

DETERMINANTS OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT: A CASE STUDY OF WORKING WOMEN IN DDC AND POKHARA SUB METROPOLIS OFFICES, KASKI

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Abstract

The main objective this study is to measure women empowerment among job working women as well as analyze the factors that determine it. For data, this study is based on the census survey by interviewing 104 women working in DDC and Pokhara Sub metropolis office through structured questionnaire schedule in 2012. Most of the interviewed women were from highly reproductive age belonging to Brahmin community, and half of them had SLC above qualification holding different level of official posts. The findings of the study shows that most of the independent variables like age of the respondents, caste, qualification, monthly income, age at marriage, work experience, husband's education and annual income of the family as the major determinants of women empowerment. The findings of this study suggest economic intervention as the most effective instrument for empowering women.

KEY WORDS: Empowerment, Kaski, Socio-Economic, Women

BACKGROUND

The word empower literally denotes to gain confidence in themselves to have more control over their own life or the situation they are in. Empower means to give the power or authority to do. As per UNDP (2004) empowerment is defined as "creating an environment, in which people can develop their full potential and lead productive, creative lives in accord with their needs and interests to be able to participate in the life of the community (UNDP, 2004).

Empowerment emerged as an important theme in the women's movement from 1975 onwards.

In fact, empowerment as a theme arose out of a failure of 'women in Development' (WID) programs, notably the equity approach all of which failed to question the interrelationship between power and development. According to Moser (1993), empowerment approach developed out of dissatisfaction with the original WID as equity approach because of its perceived co-option into the anti-poverty and efficiency approach. He puts emphasis on the importance of women increasing their power which increase their own self reliance and strength. This is identified as the right to make choices in life and to influence and the direction

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of change through the ability to gain control over crucial material and non material resources.

Development, in fact starts from the people and their education, organization, discipline and environment. Similarly, empowerment is also one of the central concepts in development agenda. Women's empowerment means to give power to women to have access over the resources and opportunities along with the ability to utilize these resources and opportunities for their personal and social change (CWD, 2007). However, we know that have limited access to education and employment opportunities in comparison to their male counter parts. The households and society directly and indirectly deny or discourage women's role as decision maker. Since women constitute half of the population of the world, their equal participation and sharing of benefits in every sector is necessary for holistic development. That is why women empowerment is one of the central concepts in development agenda (Wedeen, 1996).

In Nepalese case, a patriarchic society, even educated women do not necessarily hold an equal status than her counterpart within the family. Empowerment level of educated & job holder women is relatively higher than that of uneducated and unemployment women but within the family still women do not hold high position like that of men. Education and economic participation of women are most important determinants of women empowerment. But it is important to know whether other factors also determine women empowerment. So the objective of this study is to examine and analyze the socio-economic status and level of empowerment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Among the various theories that explain gender discrimination, the neoclassical theory is based on the assumption that human agents are essentially motivated by self interest and make rational choices to maximize individual utilities. The neo-classical

theory argues that since women accumulate a lower stock of human capital than men do, they therefore have lower productivity, which results in inequalities in the market place.

Another theory, the Marxist feminists, say that the introduction of private property caused women to be the property of men and also the first oppressed class. It talks about the household work of women and views it as unpaid labor. Marxist feminism talks about paying women for their household work and giving them better economic opportunities (Mishra, 2004). So subjugation, oppression and exploitation against women continues due to women being lower class in a capitalist mode of production have.

Empowerment is an ongoing dynamic process that enhances women's or any marginalized and alienated group's ability to change the structures and ideologies that keep it subordinate (Bhasin and Dhar, 1998). It is a process of making the power structure more inclusive to all – women and men of all castes, creeds classes, ethnicities and races. According to Malhotra women empowerment is a process of women gaining more access to a steady income and economic power or security (Malhotra, 2002). He has focused on economic empowerment of women.

Acharya (1981) says that traditionally in Nepalese society, Caste, Clan, and family allowances are predominant factors in social interaction. These factors influence women's status in different ways (Acharya, 1981). Moreover, Shrestha stresses on the age old socio-cultural practices which do not give equal rights to women. Culture and traditional norms and values stop women's development and empowerment (Shrestha, 1982). So they have been always left out of mainstream of development. Empowerment is one of the central concepts in development agenda. There is widespread agreement that women must be empowered to play an effective part in national development. People gaining an understanding of and control over social,

economic and/or political forces in order to improve their standing in society (Dangol, 2010).

