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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

#### 'EXPLORING THE CHALLENGES AND SIGNIFICANCE OF EDUCATION FOR WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT: A STUDY IN HOOGHLY DISTRICT'

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#### Abstract

Education is crucial for women's welfare, progress, and empowerment. Women face discrimination from conception to death and need greater influence in all areas of life. Empowerment yields strength and leads to rural development. This article aims to study the role of education in women's empowerment in Chinsurah, Hooghly District. The study examines the obstacles and challenges faced by women's empowerment in Chinsurah, Hooghly District. It uses a descriptive survey design and a questioner to collect data from both employed and unemployed women. The results show that employed women strongly agree on the importance of education, while unemployed women do not recognize this. The majority of employed women believe that economic problems can be solved through empowerment, while unemployed women accept empowerment as a solution. The study also highlights the challenges faced by women due to traditional gender roles, patriarchal systems, cultural and religious beliefs, economic challenges, educational barriers, health and reproductive issues, and technological barriers.

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#### Introduction:-

The process by which women develop and recreate what it means to be in a situation that they were previously denied is known as women's empowerment. There are numerous ways to describe empowerment, but when discussing women's empowerment, it refers to embracing and enabling women who are not already included in the decision-making process to participate."This puts a strong emphasis on participation in political structures and formal decision-making and, in the economic sphere, on the ability to obtain an income that enables participation in economic decision-making." Empowerment is the process that creates power in individuals over their own lives, society, and in their communities. People are empowered when they are able to access the opportunities available to them without limitations and restrictions Such as in education, profession and lifestyle.

Education is essential for women's welfare, progress, prosperity, and empowerment. Women are known to be discriminated against from conception to death. Women need to be given more influence in all areas of life since they are still vulnerable and face discrimination in every industry. Women must swim against the system, which calls for greater strength, in order to combat the socially imposed gender biases. The process of empowerment yields such strength, and education will lead to empowerment. Additionally, women's empowerment will lead to rural development. The purpose of this article is to study the role that education plays in women's overall empowerment and the problems faced by the women for their empowerment in Hooghly District.

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In any community, state, and country, there are always a number of groups that are deprived of their fundamental rights, but these groups are not conscious of their rights. Women would be at the top of this list if we included such elements from society. In actuality, women are every society's most vital component. Despite the fact that everyone knows this, no one is prepared to accept it. As a result, women are no longer given the same level of importance in today's society. Women needed to be empowered because of the growing trend of undervaluing them, which places them in a subordinate position in society and denies them their fundamental rights. We currently enjoy the advantages of living in a free country, but we must consider whether or not each and every one of our residents is truly free or enjoying freedom in the truest meaning of the word. Every Indian citizen is granted a set of fundamental rights when it comes to our nation. Although there is no gender discrimination in our country's structure, our society deprives women of fundamental rights granted to them by the Constitution.

Given the prevailing circumstances, it was necessary to empower women and release them from all constraints. The empowerment of women is not exclusive to Indian society. When we consider the global perspective in this context, we observe that industrialized countries treat women equally. Actually, if we go back at history, we see that women have always been viewed as inferior to males, yet the distinction between the sexes that nature has made is only natural. Education is how we become aware of this fact. Women's empowerment is currently a hot topic on the international scene. After considering every facet of this conversation, we will come to the conclusion that the only way to empower women is via education. As a result, women should become more literate. Education of women is the most powerful tool to change the position in society. Women education in India has been a need of the hour, as education is a foundation stone for the empowerment of woman. Education also brings a reduction in inequalities and functions as a means of improving their status within the family and develops the concept of participation. The empowerment strengthens the innate ability by way of acquiring knowledge, power and experience (Hashemi Schuler and Riley, 1996). Empowerment is the process of enabling or authorizing individual to think, take action and control work in an autonomous way. It is the process by which one can gain control over one's destiny and the circumstances of one's lives. This paper aim to create the awareness among the women's about identifying the impact of education in women overall empowerment.

### **Significance of the Problem**

Women empowerment refers to making women powerful to make them capable of deciding for themselves. Women have suffered a lot through the years at the hands of men. In earlier centuries, they were treated as almost non-existent. As if all the rights belonged to men even something as basic as voting. As the times evolved, women realized their power. There on began the revolution for women empowerment.

