

# Recent Status of Education, Employment and Empowerment of Women in West Bengal

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**Abstract-** Women's education and employment are indeed likely to play an important role in the empowerment of women through the collective efforts of women with favorable institutional support that can promote the empowerment process. The study points to the correlation between literacy and gender ratios in West Bengal in 2011 and finally look into the socio-demographic covariables of women's employment and their impact on women's empowerment in the state of West Bengal, based on secondary sources of data like, Census of India and NFHS-3. The literacy rate in West Bengal has always been higher than the all-India average, and West Bengal ranks sixth among the major states in this regard. It is observed that there is a fairly low and negative level Correlation, that is,  $r = -0.16$  between the literacy rate and sex ratio in West Bengal. The main finding is that employment has a positive impact on active participation in the decision-making process at home. Thus, the results show that in general 38.1 percent of women have generally participated in household decisions, in the rural area 34.26 percent, but the urban area improved a lot, such as 47, 5 percent. It is also found that Muslim women are not a good contributor to household decisions compared to Hindu women. In the case of age at marriage, among non-working women 12-17 age groups considered at an early age in marriage, but working women delayed marriage, especially those who marry later compensate for their delay in marriage. Reproductive reproduction more abundant after marriage.

**Index Terms-** Education, employment, women empowerment and West Bengal.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The concept of status is used in the sense of ordering individuals in terms of attributes such as level of education, occupation and income, perception of their position at home and in the community, role of taking decisions regarding home and family planning issues, the number of restrictions imposed on its activities and freedom and so on. It is truly probable that women's education and employment plays an important role in empowering women through the collective efforts of women with favorable institutional support that can promote the empowerment process. The relationship between women's participation in the workforce and decision-making has long been of interest in the context of contemporary development and in the interest of population policy in India. Women's empowerment refers to the power of women to think and act freely, exercise and choose and realize the potential as equal members of society. Women's empowerment is typically discussed in relation to

political, social and economic empowerment, but the economic empowerment of women has received particular attention and is often cited as one of the most important ways to promote gender equality, reduce poverty and improve the well-being of not only women, but children and societies.

## II. STUDY AREA

According to 2011 census there are 19 districts, 347 CD blocks, 909 towns and 40,203 villages in West Bengal. It extends from 21°25'N to 26°50'N latitudes and 86°30'E to 89°58'E longitudes and it embraces an area of about 88,968 km<sup>2</sup>. The state is bordered by Bhutan, Bangladesh and Nepal and the Indian states of Orissa, Jharkhand, Bihar, Sikkim, and Assam. The state capital is the metropolitan city of Kolkata, also called Calcutta. Total population of West Bengal as per 2011 census is 91,276,115 of which male and female are 46,809,027 and 44,467,088 respectively. This contributes to 7.55 % of the country's total population. The gender ratio or male-female ratio is 947 females per 1000 males. About 68.11% of population lives in rural areas and 31.89% of population urban areas.

## III. LITERATURE REVIEW

The empowerment of women is one of the most important issues in the world today. "Women's Empowerment," "Gender Equality," and "Gender Equity" are separate, but closely related concepts. Gender equity implies "the equivalence in the outcomes of women's and men's lives, recognizing their different desires and interests, and requiring a redistribution of power and resources." Gender equity recognizes that women and men have different needs, preferences and interests. The results may require different treatment between men and women "(Reeves and Baden 2000). Empowerment is, above all, power; changing the power relations in favor of those who previously exercised little power over their own lives. Batliwala (1993) defines power as having two central aspects: control over resources (physical, human, intellectual, financial and self) and control of ideology (beliefs, values and attitudes). If power means control, then empowerment is, therefore, the process of gaining control. Mayoux (1997) states, empowerment is a multidimensional concept that has four crucial components: First, the inner Power - which allows women to articulate their aspirations and strategies for change. Second, the power for women to develop the necessary skills and access the resources needed to achieve their aspirations. Third, the Power that allows women to analyze and articulate their collective interests and organize to achieve them. Fourth, power over-changes the underlying inequalities in power

and resources that limit women's aspiration and ability to attain them. Jejeebhoy (2000) considers autonomy and empowerment as more or less equal terms, and defines both in terms of women "who control their own lives in the face of family, community, society and markets." The participation of women in the economic market is deduced to compete with their family responsibilities, since women are usually the only ones responsible for domestic duties. However, the links between women's empowerment and employment status are not extensively explored at the state level. Therefore, this paper investigates the influence of women's education and work status on how to influence the empowerment of women.

