

Assessing Empowerment Status of Women Tea Garden Workers: A Case of Doldoli Tea Garden, Sylhet

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Abstract

The main purpose of the study was to assess the extent of empowerment of women tea garden workers. Eight factors have been taken into consideration as the bases of empowerment. Those were -influence in family decision making, participation in social and political activities, mobility, access to financial organization, control over economic activity, control over interpersonal activity, ownership asset and savings. The study was conducted in Doldoli tea garden of Sylhet Sadar Upazila. Out of 328 women involved in tea garden 100 women were sampled by following simple random technique. A pre-tested interview schedule was used to collected data from of a sample of 100 women. A four point rating scale was used to assess the focus variable. The overall empowerment score of a respondent was calculated by summing up her scores of these 8 factors. Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) was employed to explore relationship between extents of empowerment of the respondents with their selected characteristics. The selected characteristics were age, level of education, family education, marital status, family size, credit received, training received and problems faced by the women tea worker in working condition. The findings from the study explored that majority (43%) of the women tea garden workers had very low level empowerment; while 28% had low and 29% had medium empowerment. The characteristics age, level of education, family education, marital status, family size, credit received and training received were positively correlated with empowerment. So, the women empowerment status was very low but they started involving in various economic activities to improve their empowerment status.

Key words: Women empowerment, ownership and economic activity.

Introduction

Bangladesh has been a role model in women's empowerment in the past decade, and the country is experiencing an appreciable change in society because of its efforts in this regard. Half of the population of Bangladesh is women and their economic participation has been increased significantly. The number of working women increased to 18.6 million in 2016-17 from 16.2 million in 2010 (Bangladesh Tea Board Report, 2018). Bangladesh secured the 47th position among 144 countries in 2017 as per The Global Gender Gap Report, whereas India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan and Pakistan remain at 108, 109, 111, 124 and 143 positions respectively (Dhaka

Tribune, 2015). The women tea garden workers, the most neglected position of the society working generation after generation in the tea garden benefiting the owners but remain as neglected position of the society. In contrast to this scenario, women working in the tea garden are not getting proper attention neither from government side nor from the garden owners. They are not happy in their working station (Nasim, 2013). Neither have they had economic security nor social security. The wages which are paid to them is very low and below standard (Lenin, 1913). Female workers are engaged verily in collection and all kinds of processing of tea leaves including leaf

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plucking because they (women) have more “skilled and nimble fingers than men” (Majumder and Roy, 2012). The conditions of the women laborers of tea garden in Bangladesh are exploring the social and job environment with inclusion of consciousness level as the deplorable scenario of their life. 92 percent women think that they are being physically tortured and mentally harassed by their husband (Hossain, 2012). In the laborer lines of a tea estate, they are isolated from the majority Bengali community always treat them as untouchable and lower level of people (Gain, 2015). The tea plantation industry is dominated by female workers. Approximately 64% of all workers are female (The Daily Star, 2015). It is observed that many tea plantation workers start work at their early age. In a number of instances, children are engaged in the tea gardens as relievers or helper of their parents (Chowdhury *et al.*, 2011). Once they grow up, they change their status so

that they are no longer assistants to or relievers of their parents but temporary workers and a portion of them become permanent workers. Workers who start working at an early age do not get access to education. Women are highly intended to be engaged in job for ensuring their livelihood collection as well as economical solvency (Nath, 2013). But it is very much apologetic that females are always being suffered in their job field by surrounding social settings as well as co-workers or colleagues. So, the present study was formulated with following specific objectives:

1. To assess the extent of empowerment of women tea garden workers
2. To explore the factors associated with empowerment women tea garden workers
3. To determine the relationships between women's empowerment status and their selected characteristics

Methodology

The study was conducted in Sylhet sadar upazila. Doldoli tea garden which is located in the north-west of side of the Shahi Eidgha and Scholars Home of School under Sylhet Sadar upazila was selected for the study. Almost every single family has one or two persons working in the garden working is the garden in their main occupation. As the sample of the study, 100 female workers were randomly sampled from a population size of 328. In order to collect necessary information, an interview schedule was prepared based on the objectives of the study. Data were collected by using interview schedule from the period April to May, 2018.

The extent of empowerment of women tea garden workers was the focus variable of

the study. Overall empowerment of women was ascertained by checking their extent of influence in eight selected characteristics and the possible score could be ranged from 0 to 586. The nine selected characteristics were age, level of education, family education, marital status, family size, credit received, training received and problems faced by the women tea worker in working condition. The collected data were properly edited and coded before final analysis. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 was used for data management. Descriptive statistical techniques such as percentage, frequency, mean, standard deviation and correlation were used for data interpretation.

