

Education: A Pivotal Tool For Liberation And Empowerment Of Rural Women In Kashmir

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How to cite this article: Akeel Naveed Raja, Ganesh Digal (2024). Education: A Pivotal Tool For Liberation And Empowerment Of Rural Women In Kashmir. *Library Progress International*, 44(3), 10327-10335.

Abstract

Education proves to be the influential factor in the enhancement of women empowerment particularly in the rural setup. The education raises the standards of women who are being considered a marginalized class and face several discriminations in the society. The education enhances social and economic conditions in raising social status for women. the women become more aware about their rights, opportunities, health and facilities which they can avail, with the acquisition of education. the education makes women able to challenge the odds and restrictions which hurdle in their upliftment and social status. The study has found the pivotal impact of education in development and welfare of women, their life conditions and wellbeing in the rural areas of Kashmir.

Keywords: Women, Education, Rights, Empowerment, Health, Rural, Unpaid labor, social status.

Introduction

In the contemporary word overall development and growth is aimed in rendering of almost every Nation policy. The development can be achieved and understood as positive growth if all the section of society are benefited and the welfare of marginalized groups is enhanced with equal opportunities for all in the mode of social equality. The social issues faced by women have been observed and researched in several researches and theories have been concluded in several feminist perspectives advocating women as dominated and discriminated in many aspects of life. The women face social issues and are far behind in finding opportunities in different sectors which make them marginalized in our society. Women are needed to be empowered so as to provide them the resources for their social development, economic stability, and political opportunities which can enable them to control and advance their life. Empowerment is a process which is active and multidimensional enabling women to understand their identity and their power in all spheres of life (Sushma Sahay, 1998). Empowerment is the process by which one gains control over life of oneself and others (Aspy & Sandhu, 1999). Education is a powerful tool for raising the standard of the life of women and overall empowerment for women. It has been recognized that without the concept of education the achievement of development seems meaningless. Education is important for all as it is the basic requirement for every individual and also the fundamental right of every citizen. Education as the human capital enhances not only the development of women for themselves but in the larger context contributes the development of society. T Paul Shultz has elaborated in his study (investment in women's human capital, 1995) Human capital of women as contributing to economic development. It has been found that investment in education of women gives higher return at individual level for women and larger society more than education of men (Paul Schultz, 1995). Education provides women with different benefits for their welfare. The social status, economic independence and political opportunities, and other basic needs are fulfilled with education. In rural areas the availability of resources and structure is far behind the urban areas in India. The availability of fewer resources

becomes a push factor for women dominance and increases further discrimination. Education is the powerful tool which liberates women by increasing their sources in rural social environment.

Social Status and Rights of Women: The status of women is in question in several contexts as women are deprived of their rights. The question of rights of women is as old as the human race and is now the world question. Women are regarded inferior by men in all the ages, and their rights are robbed by the men, with which women were endowed by God, in common with every human being (Langley & Fox, 1994). Education literate's women about their rights and freedom in the society. Education for women is important to register their status in the society and to acquire the knowledge of their rights to be entertained with equal opportunities in all aspects of life. The powerlessness of women occurs due to their illiteracy (Iqbal, 1995). The ability to take decision in the family and ownership of assets and property are important factors in empowering women which is linked with education. The legal rights and provisions provided by the governments can be understood better by those who are able to read and know the different rights, understand the different provisions, reservations and are accessible to several development spheres. The achievement of empowerment of women where they are disadvantaged can be achieved by increasing the awareness of rights for them so that they can achieve control over their social environment (Musokotwane and Siwale, 2001, Hashemi et al., 1996). In rural areas the women have fewer services and opportunities as compared to urban areas and more cases of women domination and discrimination are found in several reports and researches inquiring women issues and empowerment. The status of women in rural areas has not been hidden as more practice of patriarchy is present and prevalent particularly in rural India.