#### IV. OBJECTIVES

This study has the following objectives.

- 1) To find out the correlation between literacy and gender ratio in West Bengal in 2011.
- 2) To examine the role of employment in empowering women economically in West Bengal.
- 3) To analyze socio-demographic covariates of women's employment and their extent of effect on women empowerment in the state of West Bengal.

#### V. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The present study is based entirely on secondary data sources, India Census 2011. The two variables, i.e the literacy rate and sex of West Bengal has been taken for this study. The data were processed and calculated the correlation between literacy and sex ratio using Spearman's correlation coefficient method. The following formula has been used:

$$1 - \frac{6\sum d_2}{n_3 - n}$$

Data were also collected from the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-3) conducted during 2005-2006 from 29 states / UTs. Here, the data has been carved for the state of West Bengal. Using the cross tabulation with background characteristics, it is a help for a clear profile of women work participations. The predictors in the study are age, education, age in marriage, husband's desire for children, contraception, caste, religion and place of residence of wealth. Explanatory variables are considered largely sub-dimensional, social, economic and

cultural. 1. The age group has been divided into three categories 15-24, 25-34 and 35+ for this study purpose. 2. Marital status is classified into three categories never married, married and widowed, divorced, and not dating together these categories are calculated in a category because of a much lower percentage. 3. The highest level of education is classified into four categories, no education included ever attended school, primary to fourth grade, secondary to 10th grade and higher level of education attended more than tenth class. 4. Caste or Tribes is divided into three categories: SC / ST, OBC, Other. 5. The index of wealth is classified into three categories: poor, middle and rich. 6. Occupation divided into two categories: not work and work. 7. Religion has been three categories Hindu, Muslim and other categories.

#### VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

##### Empowering women through Education

Education is the key to gender equality. Education and employment are two basic tools that can change the economic and social status of women in the near future, as well as for a long time. The literacy rate is generally considered as one of the important indicators of the development of a population and the educational level of a population is considered an important determinant of their quality of life. Education interacts with other human development variables in crucial ways. For example, universal education and special attention to women's education are critical to improving the health practices of a community. In addition, of course, universal education is also likely to be necessary for meaningful and effective decentralization, especially in the next phase when panchayats are given greater responsibility for a wide range of activities. The literacy rate in West Bengal has always been higher than the all-India average, and West Bengal ranks sixth among the leading states in this regard. But up to the last decade, the improvement in literacy has been relatively slow in the state, especially for women. However, in the last decade, the state government has been concentrating its efforts through various special schemes such as "total literacy campaigns", "non-formal education", etc. Apart from formal education for children to achieve the goal of 'education for all' as soon as possible.

**Table: 1 Correlation between Literacy and Sex Ratio in West Bengal, 2011**

Sr. No.	Districts name	Literacy	R <sub>1</sub>	Sex Ratio	R <sub>2</sub>	d(R <sub>1</sub> -R <sub>2</sub> )	d <sub>2</sub>
1	Bankura	70.95	14	954	8	6	36
2	Bardhaman	77.15	9	943	13	-4	16
3	Birbhum	70.9	15	956	5	10	100
4	Cooch Bihar	75.49	11	942	14	-3	9
5	Dakshin Dinajpur	73.86	12	954	8	4	16
6	Darjiling	79.92	6	971	1	5	25
7	Howrah	83.85	4	935	18	-14	196

