

Perception of husband and wife on women empowerment in family life

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ABSTRACT

Women empowerment is considered as the powerhouse of global development. This study attempted to explore the perception of husband and wife regarding the effects of women empowerment on family life. The research was conducted at three upazila of Khulna district, Bangladesh. Data were collected from purposively selected ninety (90) respondents using a structured questionnaire during January 2023. The focus variable named as effect of women empowerment on family life was measured using a 5-point rating scale. Results indicated that, education is the key factor of enhancing women empowerment. The findings exposed that almost two-third (64.4%) of the male respondents perceived medium effect of women empowerment on family life while majority of the female counterparts (60%) perceived high effect respectively. However, majority (95.6%) of the male respondents opined that women empowerment generate more income to the family whereas most (98.3%) of the female respondents agreed that women empowerment is very effective in giving decision making power. It was found that respondents' age, educational qualification, organizational participation, training exposure, cosmopolitanism, knowledge, and attitude demonstrate significant relationship with the focus variable. It is high time to change our attitude towards women empowerment for overall development of the world.

INTRODUCTION

Women represent about half of the entire population, and nothing is possible globally without the contribution of women (Klugman et al., 2014) which is imperative for achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs) effectively and efficiently (Hossain, 2021). From the creation, women are doing multidimensional activities for the overall development of the world, but their participation is always neglected (Kabeer, 2005). However, time has changed and at present, women empowerment is extensively recognized as an essential dimension for global advancement (Cornwall & Rivas, 2015; Malhotra & Schuler, 2005). The inclusion of women empowerment and gender equality in Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as well as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) expose its significance comprehensively (Hasan et al., 2015; ul Haq, 2017). According to (Sen, 2008) empowerment

consists of several qualitative attributes of human beings like sovereignty to decide on alternative opportunities, capacities of person, reduction of vulnerabilities, etc. while many authors (Duflo, 2012; Yesmin et al., 2007) explained women empowerment, as the capabilities to make decision independently by the women and offering best options to them so that, they can precisely decide about themselves and their surroundings.

On the contrary, (Paul et al., 2016) argued that economic empowerment is the fundamental solution for the women to face socio-political barriers which is indispensable for the overall development of the world. Moreover, the research report of (Batool et al., 2020) exposed that women empowerment through economic solvency is crucial with a view to understanding women's rights and accomplishment of wider development goals like, reduction of poverty, economic growth,

education, health, social security, and inclusive wellbeing.

Although, women contribute a lot regarding human capital formation as well as nation building like men but their position and status in the society is still far behind the projected level (Mahmud et al., 2012). In our society, there is a clear discrepancy between male and female in terms of various aspects like sex ratio, literacy rate, child infanticide, wage differentials, health and nutrition indicators, ownership of land and property, access to finance and in power and culture as well (Zaman et al., 2008). In addition, (Samanta, 2009) reported that in our society, a woman has to do nearly all types of works and she gets little or no time to think about herself as well as her linking which badly affect her mind and health as well, but it is a matter of sorrow that in our society, these contributions do not recognise properly. According to (Mahjabeen, 2008), women are more cordial to spend their income for the well-being of their families comparing to men whereas (Batliwala & Dhanraj, 2007) argued that the overall empowerment of women is a blessing for the development of the world. However, the overall progress of developing nations like India and Bangladesh is largely dependent on women empowerment as half of its population is women (Parvin et al., 2004; Sharma et al., 2021b).

Bangladesh is a small country having large population and the overall development is impossible without the equal participation of women in all dimensions. Although women sacrifice their life towards eradication of poverty, building gender equality and inclusive economic development but the perception of our society regarding their contribution is different whereas the percentage of women empowerment is increasing rapidly all over the world (Hasan et al., 2015). The effect of women empowerment is still being perceived in various angles by both husband and wife in modern society (Peinado & Serrano, 2018). The positive outlook of social entities about women empowerment can ensure better socio-economic growth as well as sound family life for the upcoming generations. Although, the proportion of women empowerment is increasing significantly but there is a knowledge gap on perception of husband and wife about the effect of

women empowerment on family life. Considering the current situation, the research was conducted to assess the perception of husband and wife regarding the effects of women empowerment on family life based on research in Bangladesh. The specific objectives of the study were (i) assessment of the socio-economic attributes of the respondents, (ii) finding out the factors influencing women empowerment in Bangladesh, (iii) measuring the effect of women empowerment on family life as perceived by husband and wife and (iv) investigating the relationship between the socio-economic attributes and the effect of women empowerment.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Study location and sampling

