

Role Played by Employment in Empowering Women in The Family

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Abstract— Though it is perceived that the status of a woman is enhanced by employment, it is not yet explained how it empowers women in the family set up. The power relations in family are a very important aspect from the point of view of empowerment of woman. An employed woman may be very powerful and efficient in an organization. But the situation at home may be different. The perception of self-worth of members within the household is an important component in determining their bargaining power. Many women do not even realise their deprivation due to socialisation within this culture since childhood. In intra-household bargaining, therefore, women fare worse than men by being too much willing to sacrifice their own interests. According to Amartya Sen, women are less likely to secure favourable outcomes for themselves in household decision making processes. They feel that their long-term security lies in subordinating their wellbeing to that of male authority figures. This paper highlights the important role played by employment in empowering women in the family, with the help of the results of a sample study of employed women in various categories of employment. In this paper, the empowerment achieved through employment is analysed through eight elements of empowerment such as self-esteem, importance in the family, role in deciding the number of children, decision making in family matters, role of employment in keeping up individuality, increase in self-dependence and family income, and in securing the respect of husband and in-laws. Satisfaction index is the tool used for analyzing the data. The study concludes the immense potential of employment to enhance the empowerment of women in the family set up. Hence more opportunities should be provided to women for employment or self-employment.

Indexed Terms— Democracy, Empowerment, Satisfaction Index, Bargaining Power, Self Esteem.

I. INTRODUCTION

The constitution of India has guaranteed the right of equality to all its citizens irrespective of their sex, caste, creed and religion. Indian democracy, right from the days of Independence, has been thriving on these basic principles for the last six decades. The national

movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi was one of the first attempts to draw Indian women out of the restricted circles of domestic life into equal role with men. Writing in 'Young Indian' in 1918, Gandhiji said, Woman is the companion of man gifted with equal mental capacities. She has the right to participate in the minutest details of the activities of man. She has the same right of freedom and liberty as he.

Empowerment is a multi-dimensional process, which should enable the individuals or a group of individuals to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres of life. It consists of greater access to knowledge and resources, greater autonomy in decision making to enable them to have greater ability to plan their lives, or have greater control over circumstances that influence their lives and free them from the shackles imposed on them by custom, belief and practice.

Empowerment of women also means equal status to women. Empowering women socio-economically through increased awareness of their rights and duties as well as access to resources is a decisive step towards greater security for them. Empowerment includes higher literacy level and education for women, better health care for women and children, equal ownership of productive resources, increased participation in economic and commercial sectors, awareness of their rights and responsibilities, improved standards of living and acquiring self-reliance, self-esteem and self-confidence.

This paper highlights the important role played by employment in empowering women in the family, with the help of the results of a sample study of employed women in various categories of employment. Though it is perceived that the status of a woman is enhanced by employment, it is not yet explained how it empowers women in the family set up. The *power relations* in family are a very important

aspect from the point of view of empowerment of woman. An employed woman may be very powerful and efficient in an organization. But the situation at home may be different. In this paper, the empowerment achieved through employment is analysed through eight elements of empowerment such as self-esteem, importance in the family, role in deciding the number of children, decision making in family matters, role of employment in keeping up individuality, increase in self-dependence and family income, and in securing the respect of husband and in-laws. Satisfaction index is the tool used for analyzing the data.

- Co-operative Conflict and Bargaining Power

In patriarchal societies, the subordinate status of women signifies a lack of empowerment in the sense that they are unable to take part in the decision-making processes on an equal footing with men, either within the household or in the society at large. This lack of empowerment is manifested in the relative weakness of their bargaining power in situations characterised by 'co-operative conflict', i.e., situations in which it is in the interest of both men and women to co-operate, but in which a conflict of interest is also involved. Most intra-household decisions, including those relating to the allocation of household resources, involve such co-operative conflicts. In situations like these, the party with superior bargaining power can influence the outcome of the co-operative effort in their own favour. The inferior bargaining power of women, entailed by their lack of empowerment, thus biases the allocation of scarce household resources. In general, relative bargaining power, and hence the allocation of resources within a household will depend on three characteristics of the bargaining parties; their status quo or breakdown position, perceived interests and perceived contribution to household resources.

- Breakdown Position

The breakdown position represents the position of the party in the event of breakdown of co-operation. It plays a critical role in determining the strength or vulnerability of a person in the bargaining process. Given other things, if the breakdown position of a person is worse, then the outcome of the bargaining process will be less favourable for that person. Women's breakdown position is worse because of their gender specific problems, like the demand of

pregnancy, childcare etc. There are some socially generated asymmetries between men and women, in ownership of assets, acquisition of education and training and in access to certain kinds of economic activities.