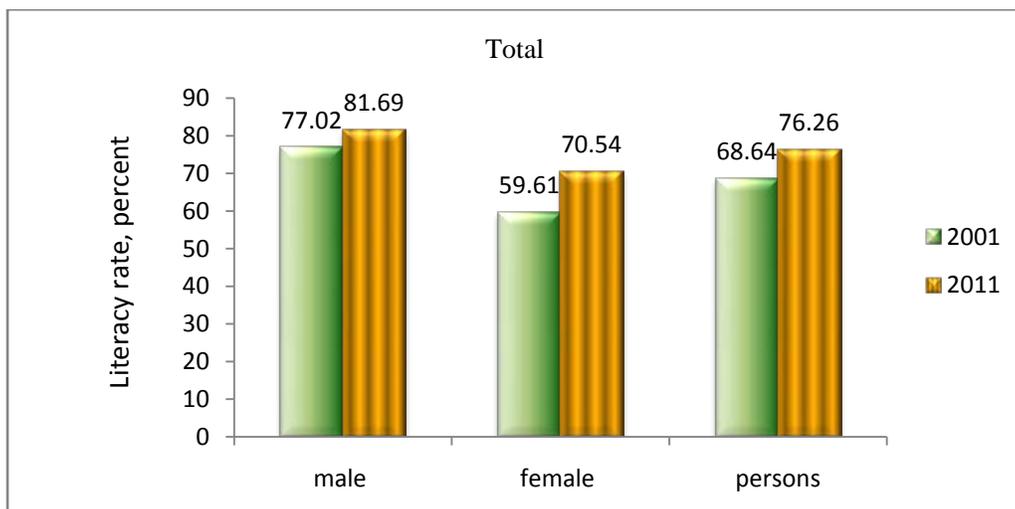
8	Hugli	82.55	5	958	3	2	4
9	Jalpaiguri	73.79	13	954	8	5	25
10	Kolkata	87.14	2	899	19	-17	289
11	Malda	62.71	18	939	15	3	9
12	Murshidabad	67.53	16	957	4	12	144
13	Nadia	75.58	10	947	12	-2	4
14	North 24 Parganas	84.95	3	949	10.5	-7.5	56.25
15	Paschim Medinipur	79.04	7	960	2	5	25
16	Purba Medinipur	87.66	1	936	16.5	-15.5	240.25
17	Purulia	65.38	17	955	6	11	121
18	South 24 Parganas	78.57	8	949	10.5	-2.5	6.25
19	Uttar Dinajpur	60.13	19	936	16.5	2.5	6.25
	<b>West Bengal</b>	<b>77.08</b>		<b>947</b>			<b>1328</b>

Source: Authors' Calculation based on Census of India, 2011

**Correlation between literacy and sex ratio in West Bengal in 2011.**

As a result, according to the Census, the literacy rate in West Bengal has increased from 48.6 per cent in 1981 to 57.7 per cent in 1991 and to 69.2 per cent in 2001. While rural literacy is predictably lower than in urban areas, it has improved more rapidly in the recent past. Furthermore, as can be seen from

Fig.1, while literacy among rural females is still low compared to other groups, it has increased more rapidly in the recent past, going up by nearly 16 percentage points in the last decade. Table 1 shows the Correlation between Literacy and Sex Ratio in West Bengal, 2011. It is observed that there is a fairly low and negative level Correlation, that is,  $r = -0.16$  between the literacy and sex in West Bengal.



**Fig 1: Changes in Literacy Rate in West Bengal during 2001-2011**

**Role of employment in empowering women in West Bengal**

Empowered women should be able to participate in the decision-making process in social and economic life inside and outside the home. The main finding is that employment has a positive impact on active participation in the decision-making process at home. Thus, the results show that in general 38.1 percent of women have generally participated in household decisions, in the rural area 34.26 percent, but the urban area improved a lot, such as 47, 5 percent. It is also found that Muslim women are not a good contributor to household decisions

compared to Hindu women. Because Hindu women are highly engaged in employment compared to Muslim women in both rural and urban areas of West Bengal. Therefore, the study of motivators is acting as a catalyst for the process of effective empowerment.

