

Empowerment of Rural Women through Income Generating Activities (Decision Making Ability)

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Abstract : *The study was conducted to determine the extent of empowerment dimension namely decision making ability of rural women 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 except the absentees of Sadar upazila of Patuakhali district, Bangladesh constituted the population of the study. Data were collected from a sample of 105 farm households selected out of a total of 1050 farm households from the 5 selected villages under the one selected union of the upazila through multi-stage random sampling technique with the help of pre-tested interview schedule during the period from 10 July to 20 August 2013. The extent of empowerment achieved by rural women through income generating activities for decision-making ability was 27.62 percent low, 39.05 percent medium and 33.33 percent high. 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 and only age showed 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 to rank first, fruit as 2nd, and poultry as 3rd. Majority of the activities were agriculture related. Only two i.e. handicrafts and tailoring were found out of agricultural activities. In the study area 10.48 percent had low, 19.05 percent had medium and 8.57 percent of the rural women had higher problem faced in income generating activities.*

Key Words: *Women, empowerment, decision making ability, income generating activities*

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. Among total Bangladesh population of 152.51 million, women constitute 75.13 million (BBS, 2012). Women constitute nearly fifty percent of population, 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.

Methodology

The study was conducted at Sadar upazila of Patuakhali district were scope of women empowerment as the study was concerned with the women empowerment of the women. 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 of his union were randomly selected. All the household women of these 5 villages 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 decision making ability. 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. Decision-making ability score of a respondent could range from 0 to 21, social participation and social mobility score of a respondent could range from 0 to 15. For clear understanding of empowerment of rural women, Decision-making Index, Social Participation Index and Social Mobility Index were developed to arrange the activities in rank order by using the following formula from Huda (2012) :

Decision-Making Ability Index (DMAI)

$$DMAI = (DMA_h \times 3) + (DMA_m \times 2) + (DMA_l \times 1) + (DMA_n \times 0)$$

Where,

DMAI = Decision-Making Ability Index

DMA_h = Number of respondents expressed high decision-making ability for a statement

DMA_m = Number of respondents expressed moderate decision-making ability for statement

DMA_l = Number of respondents expressed low decision-making ability for a statement

DMA_n = Number of respondents expressed not at all decision-making ability for a Statement

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Empowerment of Rural Women through Income Generating Activities

DMAI of decision-making ability ranged from 163 to 269 which are arranged in rank order according to DMAI. Out of 7, they had greater influence like casting vote as a personal preference, family planning, family healthcare and treatment,

education of children but in some cases they had less influence such as purchase, sell or mortgage of

land, marriage ceremony, decision on marriage of son and daughter (Table 1).

Table 1: Empowerment of rural women through income generating activities on seven items of decision-making ability with percent distribution, index and rank order

Activities of decision-making Ability	Extent of decision-making ability				DMAI	Rank order
	High	Medium	Low	Not at all		
Education of children	80	14	1	10	269	1
Family planning	48	48	2	7	242	2
Family healthcare and treatment	48	43	5	9	235	3
Casting vote as personal preference	45	33	17	10	218	4
Purchase, sell or mortgage of land	7	72	19	7	184	5
Marriage ceremony	27	39	12	27	171	6
Decision on marriage of son and daughter	16	51	13	25	163	7

Table2: Distribution of the rural women according to their decision-making ability

Decision-making ability	Rural women		Mean	Standard deviation
	Number	Percent		
Low Decision-making(8 to 12)	29	27.62		
Medium decision-making (13 to 16)	41	39.05		
High decision-making (17 to 21)	35	33.33		
Total	105	100	14.56	3.16

The rural women had medium decision-making ability almost all spheres of family decision. About 39.05 percent had medium decision-making ability, 33.33 percent had high 27.62 percent had lower decision-making ability (Table 2). In (Table 1) rural women had lower preference on decision on marriage of son and daughter, marriage ceremony, purchase, sell or mortgage of land. Education level of the women in the study area was relatively satisfactory because majority of the women in that area had education up to primary level but was not high. Education had positive correlation with the decision-making ability 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

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 24.7 percent had favorable attitude.

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 significant relationship and age had negative significant relationship in decision making ability of rural women. Education develops insight within

an individual and renders her modern outlook. Educated individuals have better insight in many matters and transform 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 of the rural women had 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
	Possible	Observed	Categories	No	Percent		
Age (Year)	Unknown	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	11.51
Education (Year of Schooling)	Unknown	0-15	Illiterate and can sign only(0-.5) Primary education(1-5) Secondary education(6-10) Above secondary	7 57 39 2	6.7 54.3 37.1 1.90	5.76	3.26
Family size (No. of Member)	Unknown	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)	Unknown	62-301.0	Low(upto80) Medium(above 80-180) High(above)180	71 24 10	67.6 22.9 9.5	81.23	58.24
Credit received (taka)	Unknown	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	40.87
Savings (taka)	Unknown	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	Unknown	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	Unknown	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	Unknown	18-36	Low(18-24) Medium(25-30) High(31-36)	11 42 52	10.5 40.0 49.5	28.22	3.84
Attitude towards income generating activities	Unknown	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

Dependent variable (Empowerment)	Independent variables (Womens' characteristics)	Coefficient of correlation (r)
	Age	-.281**
	Education	.451**

Empowerment	Family size	.032ns
	Annual income	.169ns
	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.

Conclusions

Findings of the study may be concluded that education was found significantly 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 was found significantly 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. If a person can increase his/her communication exposure and involve himself/herself with different organizations s/he will be able to changes his/her empowerment status.

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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