- Perceived Interest

The perception of self worth of members within the household is an important component in determining their bargaining power. Many women do not even realise their deprivation due to socialisation within this culture since childhood. In intra-household bargaining, therefore, women fare worse than men by being too much willing to sacrifice their own interests.

- Perceived Contribution

Given other things, bargaining power is greater for the person who is perceived to be making a larger contribution to the overall wealth of the family.

Perceived contribution is different from actual contribution. Though women usually work harder and longer hours, they are not perceived to be making much contribution since their work does not normally make a direct financial contribution to the family as does men's. Since co-operative outcome goes in favour of those whose perceived contribution is greater, women fare worse in the bargaining process.

Thus anything that can improve the breakdown position of women, or enhance their perception of self interest, or increase their perceived contribution to the household, will strengthen their bargaining power and will thus enable them to improve their position within the household.

There are three dimensions of gender power relations according to Mandakini Pant, such as, inter personal decision making capacity, division of labour among members of the household and socially structured and culturally patterned behaviour and practices within the household. According to Amartya Sen, women are less likely to secure favourable outcomes for themselves in household decision making processes. They feel that their long term security lies in subordinating their wellbeing to that of male authority figures. In Longwe's framework of empowerment, the balance of power between men and women are equal and neither party has dominance over the other.

In every family, there is a bargaining on power relations, whether conscious or not. In some families, women are totally excluded from all areas of decision making. When women do not have any income of their own and are totally dependent on other family members for all their financial needs, they may lose the bargaining power. So it is very important to see if employment confers empowerment in family. The table below shows the scores of the eight empowerment elements of women in seven categories of empowerment such as school and college teachers,

bank and government employees, nurses, factory workers and self-employed women in three districts of Jharkhand namely, East Singhbhum, West Singhbhum and Seraikella-Kharswan. The maximum satisfaction index is hundred. An index above 66 is considered highly favourable, between 33 and 66 is moderately favourable and below 33 is less favourable. The implications of the scores of each element are explained below element-wise, district-wise and category-wise.

Table- 1
Satisfaction Index on Empowerment in Family

	East Singhbhum District								West Singhbhum District								Seraikella-Kharswan District								CI
	S	C	B	G	N	W	SE	DI	S	C	B	G	N	W	SE	DI	S	C	B	G	N	W	SE	DI	
1	58	82	72	72	62	77	85	72	85	73	75	68	73	33	82	70	77	55	65	72	60	50	78	65	69
2	52	68	69	72	60	70	90	69	77	53	63	65	47	57	78	63	45	43	63	48	68	58	63	56	62
3	60	47	50	62	30	60	65	55	62	57	67	53	50	56	58	58	42	34	43	60	60	66	76	54	56
4	55	65	59	60	53	83	83	66	60	63	57	62	55	63	67	61	57	55	67	67	47	65	82	63	63
5	75	78	65	72	78	82	82	76	83	70	63	70	62	58	80	70	58	55	68	68	57	60	83	64	70
6	70	78	67	63	67	77	72	70	82	63	68	62	65	60	85	69	53	62	67	72	62	58	75	64	68
7	42	77	63	63	55	80	70	64	72	73	67	75	50	53	65	65	58	55	63	70	53	58	65	60	63
8	52	60	60	55	48	77	68	60	63	61	57	50	44	31	62	54	35	24	48	48	53	38	52	42	52
A	58	69	63	65	54	76	77	66	73	64	65	63	55	52	72	64	53	48	61	63	57	57	72	59	63

1. Self Esteem 2. Importance in the Family. 3. Role in deciding the number of children. 4. Role in decision making in Family matters. 5. Role of employment in keeping up individually. 6. Role of employment in increasing self-dependence. 7. Role in increasing the family Income. 8. Role in securing the respect of Husband and In-laws.

• Role of Employment in Self Esteem

The overall index of 69 is highly favourable. The district-wise indices for East Singhbhum (72) and West Singhbhum (70) are also highly favourable. But Seraikella-Kharswan is near the highly favourable range with 65. Indices for different categories in all the three districts fall either in the highly favourable or moderately favourable range. The highest index is 85, for both the self employed in East Singhbhum and school teachers in West Singhbhum district. The lowest score of 33 is for workers in West Singhbhum district.

In a category-wise analysis, the self employed top the list with 85 in East Singhbhum 82 West Singhbhum and 78 in Seraikella-Kharswan. When women enter into a self employed Business, they have much hesitation and doubts. But once they get experienced in the field, they get transformed. They feel their self worth and competence. This is reflected in the high score secured by them.