As women were not allowed to make decisions for them, women empowerment came in like a breath of fresh air. It made them aware of their rights and how they must make their own place in society rather than depending on a man. It recognized the fact that things cannot simply work in someone's favor because of their gender. However, we still have a long way to go when we talk about the reasons why we need it. Almost every country, no matter how progressive has a history of ill-treating women. In other words, women from all over the world have been rebellious to reach the status they have today. While the western countries are still making progress, third world countries like India still lack behind in Women Empowerment. In India, women empowerment is needed more than ever. India is amongst the countries which are not safe for women. There are various reasons for this. Firstly, women in India are in danger of honor killings. Their family thinks its right to take their lives if they bring shame to the reputation of their legacy.

Moreover, the education and freedom scenario is very regressive here. Women are not allowed to pursue higher education, they are married off early. The men are still dominating women in some regions like it's the woman's duty to work for him endlessly. They do not let them go out or have freedom of any kind.

### **Statement of Problem-**

'Exploring the Challenges and Significance of education for Women's Empowerment: A Study in Hooghly District'

### **Objectives:-**

- 01) To study the significance of education in woman empowerment.
- 02) To find out the challenges and problems face by the women for women empowerment

**Methodology:-**

Methodology is the systematic theoretical analysis of the methods applied to a field of study. It comprises the theoretical analysis of the body of the methods and principals associated with a branch of knowledge. A methodology does not set out to provide solution – it is therefore, not the same as a method, instead , a methodology offers the theoretical under – pinning for understanding which method, set of methods , or best practices can applied to a specific case, for example, to calculative a specific result.

**Variable**

Variable is a characteristic number, or quantity that increases or decreases over time, or takes different values in different situations. Two basic types are –

- 1) Independent variable :Education , socio economic condition , berries
- 2) Dependent variable: empowerment of women

**Population**

A population is the number of organisms of the same species that live in a particular geographic area at the same time, with the capability of interbreeding. Population ecology is the study of how these populations with the environment.

In simple word population is the number of living people that live together in the same place. A city's population is the number of people living in that city. These people are called inhabitants or residents. ...

Usually population refers to the number of humans in a certain area.

**Sample**

Sampling is a method of study from selected items instead of entire big number of unit. A small section called sample. Here, purposive sampling technique which is basically passed on the population and the objective from the study.

There are 50 women, 25 are employed and 25 from unemployed, 50 from Chinsurah under Hooghly District.

Sample distribution table

Employed	Unemployed	Total
25	25	50

**Tools of the study:**

Questioner: A set of questions for obtaining statistically useful or personal information from individual.

A written or printed questioner often with spaces for answers.

A survey made by the use of a questioner.

In the study questioner are used for the study.

**Research Design**

The research design refers to the overall strategy that you choose to integrate the different component of the study in a current and logical way, thereby ensuring you will effectively address the research problem it constitutes the blue print for the collection for the measurement and analysis of data.

The study is carried on with the aim to find out the obstacle and challenges of women empowerment from those belongs to employed and unemployed section. Of Chinsurah, Hooghly District.

The study follows a descriptive study of the survey design. This requires qualitative research where data is collected by the administration of questioner.

**Procedure:-**

In this study the procedure are as follows.

**Data collection**

Firstly permission letter are collected from the institution to work then the researcher went to the rural and household and vice-versa. The researcher evaluates the questioner answer and collects the data.

