

Economical, Political and Social Empowerment of Women in the Field of Agriculture Marketing with Special Reference to Vegetable Vendors

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Abstract: *This study would provide valuable information about the ongoing situation of women entrepreneurs in the Field of Agriculture Marketing. The present study was carried out in “Ima Market” also known as Khwairamband Bazar or Ima Keithel 3,000 women assemble and carry out their entrepreneur activities on daily basis. The study was designed with two objectives, to determine the socio-economic profile of women in the Ima Market basically in the Field of Agriculture Marketing and to assess their empowerment socially, economically, politically and culturally. Regarding economic empowerment of women, it was concluded that there was a significant impact of economic empowerment on the women. Majority of the women agreed on improvement of living standards. There was a significant increase in the percentage of the women who understood the banking operations as well as expenditure of family. Social empowerment shows there was a significant impact of social empowerment on the women entrepreneurs. More than half of the respondents agreed that there was increment in the participation in discussion about social activities, participation in social development programs. It can be concluded that these indicators are a positive and promising status of women in social setup.*

Keywords: women entrepreneurs, Agriculture Marketing, Women Empowerment Socially, Economically, Politically, Vegetable Vendors

1. Introduction

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru once said, “When women move forward, the family moves, the village moves, and the nation moves.” It clearly indicates the importance of women in the society and the crucial role played by them. Women constitute almost half of the population, perform nearly two-third of its work hours, receive one-tenth of the world’s income and own less than one hundredth of the world property.

Approximately 50% of the human resources in our economy are women. A country’s growth and prosperity and the best possible development for its women’s population are akin to two sides of a coin: one cannot exist without the other. But the situation for women remains dire, particularly in rural regions. The capital market, land, income, education, and skill development are all inaccessible to women. They have historically been the weaker members of society and make up a sizable portion of the impoverished populace. Barriers particular to gender exist for women in the areas of employment, healthcare, and education. The most disadvantaged group among the impoverished is the women who lack finances and knowledge, both of which are necessary to assist them. Women empowerment is a process in which women gain greater share of control over resources-material, human and intellectual (knowledge, information and ideas) and financial resources and control over decision making in the home, community, society, and nation and to gain ‘power’. Women’s empowerment equips and allows women to make life-determining decisions through the different societal problems. They may have the opportunity to re-define gender roles or other such roles, which allow them more freedom to pursue desired goals. Women’s empowerment has become a significant topic of discussion in development and economics.

Empowerment is a multi-faceted, multi-dimensional and multi-layered concept. According to a report of government of India, “empowerment means moving from a position of enforced powerlessness to one of power.” In this process women should be empowered socially, economically, educationally and politically that can help them take self-decision regarding education, mobility, economic independency, political participation and awareness to exercise rights.

Means of Empowerment

- Economic Empowerment
- Social
- Cultural
- Political

Economic empowerment is one of the means to empower the women. Enhancing women’s economic productivity is an important strategy for improving the welfare of 60 million Indian households living below the poverty line. In spite of safeguards provided in many of the poverty alleviation programmes it was observed that women in rural areas, especially from poor families could not be benefitted. **World Bank (2002)** defined empowerment as increasing the capacity of an individual or groups to make choices and transform those choices to desired action and outcomes.

The market starts early in the morning till late in the evening. Here women from different parts of the state come to sell their goods. Some come to sell their goods and products to support their family financially while others come to the market not only for the money but to get pleasure out of it. Nevertheless, it would not be false to say that most of the women here are involved in trading due to economic obligation to support their family.

2. Review of Literature

Review of literature is a necessary step for any scientific study. Considerable works have been done by many researchers in India and abroad, some of the works undertaken, their observation and findings, which have direct or indirect bearing on the present study.

Kamala Bhasin (1998) also broadly defines the term empowerment. Bhasin cites that, "It means recognizing women's contribution, women's knowledge; it means helping women fight their own fears, and feeling of inadequacy and inferiority; it means women enhancing their self-respect and self-dignity; it means women controlling their own bodies; it means women becoming economically independent and self-reliant; it means women controlling resources like land and property; it means reducing women's burden of work, especially within the home; it means creating and strengthening women's groups and organizations; it means promoting qualities of nurturing, caring, gentleness not just in women but also in men."

Sushama Sahay (1998), "Empowerment is an active, multi-dimensional process which enables women to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres of life". It implies decentralization of power and authority in the deprived, oppressed and powerless people who have not been able to participate in decision making and implementation of policies and programs of both government organizations as well as in societal matters.