Education and unpaid work: In rural areas due to the nature of economy the domestic work which is voluntary can be found more in practice than the urban areas. The Work which is the daily routine of women is voluntary and is usually done only by women and not by men do not mostly participate in domestic or voluntary work but are preferred by family for education which results in paid jobs. Women are engaged with voluntary work due to the constraints placed on them by their families and children (Blau, 1976). There is more participation of women in domestic voluntary associations than men who participate in job related associations (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, 1982 and Booth, 1972). The women are traditionally given the responsibility of family care and domestic work which is always unpaid and further discriminates women as they are being dominated and deprived of their rights, opportunities and freedom of life. Education liberates women from this limitation as with education more scope of paid jobs and school enrollment is possible. The women with education can develop themselves and gain a dominant position in the society different from the unrecognized work done in the domestic routines like cooking, washing and child care etc. In several studies of women social status in India it has been found that male child is preferred more than female child and women are considered as a burden. The women who are participating in voluntary work do not contribute in the family by means of paid work. The women particularly in rural areas spend more time in family care and due to this their pursuance of education remain effected and they are not able to raise their standards of life.

Socio-Economic aspects linked with Education: Women face social and cultural discrimination as the majority of women in India live in rural areas (Vecchio and Roy, 1998). The patriarchic social attitude hampers women work segregation by making it gender specific (Dreze and Sen, 2002, Tisdell, 2002). The traditions and patriarchy are more prevalent and dominant in rural areas. The inequality and cultural constraints can be challenged with education. Women education is pivotal for the status of women in the society. Education in India is sex and class discriminatory (Vecchio and Roy, 1998). The women remain dominated and discriminated as they are dependent on the male members of the family who earn for the family with paid work which requires education qualifications, techniques and exposure linked with education. Women who are not given education have to take the responsibility of domestic chores and child care which discriminates their status in the family and society. The cultural attitude in rural population subordinates' women and lowers their status than men in the society. Cultural attitudes are difficult to change (Vecchio and Roy, 1998). The women have to come out of the barriers and education is the powerful tool to reduce gender inequality. The women with education can register their status to change the cultural attitude by participating in dominant social positions which is difficult for the illiterate women. The women with lack of education participate in voluntary domestic work are dependent on the male members of the family for their needs. The women who are educated are more concerned about their life and more capable of raising their voice against the discrimination and inequality. The educated women who are working in formal and informal sectors are more able to fulfill their needs. Educated women are more possibly independent than the illiterate ones particularly in rural areas.

Health and Wellness: The management of health requires knowledge and resources. In rural areas women have few health facilities as found in different studies and welfare initiatives aiming rural development. The women who are discriminated and dominated with their status show negative health results. Highly educated women are less likely to report negative emotions which include the symptoms of depression, hostility and anxiety (Adler et al; 1994, Gallo and Mathews, 2003). The women who lack education remain isolated due to the lack of social networks which could have been increased and provided with education in the form of school and colleges and also the interactions in work places for job-oriented women. The more educated ones are found having more social networks which provides financial, physical and emotional support and may in turn have a causal effect on health (Berkman, 1995). The education not only gives knowledge to the rural women about the health management but with the link of jobs and business can raise the standard of the life of women by making them economically independent. The health of women in a situation where they are dominated and discriminated remains at risk. The education can provide better health with the reduction of disabilities. The rates of disability in US were found as fallen, but were found more fallen among the educated ones (Schoeni et al, 2005). The development of positive health attitudes is possible with education and the rural women who remain isolated and with less health facilities can be provided sources with education.

Theoretical framework and Review of literature

It is well known that education is a major factor in women's empowerment since it gives them the tools, they need to question gender inequality, rise up the socioeconomic ladder, and make more decisions. Examining the literature on the effect of education on women's empowerment, this study concentrates on theoretical frameworks, empirical data, and policy implications. Amartya Sen's Capability Approach highlights education as a critical element of women's capabilities, empowering them to increase their options, chances, and liberties (Sen, 1999). This approach is further supported by research by Kabeer (1999), which emphasises the contribution of education to the improvement of women's agency, resources, and accomplishments. According to Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, education gives women access to experiences, knowledge, and information that can challenge and change their views and it has been considered that education increases self-confidence and self-esteem among women which enhances their power of decision making. According to G Becker (1964) the humans make investments in themselves and describes it as human capital which includes education which provides economic returns, personal benefits and societal productivity.

Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study is to find the impact of education in the empowerment of rural women. The study is aimed to find the various aspects in which education plays an interviewing role in raising the standards of the life of rural women, a study done in rural Kashmir.