**Data analysis**

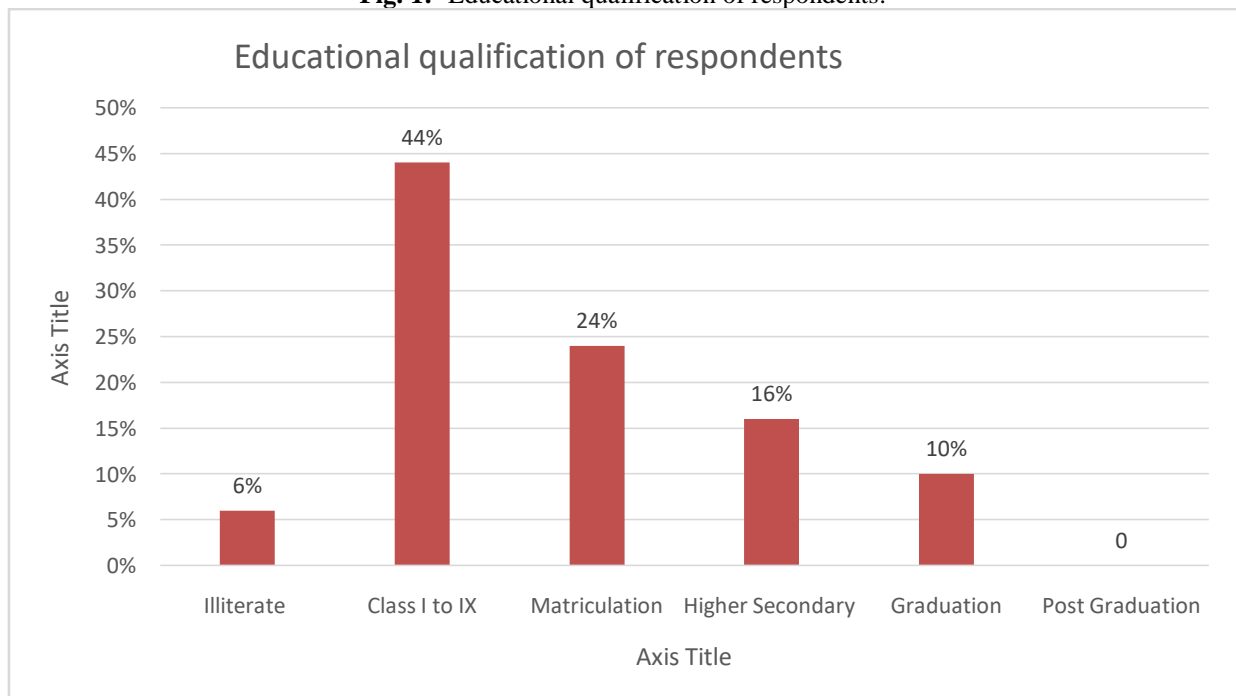
The collected data are edited, coded, classified and tabulated after tabulation data analyze.

**Results:-****Description and interpretation**

A structured questionnaire was prepared based on the objectives and necessity of the empirical study. For each village first a pilot survey was conducted regarding the village level information. Then, the required data have been collected directly from the representative women from households. A woman from each sample household was interviewed personally in a face-to-face contact to collect relevant information. The conversation was conducted in the local language..In order to study the nature causes and consequences of women empowerment an exhaustive household survey was conducted and gathered the information regarding the different indicators of empowerment at the household level and at the community level as mentioned above. Information regarding different household welfare has been collected to assess to impact of empowerment. Particularly data for several issues on domestic violence and on decision regarding family planning have also been collected.So, a generalization was prepared logically. It is natural that in any type of data collection there may be some sort of discrepancy or personal bias. In our case is being tried to minimize this problem through cross checking based on the questionnaire the survey result of some questions are being highlighted with tables and later on with graphical representation. They are as follows-

**Table No. 2:-**Educational qualification of respondents.

Sl. No.	Educational qualification	Numberof respondents	Percentage of responses
1	Illiterate	3	6%
2	Class I to IX	22	44%
3	Matriculation	12	24%
4	Higher Secondary	8	16%
5	Graduation	5	10%
6	Post Graduation	0	0
	Total	50	100%

**Fig. 1:-** Educational qualification of respondents.

According to this table, 44% of women were I to IX passed, 6% are illiterate, and none had earned a postgraduate degree

**Table 3:-** Education Most Important For Empowerment.

Respondents	Total Number of Respondents	No of Respondent Accept The Importance of Education	No of Respondent Do Not Accept The Importance of Education
Employed women	25	25	0
Unemployed women	25	14	11
Total (50)	50	39	11

This table illustrating the responses of employed and unemployed women regarding the importance of education this table displayed that A unanimous agreement (100%) of employed women on the importance of education suggests that employment was strongly correlated with valuing education and: A significant proportion (44%) of Unemployed Women did not recognize the importance of education, potentially highlighting factors like lack of opportunities, differing priorities, or other socioeconomic barriers.

There was a noticeable disparity in attitudes towards education between employed and unemployed women. Employment status may influence how education was perceived as a means to achieve personal or professional growth.