The study was conducted in three upazila namely Dumuria, Dacope and Batiaghata under Khulna district of Bangladesh (Figure 1). The choice of the study area was premised on the fact that people of this area are involved in various income generating activities and conscious about women empowerment. Before selecting these upazila, a comprehensive conversation by the researcher with the concerned personnel and department were performed with a view to contacting with the focused clientele groups.

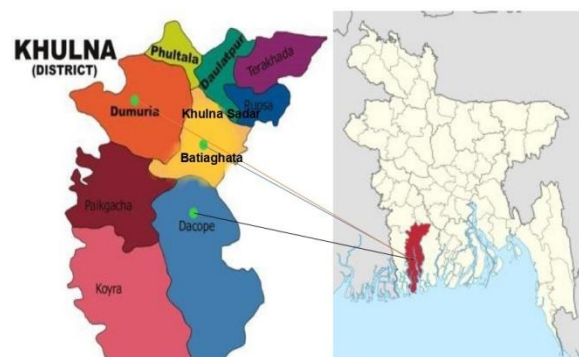


Figure 1: Map demonstrating the research area, (Source: Khulna district Wikipedia)

With a view to selecting the respondents', purposive random sampling technique was employed. Most of the respondents in the above upazila are involved in various income generating activities whose livelihood mainly depends on

agriculture-based farming activities. From each upazila a total number of 30 respondents (50 percent male and 50 percent female) were selected purposively who are involved in different income generating activities as well as being married. So, the total sample size was ninety (90).

Data collection

Both primary and secondary data were used for the study. Prior to collect data with face-to-face interview method, three Key Informant Interviews (KIIS) with local leader, NGO personnel and Upazila Social Service Officer (USSO) were conducted in the study area to get in-depth information. For the study, the researcher used the collected qualitative data to outline the interview schedule effectively. A face-to-face interview session, with the selected (90) respondents was conducted through a structured questionnaire in January 2023.

Selection and measurement of variables

Effect of women empowerment on family life was considered as focus variable whereas the selected attributes of the participants; age, religion, occupation, family size, family type, educational qualification, land holding, annual family income, credit received, cosmopolitanism, training received, organisational participation, knowledge and attitude were treated as explanatory variables. However, for assessing the focus variable a total number of 20 statements such as, give decision making power, increase literacy rate, reduce dowry system, absence of parent derail the children, generate more income, prevent early marriage etc. were incorporated. A 5- point rating scale like very strongly agree, strongly agree, moderately agree, somewhat agree, not at all agree was utilized against the rating scale correspondingly. The score assigned for the selected rating scale were 4, 3, 2, 1, and 0 respectively. The perception score of the clientele groups varied from 0-80 and based on perception score, the participants were grouped into the subsequent categories. Low effect perceived was scored as 27, medium effect perceived as 28-54 and high effect perceived as >54.

The respondents perception index score was determined by using the following formula (Billah et al., 2021):

$$RPI = N_1 \times 4 + N_2 \times 3 + N_3 \times 2 + N_4 \times 1 + N_5 \times 0$$

Where,

RPI= Respondents Perception Index

N_1 = No of respondents rated the effect of women empowerment as very strongly agree,

N_2 = No of respondents rated the effect of women empowerment as strongly agree,

N_3 = No of respondents rated the effect of women empowerment as moderately agree,

N_4 = No of respondents rated the effect of women empowerment as somewhat agree,

N_5 = No of respondents rated the effect of women empowerment as not at all agree,

The RPI score varied from 0-360, where 0 mention no effect while 360 mention highest effect of women empowerment on family life. Besides, the percentage of perception was estimated using the subsequent formula (Hamid et al., 2020) to know the relative proportion of the statements associated to perception concerning the effect of women empowerment on family life.

$$\% \text{ Perception Index (PI)} = \frac{\text{Observed perception index score}}{\text{Possible highest perception index score}} \times 100$$