• Importance in the Family

The overall index is 62, which is moderately favourable. The district-wise index is 69 for East Singhbhum district, which falls in the highly favourable range. The figures are 63 for West Singhbhum and 56 for Seraikella-Kharswan, which are moderately favourable. The highest score is 90 for the self employed in East Singhbhum district. The lowest score of 43 is for the college teachers in Seraikella-Kharswan district. That means, all the values fall either in the highly or moderately favourable range. This shows that in all the families of

employed women, they have got an important position.

Though there are variations in the indices between categories and districts, it can be concluded that employment increases the importance of a woman in the family. If she is the main earning member, her position will be the most important one. An unemployed woman is always dependent on others and this reduces her importance to some extent.

- Role in Deciding Number of Children

This is a very important area of decision making in the family. The decision has got a lot of consequences also. Since both the parents have the responsibility of bringing up the children, they decide it together in some families. In some other families, women just follow the decision taken by husband or in-laws. There are plenty of cases where women are forced to undergo sterilization, abortion etc., by other family members.

The cumulative score is 56, which is moderately favourable. The indices for the districts also fall in this range with values 55, 58 and 54. The highest score is 76 for the self-employed in Seraikella-Kharswan district and the lowest is 30 for nurses in East Singhbhum district.

The analysis shows that employed women have moderate freedom in deciding the number of children. But they do not have the exclusive power to decide it. Since the score is 54, it indicates that husband and wife have an almost equal decision-making power in this regard.

- Role in Decision Making

The power of decision-making is a real test of empowerment of a person. The extent of decision-making power exercised by employed women in their families is analysed below. The overall score is 63, which falls near the upper limit of moderately favourable range. The districts do not show much variation. East Singhbhum leads with 66, which has almost reached the highly favourable range. It is followed by Seraikella-Kharswan with 63 and West Singhbhum with 61. The highest score of 83 is in East Singhbhum district both for the workers and the self-employed. The lowest value of 47 is for the nurses in Seraikella-Kharswan district. Thus all the indices fall

either in the highly favourable or moderately favourable range.

A common phenomenon noted here is that the high degree of decision making power of the self employed women is reflected by the very high satisfaction indices of 83, 67 and 82. The fact that they have plunged into the business stream and are doing it successfully through a series of decision making, has increased the decision making power in the family also. Factory workers also exhibit a good degree of decision making power. Those in the public sector in East Singhbhum district have the highest score of 83 and others 63 and 65 each. This is a clear sign that in spite of the low wages, the earning power brings decision-making power.

Another important feature is that the lowest score in all the three districts alike, is for the nurses, their scores being 53, 55 and 47, though the values are in the moderately favourable range. The inclusion of unmarried nurses in the sample might also have contributed to this lower score.

An important point to note is that the workers, who had very low score regarding job satisfaction, exhibit a different pattern pertaining to family empowerment. In deciding the number of children as well as in other decision making powers in the family, they exercise a moderately high degree of power than those in the school, bank, hospital etc., Though they are earning only a small amount, in a poor family it is a great share of the family income and they derive more power than others who have high salary.

- Role in Keeping up Individuality

Bargaining on power relations, knowingly or unknowingly, is common in every family. One of the family members may-emerge as more powerful and the activities in the family even those of the other persons in the family, may start revolving round that person who has emerged more powerful. Others are relegated to the background. In a traditional family, husband is considered as the head of the family and the majority of the powers are reserved with him, whether he earns or not. In modern families, there is sharing of power between husband and wife to some extent. The important agency, which disturbs the power

reservation system in the traditional family, is the earning power of woman.

The fact that this element has the highest score in the group, speaks for itself. The overall index of 70 falls in the highly favourable range. East Singhbhum and West Singhbhum districts have highly favourable indices of 76 and 70 and Seraikella-Kharswan is below that range with 64. The highest category-wise score is for the school teachers in West Singhbhum and self employed in Seraikella-Kharswan with 83 each. A large number of category-wise indices fall in the highly favourable range with very high values making clear the role of employment in keeping up the individuality of women.

- Role in Increasing Self Dependence

Dependence is said to be the villain who makes women powerless. When husband is the sole earning member of the family, she has to depend upon him, even to meet her very personal and petty expenses. This gives him an opportunity to remind her of her dependence on him and his authority over her. Many unemployed women are suffering without a penny with them and many have to degrade themselves to the level of requesting from their relatives for their personal needs. This great handicap of women is solved forever, once they start to earn.