**Table 4:-** Possible To Solve The Economic Problems of Women Through Empowerment.

Response	Employed women (25)	Unemployed women (25)
No of respondent accept	23	20
No of respondent do not accept	2	5

**Fig. 2:-** Possible To Solve The Economic Problems of Women Through Empowerment.

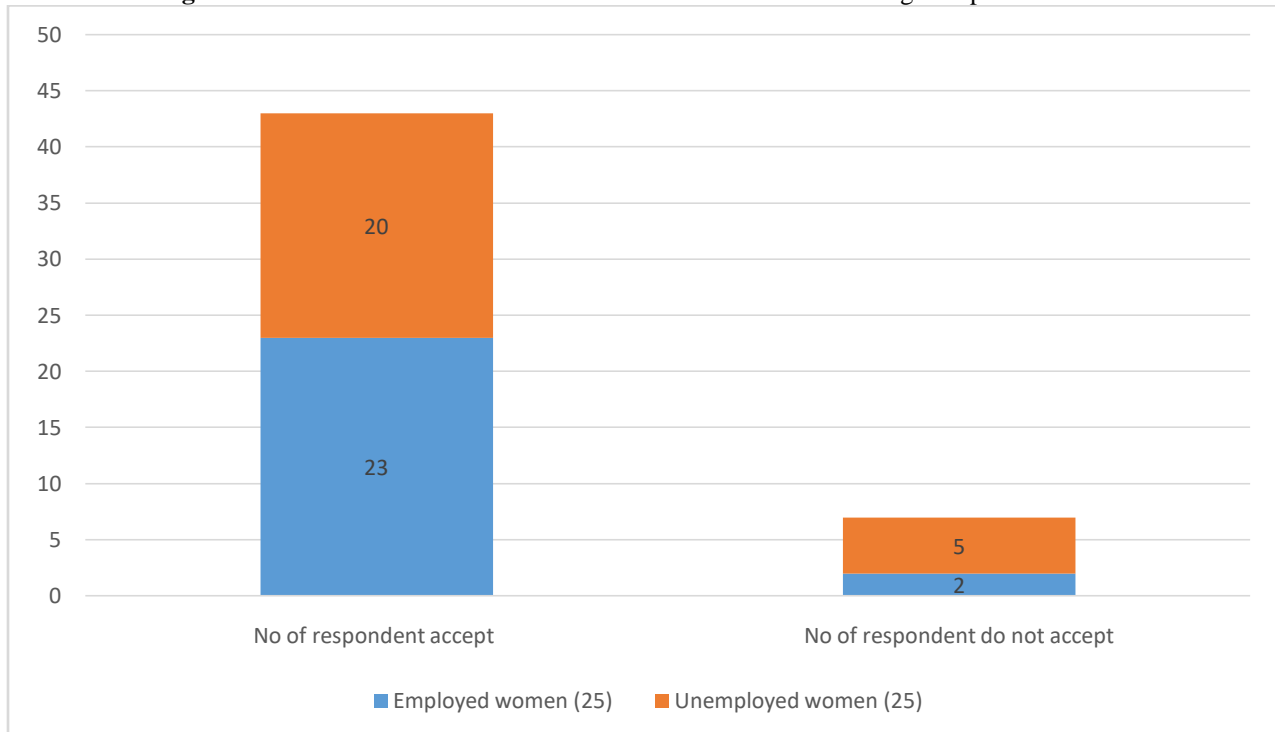


Table- 4 illustrating the responses of employed and unemployed women Possible To Solve The Economic Problems of Women Through Empowerment

A significant majority of employed women (92%) believed that women’s economic problems could be solved through empowerment. This could be attributed to their firsthand experience of the benefits of empowerment in their professional and economic lives.

A majority of Unemployed Women(80%) also accepted empowerment as a solution, though the acceptance rate was slightly lower than that of employed women. This gap might indicate skepticism or unawareness of the tangible impact of empowerment among unemployed women.

Employed women shown slightly higher confidence in empowerment compared to unemployed women (92% vs. 80%). This highlighted a potential divide in how empowerment was perceived or experienced based on employment status.

The data reflected a strong belief (86%) in the role of empowerment in solving women’s economic problems, suggesting a general consensus on its importance.

**Table 5:-** Opinion regarding Establish Own Business.

Response	Employed women (25)	Unemployed women (25)
No of respondent accept	19	15
No of respondent do not accept	6	10
Total	25	25

