



A survey on women's education and their economic condition in Odisha.

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Abstract

Education has been considered as panacea for all sorts of social issues. This paper intends to study the education status and economic condition of women in the district of Khordha, Odisha. With the help of a survey instrument, data were collected from 446 respondents of rural and urban areas of Khordha district. Trained data collectors were appointed to collect data and the sampling method was multi stage purposive sampling method. Descriptive statistics of the collected data reveals that education level of the women have been increased substantially both in urban and rural areas, most of the respondents have good housing condition and access to clean drinking water, they have their own house. However, the employment status of women has not increased. The most important reason for school drop- out has been poverty, parental decision and early marriage. Further, there is a need for subsequent study in the other districts with reference to similar parameters so that a complete understanding of the inter district position of Odisha as a whole can be made. However, it is quite clear that despite inadequate formal employment women have made significant contribution towards productivity, economic well-being as well as social harmony. This immense contribution has made our society inclusive, sensitive and empathetic.

Keywords: education, women, Odisha, economic condition

1. Introduction

Women have been sharing half the sky so they cannot be neglected in having their active participation for the development of a country. The role of women can be treated in the direction of improving their social and economic aspects. The world economic profile of women shows that women represent 50% of the population, 30% of the labour force constitutes of women, perform 60% of the working hours but unfortunately receive only 10% of the world's income and own less than 1% of the world's property (FAO, 1980)

Although women and men do not enjoy equal status in terms of enjoyment of power or possession of property (Duflo, 2011), the contribution of women

to economic development of a country cannot be undefined. The profitability of education according to estimates of private .rate of return is indisputable, universal and global", opines Harry Patrinos (2014), lead education economist at the World Bank.

It has been often argued that education is key to giving women better control over their lives. The eleventh and twelfth five year plan (2007-2012, 2012-2017) have consistently envisaged that achieving high female literacy is an inevitable step towards achievement of inclusive growth and gender empowerment. There have been a number of initiatives adopted off late by the Govt. of India such as 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao', 'Sarvasiksha Abhiyaan' to enhance the literacy rate of females in India. Govt. of

Odisha is also taking number of steps to incentivise parents and children to enhance female education. This study aims at evaluating the economic condition and education level of women in Odisha on the basis of primary data.

1. Review of literature

According to Chen (2006) "We believe that village women control over material resources and their access to it is a necessary condition to exercise power and autonomy by women". If productivity of women can be enhanced and their employment opportunities expanded women can exhibit greater autonomy at the familial level i.e. household.

In the words of Landes,(1999) the Wealth and Poverty of Nations, "the best clue to a nation's growth and development potential is the status and role of women". This quote indicates a strong consensus that investment in women and girls is the most important strategy for alleviating poverty and promoting sustainable development around the globe.

Lack of education is one of the strongest factors for poverty among women which is the most debilitating form of socioeconomic issues. For the millions of girls who are denied access to school or who drop out of school in search of livelihood for themselves and their deprived families thereby, being denied the capacity to read or write, turnout to be less productive compared to those who are accomplished. Inadequate education affects the ability to find remunerative employment and become substantially productive if the person is self-employed.

Singh (1989) has associated education to be a pre requisite for empowerment of women. The low literacy rate of women and the traditional ideas of submission by women to man, implying passivity and lack of assertion from the part of women led to low status of women. He pointed out that education will help in promoting equality between the sexes either at the level of instruction in the class room which is the 'stated part'. The 'unstated part' is the superiority of man over women. The role of government, mass media and instructors need to make a sustained effort to reorient the thinking and imbibe new values.

Moreover, illiteracy is life threatening because of its negative impact on health of self and family. Women are crucial in playing a leading part in transmission of progressive hygiene and healthy habits in the family. World bank has got a clear correlation between girl's education and mortality rates especially child mortality (Hill and King, 1995). An essential element to

sustainable development is women empowerment which is a dynamic process involving psycho-socio-politico-economic-cultural and environmental strategy for holistic quality management of feminine capabilities and capacities, latent or manifest.

