

CONCEPT OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT: A PARADIGM SHIFT IN ATTITUDE OF HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN PANDEMIC ERA

Plabani Roy¹, Dr. Prarthita Biswas², Mr. MAM Sameem³

¹ Research Scholar, Department of Education, School of Education, Adamas University, India.

² Professor & Head, Dept. of Education, School of Education, Adamas University, India.

³ Lecturer in English, Department of English, Language Teaching, South Eastern University of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka.

Abstract

Attitude of Higher Secondary School students towards women empowerment is burning issue of the present world particularly in developing countries like India. The gender inequities pervading society carried into the school environment education plays an important role in the progress of an individual's mind. In the present pandemic situations as schools were closed for long duration, which greatly affects the attitude of students at all level and also affects our society on a large scale. There is much scope to highlight and to improve in this segment to achieve a more effective outcome and the present research paper will emphasize on the same.

Keywords: Women Empowerment , Higher secondary school , Attitude , Rural Women.

Introduction:

Empowerment literally means 'To invest with Power' It is vesting where it does not exist inadequately. Empowerment of women would mean equipping women to be economically independent, self-reliant, have positive esteem to enable them to face any difficult situation and they should be able to participate in development activities. The empowered women should be able to participate in the process of decision-making. Women empowerment is to empower women by promoting their participation in all areas and sectors to build stronger economics, improve their quality of life and bring gender equality. Women empowerment has the power to many things in the society and country Education is the key factor for women empowerment. The definition of empowerment of women most quoted by scholars is the one given by Batilwala (1998:01). It reads "Empowerment is the process by which the powerless gain greater control over the circumstances of their lives.

The UNO (2001: 04) has provided a meaningful conceptual frame work of empowerment of women. It reads : "Empowerment is defined as the process by which women take control and ownership of their lives through expansion of their choices . It is the process of acquiring the ability to make strategic life choices in a contest where this ability has previously been denied". Attitude of Higher Secondary school students towards women empowerment is burning issue of the present world. The research study was aimed at measuring the attitude Of Higher Secondary school students towards women empowerment particularly in present pandemic situation.

Education is a basic human right for everyone. All girl and boys, men and women have the right to quality of education, with fair access and without discrimination.

The school environment plays an important role in the progress of an individual's mind. The school is the place where young people learn about social relationship about norms and values. A gender responsive school environment is one where the academic, social and physical environment and its surrounding community take into account the specific needs of both girls and boys. Education contributes to women's empowerment through developing skill and capabilities such as critical thinking, literacy and numeracy and communication skill, which lay the foundations for decent livelihoods and equitable relationship in adulthood.

Malhotra et al. (1997) – Women's empowerment in kalutara district of Sri Lanka. The Researcher have empirically analyzed how education and employment status of women, other life course and household factors affect women's empowerment in kalutara district of Sri Lanka. The study has revealed that years of schooling and current employment status of women have positive and significant impact on the financial decision making power of women in the family. Amin, et al (1998) – Women's participation in NGO based programmed. The Researcher have explore the relationship between poor women's participation in NGO based micro credit programme and their empowerment using empirical data from rural Bangladesh. The non member in programmed area shows a higher level of empowerment on the autonomy and authority index than do the non member of non programmed area. Agarwal, (2003) – Technology model for empowering rural women. Women's the Researcher has critically assessed employments through technological improvement and participatory approach are need to improve their life. This would ensure a suitable future for rural India. Technology model describe how scientific and technical interventions could improve the quality of life of women in rural area. This study has explained that technological development model along with education, employment reduction of socially traditional attitude i.e., religion, family structures etc, are responsible factors of women empowerment. Quisumbing et al. (2000) – To estimate the impact of women's empowerment. Arends-Kuenning, et al. (2001) – People's view about the benefit of education of women. Hence from this study it is obvious that education accelerate the empowerment level of women. Parvin, et. al (2004) – Rural Women Employment Creation Project (RWECP) on empowerment concluded that marital status and religion are influential factor of women empowerment in rural Bangladesh. Williams, (2005) – Women's empowerment – This model showed that economic and Gender components of empowerment influence each other and both have interactive effects. K.S. SIDDARAJU in 2019 described some important mechanism of Empowerment like literacy and higher education , achievement of knowledge for her rights , self reliance , self respect and dignity of being a women . Leigh –Anne Perryman et al 2016 high lighted on OER and OEP in developing countries . Pallavi Kabde in 2015 and Rathnamma .G in 2014 also emphasised on women education as a prime factor responsible for Women Education which may be augmented with the help of NGOs, Self Help Groups and through co- operatives . So this study is significant because attitude of students is an essential part of every part of every education system. It should be more opportunity to all students in regular classroom . This programme can develop