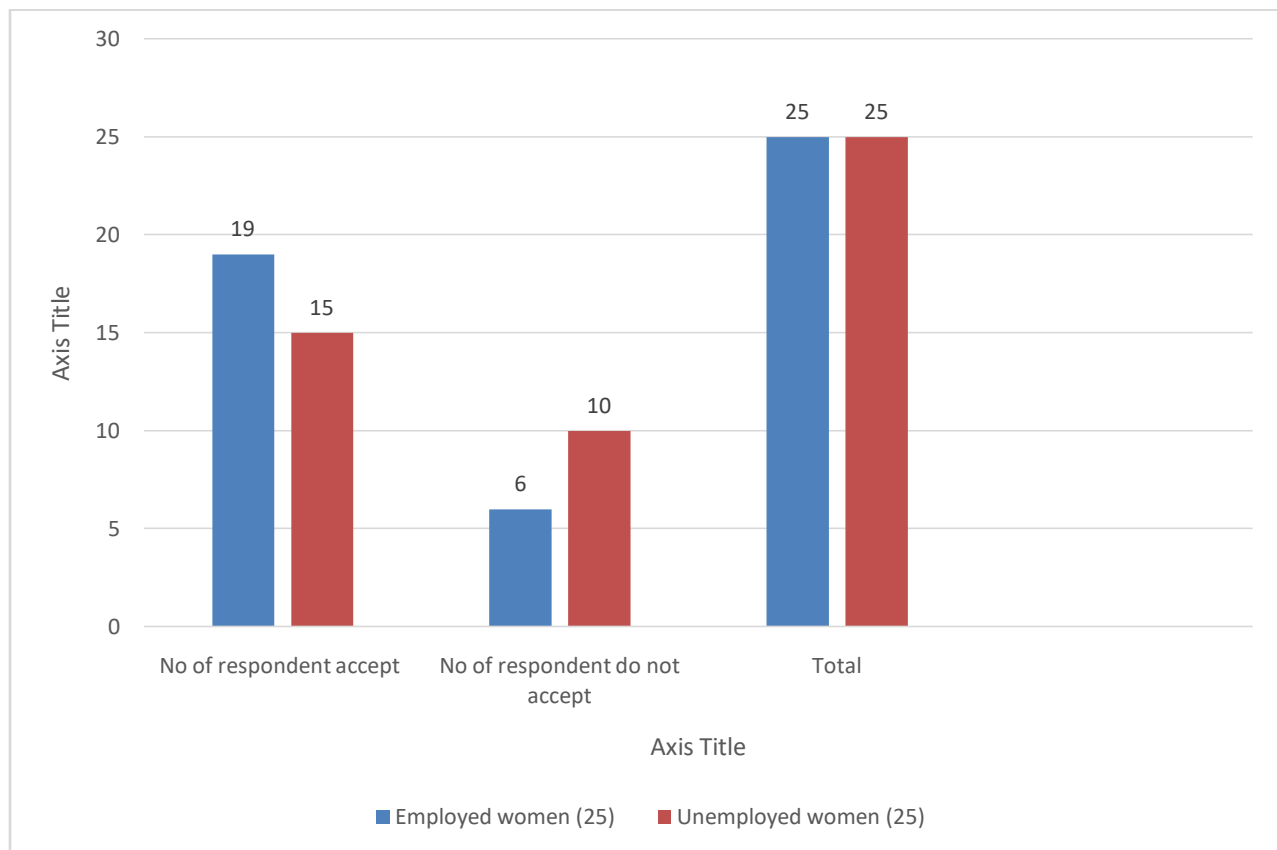


Table- 5 Illustrating the responses of employed and unemployed women regarding Establish Own Business

A higher proportion (76%) of employed women accepted the proposition compared to unemployed women. This could indicate that employed women might have greater confidence or firsthand experience in support of the idea being proposed.

A lower acceptance rate (60%) among unemployed women suggested a potential lack of belief in the idea, likely due to limited exposure or perceived barriers.

There was a notable gap between employed and unemployed women’s acceptance rates (76% vs. 60%). This disparity might reflect differences in access to resources, opportunities, or differing priorities between the two groups.

**Table 6:- Interested to Serve as a occupation.**

Response	Employed women (25)	Unemployed women (25)
Government Service	20	16
Private Job	5	9
Total	25	25