Arundhati Chattopadhyaya (2005) holds that, "Empowerment is multi-dimensional and refers to the expansion of freedom of choice and action in all spheres (social, economic, and political) to shape one's life. It also implies control over resources and decisions".

Tayde (2006) pointed that items of economic empowerment in descending order were freedom for spending on entertainment of quest (80.00 per cent), opportunity for economic development and liberty for offering gift to relatives were (78.33 per cent), participation in decision about purchase building (76.67 per cent), liberty for selection of job (71.66 per cent), participation in decision about adoption of modern technology in enterprise (70.00 per cent), operating personal account in bank (56.66 per cent), authority to employ laborers (35.00 per cent), participation in decision about marketing of produce (29.16 per cent) and personal saving in form of fixed deposit (26.66 per cent)..

Rajni and Sarada (2008) in their study on "Women Entrepreneurship Support System" indicates that the most important motivating factor to start the entrepreneurship venture was to supplement their family income.

3. Research Methodology

Keeping in view the objective of the study an appropriate sampling plan and variables were selected, interview scheduled was prepared and data were collected and analysed to draw the conclusion. The present research was undertaken to study the empowerment of women through selling of vegetables in Ima Market in Imphal west district

of Manipur. Descriptive research design was followed for conducting the present study. The study was conducted in Imphal West District of Manipur. The district lies between latitude 24°48'28.8"N and 93°56'6"E. The Ima Keithel is located in the Khawairamband Bazaar Complex. It is located in the west of Kangla Fort and on the Bir Tikendrajit Road in the Thangal Bazar locality. The complex consists of three large buildings with pagoda styled roofs. The market is split into two sections on either side of the road.

Dependent Variables		
1.	Knowledge	Structured schedule was developed for the measurement
2.	Empowerment	

Personal interview method by using structured interview schedule was used for collection of data in the present study. Since the questions in the interview schedule were in English, it was translated into local Manipuri language for better understanding. The respondents were convinced about the purpose of study and it was also made clear to them that the information would only be used for research purpose, thus ensuring smooth ongoing of the data collection. The statistical methods used in this study were averages, mean and standard deviation for the purpose of categorization. The significant of relationship between independent and dependent variables was tested with the help of co-efficient of correlation.

4. Results and Discussion

The results of the present research study in accordance with the objectives, derived through the use of required methodology and standard tools have been presented in this chapter. Following are the main heads under which the results have been presented and discussed:

Table 1: Age wise distribution of the respondent

S.no	Age	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Young Age (upto 35 years)	10	8.33
2.	Middle Age (36 – 55 years)	62	51.66
3.	Old Age (56 years above)	48	40
	Total	120	100.00

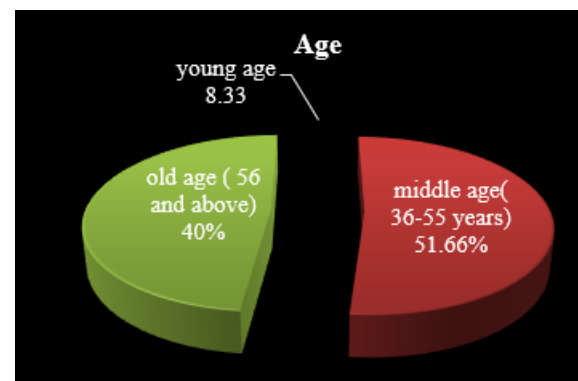


Figure 1: Distribution of respondents according to age

The findings of the above table and figure reveals that the majority of the women engaged in selling agricultural products especially vegetables in the Ima Market belonged to the middle age group i.e. the age group of 36-55 years (51.67 %) followed by 40% of women belonged to the old age group i.e. 56 years and above. 8.33% women belonging to the young age group (up to 35 years) were present.

Therefore, we can say that majority of the women entrepreneurs present in the market belonged to the middle age group. It may be because females at this age have to look

after their families and are therefore more responsible for economic fulfillment of the family.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents according to their Education Level

S. No	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Illiterate	17	14.16
2	Can read and write	32	26.67
3	Primary school	20	16.67
4	Junior high school	39	32.50
5.	Intermediate	9	7.50
6	Graduate and above	3	2.50
	Total	120	100.00