the physical skill and fitness . The subject offered in higher secondary education helps the girls to attain basic knowledge in all the areas of life .But in the present pandemics of corona virus,students lost approx two years of active classroom and opted for online class.As Women Empowerment is a continuous process in which women have control over the physical and mental resources that include human intellectual , financial , self beliefs and moral attitude ,this pandemic has greatly affects the critical areas of women empowerment in terms of social empowerment,educational aspect,health aspect,political empowerment,economic empowerment and legal empowerment.

Objectives Of The Study:

1. To study the change in attitude of higher secondary school students on women empowerment due to pandemic situation.
2. To compare the dimensional change on women empowerment.
3. To identify the adverse factors and strategic review.

Methodology:

At the present study descriptive survey type method is adopted to collect the information. The variables are 1) Students of Rural and Urban and Govt. and Non Govt. Secondary School students – Independent variables. 2) Attitude on women empowerment – Dependent variables. 3) Environment of the school in pandemic Era -Extraneous variable. Population consists of the students of higher secondary schools under the Govt. and Non Govt in Howrah District. Here the stratified sampling techniques are used for selecting schools. Interview on selected questionnaire is used as a tool. The opinion of the student is developed by Plabani Roy, Research Scholar under guidance of Dr. Prarthita Biswas, Professor, School of Education, Adamas University. The opinion contain 20 statements. This instrument based on 3 point Likert Type Scale and highest possible score would be 60 (3 X 20). The scale is constructed followed by 3 point Likert Type Scale i.e. Agree (A), Indefinite (I), Disagree (D). The study has been conducted in four different schools (both rural and urban) in Howrah District – both Govt. and Non Govt. Schools. The study is qualitative one mainly based on face to face interview and also quantitative as questionnaire is used.

Result & Discussions:

Qualitative Analysis:

On announcement of full lockdown on 25th of March, 2020, all educational institutions were closed all over India. Students were restricted to come to the schools. After few months online classes were started but which was very troublesome due to horrible physical and mental stress along with terrible financial crisis as huge number of habitants became jobless. Economic constraints played vital role in arranging online mode of learning [OML] particularly in rural areas where internet connection and smart phone/computer availability was very poor.After few months Government supported them by providing smart phones.This situation badly affects the higher secondary students as they loose their project works and their final

assessment examination which is very important pillar for their future establishment. They were evaluated by their previous project works and previous results. All these factors and 2nd and 3rd waves make them more afraid of life which ultimately affects their attitude on empowerment. As per different studies, it is obvious that higher secondary school students are generally more prone to stress and anxiety. Achievement in academics is one of the important factor. In pandemic situation, factors which greatly affects them are- understanding of the crisis, creating healthy life styles, managing social isolation, adapting to the 'new normal' future, having jovial family, reasonable use of electronic gadgets and internet, restoring emotional turbulence, engagement in creative works, reshaping of curriculum, monotonous online teaching and lack of novel assessment and preparation for future crisis.

As this study was conducted in very short time and in very turbulent situation, here qualitative part is mainly focused and quantitative part will be discussed later after getting detail analysis. From this study it is very clear that, attitude of higher secondary school students is greatly affected due to the pandemic circumstances as discussed above. They are targeting job oriented training instead of long term professional training as a need of early employment to get rid of the mental and economic stress. One more complex thing developed in the controversy between online and offline classes and also between Govt. and Non-Govt. institutions on administrative ground which often creates some confusion among them. As the employment prospect is very poor and badly affected in pandemic era, they are aiming at business oriented establishment either through NGO or SHG even with the help of microfinance. There is little bit increase in tendency of political and social empowerment rather than educational empowerment.

