

EDUCATIONAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN THENI DISTRICT OF TAMILNADU – A VIEW

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Abstract

Education is the prime avenue for empowering women. This process of empowering entails much more than awareness of alternatives, women's rights and the nature of the requirements. To analyse the association between the profile of the respondents and dimension of empowerment. The research design in the present study is descriptive in nature since it describes the phenomena of eradication of poverty through empowerment. Higher education motivated women to balance between domestic work and career work is the top ranked educational empowerment, reduction in infant mortality rate largely depends on higher education is the second top ranked educational empowerment. A need to establish separate educational, institutional and provision of self-employment shall be highly initiative for enhancement of women's educational output.

Keywords:

Age, Educational Qualifications, Caste, Religion, Employment, Status

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is the prime avenue for empowering women. This process of empowering entails much more than awareness of alternatives, women's rights and the nature of the requirements. It involves the breakdown of powerful sex stereotyping, which prevented women from demanding their rights from men in position of authority. For women, the process of empowerment entails breaking away from the cycle of learned and taught submission to discrimination, learned from one generation of women and passed on to the rest [1]. Thus, educational empowerment indicators stand as the right to learn, gender sensitization, legal understanding, health education, etc.

With more education, women have greater access to employment opportunities and increase the ability to secure their own economic resources. Legislation, which protected women from discrimination and promoted gender equality, also needed to be enacted by governments [2].

1.1 NEED FOR THE STUDY

India is a country characterized by diversity, contrasts and contradictions. According to Human Development Index (HDI) assigned by the United Nations Development Programme, India assumes extremely low position in terms of human development, though assumes a high position as an exporter of software in the world. Half of the population of India constitutes women. Indian women still have a low level of representation in the parliament of the Country and also assemblies in various states [3].

In traditional societies, women empowerment cannot happen overnight. It takes decades to produce constructive results. Gender barriers still continue particularly in rural areas though the saying goes on "women are equal to men". Due to the presence of socio-economic constraints in rural areas, the potential of women

has not been fully utilized and they have been further pushed back into the social hierarchy. Work life balancing technique and empowerment in taking household decisions could improve the working conditions of working group of women and reduce the stress. Hence, the present study made an attempt to study the eradication of poverty through women empowerment in Theni District [4].

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Empowerment of women has emerged as an important issue in our society. Empowering women is a life cycle process and therefore, policies must be framed at every stage to suit the particular needs of the women [7]. The contribution of women to the economic and social development could be possible only when women are empowered at every stage of life cycle. In the women empowerment process, the self-help group (SHG) acts only as a window for development of rural women folk by usage of micro finance and interaction [8]. The need of the day is to impart the knowledge of women by Higher education and training. Focus is to be given on empowering women and girls, because they are capable of bringing changes in the society [9].

Efforts have still to be taken by all in making strategic approach to the empowerment of women. Though the women in rural areas are capable of hard working and motivated, they are not aware of the different development programmes and schemes announced by the Government and private organizations [10]. Empowering women must be a united approach which involves attention of all stakeholders. The rural women entrepreneurs are finding it difficult in marketing their products because of poor educational background [11].

Though the women are having basic knowledge and understanding, they are not able to enter into business contracts, avail of loan facilities and incentive schemes, taxation procedures etc. due to lack of education and training. In order to address the above issues, an effort has been taken by the researcher to study the eradication of poverty through women empowerment in Theni District.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the present study are:

- To exhibit the profile of the respondents in Theni district.
- To identify the dimension of empowerments among the respondents.
- To analyse the association between the profile of the respondents and dimension of empowerment.
- To offer suggestions for enhancing the eradication of poverty through women empowerment based on the findings of the study.

1.4 PERIOD OF THE STUDY

The period of the study ranges from June 2020 to June 2021.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is a scientific and systematic way to solve research problems. The research methodology deals with research methods and taken into consideration the logic behind the methods. In total, the research methodology of the study includes research design, sampling framework, data collection, framework of analysis and limitations.

2.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design is the conceptual structure within which the research is conducted. It is a blue print for the collection, management and analysis of the data. The research design in the present study is descriptive in nature since it describes the phenomena of eradication of poverty through empowerment in Theni District. Apart from this, the present study has its own objectives and pre-determined methodology. It is purely descriptive in nature.

2.2 SOURCES OF DATA

The present study is completely based on the primary data. The secondary data collected from the books, journals, magazines and websites were used to form the theoretical framework of the study and the review of literature. The primary data was collected personally with the help of structured questionnaire.