The socio-economic status of women in Nepal is very poor. But urbanization, education and employment have brought about changes to some extent in the position of women in terms of equally individuality and independence, education, occupation and income are certain structural factors in the status of women, which have brought a change in their cognitive structure as well (Usha, 1997).

According to Khanal (1998) the main motivational factor for women to be involved in job is to utilize their educational qualification. Working women are not much involved in other social and professional organization beside their work due to their lack of interest and dual work load. However, most of women are of opinion that they are as efficient as men in decision making but again some women think they are less capable to do so and can't take quick decision as compared to their male counterparts.

Thapa & Gurung (2010) conclude that rather than women's age, age at marriage, work experience and husband's education and occupation, women's self achievement to earn more income, qualification, economic status and positive attitude towards job outside home are highly affecting factors of women empowerment (Thapa & Gurung, 2010).

Thapa, et al., (2013), from the study of rural poverty in Western Development Region, concludes that, the increase in female member involvement in service (having job) decreases log odds of household being poor by 0.771 times (Thapa, et al., 2013). Therefore, women involvement in services outside their home reduces household poverty. It also means that empowering women can also reduce poverty.

Most of the studies indicate economic empowerment of women as an important determinant of women empowerment. There has been effort and intervention in women education and women's involvement

in labor market for holistic development but due to such interventions empower women in real sense is the nerve of ongoing research studies. To entail and investigate effectiveness of education and economic involvement in empowerment of women women working in public services are considered for the study.

METHODOLOGY

This study involves description of socio-demographic status of women working in DD office Kaski and Office of Pokhara sub metropolitan and analysis of factors determining empowerment. The study solely depends on primary information collected by surveying all the women working in these two offices. Therefore 104 respondents were selected by census, the total number of women. A semi structured questionnaire schedule was applied to obtain primary data.

The indicators in this research study for computing empowerment index are influenced mainly from the human empowerment index of UN model given in Nepal Human Development Report, 2004 and Malhotra's (2002) dimensions of empowerment. The data collected was analyzed by using statistical mathematical tools and the computer running the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) and Ms Excel.

The Model

For inferential / multivariate analysis, a regression model was developed.

$$\text{Let } Y = f(X_1, X_2, X_3, X_4, X_5, X_6, X_7, X_8, X_9, X_{10})$$

Where, Y = Level of Overall empowerment of females (see Annex - I)

X_1 = Age of the respondents

X_2 = Caste / Ethnicity

X_3 = Religion

X_2 = Education X_3 = Age at Marriage X_4 = Work Experience X_5 = Income X_6 = Husband's Education X_7 = Family's annual Income

In this analysis the response variable has only two outcomes: an event either did (empowered) or did not occur (not empowered) which is referred to as a *binary* or *binomial* variable. A regression model with this type of response can be interpreted as a model that estimates the effect of the independent variable(s) on the *probability* of the event occurring.

A binary response, y , the expected value of y , $E(y) = \pi$, where π denotes $P(y=1)$ is applied. The log model would be:

$$\pi = \frac{\exp(\alpha_0 + \alpha_1 X_1 + \dots + \alpha_k X_k)}{1 + \exp(\alpha_0 + \alpha_1 X_1 + \dots + \alpha_k X_k)} \quad (1)$$

With ln

$$\left(\frac{\pi}{1-\pi} \right) = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 X_1 + \dots + \alpha_k X_k \quad (2)$$

This function is not linear, as such the usual least squares methods cannot be used to estimate the parameters. Instead, a method known as *maximum likelihood* is used to obtain these estimates. Here $\alpha_0, \alpha_1, \dots, \alpha_k$ are parameters of the model to be estimated.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first part of this section consists of description of socioeconomic status of the respondents. Age is most important determinant of women empowerment. Most of the respondents belonged to age 30-39 years category, which is followed by 40-49 years age. Most (about 70 percent) of the women in this study were married under the age 24 years and about 35 percent of them are married before 19 years age.