Data analysis

For analysing the collected data both inferential and descriptive statistics were used. Different descriptive statistical measures such as number, frequency, range, percentage, mean, standard deviation (SD) and rank order were used for describing and categorising the variables. The association between the selected attributes of the participants and their perception concerning the effect of women empowerment on family life was explored by utilizing correlation coefficient. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) computer program (version. 27) was employed for analysing the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-demographic attributes of the respondents

The findings of the research expose that over half (52.3 percent) of the respondents were middle aged whereas majority (82.6 percent) of them was from Muslim household. The results also explore that a large portion of the respondents (42.2 percent) were involved in service as their occupation which is a good sign of development, whereas about three-fourth of the respondents (75.6 percent) belonged to small family. Moreover, the findings reveal that majority of them (85.6 percent) lived in nuclear family which is the general characteristics of modern society and most (93.4 percent) of them had education at various degree, which is greater than national level 74.9 percent, while majority (54.4 percent) of them had medium land holdings. The large portion (44.4 percent) of the respondents had medium annual income which is larger than the national level of 25 percent (BBS, 2020), although about three-fourth of them (76.7 percent) did not have any credits. The findings also explore that majority (46.7 percent) of the respondents had medium cosmopolitanism while over half of them (54.4 percent) didn't participate at any institutional training. In addition, majority (56.7 percent) of the respondents had no organisational participation. It was found that a large portion of the respondents (70 percent) had medium knowledge while about half (53.3 percent) of them had moderately favorable attitude towards the effect of women empowerment on family life. Many authors (Aysha et al., 2018; Biswas & Kabir, 2002; Maheshwari & Goyal, 2014) examined nearly similar sorts of socio-demographic features of the respondents in perceiving the effect of women empowerment in various aspects of social and economic development. Generally diverse socio-economic features of the respondents accelerate women empowerment in our society.

Factors influencing women empowerment in Bangladesh

There are lots of factor accelerating women empowerment in Bangladesh but in the study area most (97.8 percent) of the respondents opined that education is the key factor of enhancing women empowerment which is strongly supported by the research report of (Ashraf & Farah, 2007), followed by decision making power (95.6

percent), awareness (88.9 percent), attitude (87.8 percent), training exposure (85.5 percent), cosmopolitanism (85.5 percent) etc. According to (Islam & Islam, 2018), education, positive attitude, communication exposure, family type are the fundamental determinants of women empowerment whereas (Bushra & Wajiha, 2015) argued that apart from traditional determinants, bank account plays a vital role in exploring women empowerment. It is generally assumed that educated people expose to various communication media having vast knowledge and positive attitude towards the effect of women empowerment. On the contrary, over half of the respondents (55.6 percent) agreed that religion is the less significant factor influencing women empowerment succeeded by dowry system (57.8 percent), landholdings (61.1 percent), gender discrimination (62.2 percent), social status (63.3 percent) etc. and presented in Table 1. According to Sharma et al. (2021a) participants having various attributes like living in urban areas, religion Islam, a smaller number of children, working status of husband and wife, higher level of education of husband and wife, living in pucca house and monthly family income act as catalyst to accelerate women empowerment.

Perceived Effect of Women Empowerment on Family Life

The respondents in the study area perceived various effects of women empowerment on their family life. The results of the study expose that almost two-third (64.4 percent) of the male respondents perceived medium effect of women empowerment on their family life followed by high (28.9 percent) and low (6.7 percent) effect respectively having standard deviation of 11.00 and mean of 34.86 whereas majority (60 percent) of the female counterparts perceived high effect of women empowerment likewise 35.6 percent medium and only 4.4 percent low effect correspondingly with standard deviation of 9.53 and mean of 41.57. The findings of the study examined that the perceived effect of women empowerment on family life differ between the two clientele groups and the differentiation of perceived effect of the respondents demonstrated in Figure 2.