2.3 CHI SQUARE TEST

In order to examine the relation between the degree of consultation and profile variables, the Chi-Square test of the following formula was applied:

$$\text{Chi Square} = \sum \frac{(O - E)^2}{E} \sim X^2(n-1) \text{ degrees of freedom.}$$

where, O = Observed Frequency, E = Expected Frequency, r = Number of Rows, c = Number of Columns.

Chi-Square test has been administered to test the association between the level of various dimensions of women empowerment with respect to demographic profile of the respondents.

3. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The present study is subjected with the following limitations:

- The present study is confined to Theni District only.
- The answers given by the respondents towards eradication of poverty through women empowerment may be affected by the personal value judgment.
- The aspects of eradication of poverty through women empowerment have been measured with the help of the variables drawn from previous studies.
- All the descriptive variables are measured by Likert five points scale.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

Dhavamoni [5] studied empowerment of rural women through SHGs. The study had revealed that the women members were giving their first preference to spend their money in education of their children and to start a business by taking loan from their groups. Then they liked to prefer to spend their money in maintain household expenditure. They repaid their loan in time. After joining SHG their income and saving had been increased.

Murugupandian and Selavarani [12] had examined on impact of Self-help Groups on empowerment of women. The study was conducted in Naappatinam district of Tamil Nadu. The researcher had made an attempt to obtain the changes in the savings and borrowing pattern of the beneficiaries and to analyse the changes in the annual income of the beneficiaries after getting benefited by the Self-help Groups program. It was also tried to analyse the improvement of the standard of living the beneficiaries of Self-help Groups. The study had revealed that after joining the Self-help Group the women participation level in the decision-making process increased within their family. They were aware of the various central governmental programmes but the level of awareness was less. The study showed that the women respondents received economic benefits of savings and credit facilities, access to credit for production and marketing and use of credit for undertaking income generating activities.

Irshad et al. [6] found to develop the nation it is necessary to fortify and empower the women folk. This can be done through various ways i.e., by taking the benefit of various schemes that are meant for women both by the state and center. One of the essential services for the upliftment of women is no doubt Self Help Groups (SHG's) as we have mentioned in this article. Through the progress made by Self Help Groups (SHG's) is slow but it is worth praising. The women join these groups voluntarily to serve and make them run according to the time. The knowledge but the Self-Help Groups (SHG's) is not so much disseminated as we see that there are only few such groups present in the Jammu & Kashmir. Hence programmes should be organized to make the women aware of about these groups. These groups have indeed developed the morale and confidence of every woman that is a part of these groups. These groups have helped to solve the community issues and in raising their economic standard.

4.1 OPINION IN EDUCATIONAL EMPOWERMENT SCALE

Educational Empowerment Scale consisted of 25 items, which is based on the respondents age, level of formal education, religious affiliation, marital status and major occupation. This was designed to elicit information on their level of educational empowerment. The major issues that were raised included the influence of education on their socioeconomic life, their desire for further training and their initiatives to enhance female education.

The Table.1 shows the Educational Empowerment status of the respondents with Mean, SD and Rank. Each of the positive items are assigned a score ranging from five (strongly agree) to one (strongly disagree) as per the scoring pattern.

Table.1. Opinion in Educational Empowerment Scale

Opinion	Mean	SD	Rank
Higher education women and their balance between domestic work and career work	4.5	0.87	1
Reduction in infant mortality rate and on Higher education	4.44	1.18	2
Higher education and environmental awareness and protection among women	4.39	0.85	3
Higher education can reduce infant mortality rate among women	4.36	1.05	4
Standardized schools and Higher educated women	4.31	0.76	5
Educated women and self-confidence and social approval in development programs in community	4.27	0.81	6
Higher education married woman and their role in family welfare activities	4.26	0.93	7
Higher education and female infanticide	4.24	0.77	8
Higher education women and reservation in professional and technical education	4.23	1.1	9
Higher educated women and multidimensional role at home and society	4.21	0.88	10
Higher education women and exploration of in the medical advancements	4.11	0.83	11
Women beyond Higher Education	4.1	0.95	12
Higher education women and postponing their age for marriage and gap between two children	4.09	1.17	13
Higher education and cause for women’s upliftment in our society	4.04	0.91	14
Employment opportunities and higher educated women both at national and international level	4	1.01	15
Higher educated women and good environment at home and nation	3.94	1.19	16
Higher education woman’s contribution to health and beauty	3.97	0.96	17
Higher education and marital conflicts	3.91	0.95	18
Higher educated women and human rights violations	3.9	1.26	19
Higher education women and the suppressive traditional customs at home and society	3.9	0.98	20
Research and development activities and higher educated women	3.84	1.05	21
Higher education and women’s participation about society	3.78	1.09	22
Higher educated women invested for education	3.76	0.93	23
Housewives with higher education and home management	3.67	1.26	24
Women entrepreneurs are higher educated women	3.56	1.46	25

