20	-	-	-	-	-	-
21-30	5.08	2.35-10.99	0.98	0.38-2.155	2.39	0.71-8.04
> 30	35.65	10.1-124.97*	1.09	0.39-3.08	4.34	1.18-15.91*
Education						
Illiterate	-	-	-	-	-	-
Primary/Middle	0.89	0.52-1.52	0.85	0.49-1.47	1.26	0.61-2.57
Secondary/Above	1.29	0.81-2.06	2.16	1.29-3.60*	2.08	1.15-3.77*
Employment Status						
Not Employment	-	-	-	-	-	-
Employment	4.95	2.57-9.54*	1.46	0.85-2.53	5.86	3.65-9.40*
Type of Family						
Joint Family	-	-	-	-	-	-
Nuclear Family	2.80	1.75-4.50*	0.98	0.62-1.54	1.11	0.70-1.76
Socio-Economic Class of the Family						
I (Upper Class)	3.07	1.35-7.00*	3.95	1.39-11.23*	3.25	1.75-6.04*
II (Middle Class)	1.30	0.69-2.44	1.97	0.90-4.32	2.06	1.09-3.91*
III (Lower Class)	-	-	-	-	-	-

Decision related to own health care						
Mainly Wife	14.88	8.21-26.95*	7.75	4.31-13.95*	9.53	3.95-22.99*
Wife & Husband Jointly	5.32	3.34-8.47*	5.02	3.03-8.30*	7.03	2.92-16.93*
Other Family Member**	-	-	-	-	-	-
Decision related to visits to her family or relatives						
Mainly Wife	8.28	3.81-18.00*	4.79	2.27-10.10*	3.06	1.58-5.95*
Wife & Husband Jointly	3.26	2.15-4.94*	4.29	2.63-6.98*	3.43	2.02-5.82*
Other Family Member**	-	-	-	-	-	-
Associated with any income generating activities like SHGs, NGO etc.						
Yes	16.80	2.28-123.80*	5.25	1.24-22.21*	5.21	2.60-10.43*
No	-	-	-	-	-	-
Having any bank or saving account						
Yes	2.02	1.38-2.94*	1.71	1.13-2.60*	2.42	1.52-3.86*
No	-	-	-	-	-	-

* Significant at level 95%

**Decision taken by husband alone were merged with decision taken by other family members

• Multivariate Binary Logistic Regression Analysis

Multivariate logistic regression analysis shows that women who have decision making power related to own health were more likely empowered in terms of mobility (OR=5.46, 95%CI=2.73-10.91, P<0.05), in compare to those who don't had decision making power. Women's age were also found significant with women's mobility. Higher age group women (>30 years) were more likely to empower in term of mobility (OR=15.12, 95%CI=3.79-60.23, P<0.05), in compare to early age group women. Total number of children's were also found significantly associated with women's mobility (OR=7.85, 95%CI=2.08-29.63, P<0.05). Type of family were also found significantly associated with women's mobility. Women's belonged to the nuclear family were more likely to had freedom of mobility then the women belonged to the joint family (OR=2.42, 95%CI=1.36-4.32, P<0.05). Similarly, women associated with income generating activities like SHGs, NGO etc. were more likely had freedom of mobility then the other women (OR=7.92, 95%CI=1.01-61.84, P<0.05).

Women's Freedom from family domination were found significantly associated with women's decision making power related to their own health care (OR=4.53, 95%CI=1.85-11.09, P<0.05) and visits outside the family or relatives (OR=2.25, 95%CI=0.70-7.19, P<0.05). Women's economic security were significantly associated with the employment status of women (OR=4.64, 95%CI=2.83-7.60, P<0.05). Women who were belong to higher socio-economic class of the family were more empowered in term of economic security (OR=2.87, 95%CI=1.46-5.65, P<0.05), in compare to lower socio-economic class of women. Women's decision making ability related to their own health care were also significantly contributed in women's economic security (OR=6.12, 95%CI=2.46-15.20, P<0.05) (Table 4.B).