Research Methodology

The research methodology is the determined approach to find the fact with procedures, techniques and analysis. The research work has commenced on field to collect the data which is analyzed to reach on conclusion. The sample has been taken from 400 women visiting the health centers. The convenient sampling method has been used and 4 health centers are selected purposively. The details of the centers (Ayushman Arogya Mandir AAM) under the aegis of National Health Mission are: AAM Noonmai and AAM Kadder in district Kulgam and AAM Batengoo and AAM T Tachlo in district Anantnag in south Kashmir of Jammu and Kashmir India.

The details of the respondents are as:

Age group of 30 – 50

Marital status: Married

Stages of education level:

Highest level of school joined	No. of women (N= 400)	No. of women in two groups
Primary	55	200
Middle	78	
High school	67	
Higher secondary school	97	200
College	67	
University	36	

Table T 1

The respondents have been categorized in two groups as shown in table T1. Group A consists of the respondents having high school has highest qualification stage and also with less than that stage. Group B consists of the respondents who have received education more than the stage of High school. Both groups consist of 200 respondents.

The primary data has been collected from field and secondary data from journals, books and research papers. Structured interview schedule has been used as the tool for the collection of data on field. The quantitative data has been analyzed by using SPSS.

Analysis and Results

The women face discrimination in our society and the process of discrimination starts from the family where the children get gender-based socialization. The sons are been preferred on daughters due to the different social situations and reasons. The education which is the fundamental right of every citizen beyond the gender constructs is preferred for the sons more than daughters.

Family prefers education more for	Respondents	Percentage
Sons	67	55.83
Daughters	6	5.00
Both	47	39.16

Table T 2

As per the responds self-reported by the women participating in research, the family prefers sons to get educated than others. Only 5 percent of the respondents reported that daughters are preferred over others in the family to get educated. More than half of the sample shows sons being the first preference for education by the family. The lack of support for education for girl Childs leads to poor education for them which is decisive for social status of women and their overall development. The women who are educated are more aware about their rights. They are able to raise their voices against discrimination and are more able to register their equal place in the family and society.

Group A (N = 200)			Group B (N = 200)		
Participate in major family decisions	Frequency	Percentage	Participate in major family decisions	Frequency	Percentage
Never	69	34.5	Never	19	9.5
Sometimes	85	42.5	Sometimes	87	43.5
Always	46	23	Always	94	47

Table T 3

Education is an important tool for raising the standards and development of life for women. The data given in table T 3 shows that status of women in the family rises with the education level. It has been found that the majority of women from group A (Less educated) responded that they have never or only few times participated in the major family decisions and the respondents from group B (Highly educated) responded in better participation of family decisions as compared to the below higher secondary level literates. The family decision making process raises the standard in the society and has been found more related to the educated women and their literacy rate is showing the better results for them. The education and future plans for children has also been found the authority of male members and in case of women the more educated ones reported as taking decisions in matters of education and future plans for the children.

Group A (N = 200)			Group B (N = 200)		
Mothers take decisions regarding future and education of children	Frequency	Percentage	Mothers take decisions regarding future and education of children	Frequency	Percentage
Never	59	29.5	Never	8	4
Sometimes	86	43	Sometimes	100	50
Always	55	27.5	Always	92	46

Table T 4

The data given in the table T 4 has made it clear that the women belonging to group A are less authoritative in children education and future planning in the family and the higher educated women categorized in group B take more decisions about the child lives which specify their status in the family decision making in several forms. This shows the social position of the women enhanced with education.

Group A (N = 200)			Group B (N = 200)		
Decision making status in child marriage	Respondents	Percentage	Decision making in child marriage	Respondents	Percentage
No Say	27	13.5	No Say	13	6.5
Partial authority	98	49	Partial authority	45	22.5
Complete authority	75	37.5	Complete authority	142	71

Table T 5

The family asset ownership is an important feature of women authority in the family and also determines their status in the family and society. The assets are in several forms related to women and their ownership and authority has a genuine base. The respondents were asked about the ownership of assets in the household and different responds were received.

Group A (N = 200)			Group B (N = 200)		
Assets ownerships	Respondents	Percentage	Assets ownerships	Respondents	Percentage
Complete	14	7	Complete	29	14.5
Partial	80	40	Partial	107	53.5
Nothing	106	53	Nothing	64	32

Table T 6

The data in table T 6 has shown that the assets ownership has also an impact of education for the respondents who have given information about the status of their asset's ownership in the family. The respondents asked about the asset's ownership have given different responds which show that group A respondents have less control over the assets in the family.