Source: Primary Data

The Table.1 shows that higher education motivated women to balance between domestic work and career work is the top ranked educational empowerment variable with the mean value of 4.50, reduction in infant mortality rate largely depends on higher education is the second top ranked educational empowerment variable with mean value of 4.44, higher education brings environmental awareness and protection among women is the third ranked variable with the mean value of 4.39, higher education can reduce infant mortality rate among women is the fourth ranked variable with mean value of 4.36. Only standardized schools could bring more higher educated women and educated women portray greater self-confidence and social approval in development programs in community are the fifth and sixth ranked variables with the mean of 4.31 and 4.27 respectively, higher education induces married woman to adopt family welfare activities and higher education reduce female infanticide are the next ranked educational empowerment variables with mean of 4.26 and 4.24 respectively. Higher education helps women about reservation in professional and technical education and higher educated women play multidimensional role at home and society is the ninth and tenth rank variable with the mean of 4.23 and 4.21 respectively. Higher educated women could earn more what they invested for education (3.76) and housewives with higher

education are better in-home management than those without education (3.67) and top-level women entrepreneurs are higher educated women (3.56) are the last ranked educational empowerment variables.

4.2 LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL EMPOWERMENT AND AGE OF THE RESPONDENTS

This analysis was carried out to know whether there is any association between the level of Educational Empowerment and age of the respondents. From this analysis, it is seen that there is a significant association between age and educational empowerment. That is on the whole as age increases the level of empowerment also increases.

Table.2. Level of Educational Empowerments and Age of the respondents

Age	Educational Empowerment			Total	Chi Square Value	p value
	Low	Medium	High			
20-29	88 (25)	154 (43.75)	110 (31.25)	352	64.05	0.000*

30-39	35 (23.81)	81 (55.10)	31 (21.09)	147		
>40	42 (32.06)	39 (29.77)	50 (38.17)	131		
Total	165	274	191	630		

*Significant at 1% level

The Table.2 shows association between the overall level of educational empowerments and age of the respondents. The p value is less than 0.01; hence it is concluded that there is an association between the different levels of educational empowerments and the age of the respondents.

4.3 LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL EMPOWERMENTS AND EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION OF THE RESPONDENTS

This analysis was carried out to know whether there is any association or not between the level of educational empowerment and educational qualification of the respondents. The empowerment scores are classified into the low, medium and high, according to educational qualification of the respondents and are presented below:

Table.3. Level of Educational Empowerment and Educational Qualification of the respondents

Qualification	Educational Empowerment			Total	Total	p value
	Low	Medium	High			
Arts and Science (UG)	63 (28.51)	104 (47.06)	54 (24.43)	221	37.864	0.000*
Arts and Science (PG)	21 (20.19)	56 (53.85)	27 (25.96)	104		
Professional (UG)	41 (26.28)	56 (35.9)	59 (37.82)	156		
Professional (PG)	13 (17.81)	22 (30.14)	38 (52.05)	73		
Diploma	19 (37.25)	22 (43.14)	10 (19.61)	51		
Others	8 (32)	14 (56)	3 (12)	25		
Total	165	274	191	630		

*Significant at 1% level

The Table.3 shows that p value is less 0.01, hence it is concluded that there is an association between the different levels of educational empowerment and the educational qualification of the respondents.

4.4 LEVEL OF EDUCATION EMPOWERMENT AND CASTE OF THE RESPONDENTS

This analysis was carried out to know whether there is any difference between the level of educational empowerment and caste of the respondents. The table below shows the classification of respondents by caste and the level of educational empowerment. Chi-square test was carried out and the result showed a significant difference between the broad categories of

caste, viz. BC, MBC and SC/ST. The result was statistically significant at 1% level.

Table.4. Level of Education Empowerment and Caste of the Respondents

Caste	Educational Empowerment			Total	Chi Square Value	p value
	Low	Medium	High			
BC	88 (28.39)	91 (29.35)	131 (42.26)	310	61.33	0.000*
MBC	54 (21.77)	143 (57.66)	51 (20.56)	248		
SC/ST	23 (31.94)	40 (55.56)	9 (12.50)	72		
Total	165	274	191	630		

*Significant at 1% level

The Table.4 shows the distribution of respondents by the level of education empowerment and the caste of the respondents. The p value is less than 0.01 and hence it is concluded that there is a significant difference between the level of educational empowerment and caste of the respondents.

