

Transforming Household Economies: Empowering Rural Women and Shaping the Dynamics of Traditional Economic Activities

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Abstract: Empowering rural women in traditional economic roles is vital for sustainable development. They play a crucial role in farming and handicrafts but face challenges in resources, education, and decision-making. Empowerment includes training, credit access, and modern technologies. In India, rural women contribute significantly to the financial system through their vital roles. The research aimed to analyze factors influencing women's productivity in traditional economic activities, impacting their contributions to home economics through earnings and savings. Primary data was collected, and participants divided into two groups: Northwest region (55% population increase) with five villages (Jatkore, Begumpur, Kanjhawla, Jaunti, Ladpur) and Northeast region (45%) with four villages (Bihari Pur, Pur Shahdara, Jeevanpur, Mandoli). Northwest villages Notably, from Group A and Northeast from Group B in Delhi were included in the study. We utilized a snowball sampling approach for this identification process. The data was gathered through implementation of direct conversations and focus groups (FGDs). According to study, men prefer to make the most important decisions at home due to firmly established hierarchical principles. Northeast and Northwest areas have benefited greatly from government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) funding development programs. All female participants understood the advantageous outcomes associated with achieving economic autonomy.

1 INTRODUCTION

In today's rapidly changing world, it is more important to encourage rural women's economic independence. Many individuals live in rural areas, but they have less availability of resources, fewer opportunities for learning, and fewer work opportunities (Lambrecht and Tucker, 2019). Particular problems frequently contribute to economic disparities and prevent development in certain areas. However, empowering rural women is one effective approach (Akhter and Cheng, 2020). Women in rural areas perform crucial roles in their communities, resulting in activities like agriculture, livestock keeping, and managing small enterprises. It entails providing educational and training opportunities, allowing women to acquire essential skills in multiple fields, including agriculture and entrepreneurship (Li and Bates, 2019).

These acquired skills enable them to assume more significant roles in income-generating activities.

Equitable access to resources represents another critical facet. Rural women frequently lack access to land, credit, and technology, which are fundamental for economic pursuits (Rouamba, et al, 2021). Empowering them necessitates ensuring that they have equal access to these resources. Additionally, it is imperative to promote gender equality and facilitate women's engagement in decision-making processes at the community and household levels (Acosta, et al, 2020).

Encouraging communities to acknowledge the significance of women's contributions and challenging stereotypes can significantly contribute to fostering a supportive environment for their economic pursuits (Amusan, et al, 2021). This endeavor encompasses providing education and training, ensuring equal access to resources, and advocating for gender equality and participation in

decision-making (Reshi and Sudha, 2023). When rural women prosper economically, the entire community reaps the rewards.

This research aims to illustrate the empowerment of rural women within the many dynamics of traditional economic activity. The remainder of the paper's portions have been organized as follows. In Part 2, we investigated the related works similar to rural women empowerment. Part 3 explains the methodology, whereas Part 4 displays the analysis outcomes. Part 5 discusses the conclusions.

2 RELATED WORKS

(Yu and Cui, 2019) utilized a feminist political economics approach to examine the intersection of gender, entrepreneurship, and web-based commerce in small-town China. Women's financial independence did not automatically provide them with the same level of autonomy in other circles, such as culture and politics. (Banihani, et al, 2020) examined women entrepreneurs' obstacles in Jordan to identify strategies to enhance their empowerment. The study employed a qualitative research approach, specifically in-depth interviews, as the primary data collection method. The themes and categories were determined by utilizing NVIVO software to analyze the interview findings.

(Anderson, et al, 2021) considered ways to increase female empowerment in agriculture by investing in or reallocating resources to them. "Reducing the gender gap in input access and taking advantage of gender differences in risk, time, and social preferences" were the two hypotheses put up as approaches for enhancing productivity. (Kapoor, et al, 2019) employed interviews and focus groups to examine the potential impact of self-help organizations on economic growth and sustainable livelihood initiatives for low-income residents. It looked at the potential of (Self Help Groups) SHGs, a form of social innovation, to assist in eliminating poverty among women and girls by encouraging them to start their businesses.

(Andriamahery and Qamruzzaman, 2022) employed a combination of "structural equation modeling and a multivariate regression approach" to examine how each dependent variable influenced the dependent one. The results showed a favorable statistically significant correlation between women's company sustainability and female economic independence. (Ferrant and Thim, 2019) examined time management data and unpaid caregiver activities in "Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Peru, and South Africa"

while also establishing similarities with governments belonging to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Their recommendations were based on insights derived from the "Social Institutions and Gender Index and in-country research conducted by the OECD Policy Conversation on Women's Financial Empowerment."