Samarakoon and Parinduri (2015) in the paper, 'Does Education Empower Women? Evidence from Indonesia', examines if education empowers women. In Indonesia there exists a huge gender gap in almost all spheres showing low income earnings of women, low participation of women in labour market. They have also found out that education reduces the number of skill work, increases contraceptive use and improves reproductive health practices. However, there is no clear evidence except in a few outcomes of decision making, or property ownership. Their result indicates that education empowers women in Indonesia.

Hill and King (1995) in their paper 'Women's education and economic well-being' analyses the cost-benefit aspects of educating women. Women attain lower levels of education compared to men. The rate of return on education is equal for both men and women at the margin. This research has addressed the benefits of educating girls and women in terms of social and economic well being.

Klasen (2002) in his article in the World Bank economic review investigates how gender inequality in education affects long term economic growth by lowering the average human capital. He has studied East Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, middle East to show that gender inequality affects investment and population growth. He also has found out that gender gap in education lead to differences in annual per-capita growth rate from 0.4-0.9% points.

Alsop and Heinsohn (2005) and Alsop et.al (2006) provide a conceptual framework for women's economic empowerment in which they identify agency and opportunity structure and assets for achieving economic empowerment, where agency influences empowerment outcome i.e. determined by opportunity structure and assets which further influences agency. The monitoring mechanisms adopted in this case are focus group discussions and analysis of indicators at the household and local level.

Bhat's (2014) article based on secondary data especially as per 2011 census study analyses the socio-economic issues of women in India. It gives importance to education, training for increasing capacity for gainful economic participation of women in India. It gives a rural urban comparison and discusses the socio economic issues of women, primarily empowerment.

Mohanty *et. al* (2013) have measured decision making capacity of women as a principal component of empowerment. Their study is based on women in rural Odisha and capacity building through participation in SHGs and micro enterprises.

Agarwal and Lynch (2006) have conducted a survey on rural Pakistani women with a sample size of 1050 rural women over 3 agro-ecological zones which represents varying degrees of development, culture and tradition all of which affect gender indicators. They have taken a four factor combined model which include violence on women, household decisions, community involvement and household economic condition.

All the above studies indicate the relationship between education and socio-economic condition of women. In the same line, our study intends to find out the relationship between education and economic condition of women in one of the progressing states of Odisha.

3. Methodology

To address the major objectives of the study, primary data and secondary data have been used. A multi stage purposive sampling procedure has been

adopted to select the State, the District, the Gram Panchayats, the Wards, the villages and the households. The first stage involved selecting the district of Khordha. The second stage consisted of selection of four different wards in the urban areas of Bhubaneswar and four different wards in the urban area of Khordha town. Similarly, two blocks were selected from Khordha district which were completely rural in nature. The two selected blocks were Begunia and Bolagada. The third stage of sampling procedure was selection of three Gram Panchayats from each block. On the whole six GPs were selected on the basis of distance from block headquarters. In the fourth stage four villages from each GP were selected on the basis of purposive sampling. Therefore, a total of 24 villages were selected. In the final stage households were selected for interview through structured Questionnaires. A total of 315 households were interviewed in the rural areas, out of which 160 households were chosen from Begunia block and 155 from Bolagada block on the basis of convenience sampling. Those sample who were available, willing and satisfied the required criteria for the study were interviewed. In the urban areas 131 households were studied using questionnaires with same questions.

Table 1: Profile of the respondents

	Rural	Urban	Total		Rural	Urban	Total
Age				Marital Status			
Upto 20 years	2 (0.63)	3 (2.29)	5 (1.12)	Married	296 (93.97)	118 (90.08)	414 (92.83)
20-30	100 (31.75)	45 (34.35)	145 (32.51)	Unmarried	14 (4.44)	10 (7.63)	24 (5.38)
30-40	116 (36.83)	44 (33.59)	160 (35.87)	Widow	4 (1.27)	1 (0.76)	5 (1.12)
40-50	96 (30.48)	38 (29.01)	134 (30.04)	Divorce	0 (0.00)	1 (0.76)	1 (0.22)
50 & Above	1 (0.32)	1 (0.76)	2 (0.45)	Separate	1 (0.32)	1 (0.76)	2 (0.45)
Total	315 (100.00)	131 (100.00)	446 (100.00)	Total	315 (100.00)	131 (100.00)	446 (100.00)
Caste				Type of Family			
SC	19 (6.03)	30 (22.90)	49 (10.99)	Joint	35 (11.11)	22 (16.79)	57 (12.78)
ST	16 (5.08)	4 (3.05)	20 (4.48)	Nuclear	280 (88.89)	109 (83.21)	389 (87.22)
OBC	111 (35.24)	35 (26.72)	146 (32.74)	Total	315 (100.00)	131 (100.00)	446 (100.00)
GEN	169 (53.65)	62 (47.33)	231 (51.79)				
Total	315 (100.00)	131 (100.00)	446 (100.00)				