4.5 LEVEL OF EDUCATION EMPOWERMENT AND RELIGION OF THE RESPONDENTS

This analysis was carried out to know whether there is any difference between the level of education empowerment and religion of the respondents. The table below shows the classification of respondents by religion and level of educational empowerment. Chi-square test was carried out and the result showed a significant difference between the broad categories of religion, viz. Hindu, Christian, Muslim and others. The result was statistically significant at 1% level.

Table.5. Level of Education Empowerment and Religion of the Respondents

Religion	Education Empowerment			Total	Chi Square Value	p value
	Low	Medium	High			
Hindu	99 (28.95)	123 (35.96)	120 (35.09)	342	30.791	0.000*
Christian	36 (19.46)	110 (59.46)	39 (21.08)	185		
Muslim	28 (30.43)	34 (36.96)	30 (32.61)	92		
Others	2 (18.18)	7 (63.64)	2 (18.18)	11		
Total	165	274	191	630		

*Significant at 1% level

The Table.5 shows the distribution of respondents by level of education empowerment and religion of the respondents. The p value is less than 0.01, hence it is concluded that there is a significant difference between the level of educational empowerments and religion of the respondents.

4.6 LEVEL OF EDUCATION EMPOWERMENT AND EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF THE RESPONDENTS

This analysis was carried out to know whether there is any significant difference between different groups of employment and the empowerment status of the respondents. Data on this aspect is given in the following table.

Table.6. Level of Education Empowerment and Employment Status of the Respondents

Employment status	Education Empowerment			Total	Chi square value	p value
	Low	Medium	High			
Government employed	33 (28.45)	64 (55.17)	19 (16.38)	116	74.63	0.00*
Private employed	60 (52.63)	36 (31.58)	18 (15.79)	114		
Self employed	35 (21.34)	65 (39.63)	64 (39.02)	164		
Unemployed	37 (15.68)	109 (46.19)	90 (38.14)	236		
Total	165	274	191	630		

*Significant at 1% level

The Table.6 shows a significant difference between different categories of employment and the level of empowerment as given by the chi-square test. The p value is less than 0.01, hence it is concluded that there is a significant difference between the level of educational empowerments and employment status of the respondents.

4.7 LEVEL OF EDUCATION EMPOWERMENT VERSES MARITAL STATUS OF THE RESPONDENTS

Classification of the respondents by marital status and the level empowerment is given in the table below.

Table.7. Level of Education Empowerment Verses Marital Status of the Respondents

Marital status	Education Empowerment			Total	Chi Square Value	p value
	Low	Medium	High			
Married	56 (19.58)	146 (51.05)	84 (29.37)	286	21.444	0.002*
Unmarried	74 (28.57)	101 (39)	84 (32.43)	259		
Widow	24 (42.86)	18 (32.14)	14 (25)	56		
Divorce/ Separated	11 (37.93)	9 (31.03)	9 (31.03)	29		
Total	165	274	191	630		

*Significant at 1% level

The Table.7 shows the distribution of the respondents by level of educational empowerment and the marital status of the

respondents. Chi-square test was carried out and the difference between groups is significant in terms of education empowerment. It is concluded that married and unmarried are more empowered than other groups.

4.8 LEVEL OF EDUCATION EMPOWERMENT AND AGE AT THE TIME OF MARRIAGE OF THE RESPONDENTS

This analysis was carried out to know whether there is any difference between the level of educational empowerments and the age at the time of marriage of the respondents. Data on this classification is given below.

Table.8. Level of Education Empowerment and Age at the time of Marriage of the Respondents

Age at the time of marriage	Education Empowerment			Total	Chi square value	p value
	Low	Medium	High			
15-19	4 (23.53)	9 (52.94)	4 (23.53)	17	19.601	0.003*
20-24	52 (19.26)	138 (51.11)	80 (29.63)	270		
25-29	24 (43.64)	17 (30.91)	14 (25.45)	55		
30-34	11 (37.93)	9 (31.03)	9 (31.03)	29		
Total	91	173	107	371		

*Significant at 1% level

From the Table.8, it is clear that there is a significant difference between the groups classified on the basis of age at marriage and the level of education empowerment.