This is the third element in this group which has crossed over the highly favourable range with 68. East Singhbhum leads with 70, followed closely by West Singhbhum with 69 and by Seraikella-Kharswan with 64. Category-wise maximum score is 85, for the self-employed in West Singhbhum district. The lowest score of 53 is also in Seraikella-Kharswan district, for the school teachers.

An unusual point to note here is that the nurses who used to get low indices for other elements have got a good score in all the three districts; 67, 65 and 62 for this very decisive element. Though there are many negative points associated with the profession of nursing, they are aware of the fact that it has contributed to a great extent in making them self-dependent.

- Role in Increasing the Family Income

Woman's earnings are always considered as subsidiary income and man is considered as the breadwinner. The traditional concept is that, if husband is having a substantially high income, there is no need for a woman to work. The decision as to whether a woman should participate in the labour force itself is decided by the proportion of augmentation in the income she can bring to the family. The decision of sending a woman to work depends on an opportunity cost consideration. What she will be getting is extra compared to the benefit the family would have received, had she been at home looking after the children and caring for the husband and in-laws, is the main concern. A woman is allowed to work only if her income results in a considerable increase in the family income. The overall index for this element is 63, which falls near the upper limit of the moderately favourable index. The score of the districts are also similar i.e., 64, 65 and 60.

The highest category-wise index is 80 for the workers in East Singhbhum district. The factory workers in the public sector earn a good salary which constitutes a big share of their family income. The lowest index is for school teachers in East Singhbhum district, which are 42. Teachers in private unaided schools earn lesser salary than the aided school teachers. But their index is low since their husbands are earning a comparatively higher income and their share in the total income is small and not because they earn lesser than the workers with an index of 80. Another point to note is that, though the self-employed in all the three districts have indices greater than the gross index, it is not as high as usual. This is because many of the self-employed are earning very less, compared to other categories, especially those in the initial stage of their production.

- Role in Securing Respect of Husband and In-laws

The overall index is 52, which is in the moderately favourable range. But among all the elements studied under *Empowerment in Family*, this is the one with the lowest index. It is index of 42 in Seraikella-Kharswan district, which pulled down the general index to 52, though East Singhbhum having 60 and West Singhbhum 54. This is the element having the lowest index for both West Singhbhum and Seraikella-Kharswan. In East Singhbhum it is the second lowest. This is a strange phenomenon. The reason may be

either positive or negative. Positive reason may be that even if not employed, women get due respect from husband's family members. The negative possible reason may be that, even if women are well employed and can earn a good income for the family, it has nothing to do with securing the respect of husband's family. They are indifferent to it, to some extent, in some families. Both reasons might have played in the background. In many cases, in-laws resent women going for a job, due to the inconveniences it causes to them like child care, in spite of the extra income they bring to the family. In some traditional families, they may have to enter into a real fight with the husband and in-laws in order to go out for a job, even if they are highly qualified. Some women are compelled even to resign their jobs after marriage.

Highest category-wise score is for workers in East Singhbhum district, having 77, who bring a proportionately high income to their families. For other workers and self-employed, the low index can be considered as an after-effect of low income earned. But it looks strange that the highly qualified and high salaried college teachers in Seraikella-Kharswan district have an index even lower than the poor factory workers and they have the lowest category-wise index in the whole table, which are 24.

II. CONCLUSION

After going through all the indices on the above elements, it is clear that employment contributes a great degree of empowerment to women in the family, since many of the indices fall either in the highly favourable range or near the upper limit of the moderately favourable range. A district-wise analysis shows that East Singhbhum district has a very bright picture for women regarding empowerment in family, by 5 indices out of 8 coming in the highly favourable range.

In Seraikella-Kharswan district, all indices are in the moderately favourable range, varying from 65 to 54 and the lowest one is 42. It is surprising that college teachers in this district have got a very low index for all the elements compared to other districts and other categories. The self-employed, have got good scores with 5 values in the highly favourable range varying from 83 to 75. West Singhbhum district has 3 indices

in the highly favourable range and 5 in the moderately favourable range, varying from 70 to 54.

A category-wise analysis shows that the Self-Employed in all the three districts have the highest empowerment in family. Factory-workers in East Singhbhum district have exemplary scores, with 7 indices in highly favourable range. The cumulative average index for empowerment in family is 63, which is near the highly favourable range. District-wise average indices are 66, 64 and 59. Thus the study reveals the immense potential of employment to enhance the empowerment of women in the family set up. Hence more opportunities should be provided to women for employment or self-employment.

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