Trained data collectors were appointed to collect data with the help of an interview schedule. The schedule contained questions on demographic variables, education and employment status of the respondent, the household economic condition and other measures of women empowerment. This paper is a part of the entire study conducted to measure women empowerment. The questionnaire was pretested

before conducting the final study.

4. Results

To understand the education and economic status of the respondents and the family members, data were analysed using frequency distribution tables. Table 2 to 9 describe the rural urban distribution of respondents on different studied parameters.

Table 2: Educational Profile of Respondent

Educational Qualification	Rural	Urban	Total
Illiterate	44 (13.97)	20 (15.27)	64 (14.35)
Low Level Education	58 (18.41)	23 (17.55)	81 (18.16)
High level Education	213 (67.62)	88 (67.17)	301 (67.50)
Total	315 (100.00)	131 (100.00)	446 (100.00)

The educational qualification of the respondents as it is depicted in table 3 and 4, reveals that most of the women have got highest educational qualification.

Majority of the female have done either technical degrees or diplomas. However, there were many dropout cases (table 4).

Table-3 : Highest Educational Qualification of the Respondents

Educational Qualification	Rural	Urban	Total
Illiterate	44 (13.97)	20 (15.27)	64 (14.35)
Just Literate	1 (0.32)	4 (3.05)	5 (1.12)
Elementary Level	6 (1.90)	4 (3.05)	10 (2.24)
High School	8 (2.54)	4 (3.05)	12 (2.69)
Matriculate	43 (13.65)	11 (8.40)	54 (12.11)
Intermediate / Plus Two	25 (7.94)	15 (11.45)	40 (8.97)
Graduate	52 (16.51)	21 (16.03)	73 (16.37)
Post Graduate	9 (2.86)	5 (3.82)	14 (3.14)
Tech. Degree	58 (18.41)	20 (15.27)	78 (17.49)
Tech Diploma	55 (17.46)	18 (13.74)	73 (16.37)
ITI / CT	1 (0.32)	1 (0.76)	2 (0.45)
Professional Degree	10 (3.17)	7 (5.34)	17 (3.81)
Others	3 (0.95)	1 (0.76)	4 (0.90)
Total	315 (100.00)	131 (100.00)	446 (100.00)

Table-4 : Age of Dropout at the time of Leaving School

Age of Dropout	Rural	Urban	Total
6-8	0 (0.00)	2 (1.98)	2 (0.55)
8-10	12 (4.62)	8 (7.92)	20 (5.54)
10-12	44 (16.92)	11 (10.89)	55 (15.24)
12-15	96 (36.92)	26 (25.74)	122 (33.80)
15-18	84 (32.31)	35 (34.65)	119 (32.96)
18-22	22 (8.46)	19 (18.81)	41 (11.36)
22 & Above	2 (0.77)	0 (0.00)	2 (0.55)
Total	260 (100.00)	101 (100.00)	361 (100.00)

The table 5 shows the dropout in the age group of 6 years and above of the respondents in the rural and urban areas. The maximum dropout is seen in the age group of 12 to 15 years which is 36.92% and the 15 to 18 years age group 32.31% in the rural areas and 25.74% and 34.65% in urban areas. The adolescent girls show a trend of dropping out of school due to various infrastructural inconveniences and socio-

cultural reasons including early marriage. On observing the overall average 15 to 18 years age shows highest dropout rate of 32.96%. 11.36% girls show a discontinuation of formal education in the age group of 18-22years. After higher secondary education girls get married or engage themselves in other income generating activities and household chores if they are not married.