Table 1: Factors affecting women empowerment in Bangladesh

Factors accelerating women empowerment*	Frequency	Percent (%)	Rank order
Education	88	97.8	1
Decision making power	86	95.6	2
Awareness	80	88.9	3
Attitude	79	87.8	4
Cosmopolitanism	77	85.5	5
Training exposure	77	85.5	5
Organisational participation	74	82.2	6
Knowledge	73	81.1	7
Leadership	72	80.0	8
Age	70	77.8	9
Occupation	69	76.7	10
Number of children	68	75.6	11
Family size	67	74.4	12
Annual family income	66	73.3	13
Social media	65	72.2	14
Credit received	64	71.1	15
Domestic violence	62	68.9	16
Family type	61	67.8	17
Marital status	60	66.7	18
Mass media	60	65.6	19
Social status	57	63.3	20
Gender discrimination	56	62.2	21
Landholdings	55	61.1	22
Dowry system	52	57.8	23
Religion	50	55.6	24

* Multiple response, **Source:** Field survey, (2023)

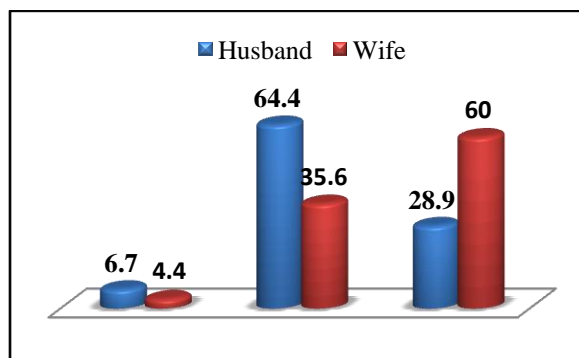


Figure 2: Perceived Effect of Women Empowerment by Husband and Wife

A research report of (Hasan et al., 2015) explored that women empowerment plays a vital role in socio-economic development of Bangladesh while (Hossain, 2000) pointed out that the participation

of rural women in credit program improve the standard of social as well as family life. In addition, (Prodip, 2014) argued that women empowerment helps in fulfilling the basic needs of the family effectively and make significant influence in household decision making, especially the decision regarding their personal needs and getting recreational and treatment facilities. It is the general hypothesis that without the contribution of women, no development is possible as they are half of our total population.

Extent of Perceived Effect of Women Empowerment on Family Life by Husband

The respondents' perception associated to the effect of women empowerment score varied from 0 to 180 where 0 indicate no effect and 180 show highest effect perceived by both the male and

female respondents accordingly. For clear insight of the magnitude of perceived effect of women empowerment on family life a Respondents Perception Index (RPI) for both husband and wife presented in Table 2 and Table 3 respectively.

Table 2: Extent of Effect of Women Empowerment Perceived by Husband (N=45)

Statements of women empowerment*	Respondents Perception Index (RPI)		
	Perception Score	Percent (%)	Rank order
Generate more income	172	95.6	1
Lack of care of children	167	92.8	2
Promote leadership	163	90.5	3
Absence of parent derail the children	160	88.9	4
Enhance the standard of living	157	87.2	5
Increase dependency on home servants	155	86.1	6
Ensure gender equality	151	83.8	7
Weaken the relationship in family	142	78.9	8
Risk of male assaultment	139	77.2	9
Give decision making power to female	127	70.5	10
Create loneliness to children	125	69.4	11
Increase literacy rate	113	62.7	12
Better family planning	112	62.3	13
Affect the peace of family	109	60.5	14
Force to divorce	98	54.4	15
Prevent early marriage	95	52.7	16
Freedom from abuse	91	50.5	17
Reduce dowry system	87	48.3	18
Prevent women trafficking	84	46.7	19
Reduce domestic violence	79	43.9	20

* Multiple response, **Source:** Field survey, (2023)

Table 2 imply that most (95.6 percent) of the male respondents opined that women empowerment generate more income to the family followed by lack of care of children (92.8 percent), promote leadership (90.5 percent), absence of parent derails the children (88.9 percent), enhance the standard of living (87.2 percent) while only 43.9 percent of them agreed that women empowerment is less effective in terms of reducing domestic violence. Several studies (Hossen, 2014; Parvin et al., 2004) explored that participation of women in income generating activities and earning money is the main effect of women empowerment in family life perceived by the respondents.

