



Effect of Education on Legal Empowerment among Women in Murshidabad District of West Bengal, India

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Abstract:

Women have historically been subjected to various forms of oppression at various societal and familial levels. To put a stop to this tyranny, women must be empowered. Women will remain repressed as long as they lack agency. Thus, we must distribute knowledge among them to expand their power. All of their life's gloom will only be eliminated by education. The only way to empower women is through an appropriate educational system. Legal empowerment of women grants them greater control over their intellectual and material resources, thereby enhancing their financial and household decision-making autonomy through enhancing legal awareness.

Keywords: *Education, Legal Awareness, Expansion of Power, Greater Control, Empowerment.*

Introduction:

Understanding of empowerment is a multifaceted process that includes political, social, cultural, economic, and legal empowerment—allows people to take charge of their lives. We can understand women's empowerment as a process that grants them greater control over their intellectual and material resources, thereby enhancing their financial and household decision-making autonomy (Maity, & Sanuar, 2020). One of the top priorities of the UN Millennium Development Goals is women's empowerment. The concept of empowerment changes over space and time, and it is imperative to consider the interplay between multiple predictor variables that collectively impact the women's empowerment process in a given research region (Biswas, Santanu, 2015).

Significance of the Study:

Women's empowerment gives confidence to every woman in the community. Their self-assurance can help individuals succeed in a variety of societal occupations. It is necessary to increase legal awareness of this among all women in the community. It is necessary to inform them about their capabilities. The majority of women believe they are weak. They are intellectually and physically frail. However, they must be aware of the power wielded by women. Their triumph will come from their confidence. Through women's

empowerment, all of their flaws will be eliminated, and women will rule every aspect of state life, from the household to society.

Brief Review of Literature:

Wiggins (2012) clarified women's standing in his study by utilizing survey data at the home level. This study aims to examine the factors that influence women's empowerment and the existence of gender-related limitations in rural Indian households. The data includes households from Tamil Nadu in the south and Uttar Pradesh in the north, two states with quite contrasting demographic development. Women's empowerment encompasses decision-making within the family, voice, and mobility. According to **Sudaram et al. (2014)**, education is the primary means by which we may instruct people. Education will improve our society's structure and lead to equality. In rural places, education can support women's development. **Huis et al. (2017)** provided a testimonial of the previous era in which women were granted equal standing in society. However, things changed and they encountered numerous issues during the Vedic and Epic eras. They occasionally suffered from being treated like slaves, which made their situation worse. Many things altered starting in the early 20th century as a result of the women's empowerment movement. These days, they are regaining equality, though not everywhere. **Hilbert (2011)** examined women's use and access to digital information and communication technology (ICT) in developing nations, although the results of this study are still preliminary. While some suggest that women enthusiastically embrace digital communication, others assert that women are fairly technophobic and that males are much better consumers of digital tools. This article tests this hypothesis empirically. Data sets from 13 African and 12 Latin American nations were examined here between 2005 and 2008. This is thought to be the largest empirical study on this topic to date. The findings are strikingly consistent and illuminating: certain women's adverse circumstances concerning work, education, and income are the primary cause of their access to and utilization of ICT. Women are found to be more frequent users of digital technologies than men when these factors are taken into account.

Objectives:

1. To find out the difference in attitude between APL & BPL households towards the impact of education on legal empowerment of women;
2. To find out the difference in attitude between male and female towards the impact of education on legal empowerment of women;
3. To find out the interrelationship between education and legal empowerment of women.

Hypothesis:

H_1 : No significant difference in attitude exists between APL & BPL households towards the impact of education on legal empowerment of women;

H_2 : No significant difference in attitude exists between male and female towards the impact of education on legal empowerment of women;

H_3 : No significant interrelationship exists between education and legal empowerment of women.

Variables of the Study:

Dependent Variable: Women Empowerment

Independent Variable: Education

The present study also included several Socio-economic and demographic variables like this:

1. Economic status (APL and BPL)
2. Gender (Male and Female)

Data Source & Methodology:

The primary data has been collected from 610 households in 2023-24 from Murshidabad district in West Bengal. A self made structured questionnaire has been used for collection of data. Students’-t test and Product Moment Correlation have been used for analysis of data.