(Qahtani, et al, 2020) explored opportunities in the "theoretical and practical realm of female empowerment in Saudi Arabia" by examining the impact of education and political participation on women's financial, social, and management participation. They discovered an advantageous connection between political and economic/managerial empowerment. (Ghasemi, et al, 2021) explored empowerment and eco-feminist recommendations to investigate how empowering rural women influenced the connection between social variables and environmental protection.

3 RESEARCH METHODS

In this study, we separated data into two groups: the Northern area, comprising five districts and 55% of the population growth, and the southwestern central, comprising four districts and 45%. During the second phase, a specific district and two rural areas from each district were chosen. This selection process included Northwest from Group A and Northeast from Group B. Women were actively engaged in many economic initiatives. This identification process was carried out using the snowball sampling approach.

3.1 Characteristics of the Participants

The data mentioned for this analysis was primary data and it consist of 390 women (or about 78 %) out of the entire group of 500 approached were willing to participate in interviews and focus groups to share their thoughts and opinions. Table 1 and Figure 1 provide each participant's characteristics.

Table 1: Characteristics of each individual.

| Areas | Sample Area | No. of Respondents (%) |
|-------------------------------|-------------|------------------------|
| Northwest (Group A) | Jatkhore | 175 (30.2) |
| Northeast (Group B) | Bihari Pur | 215 (37.1) |
| Initial individuals | | 390 (78) |
| Investigated count (Overall) | | 500 |

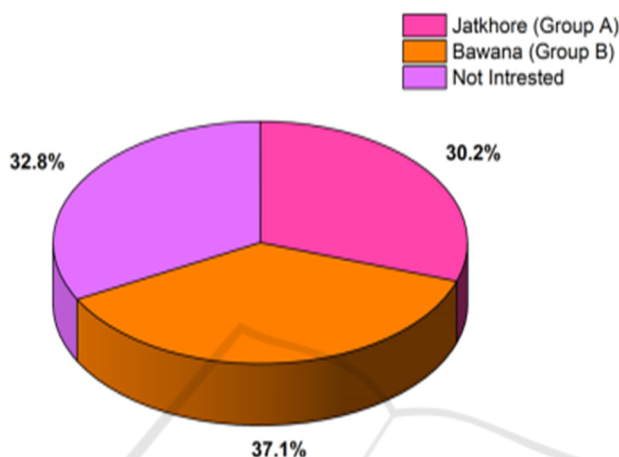


Figure 1: Characteristics of each individual.

One possible reason that has been proposed for the higher incidence of lack of education is that these women were part of a demographic in which the need of educating females was not usually recognized. All

participants acquired the ability to engage in the study of the Bible as an integral component of their religious instruction, as mentioned in Table 2.

Table 2: Participants' characteristics

| Contents | No of individuals (%) | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Group A | Group B | Total |
| Educational State | | | |
| Educated | 109 (62.28) | 102 (47.44) | 211 (54.10) |
| Uneducated | 66 (37.72) | 113 (52.56) | 179 (45.89) |
| Education | | | |
| Middle | 45 (25.71) | 60 (27.90) | 105 (26.92) |
| High | 68 (38.85) | 48 (22.32) | 116 (29.74) |
| Matric. | 15 (8.57) | 51 (23.72) | 66 (16.92) |
| Secondary | 47 (26.85) | 56 (26.04) | 103 (26.41) |

4 RESULTS

4.1 Financial State of Household

The study revealed that a significant proportion of households belonged to the poverty category,

characterized by small earnings. The primary factor contributing to the difficult economic condition discussed is the high number of joint family systems among the respondents, accounting for 54.08% of the sample mentioned in Table 3.

Table 3: Financial State of Household

| Contents | No of individuals (%) | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|------------|-------------|
| | Group A | Group B | Total |
| Primary Employment of Household | | | |
| Farming | 53 (30.28) | 37 (17.20) | 90 (23.07) |
| Gardening | 34 (19.42) | 59 (27.44) | 93 (23.84) |
| Animal farming | 15 (08.57) | 68 (31.62) | 83 (21.28) |
| Others | 68 (38.85) | 12 (05.58) | 80 (20.51) |
| Mixed | 5 (02.85) | 39 (18.13) | 44 (11.28) |
| Overall Income (Rs) | | | |
| Less than 8,000 | 59 (33.71) | 68 (31.62) | 127 (32.56) |
| 10,000–15,000 | 37 (21.14) | 45 (20.93) | 82 (21.02) |
| 15,000–20,000 | 59 (33.71) | 58 (26.97) | 117 (30) |
| More than 20,000 | 20 (11.42) | 44 (20.46) | 64 (16.41) |
| Overall Spending (Rs) | | | |
| Less than 8,000 | 60 (34.28) | 65 (30.23) | 125 (32.05) |
| 10,000–15,000 | 40 (22.85) | 48 (22.32) | 88 (22.56) |
| 15,000–20,000 | 51 (29.14) | 55 (25.58) | 106 (27.17) |
| More than 20,000 | 24 (13.71) | 47 (21.86) | 71 (18.20) |

4.2 Engagement in Traditional Economic Activities

Initially observed, the participants in our study engaged in various assigned tasks and important economic activities based on their skills they obtained training, and the accessibility of time and financial resources. Low household income and a large number

of dependents all contributed to the common scenario of women engaging in several economic activities to support their families. About 11.53% wished the kids had a greater opportunity to get a solid education. Tables 4 and 5 show 18.71 % accomplished to raise their families' access to healthcare or living standards, and 16.38% utilized their enterprises as their only source of earnings.