Table 3: Extent of Effect of Women Empowerment Perceived by Wife (N=45)

Statements of women empowerment*	Respondents Perception Index (RPI)		
	Perception score	Percent (%)	Rank order
Give decision making power	177	98.3	1
Enhance standard of living	173	96.1	2
Ensure gender equality	165	91.7	3
Prevent early marriage	163	90.6	4
Generate more income in family	160	88.8	5
Absence of parent derail the children	156	86.6	6
Better family planning	147	81.7	7
Promote leadership	142	78.9	8
Increase literacy rate	137	76.1	9
Create loneliness to children	129	71.6	10
Freedom from abuse	118	65.5	11
Increase dependency on home servants	113	62.7	12
Reduce dowry system	111	61.7	13
Lack of care of children	107	59.4	14
Prevent women trafficking	105	58.3	15
Weaken the	101	56.1	16

relationship in family			
Reduce domestic violence	98	54.5	17
Risk of male assaultment	89	49.4	18
Affect the peace of family	83	46.1	19
Force to divorce	79	43.9	20

* Multiple response, **Source:** Field survey, (2023)

Data presented in Table 3 pointed out that amongst the selected 20 statements experienced as the effect of women empowerment by the wife on family life; most (98.3 percent) of the respondents agreed that women empowerment is very effective in giving decision making power followed by enhance standard of living (96.1 percent), ensure gender equality (91.7 percent), prevent early marriage (90.6 percent), generate more income in family (88.8 percent) etc. while only 43.9 percent of them observed that women empowerment is responsible in forcing to divorce. The research findings of (Zaman et al., 2008) revealed that effect of women empowerment is visible in all aspects of family life. It is general assumption that women empowerment is the indicator of developing the socio-economic condition of Bangladesh.

Relationship between Socio-demographic Attributes and Perceived Effects of Women Empowerment

The relationship between explanatory and focus variables is summarized in Table 4. For identifying the relationship between the perceived effect of women empowerment and selected attributes of the respondents, Karl Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient (r) was performed. The analysis indicates that seven (7) out of fourteen (14) explanatory variables; age, educational qualification, organizational participation, training exposure, cosmopolitanism, knowledge and attitude revealed substantially correlation with the focus variable. Many authors (Kamal & Haider, 2004; Zafar, 2016) argued that education has positive and significant relation to women empowerment while knowledge, attitude, cosmopolitanism is also crucial. On the contrary, there is no significant relationship of religion,

occupation, family size, family type, land holding, annual family income and credit received with the perceived effect of women empowerment on family life which is supported by the research findings of (Morshed & Haque, 2015).

Table 4: Relationship of Perceived Effect and Selected Attributes of the Respondents

Explanatory variables	Focus variable	Correlation coefficient (r)
Age	Effect of women empowerment	0.319*
Religion		0.004 NS
Occupation		0.113 NS
Family size		0.129 NS
Family type		0.017 NS
Educational qualification		0.718**
Land holding		0.180 NS
Annual family income		0.159 NS
Cosmopolitanism		0.296*
Organisational participation		0.303*
Training exposure		0.311*
Credit received		0.067 NS
Knowledge		0.535**
Attitude		0.679**

** and * significant at 0.01 & 0.05 level of significance correspondingly, NS= Non-Significant

The research findings of (Chakrabarti & Biswas, 2008) examined; women empowerment is correlated with education, communication exposure, attitude, and family type while some studies (Nikkhah et al., 2010; Reddy, 2002) explored that there is significant association between respondents' socio-economic features and women empowerment.

CONCLUSION

The study examined the perception of husband and wife regarding the effect of women empowerment on family life. The findings demonstrated that most of the participants were young to middle aged, higher educated, having nuclear and Muslim family who had medium land holdings and knowledge having favorable attitude towards women empowerment. However, the respondents opined that education, decision making power,

awareness, attitude, training exposure, cosmopolitanism etc. are the most dominant factors that influence women empowerment in Bangladesh. Both husband and wife perceived that women empowerment had medium to high effect on family life. It is explored that respondents' age, educational qualification, organizational participation, training exposure, cosmopolitanism, knowledge, and attitude towards women empowerment has positive and significant affiliation with the effect of women empowerment on family life. So, public awareness along with change in attitude is very crucial and the concern authorities should take appropriate strategies in accelerating women empowerment.

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