

Empowerment of Rural Women through Income Generating Activities (Social Participation)

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Abstract - The study was conducted to determine the extent of empowerment dimension namely social participation through income generating activities and also to explore relationship between the selected characteristics of the women and their empowerment. All the women of farm household included except the absentee members of the study area. Data were collected from 10 July to 20 August 2013. The extent of empowerment achieved by rural women through income generating activities of decision-making ability was 27.62 percent low, 39.05 percent medium and 33.33 percent high respectively. The coefficient of correlation showed that out of 10 selected characteristics of the rural women, only four viz. education, training exposure, and communication exposure had positive significant relationships with the decision making ability. On the other hand, only age had negative significant relationship for decision making ability. In the study area there were 13 income generating activities found and according to rank order vegetable production was found first, fruit as 2nd, and poultry as 3rd. Majority of the activities were agriculture related. Handicrafts and tailoring were found out of agricultural activities. In the study area 10.48 percent low, 19.05 percent medium and 8.57 percent of the rural women had higher problem faced in income generating activities.

Keywords - Women, Empowerment, Social Participation, Income Generating Activities.

I. INTRODUCTION

The women make up half of the world population, their participation in various activities is not the same as men's even today. Without the participation of women in the development process, society as a whole cannot be said to develop sufficiently. Women constitute about half of the humanity. The total population of Bangladesh is 152.51 million, women constitute 75.13 million (BBS, 2012). Women perform two-thirds of the work and produce fifty percent of food commodities consumed by the country. They earn one third of remuneration and own ten percent of

the property or wealth of the country. Rural women are still neglected and have little opportunity to make decision, to engage in IGAs, to participate in social and political activities.

But national development is not possible without integrating them into the mainstream of the development process because 49.26 percent of the total populations are women and majority of them are living in rural areas (BBS, 2012). The structures of power (i.e. who has it, what its sources are, and how it is exercised) directly affect the choices that women are able to make in their lives (Mayoux,

2001). Majority (51.7%) women were of the impression that lacks of land rights deprive them from obtaining equal status in society. Half of the women were not clear about the importance of social-political mobility of rural women. Further, 45.8 per cent women expressed that rural women were not having equal access to different sources of information as men and along with men; women also should be contacted regarding the development activities of village (39.2%) Saradha (2001). Training of rural women was important so as to increase their involvement in development process, enhance their skill and make them equal partners in national development. The major objectives of training for rural women should be to equip them with better skills and enhance their knowledge so as to prepare them to face new challenges due to technological developments (Agarwal 2000).

Most rural women's lives remained bounded on their traditional roles and they had limited access to markets, productive services, education, health care, and local government. At the household level, the girl child often has

unequal access to nutrition, health care and education compare to boy child which arises many discriminatory practices out of some deep-rooted socio-cultural factors. Women still earn less than men earn and are mostly occupied in low paid jobs. They often do not have easy access to credit and other income generating activities and are still under represented at management and policy levels. In view of the above situation the present study was undertaken to have an understanding of the nature and extent of the empowerment of rural women through involvement in income generating activities and subsequently with the expectation of helping the researchers, extension personnel, policy makers and women to establish empowerment of rural women exposure throughout the country. However, the following specific objectives were set forth in order to i) to determine and describe the extent of the empowerment of rural women through involvement in income generating activities; ii) to determine and describe some selective characteristics of the women; and iii) to explore relationship between women empowerment and selected characteristics of women.



Fig. 1. The map of the study area (Modified from [https://www.google.com.bd/search?q=patuakhali district map](https://www.google.com.bd/search?q=patuakhali+district+map))

II. METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted at Sadar upazila of Patuakhali district where scope of women empowerment as the study was concerned with the women empowerment. All the farm household women except the absentees of Sadar upazila constituted the population of the study. Data were collected from a sample rather than the whole population. Multi stage random sampling technique was used for the selection of sample. Sadar upazila is consisted of 12 unions out of which Laukathi was selected randomly at the first stage. Laukathi union consists of 8 villages, out of which 5 villages viz. Laukathi, Dheukhali, Jamura, Golbunia, and Daritaluk were listed. In the third stage, 10 percent of the villages were randomly selected. Then total women members of the household were listed with the help of Sub-Assistant Agricultural Officers, local union parishad personnel, and local leaders of concerned villages. There were a total of 1050 such farm household women which constituted the sampling population for this study. At the final stage, 10 percent of the farm household women of each village was randomly selected as sample by using a Table of Random Numbers. Thus, the sample size stood at 105. Independent variables of the study were measured following standard techniques such as age was measured in years, education was measured in schooling years, family size is actual number of the family members, income generating experience was measured in years, household annual income was measured in taka. Empowerment of rural women through income generating activities was the dependent

variable of this piece of research. Empowerment status was measured by the dimension namely social participation. These were measured by 4-point Likert type scale with responses namely high, medium, low and no and weights for each of this response were 3, 2, 1 and 0 respectively. social participation score of a respondent could range from 0 to 15. For clear understanding of empowerment of rural women, Social Participation Index were developed to arrange the activities in rank order by using the following formula from Huda (2012):

$$SPI = (SP_h \times 3) + (SP_m \times 2) + (SP_l \times 1) + (SP_n \times 0)$$

Where,

SPI = Social Participation Index

SP_h = Number of women high participation

SP_m = Number of women moderate participation

SP_l = Number of women low participation

SP_n = Number of women indicating not at all participation for a statement.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Empowerment of Rural Women through Income Generating Activities

Social Participation Index (SPI) was computed with the aspects, having better understanding regarding women's participation in the social activities reflecting empowerment. The computed SPI ranged from 33 to 198 which were arranged in rank order according to SPI as shown Table 1.

Table 1 - Empowerment of rural women through income generating activities on five items of social participation with percent distribution, index and rank order

Activities of social participation	Extent of social mobility				SMI	Rank order
	High	Medium	Low	Not at all		
Participation in social function such as marriage, birthday, chehram, puja etc	12	74	14	5	198	1
Social fair	12	17	41	35	111	2
Arbitration in family quarrel of neighbours and relatives	13	15	40	37	109	3
Participation in social committee	11	12	43	39	100	4
Participaion in village meeting and shalish	2	6	15	82	33	5

Table2 - Distribution of the rural women according to their social participation

	Rural women		Mean	Standard deviation
	Number	Percent		
Social Participation				
Low Social participation(4-6)	89	84.76		
Medium social participation(7-9)	14	13.33		
High social participation(10-13)	2	1.90	6.30	1.56
Total	105	100		

Rural women participation in social functions such as marriage, birthday, chehnam, puja, eid, social fair was quite satisfactory and arbitration in family quarrel of neighbors and relatives was less satisfactory and participation in social committee and meeting and shalish was quite unsatisfactory. It was observed that 59.05 percent of the women had low, 36.19 percent of them had medium and the 4.76 percent of the women had higher social mobility. It was found that visit to house of relatives/ neighbors/friends was satisfactory, visit to nearby NGO office, visit to own upazila HQ was lower. Education had positive correlation with the social mobility of empowerment. The more educational level, the more they were empowered. If any programme is implemented to empower the women, the programme must take attention on educational aspect of women because it is the key factor of empowerment. This situation is very conducive for the rural women to organize themselves for performing income generating activities and improve the earning side of the rural women and also improve the present situation.

B. Selected characteristics of the rural women

The highest proportion 42.9 percent of rural women in the study area were the young aged. About 54.3 percent of them having primary level of education and 37.1 percent had secondary education, very lower amount had above secondary level of education. About 45.7 percent of them had medium family size. Majority of the women had lower

income and majority had higher credit received from different organizations. About 76.2 percent of the women had training exposure with varying duration while the rest 23.8 percent had no training exposure and majority (83.8 percent) of the respondents had low to medium communication exposure. Most of the women had medium (49.5 percent) to high (40 percent) fatalism (Table 3). Most of the women showed medium attitude (56.19 percent) and rest of the favorable attitude.