Table-5 : Reason for Dropout

Reason for Dropout	Rural	Urban	Total
Poverty	92 (35.38)	31 (30.69)	123 (34.07)
Parental Decision	40 (15.38)	15 (14.85)	55 (15.24)
Child Labour	0 (0.00)	2 (1.98)	2 (0.55)
Household Chores	1 (0.38)	4 (3.96)	5 (1.39)
Sibling Care	2 (0.77)	0 (0.00)	2 (0.55)
Lack of School Infrastructure	13 (5.00)	3 (2.97)	16 (4.43)
Early Marriage	43 (16.54)	21 (20.79)	64 (17.73)
Others	69 (26.54)	25 (24.75)	94 (26.04)
Total	260 (100.00)	101 (100.00)	361 (100.00)

Table-6: Usual Activity of the Household Members

Usual Activity	Rural	Urban	Total
Employed	493 (30.28)	117 (37.03)	610 (31.38)
Unemployed	89 (5.47)	12 (3.80)	101 (5.20)
Housewife	394 (24.20)	60 (18.99)	454 (23.35)
Student	445 (27.33)	83 (26.27)	528 (27.16)
Old and Retired	88 (5.41)	15 (4.75)	103 (5.30)
Disabled	9 (0.55)	1 (0.32)	10 (0.51)
Others	110 (6.76)	28 (8.86)	138 (7.10)
Total	1628 (100.00)	316 (100.00)	1944 (100.00)

The table 6 presents the usual activities of the members of the households of the respondents. In the Urban areas it is seen that 30.28% of the persons are employed and 5.47% are unemployed. But in the urban samples 37.03% are employed and 3.80% are unemployed. In rural samples it is found that 24.20% are housewives who are involved in only household work and receive no payments for this work. In urban areas 18.99% are housewives showing work opportunities are higher in urban areas for the women

who desire to work. The percentage of students is almost at par in both the rural and urban areas at 27.33% and 26.27% respectively. 'Others' refer to the work which is seasonal in nature or unorganised work or even some random service that is not regular in nature. Old and retired constitute 6.76% of the sample population in rural and 4.75% in urban areas. The major source of livelihood is agriculture. Women are also involved in the agricultural activities especially in the post-harvest period.

Table-7: Economic Profile of the Households

	Rural	Urban	Total		Rural	Urban	Total
Ownership of House				Type of House			
Own House	308 (97.78)	106 (80.92)	414 (92.83)	Pucca	126 (40.00)	71 (54.20)	197 (44.17)
Rented	6 (1.90)	24 (18.32)	30 (6.73)	Semi Pucca	108 (34.29)	45 (34.35)	153 (34.30)
Others	1 (0.32)	1 (0.76)	2 (0.45)	Kutchha	81 (25.71)	15 (11.45)	96 (21.52)
Total	315 (100.00)	131 (100.00)	446 (100.00)	Total	315 (100.00)	131 (100.00)	446 (100.00)
House having facilities				Access to safe drinking water			
Toilet within House	89 (28.25)	51 (38.93)	140 (31.39)	Pipe Water	67 (21.27)	90 (68.70)	157 (35.20)
Electricity Connection	302 (95.87)	127 (96.95)	429 (96.19)	Tube Well	189 (60.00)	29 (22.14)	218 (48.88)

The economic profile of the respondents reveals that maximum of the respondents have their own house, live in *pucca* or *semi pucca* house and have electricity connection in house. However, only

31.39% of the respondents have toilets within their house. Drinking water availability seems to be good as either they are getting pipe water or water from tube well.

Table 8 : Employment status of the respondents

Usual Activity	Rural	Urban	Total
Employed	25 (7.94)	31 (23.66)	56 (12.56)
Unemployed	290 (92.06)	100 (76.34)	390 (87.44)
Total	315 (100.00)	131 (100.00)	446 (100.00)

Despite fairly good levels of education, the respondents are unemployed in large numbers . 92% of the women in rural and 76.34% in urban are unemployed. The unemployment level is far above the

national average of 25.51% in urban and 30.02% in rural areas for women. The female work participation rate has been declining gradually.