As per the data it has been revealed that education is an important component in providing and developing the status in the family. The social status for women is linked with socio-economic factors which are directly and indirectly associated with education. The social class gets redefined with education and well-educated women have more social control and means of life.

Group A (N = 200)			Group B (N = 200)		
Household income control	Frequency	Percentage	Household income control	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	16	8	Yes	61	30.5
No	184	92	No	139	69.5

Table T 7

The data in the table T 7 shows that most of the household income is not controlled by women. However, the data has again differentiated with some higher educated women reporting control over the household income. The reasons behind this empowerment are education providing better opportunities of jobs and other paid works with more benefits in the form of monetary gains which gives women control over income and provides them assistance for them and their family. This makes the earning women able to meet their monetary needs also. The data has been also collected to find the fact of meeting the monetary needs which the paid workers are being found meeting better monetary needs.

Group A (N = 200)			Group B (N = 200)		
Source of Money	Frequency	Percentage	Source of Money	Frequency	Percentage
Govt./Private sector jobs	14	7	Govt./Private sector	29	14.5

			jobs		
Craft or other skilled paid work	41	20.5	Craft or other skilled paid work	73	36.5
Husband/father/others	145	72.5	Husband/father/others	98	49

Table T 8

As per the responds analyzed by categorizing the respondents in two categories the data has shown the difference in sources of money women with different categories. The women categorized in group B (Higher educated) are more able to be self dependent and are having monetary benefits to take care of them better as compared to those women who are categorized in group A (Less educated). The educated women have more chances of getting jobs which make them able to manage their needs as they are paid for their work. The women who are educated have better abilities to be entrepreneurs and are not as dominated as compared to the illiterate women who are unpaid in their domestic work. This is evident with the data that women who are educated can manage their needs with paid work more than the illiterate women who are not secure with economic assistance and are usually assigned the domestic work which always remain unpaid and further discriminate the women.

Group A (N = 200)			Group B (N = 200)		
Daily Responsibility of household chores done	Frequency	Percentage	Daily Responsibility of household chores done	Frequency	Percentage
Always	118	59		79	39.5
Mostly	72	36		92	46
Rarely	8	4		27	13.5
Never	2	1		2	1

Table T 9

The domestic chores are done the women of the family and their status and position are linked with their work. The women likely remain busy in domestic chores which is not paid and this lack of economic assistance makes them dependent on the other members of the family. The data in the table T9 clearly shows that women who are above the level of high school in qualification are not always responsible for household work as compared to those who are less than high school literates.

It has been found that women in category of higher grades of qualification (Group B) are with better life conditions and are in the process of liberation from the social barriers which are faced by them in these rural setups. The women face several social discriminations and dominations and also face violence in several situations. There are several constitutional preservation and laws framed for the preservation of women rights by the central and state governments which are understood by educated women who are more aware about these provisions and law.

Group A (N = 200)			Group B (N = 200)		
Experienced domestic violence	Frequency	Percentage	Experienced domestic violence	Frequency	Percentage
Regular times	13	6.5	Regular times	1	0.5
Several times	60	30	Several times	12	6
Few times	94	47	Few times	45	22.5
Never	33	16.5	Never	142	71

Table T 10

The data in the table T 10 shows that group A women face more domestic violence than the group B women. the violence and discrimination are less faced by the group B which is categorized as of the higher educated ones. The difference is again clear with education.

Those women categorized in group A have poor knowledge of various provisions and protection for them provided by the government at centre and state levels. The women who are categorized as group B are more aware about the women rights as per the data tabulated in table T 11. Education provides awareness about women rights and empowers women with the sources of knowledge and ability to defend the violence. The women need to be able in managing their health and requirements in which education plays an

important role. The data has shown that menstrual health management abilities are better in those respondents who are literate more than high school as compared to the less than those ones.

Group A (N = 200)			Group B (N = 200)		
Knowledge about women rights	Frequency	Percentage	Knowledge about women rights	Frequency	Percentage
Poor	37	61.66	Poor	19	31.66
Average	18	30	Average	26	43.33
Good	8	13.33	Good	15	25.00

Table T 11

It has been self reported by the respondents about their knowledge about women rights and the table T11 presents the picture in which group A is showing poor and average knowledge about women rights and in comparison, the group B is better in knowledge of women rights.