**Fig. 4:- Interested In Serving In Occupation.**

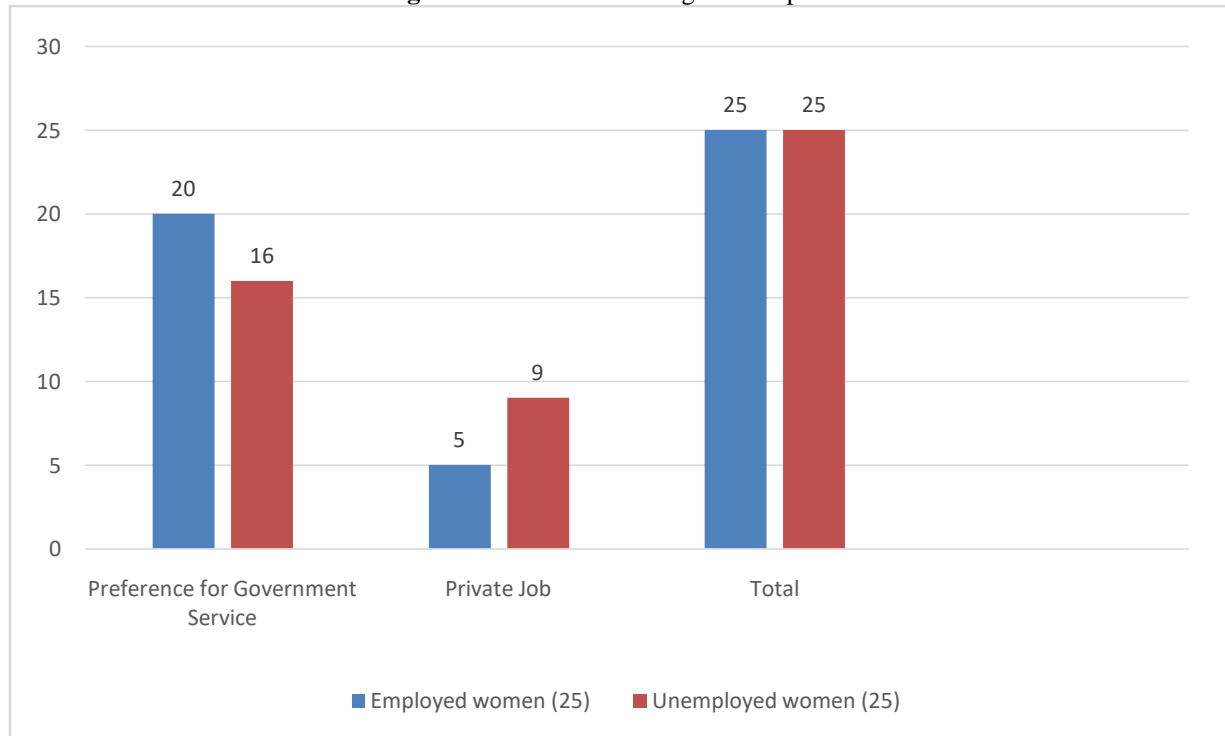


Table 6 shows that a significant majority (80%) of employed women prefer government service, indicating its stability, benefits, and career security as key factors for employed women.

A majority (64%) of Unemployed Women also preferred government service, though the proportion was lower compared to employed women. This suggested that while government jobs were desirable, unemployed women might face challenges accessing them.

Among unemployed women, a higher percentage (36%) were open to private jobs compared to employed women (20%). This could indicate a willingness to explore diverse opportunities or a recognition of the challenges in securing government positions.

Across all respondents, government service was overwhelmingly preferred (72%), reinforcing its status as the most desirable occupation.

**Table 7:-Importance of Empowerment for Women.**

Response	Employed women (25)	Unemployed women (25)
Acceptance of Importance of	20	16

<b>Empowerment for Women</b>		
Do not Accept Importance of Empowerment for Women	5	9
Total	25	25

Fig. 5:- Importance of Empowerment for Women.