Table-9: Main Occupation of the Household Members

Main Occupation	Rural	Urban	Total
Cultivator	71 (14.40)	6 (5.13)	77 (12.62)
Agricultural Labourer	51 (10.34)	2 (1.71)	53 (8.69)
Non Agl Labour	148 (30.02)	25 (21.37)	173 (28.36)
Service	104 (21.10)	39 (33.33)	143 (23.44)
Craft Artisan	16 (3.25)	3 (2.56)	19 (3.11)
Business	99 (20.08)	27 (23.08)	126 (20.66)
Others	4 (0.81)	15 (12.82)	19 (3.11)
Total	493 (100.00)	117 (100.00)	610 (100.00)

The table 8 suggests the various kinds of activities the people of the sample areas are involved in. In the rural areas it is found that 14.40% are cultivators or tillers of the soil, 10.34% are agricultural labourers who work on the fields without any ownership and accept payments in kind or cash. 30.02 % are non-agricultural labour. 20.08% are into different kinds of business like grocery shops, poultry, tea-stall, snacks store, temple store etc. In the Urban areas the occupational pattern is very different from that of the rural areas. 5.13% are engaged in cultivation. 1.71% of the people are agricultural labour and 21.37% are non-agricultural

labour. 23.08% are engaged in business of different sorts. The % of others category are 0/81% in rural areas but 12.82% in urban areas. It indicates that some of the sample population are engaged in activities not enlisted here which may be seasonal or occasional or unorganised in nature. However, from a total of 610 persons it is seen that maximum people 28.36 are non-agricultural labour who do not have a steady source of income or a high quantum of income. It is noteworthy that some of the persons are engaged in more than one kind of activities like a cultivator also runs a business simultaneously.

5. Discussion

Some of the significant findings of the study are: 1) the education level of women is fairly good, 2) the housing and drinking water facilities are good, 3) employment status is not so impressive as very few were found to be employed, 4) reason for dropout from schools has been found to be poverty, parental decision and early marriage. Such findings indicate the results of various developmental activities conducted by governmental and non-governmental agencies in providing assistance for *pucca* house, safe drinking water and encouragement for female child education.

The finding that the percentage of employed women in the study areas is very meagre can be attributed to many reasons. One reason could be paucity of employment opportunities in rural parts of the state. The social restrictions, lack of labour mobility, male dominance and burdensome household chores might have also hindered women from seeking income earning avenues.

Although the unemployment level of women appears to be ineffectiveness of education in empowering them economically, still we should not draw a conclusive judgement of women empowerment by considering a narrower view of women empowerment. An educated woman (although prefers to be house wife), may be capable of taking decision in various aspects of life such as health and hygiene, children education, investments, etc. Although there has been discussions and debates on the valuation of the unpaid care (Ferrant, Pesando & Nowacka, 2014), there seems to be lack of realisation of this fact. Field observation of the researcher reveals that women who identify themselves as 'unemployed' ignore their contribution to the rearing of children, cooking, taking care of the health and hygiene of self and family, assisting their spouse in the agriculture etc. as they

are not paid for this kind of work.

The study has certain limitations that cannot be overlooked while generalising the findings of the study. Firstly, the study adopted a purposive sampling method and presents the picture of the places which is close to the state capital. Hence, the findings derived here can't be applicable to other districts. Secondly, the findings are based on descriptive analysis and do not reflect the correlation between education and economic status of the respondents. However, the findings generated through well executed field survey and personal observation of the researcher provides glimpses on the studied variables.

6. Conclusion

The finding that poverty and parental decision (may be again owing to insufficient fund) prevents girls to continue their study is still a major insight for developmental agencies. The poverty condition and the reasons for poverty have been discussed at length and breadth (Misra and Behera, 2000). Well planned actions in that direction may improve the situation further. At the same time the study leaves some questions open. When there are so many avenues for girls' education and employment, why parents still prefer early marriage of their children? Is it again because of poverty? or due to deep rooted attitude towards female child. Further, there is a need for subsequent study in the other districts with reference to similar parameters so that a complete understanding of the inter district position of Odisha as a whole can be made. However, it is quite clear that despite inadequate formal employment women have made significant contribution towards productivity, economic well-being as well as social harmony. This immense contribution has made our society inclusive, sensitive and empathetic.

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