One cannot change the issue of women empowerment with a blink of an eye. It will take a lot of effort not only from the part of women of the nation but from the men said and side of the society too and as a whole from the nation. Women's empowerment is a complex concept, and accurately measuring it poses a number of challenges to researchers. Currently, few empirical studies fully integrate theory into their measurement models, and many studied employ analytic methods and measurement choices with high risk of bias. These choices hamper efforts to understand this important concept and may lead to erroneous conclusions. This paper offers researchers suggestions to improve upon current measurement approaches. Improved measurement could greatly advance research efforts into the causes and consequences of poor empowerment and will strengthen evidence on social policies to increase empowerment. Women's empowerment is a critical human rights issue with implications for the well-being of women, their families, and society, and it should be measured with the atmosphere.

Limitation Of The Study

The study is constructed on attitude of women students only. The population of the study is only four schools. The study is related with respect of time, money and effort.

Conclusion:

Higher secondary school students are generally more prone to stress and anxiety because of their confrontation between self organization and role confusion. Present pandemic situation

aggravated their mental, physical and emotional stress to a great extent in view of the socio-economic situation and shattered employment status. The attitude towards women empowerment and the dimension of empowerment also been changed as discussed earlier. The imbalance caused by the pandemic situation can be overcome by parental support, giving students their personal space, providing them right information and proper counselling, proper academic environment as per their personal needs. Finally, it is suggested that further research needs to be undertaken on a large scale on the problems identified. It has been rightly said by Swami Vivekananda “The Best Thermometer to the proceed of a nation is its treatment of women”. Therefore, due recognition of them in society and their greater involvement in socio economic and political affairs becomes all the more important. Every person should come forward to ensure equal status of our women in spheres of life as the empowerment of women has become one of the essential concerns of the 21st Century, not only at a national level but also in the international level. Upliftment of Higher Secondary Students attitude is an important strategy to improve the Empowerment of Women in India.

References:

1. Malhotra, Anju and Mark Mather. (1997). Do schooling and work empower women in developing countries-Gender and Domestic decisions in Sri Lanka. *Sociological Forum*, 12 (4): 599-630.
2. Rahul, Amin. Robert, Hill. & Yiping, Li. (1995). Poor women’s participation in Credit based self employment : The impact on their Empowerment, Fertility, Contraceptive used & fertility desire in rural Bangladesh. *Pakistan Development Review* ; 32 : 93 – 119 [Google Scholar]
1. 3. Srinivasa.D, Siddegowda.Y.S. (2015). Recent trends in women empowerment: An analysis. *International Education and Research Journal*, 1 (5) ; 100-103.
3. Agarwal, B. (2003) : Gender and Land rights revisited : Exploring new prospects via the state, family and market. *Journal of agrarian change*, 3 (1-2) : 184-224.
4. Quisumbing et al. (2000). Intra Household allocation and Gender Relations : New Empirical evidence. [Research Gate].
5. Kuenning, Arends et al. (2001). Women’s capabilities and the right to education in Bangladesh. *International Journal of Politics Culture and Society*, 15 (1) : 125-142.
6. Parvin, Ara. Rezaul, SM., & Chowdhury, M. (2004). Women empowerment performance of income generating activities supported RWECP : A Case study in Dumuria Thana, Bangladesh. *The Journal of Geo Environment*, 4 (1) : 47- 62.
7. Williams, Jill. (2005). *Measuring Gender and Women’s Empowerment using Confirmatory Factor Analysis* [IBS, University of Colorado]. [citeseerx.ist.psu.edu].
8. Siddaraju, K.S. (2019). Pros and Cons of Women Empowerment. *International Journal of Education*, 7 (4) : 38 – 41.
9. Perryman, L., & Arcos, B. (2016). Women’s Empowerment through openness : OER, OEP and the Sustainable Development Goals. *Open Praxis*, 8 (2) : 163 – 180.

10. Kabde, Pallavi. (2015). *Empowerment of Women in Slums through Self Help Groups in Hyderabad City*. (Doctor of Philosophy in Public Administration, Osmania University). Shodhganga hdl.handle.net/10603/192595.
11. Rathnamma, G. (2014). *Women Empowerment through Co-operatives*. (Doctor of Philosophy in Co-operation, University of Mysore). Shodhganga hdl.handle.net/10603/49962.
12. Mukherjee.S,Biswas.P,Olea.D.M(Ed.)(2022).*Education in Post-Pandemic Era: A Paradigm Shift*. Sweden:Red'shine.
13. Roy. P, Biswas. P. (2022). Chapter 20 page 240-248 Mukherjee. S, Biswas.P, Olea.D.M(Ed). *Education in post-Pandemic Era A Paradigm Shift*.Sweedeen:Red'shine.