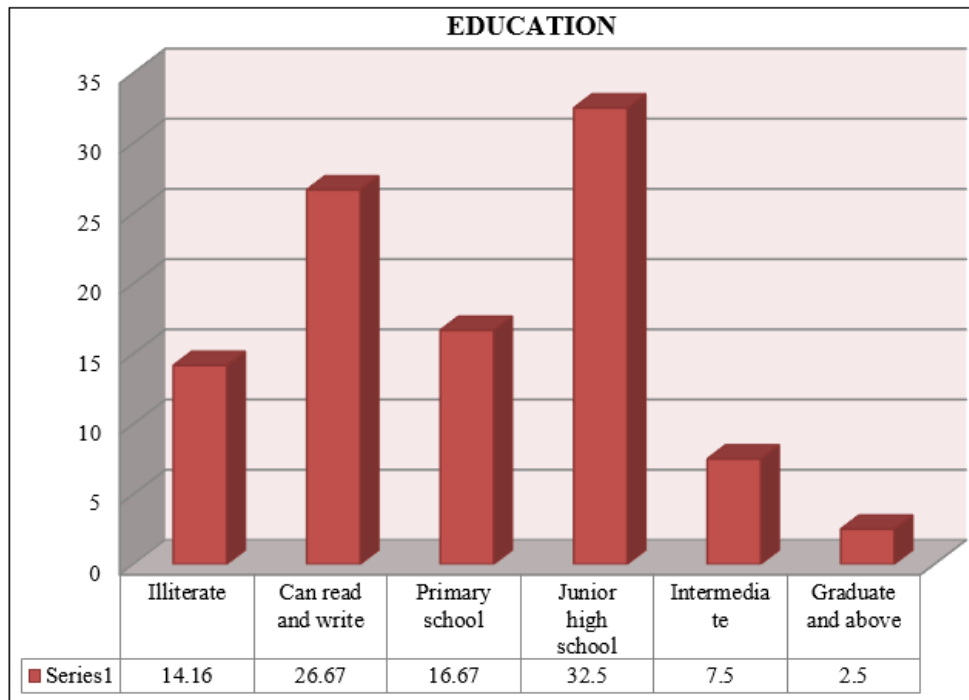


Figure 2: Distribution of respondents according to their education level

Findings of above table and figure indicates that 32.5% of the women were educated up to junior high school followed by 16.67% of women educated up to the primary level of schooling with which is followed by women educated up to their intermediate level 7.5%. Only 2.5% of the women were educated up to college level while 26.67% of the women could only read and write. The remaining 14.16% were illiterate.

It is clear from the findings that majority of the women have education level of junior high school which restricted from getting other jobs. Education is one of the most important factors in women empowerment and society uplift.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents according to their Occupation.

S. No	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Business	50	41.67
2	Business + agriculture	65	54.16
3	Business + labour	5	4.16
	Total	120	100.00

From the findings of the above table concerning occupation, it was revealed that majority of the women were involved in business and agriculture i.e. 50 % of the total respondent

followed by 41.67 % of women were involved with business only and 4.16 % were involved in Business+labour.

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents according to their Marital Status

S. No	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Married	73	60.84
2	Unmarried	12	10
3	Widow	30	25
4	Divorce	5	4.16
	Total	120	100.00

The data with regard to Marital Status indicates that the majority of the respondent 60.84 were married women which was followed by 25 % of widow and then followed by 10% of respondent were unmarried while 4.16% were divorced. These women were independent financially and their contribution in financial status of family and society as a whole is appreciable.

Table 5: Distribution of respondents according to their Annual Income

S. No	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Low (< 100965)	48	40.00
2	Medium (100966 – 205374)	62	51.67
3	High (>205374)	10	8.33
	Total	120	100

The above table shows that majority of the women entrepreneurs belonged to the medium income group (51.67 %) which was followed by women belonging to low-income group (40.00%) and 8.33 % of women entrepreneurs belong to high income group. Similar findings were reported by Khumlo (2009) and Sapam (2009).

An effort was made to study the empowerment of rural women through Ima Market. For measuring the empowerment of respondents, the areas taken for the study were economic empowerment, social empowerment, political empowerment and cultural empowerment.