Table 1: Descriptive Variables

Variable	Category	Number	Percent
Age	Up to 29yrs	7	6.7
	30-39yrs	53	51.0
	40-49yrs	33	31.7
	50yrs and above	11	10.6
Age at Marriage	below 15yrs	10	9.6
	15yrs-19yrs	37	35.6
	20yrs-24yrs	34	32.7
	25yrs and above	16	15.4
Religion	Hindu	95	91.3
	Buddhist	7	6.7
	Christian	2	1.9
Caste	Brahmin	44	42.3
	Chhetri	14	13.5
	Janajati	25	24.0
	Dalit	21	20.2
Qualification of Self	Below SLC	49	47.1
	SLC	20	19.2
	Intermediate	9	8.7
	Bachelors	19	18.3
	Masters	7	6.7
job experience	0yrs-4yrs	4	3.8
	5yrs-9yrs	17	16.3
	10yrs-14yrs	29	27.9
	15yrs-19yrs	24	23.1
	20yrs and above	30	28.8
Husband's Qualification	Below SLC	33	31.7
	SLC	10	9.6
	Intermediate	12	11.5
	Bachelors	20	19.2
	Masters/PhD	15	14.4
Monthly Income of Respondents (Rs)	Up to 9,999	6	5.8
	10,000-14,999	83	79.8
	15,000-19,999	12	11.5
	20,000 and above	3	2.9
Annual Income of the Family	Below 50,000	15	14.4
	50,000-1,00,000	17	16.3
	1,00,000-1,50,000	11	10.6
	1,50,000-2,00,000	16	15.4
	Above 2,00,000	45	43.3
Total		104	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2012

As per the national scenario, the Hindus are in majority (about 90 percent). Similarly the Brahmin women occupy the largest portion of share in this study. Nepalese society has a long history of caste based division and each caste was assigned with particular duties. At present, the caste system is abolished but its remnants could be easily observed like this. In terms of education nearly half of the respondents are below SLC, whereas only 30 percent of their husbands are below SLC. It indicates lower educational attainment among the females. About 80 percent of the women are 10 years and above on this job and most of their salary ranged within 10-15 thousand rupees per month. It also indicates that most of them are employed on lower level posts.

The annex-II shows that women of the active age (20-49) are more empowered. Similarly, there is association between age at marriage and the empowerment level because majority of women (87.5%) who got married above 24yrs of age were found to be empowered than the women who got married at early ages. There is association between empowerment and caste and upper caste are likely to be empowered than the lower caste.

The association between education and empowerment is significant and women holding master degree are empowered. As accepted, the income is significantly associated with empowerment. Likewise, the educational level of the husband and their empowerment level are highly significant. It shows that with the increase in the husband's educational level there is increase in women empowerment. Hundred percent of respondents whose husbands' education level is masters/PhD are more empowered than those with partners having low education level of SLC or below which is significance at 1 percent level. The economic status of the family is known from their annual income (see annex-II).

Binary Logistic Regression

In this section the factors affecting women empowerment are analyzed for sorting out their direction and magnitude. The empowerment level is simply a numeric value. Higher value represents higher level of empowerment and lower value represents lower level of empowerment. On the basis of scores of overall empowerment level, they are categorized as follows:

Low empowered = below 60 points = 0,

Empowered = 60 and above points = 1

So the dependent variable Y takes values Y (0, 1). It is dichotomous in nature. Dependent Variable is overall Empowerment. The independent variables are caste, qualification, husbands' education, religion and family annual incomes. First of the socio-demographic variables were considered and the regression was run which is represented as Model I. Then only economic variables were considered for regression which is represented by Model II. In the last column of table 2, the statistically significant variables of Model I & II were considered for running the regression. The Chi-square & Snell R square on the last row of this table show the goodness of fit of this regression model. The value of R square is greater in successive models so all the models exhibit good fit. To check whether the explanatory variables have multi co-linearity a correlation was run (see Annex -III). As per the acceptable value of below 0.8, only education and husband education are having value around 0.7 poses a little co-linearity. But rest all the variables presented on Annex - III, indicates that there is no multi-co-linearity among the variables.