C. Relationship between the selected characteristics of the rural women and their empowerment

Out of ten possible correlations education, training exposure and communication exposure had positive and age had negative significant relationship in social mobility of rural women. Education develops insight within an individual and renders her modern outlook. Educated individuals have better insight in many matters and transforms their mentality towards desirable directions. Educated rural women can foresee the future problems that may come by while undertaking selected income generating activities. Training generally increases knowledge, skills of individual and that is an important factor, which enhance demand of rural women involving in various income generating activities. Communication exposure was found in lower level. The poor exposure to various sources of information is likely to be the root cause of involving in income generating activities.

Table 3 Characteristic Profile Of The Women

Characteristics (Measuring units)	Range		Respondents			Mean	SD
	Poss- ble	Obs- ved	Categories	No	Percent		
Age (Year)	Unkno wn	19-75	Young(up to 35 years) Middle age(36-50) Old age(Above 50)	45 42 18	42.9 40 17.1	40.49	11.5 1
Education (Year of Schooling)	Unkno wn	0-15	Illiterate can sign only(0-.5) Primary Secondary Above secondary	7 57 39 2	6.7 54.3 37.1 1.90	5.76	3.26
Family size (No. of Member)	Unkno wn	2-11	Small(2-4) Medium(5-7) Large(8-11)	43 48 14	41 45.7 13.3	5.35	2.08
Annual income (taka)	Unkno wn	62-301.0	Low(upto80) Medium(above 80-180) High(above)180	71 24 10	67.6 22.9 9.5	81.23	58.2 4
Credit received (taka)	Unkno wn	1600- 24000	No credit(0) Low(1600-5000) Medium(5001-10000) High(above 10000)	36 29 30 10	34.3 27.6 28.6 9.5	3007. 15	40.8 7
Savings (Taka)	Unkno wn	1200- 22000	No savings(0) Low (upto Tk 7000) Medium(7000-14000) High(above 14000)	33 30 23 19	31.4 28.6 21.9 18.1	4125. 5	4500 .65
Training exposure	Unkno wn	0-10	No(0) Short(1-3) Medium(4-6) Long(above 6)	25 44 27 9	23.8 41.9 25.7 8.6	3.68	2.75
Communication exposure	Unkno wn	11-52	Low(11-24) Medium(25-38) High(above 38)	46 42 17	43.8 40.0 16.2	17.8	12.8
Fatalism	Unkno wn	18-36	Low(18-24) Medium(25-30) High(31-36)	11 42 52	10.5 40.0 49.5	28.22	3.84
Income generating activities	Unkno wn	23-33	Unfavorable(23-26) Moderate(27-29) Favorable(30-33)	20 59 26	19.05 56.19 24.76	28.31	1.97

Table 4 - Relationship between the selected characteristics of the rural women and their empowerment

Empowerment	Womens' characteristics	Coefficient of correlation (r)
	Age	-.281**
	Education	.451**
	Family size	.032ns
	Annual income.169ns	

Empowerment	Credit received.053ns
	Savings .099ns
	Training exposure .587**
	Communication exposure .463**
	Fatalism.065ns
	Attitude towards income generating activities.238**

ns = not significant, * = significant at 0.05 level ** = significant at 0.01 level

Different development programs related income generating activities such as vegetable, fruit cultivation, poultry rearing and gender specific shifting policy could change the situation of rural women in Bangladesh. If rural women are exposed to effective income generating activities which helps them become more innovative. Exposing them in different training related to income generating activities helps them to identify the best one to earn and identify their problems in earning and the formulation of gender specific Better communication and pragmatic programs are needed to accelerate the process of empowerment of rural women and that makes them aware about which is essential for her or not.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

This study concluded that education correlated to women empowerment meaning that, a person having higher education level is likely to have higher empowerment. Education can bring desirable changes in human behavior which ultimately helps in her empowerment.

Income generating experiences correlated to empowerment which means a person having higher income generating experiences will have higher empowerment and vice versa. A person who used to have skill with income generating through which s/he can earn money and can changes his/her empowerment status.

Communication exposure was found to have significant relationship with empowerment which indicates that a person with high communication exposure is able to changes his/her empowerment.

Training exposure showed significant relationship with different social mobility activities, so it can be concluded that different organizations can be taken steps for their empowerment.

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