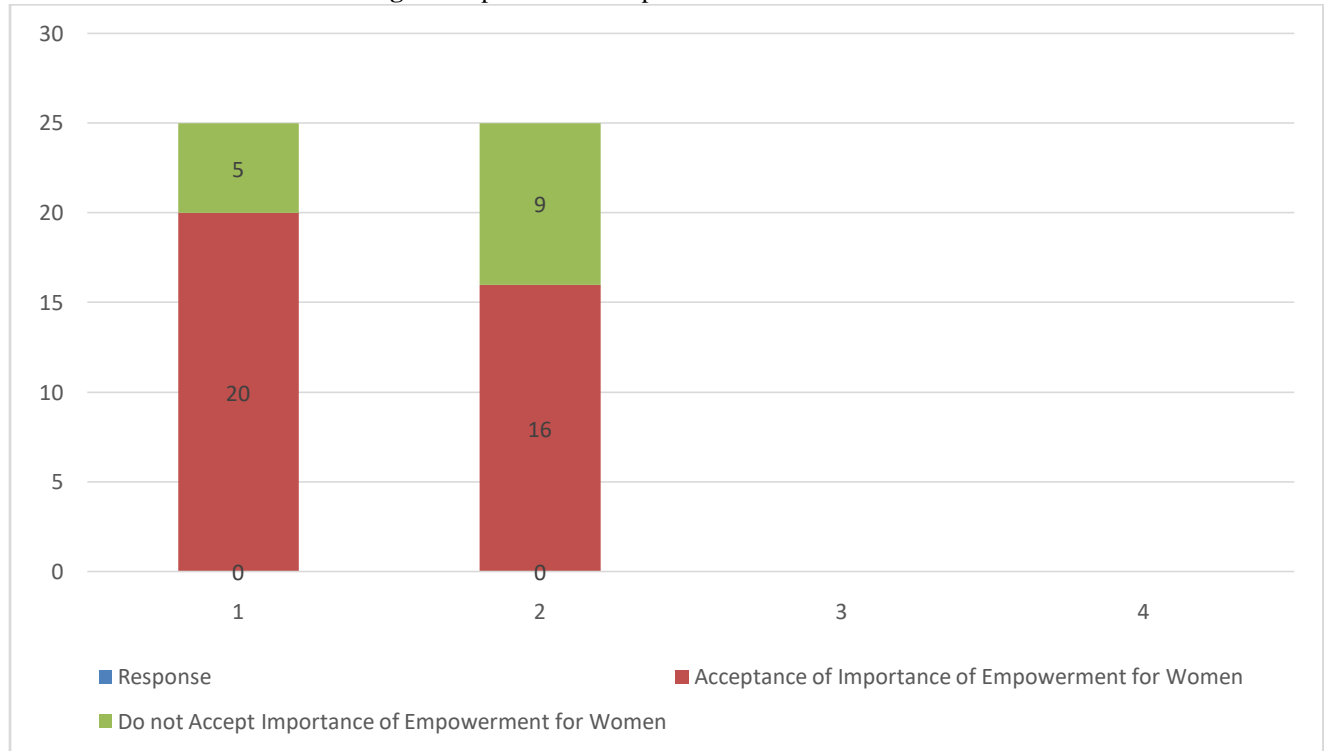


Table no. 7 indicate that a significant majority (80%) of employed women recognize the importance of empowerment for women. This may reflect a greater sense of agency and recognition of empowerment’s role in improving personal and professional lives.

A slightly lower proportion (64%) of unemployed women accepted the importance of empowerment. This could indicate that unemployed women might feel less empowered due to their current economic or social situation, leading to a more skeptical or cautious view.

The data revealed a clear gap in the acceptance rates between employed and unemployed women, with employed women showing a much stronger belief in the importance of empowerment. This disparity could stem from the differing levels of opportunity, resources, and experiences faced by both groups.

Across all respondents, a majority (72%) believed in the importance of women’s empowerment, suggesting that empowerment was widely recognized as beneficial, but there was still a notable minority (28%) who were unsure.

**Challengesfaced by the women for employment**

Women faced several significant challenges in their journey toward empowerment, which was varied based on region, culture, and socio-economic status. These challenges could be broadly categorized into social, economic, political, legal, and psychological barriers. Below are some of the key challenges that hinder women’s empowerment:

**1. Social and Cultural Challenges**

- Traditional Gender Roles: women were expected to fulfill traditional roles such as homemakers and caregivers, which limited their opportunities for education, employment, and personal development.

- Patriarchy and Gender Norms: Societies dominated by patriarchal systems often restrict women's autonomy and access to decision-making processes, whether in the home, workplace, or in government. These norms contributed to gender inequality.
- Cultural and Religious Beliefs: Certain cultural or religious practices might hinder women's access to education, work, or freedom. Practices such as early marriage, gender segregation, and restrictions on mobility or personal choices limited women's growth and independence.

## **2. Economic Challenges**

- Women often faced pay disparities, earning less than men for similar work. Economic independence was key to empowerment, and wage inequality makes it harder for women to build financial security and independence. Women, particularly in this have limited access to credit, land ownership, and capital, preventing them from starting businesses or investing in their education.
- They might face discrimination in the workforce, including limited access to leadership positions or career advancement opportunities. Gender biases often shape hiring practices and career trajectories.

## **4. Educational Challenges**

- In this study the researcher overheard that girls had less access to quality education than boys due to financial, cultural, or geographical barriers. Lack of education prevents women from developing the skills needed to compete in the workforce or engage in informed decision-making. Gender Bias in Education is the common factor here

## **5. Health and Reproductive Challenges**

- Limited Access to Healthcare: Many women, faced inadequate healthcare services, particularly in maternal health and reproductive services. Poor health prevented women from fully participating in education and work.
- Most of the women lack control over their reproductive choices, including family planning, leading to early pregnancies and limiting opportunities for education and career advancement.