4.9 LEVEL OF EDUCATION EMPOWERMENT AND GAP BETWEEN CHILDREN OF THE RESPONDENTS

This analysis was carried out to know if there is any significant difference between the different level of educational empowerment and the gap between children of the respondents. Data on this classification is presented in the following table.

Table.9. Level of Education Empowerment and Gap between Children of the Respondents

Gap between children (in years)	Education Empowerment			Total	Chi Square Value	p value
	Low	Medium	High			
1-2	14 (31.82)	17 (38.64)	13 (29.55)	44	18.724	0.001*
3	52 (19.19)	139 (51.29)	80 (29.52)	271		
>3	25 (44.64)	17 (30.36)	14 (25)	56		
Total	91	173	107	371		

*Significant at 1% level

From the Table.9 it is found that women with 3 years gap between successive children are found to be more empowered educationally than others. Chi-square test was carried out and it showed a significant difference between the gap between children and the level of empowerment. It is therefore concluded that gap between children plays an important role in empowering women educationally.

4.10 LEVEL OF EDUCATION EMPOWERMENT AND FAMILY TYPE OF THE RESPONDENTS

This analysis was carried out to find out if there is any difference between the level of educational empowerments and the family type of the respondents. The classification of respondents by family type and level of educational empowerment is given below.

Table.10. Level of Education Empowerment and Family type of the Respondents

Family type	Educational Empowerment			Total	Chi Square Value	p value
	Low	Medium	High			
Nuclear	80 (23.39)	164 (47.95)	98 (28.65)	342	6.343	0.042*
Joint	85 (29.51)	110 (38.19)	93 (32.29)	288		
Total	165	274	191	630		

*Significant at 1% level

The Table.10 shows the classification of respondents by the family type and the empowerment. The Chi-square test analysis showed a significant difference between family type with regard to educational empowerment. It is concluded that 48 percent of nuclear family members are more educationally empowered than the other groups.

4.11 LEVEL OF EDUCATION EMPOWERMENT AND MONTHLY INCOME OF THE RESPONDENTS

The level of educational empowerment of women are classified according to the monthly income of the respondents. The data on this analysis is given in the Table.11.

Table.11. Level of education empowerment and monthly income

Monthly Income	Educational Empowerment			Total	Chi Square Value	p value
	Low	Medium	High			
Low	76 (22.75)	137 (41.02)	121 (36.23)	334	55.046	0.000*
Medium	76 (31.4)	113 (46.69)	53 (21.9)	242		
High	13 (24.07)	24 (44.44)	17 (31.48)	54		
Total	165	274	191	630		

*Significant at 1% level

The Table.11 shows the classification of respondents by the level of educational empowerments and the monthly income of the respondents. The p value is less than 0.01. It shows that the null hypothesis is rejected; hence it is concluded that there is an association between different level of educational empowerment and monthly income of the respondents. That on the whole asserts as the income increases, the level of empowerment also increases

5. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Higher education motivated women to balance between domestic work and career work is the top ranked educational empowerment variable with the mean value of 4.50, reduction in infant mortality rate largely depends on higher education is the second top ranked educational empowerment variable with mean value of 4.44, higher education brings environmental awareness and protection among women is the third ranked variable with the mean value of 4.39, higher education can reduce infant mortality rate among women is the fourth ranked variable with mean value of 4.36. Only standardized schools could bring more higher educated women and educated women portray greater self-confidence and social approval in development programs in community are the fifth and sixth ranked variables with the mean of 4.31 and 4.27 respectively, higher education induces married woman to adopt family welfare activities and higher education reduce female infanticide are the next ranked educational empowerment variables with mean of 4.26 and 4.24 respectively. Higher education helps women about reservation in professional and technical education and higher educated women play multidimensional role at home and society is the ninth and tenth rank variable with the mean of 4.23 and 4.21 respectively. Higher educated women could earn more what they invested for education (3.76) and housewives with higher education are better in-home management than those without education (3.67) and top-level women entrepreneurs are higher educated women (3.56) are the last ranked educational empowerment variables. There are association between different level of educational empowerments and age, educational qualifications, caste, religion, employment, status, marital status, age at the time of the marriage, gap between the children, family type and monthly income of the respondents.

6. SUGGESTIONS

The role of government is pivotal and it shall take other organizations, responsible person of the community and the common people confidence to introduce gender balanced policies and initiate programs to provide equal opportunities to women in education. Besides, a need to establish separate educational, institutional and provision of self-employment shall be highly initiative for enhancement of women's educational output.

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