**Employment Status in West Bengal**

Women's participation in economic activities, particularly outside the home, is often seen as an important factor facilitating the economic and social empowerment of women. Not only can

employment be a source of economic independence, it can help give women a sense of self-esteem. As a result of the expansion of research and the promotion of women's issues, we now have a better understanding of women's contribution to the economy and society as a whole through the many types of work they do in all the communities. In this section we examine the economic circumstances and patterns of labor participation of women in West Bengal, taking into account the context of globalization that has become increasingly noticeable in India since the 1990s. Experiences accumulated from different parts of the world, now it's clear that those adversely affected by the processes associated with globalization include disproportionately large segments of women, especially from the weaker sections of society, primarily through constraining work opportunities and employment levels, which, in their turn are important determinants of women's over-all situation in society.

The percentage distribution of non-working and working women by background characteristics in West Bengal is shown in Table 2 shows that the percentage distribution of working women increases as their age increases, but this is showing a decline in the non-working group. The educational level of women seems to be one of the most important factors influencing family size and birth rates, in this table non-working women are determined by the literate, but women with more studies are very busy In the labor sector. In the case of age in marriage, among non-working women 12-17 age groups considered at an early age in marriage, but working women delayed marriage, especially those who marry later compensate for their delay in marriage. Reproductive reproduction more abundant after marriage. The wealth index focuses on working women compared to the high contribution to labor participation, then non-working women.

**Table 2: Percent distribution of not-working and working women by background characteristics of women in West Bengal, 2005-06**

Background Characteristic	Not working	Working
<b>Age group</b>		
<i>15-24</i>	40.00	32.50
<i>25-34</i>	29.60	33.40
<i>35+</i>	30.40	34.10
<b>Marital status</b>		
<i>Never married</i>	16.20	18.40
<i>Married</i>	80.50	70.60
<i>Widowed</i>	2.20	6.80
<i>Divorced</i>	0.30	0.50
<i>Not living together</i>	0.90	3.80
<b>Fertility preference</b>		
<i>Have another</i>	20.40	15.00
<i>Undecided</i>	1.20	0.70
<i>No more</i>	35.10	30.50
<i>Sterilized</i>	24.90	31.80
<i>Declared infused</i>	2.20	3.80
<i>Never had sex</i>	16.00	18.20
<b>Religion</b>		
<i>Hindu</i>	70.90	75.40
<i>Muslim</i>	28.20	23.60
<i>Others</i>	0.90	1.00
<b>Educational status</b>		
<i>No education</i>	29.80	48.40
<i>Primary</i>	21.10	23.30
<i>Secondary</i>	43.00	23.20
<i>Higher</i>	6.00	5.10
<b>Wealth index</b>		
<i>Poorest</i>	18.40	31.90
<i>Poorer</i>	22.90	28.40

<i>Middle</i>	19.20	18.80
<i>Richer</i>	21.20	12.40
<i>Richest</i>	18.30	8.40
<b>Type of place of residence</b>		
<i>Urban</i>	33.00	26.40
<i>Rural</i>	67.00	73.60

Source: Author's calculation based on NFHS-3

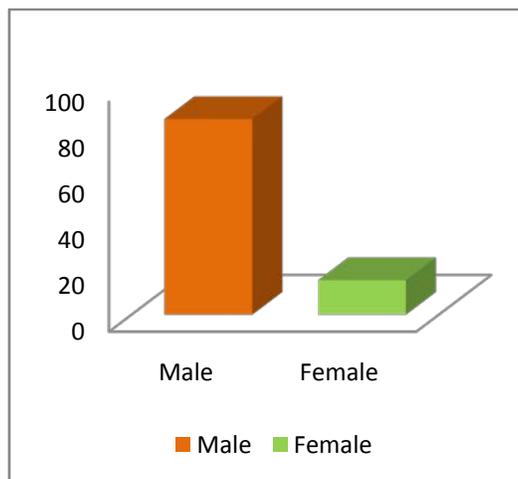
**Table: 3 Percentage of female workers by Age group and Place of residence in West Bengal, NFHS 2005-06**

Background Characteristics		Not Workers	Prof., Tech., Manag.	Clerical Workers	Sales workers	Agric-Employee	Services sector	Skilled & Unskilled Workers
Age Group	15-24	40	38.8	18.8	14.5	27.6	19	43.5
	25-34	29.6	25	37.5	38.9	36.1	34.9	31.5
	35+	30.4	36.2	43.8	46.6	36.3	46	25
Place of Residence	Urban	33	62.7	93.8	46.6	0.7	62.5	24.3
	Rural	67	37.3	6.2	53.4	99.3	37.5	75.7