Individual characteristics of Women Workers

The age of the respondents ranged from 18 to 66. The mean age was 36.09 years and standard deviation was 10.99. Based on age, respondents were classified into three categories as young, middle and old age as shown in Table 1. The level of education of the respondents ranged from 0 to 12 years of the schooling having a mean of 0.49 with a standard deviation of 0.70. On the basis of their level of education respondents were

classified into three categories as shown in Table 1. The level of family education of the respondents ranged from 0 to 12 years of the schooling having a mean of 1.95 with a standard deviation of 1.18. On the basis of their education respondents were classified into three categories as shown in Table 1. The marital status of the respondent women range from 0 to 4 with mean of 1.14 and standard deviation 0.77. On the basis of marital status they were classified into four categories as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Distribution of the respondents according to their selected characteristics (n=100)

Characteristics	Possible score range (observed score)	Categories	Respondents		Mean	SD
			Number	Percent (%)		
Age (Actual years)	Not defined (18 to 66 years)	Young aged (18-30))	42	42	36.09	10.99
		Middle aged(31-50)	48	48		
		Old aged (>50)	10	10		
Level of personnel education (Year of schooling)	Not defined (0 to 16 years of schooling)	Illiterate(0)	15	15	1.95	1.18
		Primary (1-5)	83	83		
		Secondary (6-10)	2	2		
		Above secondary (>10)	0	0		
Level of family education (Year of schooling)	Not defined (2 to 10 members)	Illiterate(0)	64	64	0.49	0.70
		Primary (1-5)	24	24		
		Secondary(6-10)	12	12		
		Above secondary (>10)	0	0		
Marital status	Not defined	Unmarried	5	5	1.14	0.77
		Married	62	62		
		Widow	20	20		
		Separated	13	13		
Family size (Number of family members)	Not defined	Small (2-5)	48	48	7.28	3.48
		Medium (6-10)	27	27		
		Large (above 10)	25	25		
Annual Income ('000' Tk)	Not defined (41 to 50)	Low	1	1	42.57	4.57
		Medium	99	99		
		High	0	0		
Credit received ('000' Tk)	Not defined (0 to 20)	No credit	44	44	6.45	6.16
		Low credit	13	13		
		Medium credit	13	13		
		High credit	0	0		

Table 1 (Contd.)

Characteristics	Possible score range (observed score)	Categories	Respondents		Mean	SD
			Number	Percent (%)		
Training received (Number of days)	Not defined (0 to 15 days)	No training	50	50	4.01	4.82
		Less training	21	21		
		Medium training	19	19		
		High training	10	10		
Problems faced by the women worker at working condition	Not defined (5 to 27)	No problem	8	8	14.31	7.42
		Low problem	24	24		
		Medium problem	44	44		
		High problem	24	24		
		Medium (11-20)	91	82.7		
		High (>20)	2	1.8		

SD: Standard Deviation

The family size of the respondents ranged from 3 to 16. The mean was 7.28 and the standard deviation was 3.84. On the basis of their family size they were classified into three categories as shown in Table 1. The annual income of respondent was measured in “thousand taka” per year in the present study and it ranged from 41 to 50 thousand taka with a mean of 42.57 and standard deviation of 4.57. On the basis of annual income of women tea garden workers, they were classified into three categories as shown in Table 1. Credit received respondent ranged from 0 to 20 thousand taka with the mean of 6.45 and standard deviation of 6.16 respectively. Based on the credit received, the women were classified into four categories as shown in Table 1. Training received respondent ranged from 0 to 15 days with the mean of 4.01 and standard deviation of 4.82 respectively. Based on the training received, the women

were classified into four categories as shown in Table 1. Problems faced by the women tea worker in working condition respondent ranged from 5 to 27 with the mean of 14.31 and standard deviation of 7.42 respectively. Based on problem faced by the women tea worker in working condition were classified into three categories as shown in Table 1.

Empowerment Status of Women Tea garden workers

Overall empowerment of women was ascertained by checking their extent of influence in eight selected characteristics and the possible score could be ranged from 0 to 586 while the obtained score ranged from 100 to 586. On the basis of their overall empowerment of women the respondents were classified into three categories as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Categorization of Women according to Their Overall Empowerment

Category of empowerment	Respondent women		Range		Mean	Standard Deviation
	No.	Percent (%)	Min	Max		
Very low	43	43				
Low	28	28	100	586	266.89	175.73
Medium	29	29				
Total	100	100.0				

The average empowerment score 266.89 was 29 percent of the women workers had medium empowerment, 43 percent had very low and only 28 percent had low empowerment. The findings from Table 2

reveal that empowerment status of women is medium. They are not fully empowered but they are educated and involved in different work.