## **7. Psychological and Emotional Challenges**

Due to societal conditioning, many women internalize feelings of inferiority, which impacted their confidence in pursuing education, career goals, or personal aspirations. Women might feel a heightened fear of failure due to the societal pressure to conform to expectations. This fear could prevent them from taking risks and seizing opportunities that would lead to personal or professional growth.

## **8. Technological Barriers**

- Women, often had less access to technology such as computers and the internet. This limited their ability to access information, education, and job opportunities that are increasingly digital.
- There was often a gender gap in digital literacy, with women having less access to or training in technology. This further limited their economic and educational opportunities, as well as their ability to engage in the modern digital economy.

## **Findings**

1. 44% of women are I to IX passed, 6% are illiterate, and none have earned a postgraduate degree.
2. A vast majority (78%) of all respondents acknowledge the importance of education, indicating a strong consensus overall.
3. strong belief (86%) in the role of empowerment in solving women's economic problems, suggesting a general consensus on its importance.
4. Across all respondents, a majority (68%) accept the proposition, indicating general agreement but with a significant minority (32%) expressing doubt or disagreement.
5. Private jobs are less popular (28%), possibly due to perceived limitations in job security, benefits, or work-life balance.
6. Across all respondents, a majority (72%) believe in the importance of women's empowerment, suggesting that empowerment is widely recognized as beneficial, but there is still a notable minority (28%) who are skeptical or unsure.
7. Limited Access to Technology is one of the major technological challenge for women empowerment.
8. Most of the women lack control over their reproductive choices, including family planning,

9. Girls have less access to quality education than boys due to financial, cultural, or geographical barriers
10. Gender Bias in Education is the common factor here

**Summary –**

It is being described and explained that the women’s empowerment conceptually and qualitatively. The study focuses on the obstacles and challenges of women empowerment in Chinsurah, Hooghly District. It uses a descriptive survey design and a questioner to collect data from both employed and unemployed women. The research design integrates various components to effectively address the problem. The procedure involves collecting permission letters from institutions, visiting rural and household areas, and evaluating the questioner's answers. The collected data is then edited, coded, classified, and tabulated.

Objectives of this study are

- 01) To study the significance of education in woman empowerment.
- 02) To find out the challenges and problems face by the women for women empowerment

This study shows that employed women (100%) strongly agree on the importance of education, while unemployed women (44%) do not recognize this. Employment status may influence how education is perceived as a means for personal or professional growth. A majority of employed women (92%) believe that women’s economic problems can be solved through empowerment, attributed to their firsthand experience of the benefits. Unemployed women (80%) also accept empowerment as a solution, though the acceptance rate is slightly lower than that of employed women. Employed women show slightly higher confidence in empowerment compared to unemployed women (92% vs. 80%). A notable gap in acceptance rates (76% vs. 60%) might reflect differences in access to resources, opportunities, or differing priorities between the two groups. A majority of unemployed women prefer government service (72%), while a significant majority (80%) recognize the importance of empowerment for women.

Traditional gender roles, patriarchal systems, cultural and religious beliefs, economic challenges, educational barriers, health and reproductive challenges, psychological and emotional challenges, and technological barriers all contribute to gender inequality. Traditional roles, such as homemaking and caregivers, limit women’s opportunities for education, employment, and personal development. Patriarchal systems restrict women’s autonomy and access to decision-making processes, while cultural and religious beliefs, such as early marriage and gender segregation, limit women’s growth and independence. Economic challenges include pay disparities, limited access to credit, land ownership, and capital, and discrimination in the workforce. Educational barriers, such as gender bias in education, health and reproductive services, and psychological and emotional challenges, hinder women’s ability to participate in the workforce and engage in the digital economy.

**Conclusion:-**

In conclusion, this study underscores the pivotal role of education in empowering women and addressing gender inequality. It reveals that employed women recognize education as a critical tool for personal and professional growth, while unemployed women show lower awareness. Barriers such as traditional gender roles, patriarchal systems, economic disparities, and educational limitations continue to impede empowerment. Addressing these challenges requires systemic changes, including equitable access to education, economic opportunities, and healthcare, along with societal shifts to challenge stereotypes. Empowerment is key to women’s self-realization and societal development, necessitating coordinated efforts through policies, community support, and awareness initiatives to create lasting change

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