Analysis & Discussion:

Analysis Pertaining to Hypothesis ⁰H₁: No significant difference in attitude exists between APL & BPL households towards the impact of education on legal empowerment of women;

Table -1: Comparing Mean, SD, t-value, and SED value about the level of Legal empowerment according to Economic Status

Variables	APL		BPL		t-value	df	SED	Critical Value	Decision
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD					
Legal Empowerment	102.48	3.27	90.46	2.60	46.23	608	0.26	2.58	Null hypothesis rejected, significant difference exists (P < .01)

Source: Calculation based on Field Survey, 2023-24

Table 1 indicates that APL type households had higher mean scores for legal empowerment than BPL type households. (i.e., 90.46 and 102.48). The critical threshold is not met by the t-value, which is 46.23. Thus, the alternative hypothesis is accepted and the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that there is a substantial attitude gap between APL and BPL households about the contribution of education to women’s legal empowerment.

Analysis Pertaining to Hypothesis ⁰H₂: No significant difference in attitude exists between male and female towards the impact of education on legal empowerment of women;

Table -2: Comparing Mean, SD, t-value, and SED value about the level of Legal empowerment according to Gender

Variables	Male		Female		t-value	df	SED	Critical Value	Decision
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD					
Legal Empowerment	100.76	3.72	86.36	2.64	55.38	608	0.26	2.58	Null hypothesis rejected, Significant diff. exists (P < .01)

Source: Calculation based on Field Survey, 2023-24

From table 2, it is depicted that the mean scores of legal empowerment of male and female are different (i.e., 100.76 and 86.36). The t-value is 55.38 which is higher than the critical value. So, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. That means that significant difference in attitude exists between males and females towards the Impact of education on the legal empowerment of women.

Box-1: Education: A Turn of Event of Rahima for Legal Empowerment

Education is a prerequisite for achieving legal empowerment. I’ll talk about a personal experience I had while conducting a field survey here. Rahima is a resident of West Bengal’s Murshidabad district and comes from a low-income, marginalized household. Even though her family is not wealthy, she is driven to pursue a legal education at the graduate level. She joined a self-help group in order to support her family’s financial requirements. She therefore successfully completed her Bachelor of Laws (LLB) and Master of Laws (LLM) degrees from Burdwan University. Rahima was now an advocate in a municipal court. She was granted complete legal empowerment, including the ability to enforce the law, mobilize the community, advocate for legal rights, and support others in raising legal awareness. This incident is a real-life illustration of how education enabled Rahima to achieve legal empowerment.

Analysis Pertaining to Hypothesis ⁰H₃: No significant interrelationship exists between education and legal empowerment of women;

Table -5: Particulars Explaining the Interrelationship between education and Legal empowerment

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r-value	t _r -value	Decision
Education	610	7.24	5.03	0.80	32.86	Null hypothesis rejected, Significant diff. exists (P < .01)
Legal Empowerment	610	92.18	24.80			

Source: Calculation based on Field Survey, 2023-24

Table 3 indicates that the computed TR value is 32.86, being significant at 0.01 level. Thus, the alternative hypothesis is accepted and the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that there is a strong correlation between education and women’s legal empowerment.

Conclusion:

Empowerment is a primary issue when discussing human rights and development. Women’s empowerment encompasses a range of abilities, including decision-making, choice-making, assertiveness, and the capacity to influence others’ perceptions through interaction, education, and engagement. It also involves overcoming stigma, developing a positive self-image, and improving one’s capacity for discrete thought to distinguish between right and wrong. The United Nations Millennium Campaign states that women perform two-thirds of all labor hours worldwide, including planting crops, cooking, raising children, taking care of the elderly, and cleaning houses, among other tasks. Despite this, women often endure poor status and receive no compensation. Backwardness even prevents women from getting jobs through schooling. While it may not have a significant impact, a child’s sexual behavior significantly affects the family.

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Citation: Anjoon. Dr. A., (2025) “Effect of Education on Legal Empowerment among Women in Murshidabad District of West Bengal, India”, *Bharati International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Development (BIJMRD)*, Vol-3, Issue-02, February-2025.