Group A (N = 200)			Group B (N = 200)		
Participate in political processes	Frequency	Percentage	Participate in political processes	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	84	42		164	82
No	116	58		36	18

Table T 12

The table T shows that group B is more participant in different political processes. With this it has been found that education is again a great factor in making better civil citizens and developing women rights.

Group A (N = 200)			Group B (N = 200)		
Benefitted from any social welfare scheme	Frequency	Percentage	Benefitted from any social welfare scheme	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	21	10.5	Yes	110	55
No	179	89.5	No	90	45

Table T 13

The table T13 shows that the 55% respondents consisting group B have reported that they have been benefitted from various social welfare schemes and only 10.5% among the group A respondents have been benefitted from the various schemes. This shows the difference of accessibility which is provided better with education.

The social relationships play an important part in mental health and women who face social issues and domination in the society are in need of social and emotional support which is important for the mental health of women. The respondents who are engaged in different educational institutes or those who are engaged in jobs have a larger circle with whom they communicate and are supported emotionally by making a larger social bond for them. This provides better health for women who are been provided a larger social environment by education.

Group A (N = 200)			Group B (N = 200)		
Spend quality time with friends out of family	Frequency	Percentage	Spend quality time with friends outside family	Frequency	Percentage
Mostly	35	17.5		64	32
Sometimes	64	32		94	47
Never	101	50.5		42	21

Table T 14

The data in the table T14 as recorded from the respondents reports it has been found that the group B having high level of education are more socially connected and spend quality time more than the group A. this has a great influence on health outcomes as per the previous studies which found impact of social relations on health. The education can be seen as an important factor in developing social relationships.

Group A (N = 200)			Group B (N = 200)		
Frequent in health checkups	Frequency	Percentage	Frequent in health checkups	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	41	20.5	Yes	127	63.5
No	159	79.5	No	73	36.5

Table T 15

It has been self reported by the 63.5% of the group B respondents that they are frequent in health checkups while only 20.5% among the group A are frequent in health checkups. The higher literate ones show better concern about the health.

Group A (N = 200)			Group B (N = 200)		
Awareness about disease transmission	Frequency	Percentage	Awareness about disease transmission	Frequency	Percentage
Good	21	10.5	Good	69	34.5
Average	87	43.5	Average	94	47
Poor	92	46	Poor	37	18.5

Table T 16

The data collected from the self reporting of the respondents in the table T 16 shows that the group A with less qualification has less awareness about disease transmission. The group B has self reported better awareness about the disease's transmission than the group A. the women with education can be more aware about their own health and also of the community health.

Group A (N = 200)			Group B (N = 200)		
Awareness about Government Health benefit facilities	Frequency	Percentage	Awareness about Government Health schemes	Frequency	Percentage
Good	25	12.5	Good	64	32
Average	107	53.5	Average	122	61
Poor	68	34	Poor	14	7

Table T 17

In the table T 17 it can be found as per the data, the awareness about the various facilities which are provided by the government regarding the health has been better reported by the group B. the group A has been found less aware about the beneficial schemes for the enhancement of health. the accessibility to healthcare systems and availing benefits is influenced with education.

Conclusion:

The enhancement of status of the women is boosted with education in particularly the rural areas. The empowerment of rural women in Kashmir is also linked with education. The women who are educated are in better standards of life as compared to the illiterate ones and with the level of education the standard of life of women is showing difference in results. The preference of sons education has still prevalent in the society. The social status is raised with education. the women better in education levels participate more in major family decisions. The decision-making process is important for the recognition of social status. The education is enhancing economic conditions. The ownership of assets and control over income is found better among the qualified ones. the education provides more opportunities of income. The attitude towards the laws and provisions and the knowledge of different beneficial ways of life development are accessible for the educated women. The better perception of health and managing abilities has been found in educated rural women in Kashmir.

Suggestions

The education of girl child needs to be more focused so as to raise the standards of those rural women who are still facing the domination and discrimination. More awareness of the importance of education needs to be imparted in generations to fill the gaps of gender divide. The government laws and provisions along with political

participation is needed to be implemented in proper ways so that the women are liberated from the suppression, discrimination and domination.

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