Table 4.B Adjusted odds ratio (AOR) for multivariable logistic regression of factors independently associated with women's empowerment status

Women's Empowerment Status					
Stepwise Analysis	Independent Variable	Exp (B) (AOR)	95 % CI for EXP (B)	Sig. (P value)	Nagelkerke R Square (R ² X 100)
1. Women' Mobility					
Step 1.	Decision related to own health care				
	Mainly Wife	5.46	2.73-10.91	0.00	26.7
	Wife & Husband Jointly	2.64	1.50-4.64	0.00	
	Other Family Member*	-	-	-	
Step 2.	Age (in years)				
	≤ 20	-	-	-	32.7
	21-30	4.09	1.71-9.78	0.00	
	> 30	15.12	3.79-60.23	0.00	

Step 3.	Total No. of Children's				
	1-2	-	-	-	36.6
	3-4	3.00	1.71-5.20	0.00	
	≥ 5	7.85	2.08-29.63	0.00	
Step 4.	Type of Family				
	Joint Family	-	-	-	38.4
	Nuclear Family	2.42	1.36-4.32	0.00	
Step 5.	Associated with any income generating activities like SHGs, NGO etc.				
	Yes	7.92	1.01-61.84	-	39.7
	No	-	-	-	
2. Women's Freedom from Family Domination					
Step 1.	Decision related to own health care				
	Mainly Wife	4.53	1.85-11.09	0.00	20.3
	Wife & Husband Jointly	3.52	2.00-6.21	0.00	
	Other Family Member*	-	-	-	
Step 2.	Decision related to visits to her family or relatives				
	Mainly Wife	2.25	0.70-7.19	0.17	22.2
	Wife & Husband Jointly	2.17	1.17-4.03	0.01	
	Other Family Member*	-	-	-	
Step 3.	Education				
	Illiterate	-	-	-	23.8
	Primary/Middle	0.73	0.39-1.35	0.31	
	Secondary/Above	1.52	0.85-2.70	0.15	
3. Women's Economic Security					
Step 1.	Socio-Economic Class of the Family				
	I (Upper Class)	2.87	1.46-5.65	0.00	15.3
	II (Middle Class)	1.67	0.83-3.33	0.14	
	III (Lower Class)	-	-	-	
Step 2.	Decision related to own health care				
	Mainly Wife	6.12	2.46-15.20	0.00	22.0
	Wife & Husband Jointly	5.05	2.03-12.51	0.00	
	Other Family Member*	-	-	-	
Step 3.	Employment Status				
	Not Employment	-	-	-	24.5
	Employment	4.64	2.83-7.60	0.00	

**Decision taken by husband alone were merged with decision taken by other family members*

Results and Discussion

Women's decision making ability is positively associated with their age, education, employment and number of living children. Women's increased the level of education is positively associated with autonomy in own health care decision making, family planning and so on. Women's decision-making power is related to their mobility. The Women having power to take decisions regarding to go outside alone or go to make household purchases are empower in decision-making. Educational status influence demographic variables for decision making including age at first marriage, decision to have children, and decision to use contraceptives.

Ullah et al. [3] stated that the importance of education for woman has been accepted worldwide, as it improves their earning ability and empowers them in deciding about their family size, and other family decisions. The study has shown that the educated women delay marriages, use family planning methods. Bbaale and Mpuga [4] the positive impact of women's education on their autonomy, leading to later marriages, increased use of contraceptives and lower fertility. Female education has also been claimed to alter household power relations making women more autonomous and giving them greater control of various dimensions of their lives.

Female education has also been claimed to alter household power relations making women more autonomous and giving them greater control of various dimensions of their lives [5, 6]. Acharya [7] said that education is recognized as a major instrument in empowering women. Maitra [8] argued that the higher the education level of woman, the stronger is the effect of education on age at marriage.

Boonto [9] asserted that female education is essentially important in accessing decision-making power and in improving quality of their life. Employment of women increases the likelihood of their participating in decision making only if they are employed for cash; in fact, women who are employed but do not earn cash are less likely than women not employed to participate in decision making. Women in nuclear households and women who are employed for cash are more likely to participate in these household decisions.

Freedom of movement outside the home is an important aspect of women's empowerment. Older women, and women in nuclear households have more freedom of movement than other women. Women in the highest education group are more likely to go to the market, compared to those women with no education. Employment for cash is associated with greater freedom of movement, although women not employed in the past (NFHS-III). Women's economic security was significantly associated with employment status of women's and socio-economic class of the family.

Conclusion

The Empowerment of women has become one of the most important Concerns of 21st century not only at national level but also at the international level. It is the vital instrument to expand women's ability to have resources and to make strategic life choices. Efforts by the Government are on to ensure Gender equality but Government initiatives alone would not be sufficient to achieve this goal. Society must take initiative to create a climate in which there is no gender discrimination and Women have full opportunities of Self decision making and participating in the Social, Political and Economic life of the Country with a sense of equality.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of this paper.

Acknowledgments

We would like to extend our gratitude to the participants of the study. Their cooperation was valuable, and was greatly appreciated.

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