Table 2: Result of Regression Analysis

Variables		Model I	Model II	Model III
		Beta	Beta	Beta
Socio – Demographic	Age	-0.114**		-0.103
	Age at marriage	0.16*		0.173**
	Caste / Ethnicity (Brahmin ref.)			
	Caste / Ethnicity(Chhettri)	0.535		
	Caste/ Ethnicity(Janajatis)	0.866		
	Caste/ Ethnicity(Dalits)	0.33		
	Religion (Hindu ref.)			
	Religion(Buddhist)	-0.586		
	Religion(Christian)	0.77		
	Education husband (Below SLC ref.)			
	Education husband(SLC)	-19.201		
	Education husband(Inter)	-18.466		
	Education husband(Bachelor)	-17.748		
	Education husband(Master ab)	-17.948		
	Qualification (Below SLC)			
	Qualification(SLC)	-19.28		
	Qualification(Intermediate)	-18.071		
	Qualification(Bachelor)	-18.6		
	Qualification(Masters above)	-0.149		
Economic	Salary		0.001***	0.001***
	Work Experience		-0.192***	-0.146**
	Total trainings		0.304***	0.368***
	Family Income (<Rs. 50,000 ref.)			
	Family Income(50000-100000)		-0.507	
	Family Income(100000-150000)		-0.785	
	FamilyIncome(150000-200000)		-0.798	
	FamilyAnnualIncome(200000 above)		-0.64	
	cox & snells R Square	0.422	0.454	0.49
	Ngelkerke R Square	0.59	0.623	0.675

Source: Authors self compilation, 2012

Note: *** P value is < 0.01; ** P value is < 0.5; * P value is < 0.1

In model I, Six Socio-Demographic variables age, age at marriage, caste/ethnicity, religion, education level of husband and qualification of the self were considered for regression analysis. Among the variables only age and age at marriage are statistically significant. But contrary to generally accepted fact the beta-coefficients of the age of the respondents is negative which means the probability of being empowered falls as the age increases. The beta coefficient indicates that the probability of being empowered declines by 0.114 times for one year increment in the women's age. Similarly, the age at marriage is one of the positively predicting variable which means the empowerment level of women increases as the age at marriage increases. For a year increase in age at marriage, the probability of being empowered increases by 0.160 times. The first model shows acceptable goodness of fit as the Cox and Snell R square value is 42.2 percent. It means 42.2 percent of variations in the dependent variable is explained by the explanatory variables considered.

In the second model, only the economic variables are considered. Among the economic variables monthly income, work experience and trainings are statistically significant. Salary and trainings received are strongly positively significant with empowerment level. But the beta coefficient of salary is very small and positive. The probability of being empowered increases only by 1% with a 100 percent increase in salary of the respondents. But the probability of being empowered increases by 0.306 times with every unit increase in trainings received. But the coefficient of work experience is negative. It means the probability of being empowered decreases by every year increase in number of years employed. It is surprising and contradictory result. But it seems that most of the respondents who have long working experience in these offices were employed in lower posts. So they being employed might have little impact on

empowerment level. The Cox and Snell R square is 45.4 percent which means 45.4 percent of variation in dependent variable is explained by explanatory variables. The model is good fit.

Finally in Model III, the combined variables of socio-demographic and economic which were statistically significant were considered. Among the variables only age at marriage, monthly income, work experience and trainings are significant. Since the values of R square increases, this model is well acceptable and fit. From this regression analysis it has found that self qualification, husband's education and family annual income has no significant influence in the empowerment level of women. On the contrary, economic intervention is highly essential in order to empower women. Marrying after matured age might help in empowering women. Similarly, training skills do determine their being empowered.

CONCLUSION

Most of the respondents belong to highly reproductive age having fair educational attainment (half of them SLC below) belonging to Brahmin community. As per the empowerment scale, half of the respondents are empowered. The chi-square test shows education, income, work experience and husbands attributes are statistically associated with empowerment. Running a binary logistic regression, age, age at marriage, monthly income, training and work experience are found to be major determinants of empowerment. It indicates that there is a need for economic intervention for empowering women. Therefore, for the holistic development of the country, policy makers still need to promote women in socio-economic and political spheres. It has to focus its programs on income generating and employment creating activities.

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