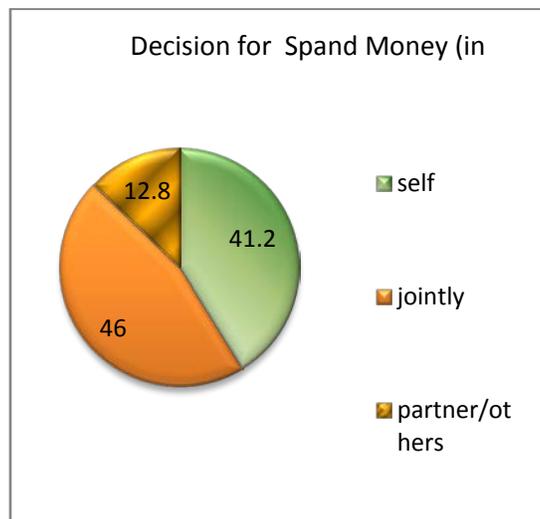
Source: Author's calculation based on NFHS-3

Table 3 shows the percentage of female workers by age group and place of residence in West Bengal, NFHS 2005-06. It is found that women who do not work are higher, it is 40 percent who belongs to 15-24 age groups. However, skilled and unskilled workers are in groups of 15 to 24 years, which refers to 43.5 percent. It is a good symbol for the empowerment of women because the empowerment of women generally determines the social, cultural, economic and biological context. This table 3

also found that administrative, sales and agricultural employee contributes highly from 35+ age groups. Regarding the place of residence, it is clear that 99.3% of the women belong to rural areas that are concerned as agricultural employees and only 37.3% work in professional, technical or management professions. However, office workers are 93.8 percent found in urban areas and 62.5 percent of women are employed in the service sectors.



**Fig. 2: Percent of male female of household head in West Bengal, 2005-06**



**Fig. 3: Decision for Spand Money (in Percent) in West Bengal, 2005-06**

**Table: 4 Women’s empowerment by residence in West Bengal, NFHS-3, 2005-2006**

	NFHS-3	URBAN	RURAL	KOLKATA
Currently married women who usually participate in household decision (%)	38.1	47.6	34.3	55.8
Ever married women who have ever experienced spousal violence (%)	40.3	30.4	44.2	26.7

Source: National Family Health Survey (NFHS-3) conducted during 2005-2006.

Table 4 shows the empowerment of women by residence in West Bengal, NFHS-3 and 2005-2006. Empowerment of women is the process of gaining power, both controls over external resources, as well as internal confidence and capacity. As a result it is found that currently married women who typically participate in decision making at home is higher in urban areas as 47.6 percent and in rural area is only lower as 34.3. Table 4 also focuses on married women who have experienced marital violence. In general, in rural areas, conjugal violence is higher (44.2%), but in urban areas it is a minor concern (30.4%). It is located in Kolkata, the home's decision is 55.8 percent.

This study points to the fact that the mere celebration of statistical swelling in female participation rates at work does not ensure women's power status, but the quality of the work involved is also an important determinant because employment can determine empowerment. Women's education and employment patterns play a significant role in women's empowerment as they are key contributors to their economic empowerment, which in turn influences the overall position of women in society. Economic empowerment, women can gain financial autonomy, enter into participation in work, and have equal opportunities to gain positions of economic power. Thus, on the basis of the empirical result, it can be concluded that employment has a positive effect on the empowerment of women in West Bengal.

**VII. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

In recent decades, there have been significant changes in the occupational and educational situation of women, although the change has been very low. There is a need for incentives in education and health organization for the participation of women. The government needs special attention in women's educational grants and women's health subsidies that change society's behavior on women. Enable the full participation of women in personal and family decisions, especially those related to maternity.

Gender policies emphasize greater participation of women in the labor market, while social exclusion analysts emphasize employment-based inclusion for vulnerable or excluded groups.

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