Table 4: Various types of traditional economic activities

| Contents | Group A | Group B | Total (%) |
|--------------------------------|---------|---------|------------|
| Farming and Gardening | 42 | 53 | 95 (24.41) |
| Farming animals and chicken | 19 | 40 | 59 (15.12) |
| Preserving and preparing meals | 37 | 37 | 74 (15.12) |
| Art products | 26 | 49 | 75 (19.05) |
| Others | 51 | 36 | 87 (22.30) |

Table 5: Financial state

| Contents | No of individuals (%) | | |
|--|-----------------------|------------|-------------|
| | Group A | Group B | Total |
| Desire for Beginning Economic Activities | | | |
| The primary source of finance | 37 (21.09) | 27 (12.54) | 64 (16.38) |
| Provide quality education to kids | 16 (09.23) | 29 (13.40) | 45 (11.53) |
| Quality of life and good health | 25 (14.28) | 48 (22.22) | 73 (18.71) |
| Individual earnings (Rs) | | | |
| Less than 8,000 | 60 (34.28) | 65 (30.23) | 125 (32.05) |
| 10,000–15,000 | 40 (22.85) | 48 (22.32) | 88 (22.56) |
| 15,000–20,000 | 51 (29.14) | 55 (25.58) | 106 (27.17) |
| More than 20,000 | 24 (13.71) | 47 (21.86) | 71 (18.20) |

The participants participated extensively in various skill-based initiatives to provide for their families. In addition to selling fresh goods in the market, women provided seedlings, desserts, eggs, and chicks to support their families. Most participants (22.56%) reported a monthly household income of 10,000 and 15,000 Rupees. 61.79% of women, however, said they save less than 8,000 each month. Total family income, dependence ratios, and poverty rates affected individual sources of income, savings, and expenditures. 23.84% of women reported a certain amount of satisfaction with men's views on women working, possibly if such jobs were carried out in the context of their own homes and contributed directly to satisfying fundamental necessities.

4.3 Impact of Traditional Economic Activities on Rural Women

Empowerment is crucial in several dimensions of individuals' lives, spanning the domains of self-worth, identity in themselves, and the capacity to reject subordination. The concept entails recognizing an individual's ability to utilize initiative and engage in discussions with those holding superior hierarchical positions. In general, the economic activities were found to positively impact lives, promoting self-reliance and improving their socio-economic welfare, as indicated by 69.28% of the participants mentioned in Table 6.

Table 6: Positive impacts of economic activity

| Contents | No of individuals (%) | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------|-------------|
| | Group A | Group B | Total |
| Independent Financial | 82 (46.93) | 73 (34.05) | 155 (80.98) |
| Relationship building | 60 (34.28) | 48 (22.22) | 108 (56.50) |
| Dependents' Schooling | 51 (29.33) | 54 (25.00) | 105 (54.33) |
| Quality of life | 77 (44.28) | 54 (25.00) | 131 (69.28) |
| Encouragement from the family's males | 58 (33.14) | 64 (29.62) | 122 (62.76) |

The majority of participants in the study was from traditional households and held generally negative opinions on women's ability to relocate independently and attain socio-economic autonomy.

Although beneficial impacts were observed, a significant number of the participants also reported negative results associated with economic activities. These negative effects encompassed physical strain, mental stress, and strained social connections. These negative outcomes were generally attributed to factors such as time constraints, financial demands, and societal expectations. Nearly half of those investigated mentioned both positive and negative effects of economic activities, with the first group citing negative effects on their physical health, the other half including negative effects on their mental health, and the subsequent providing negative effects on social ties and harmony.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The growth of economic activities among rural women is vital in order to facilitate the advancement of sustainable development. By facilitating access to educational opportunities, professional development, and financial resources, we may enhance their abilities and expertise in business. Many women in rural areas are actively engaged in both productive and reproductive roles within their families, contributing to both their personal well-being and the family's financial stability. To address this, a gender-sensitive approach is essential to assess women's empowerment in financial, political, and social spheres. This requires commitment from all members of society, with active participation from women themselves. To achieve greater gender equality in asset ownership and future prospects, social norms, legal structures, and regulations need significant changes.

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