Table 6: Distribution of respondents according to the Level of Economic Empowerment through the Market

Empowerment Level	Frequency	Percentage
Low (6-8)	22	18.33
Medium (9-12)	53	44.17
High (13-15)	45	37.50
Total	120	100

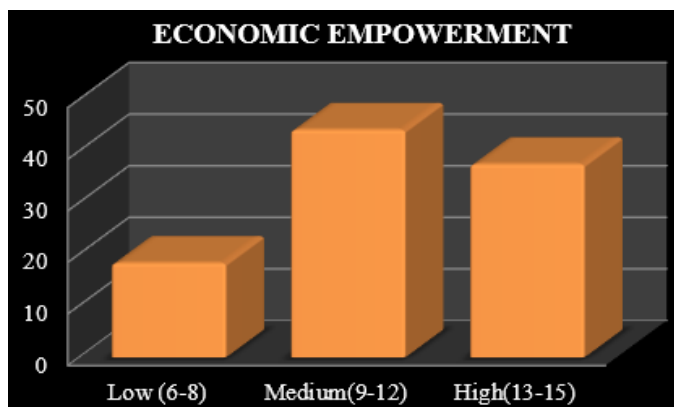


Figure 3: Distribution of Respondents according to the Level of Economic Empowerment through the Market.

Findings of the above table indicates that majority of women 44.17% belonged to medium Level of Economic Empowerment through the Market, 37.50% to high and 18.33% to low level of Level of Economic Empowerment through the Market.

Table 7: Distribution of Respondents according to the Level of Social Empowerment through the Market

Empowerment level	Frequency	Percentage
Low (13-15)	24	20.00
Medium (16-18)	54	45.00
High (19-21)	42	35.00
Total	120	100.00

The above table clearly depicts that majority (45.00%) of the respondents belongs to the medium category of social empowerment followed by 35.50 per cent of respondents who belong to the high-level category. Remaining 20.00 per cent of the respondents were under the low level of empowerment category. The responses were collected on questions like: Increase in participation in discussion about social activities. Increase in participation in social development programmes has increased. Increase in participate in public speaking Awareness on social problems has increased More free to attend social social functions.

Table 8: Distribution of Respondents according to the Level of Political Empowerment through the Market.

Empowerment Level	Frequency	Percentage
Low (6-8)	22	18.33
Medium (9-11)	54	45.00
High (12-14)	44	36.67
Total	120	100.00

Table above table clearly shows that majority (45.00%) of the respondents belongs to the medium category of political empowerment followed by 36.67 per cent of respondents who belong to the high-level category. Remaining 18.33 per cent of the respondents were under the low level of empowerment category. In reference with political indicator, there has been significant increment in the casting of votes, being a supporter of political parties and also attending political meetings. The following questions were asked to rate the respondents on political empowerment of women like: Cast votes, support political parties, Awareness to legal rights of women, attending political meetings and contested in panchayat election

Table 9: Distribution of the Respondent according to their overall Empowerment Level

S. No	Empowerment Level	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Low	24	20.00
2.	Medium	59	49.17
3.	High	37	30.83
	Total	120	100.00

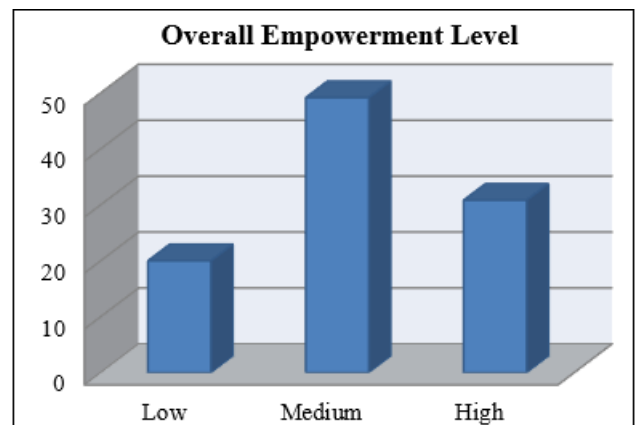


Figure 4: Distribution of the respondent according to their overall empowerment level

Overall empowerment of the women selling vegetables in the Ima market is calculated by summing the value of low, medium and high categories and finding their mean with regard to the four dimensions i.e. economical, social and political empowerment indices. The data in Table 4.3.5 revealed that 49.17 of the respondents belonged to medium category of empowerment. This was followed by 30.83 percent of the respondents appearing in high category of empowerment. The percentage of respondents appearing in low category of empowerment was found to be 20.00 per cent.

5. Conclusion

An effort was made to study Women Empowerment in the Field of Agriculture Marketing with special Reference to

Vegetable Vendors through Ima Market. To find out the level of empowerment of respondents, the areas taken for the study were economic empowerment, social empowerment and political empowerment. Majority of the respondents (49.17%) belonged to medium category of empowerment followed by 30.83 per cent belonging to high category of empowerment. Remaining 20.00 per cent of the respondents belonged to low level of category.

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