Table 3 Categories of Women Tea Garden Workers Depending upon Their Empowerment Factor

Empowerment factors	Range		Mean	Standard Deviation
	Minimum	Maximum		
1. Influence in family decision making process	0	11	2.85	4.06
2. Participation in social and political activity	0	10	2.69	4.07
3. Control over the economic activity	0	6	2.09	1.83
4. Mobility	0	9	2.96	2.59
5. Control over interpersonal activity	0	11	2.55	3.26
6. Savings	0	7	0.28	2.72
7. Ownership of other assets	0	6	1.80	2.18
8. Access to financial organization	0	6	1.63	1.67

From Table 3, it was observed that women tea garden workers had moderately influenced in almost all family decision. They have greater influenced like Daily food menu, Daily house expenditure, Buying the cloth, Purchasing and selling household furniture and Buying and selling of cattle goat and poultry bird etc. But in the some cases they have little influence .majority of the women had medium mobility. The relatives house remain in the nearby area, so they used to go the relatives house frequently and occasionally they go in the market for buying some cloth or important things. Women workers are mostly participate in the village *shalish*, village religious program, village fair etc. now-a-days the women as quite conscious

about their voting casting. Their participation in casting votes is quiet good. They are less participating in public meeting and organization etc. that the women frequently take credit from BRAC; they are utilizing their credit for family. Seldom have they taken credit from NGOs .but they don't go to the government bank. They frequently control over income because they contribute a considerable amount of the family expenditure. The women workers had moderate participation in almost all sphere of domestic decision making. In the some cases, they have greater influence like one women helps another women, child, health, child education, purchasing of household furniture buying of clothes, buying and

selling of cattle, etc but in some cases they have little influence to choose over spouse selection and their timing of marriage and using family planning methods. 42 percent women had no savings, 23% savings of the women workers had up to 15% percent savings and 10 percent savings from their income .saving is income not spent, or deferred consumption. Method of saving includes putting money aside in organization.

Relationships between the Selected Characteristics of Women Tea Garden Workers and Their Empowerment

Pearson's product moment co-efficient of correlation (r) was computed in order to explore the relationship between the selected characteristics of the women and their extent of empowerment .The relationship between the focus variable and selected characteristics of women has been presented in Table 4.

Table 4 Relationships between the Selected Characteristics of Women Tea Garden Worker and Their Empowerment

Focus variable	Selected characteristics of women	r-values with 98df
Empowerment of women	Age	.711**
	Level of education	.740**
	Family education	.017
	Marital status	.203*
	Annual income	-.104
	Family size	.799**
	Credit received	.027
	Training received	.704**
	Problems faced by the women tea worker in working condition	.135

* Significant at 0.05 level of probability

**Significant at 0.01 level of probability

The correlation coefficient between age of the women workers and their empowerment was examined by testing the following null hypothesis, there was no relationship between the age of the women workers and their empowerment and the calculated value was 0.711 as shown in the Table 3.the tabulated value was 0.197 at 0.05 level of probability and 0.257 at 0.01 level of probability with 98 df which was than that of calculated value, so the hypothesis may be rejected. Thus the relationship between age and empowerment was significant and followed a positive trend. The women live in with her father, mother, brother, father-in law and mother-in-law.she cannot live

freely, she cannot go out of the house and cannot do anything if she thinks. But this study present that age of the women play a significant role in their empowerment. There was no relationship between the education of the women workers and their empowerment and the calculated value was "r" 0.740 as shown in the Table 3. The calculated value was higher than the tabulated value was 0.197 at 0.05 level of probability with 98 df which was than that of calculated value, so the hypothesis may be rejected. Thus the relationship between education and empowerment was insignificant and followed positive trend. There was no relationship between the

family education of the women worker and their empowerment and the calculated value was (.017) as shown in Table 4. The tabulated value was less than 0.197 at 0.05 level of probability and 0.257 at 0.01 level of probability with 98 df which was than that of calculated value, so the hypothesis may be accepted. Thus the relationship between family education and empowerment was no significant and followed a positive trend. Education enables an individual to become more socialized, to have wider outlook, to fight against injustice and also to gain better knowledge about every sphere of life both from culture and economic point of view of society. The calculated value was higher than the tabulated value was 0.197 at 0.05 level of probability with 98 df which was than that of calculated value, so the hypothesis may be rejected. Thus the relationship between marital status and empowerment was significant and followed a positive trend. That is marital status of a women did not play any role in empowerment process. The calculated value was less than the tabulated value was 0.197 at 0.05 level of probability with 98 df which was than that of calculated value, so the hypothesis may be accepted. Thus the relationship between annual income and empowerment was insignificant and followed a negative trend. There was no relationship between the family size of the women workers and their empowerment and the calculated value was 0.799. The tabulated value was 0.197 at 0.05 level of probability and 0.257 at 0.001 level of probability with 98 df which was than that

of calculated value, so the hypothesis may be rejected. Thus the relationship between family size and empowerment was significant and followed a positive trend. That is family size of a women worker did not play any role in empowerment process. The calculated value was less than the tabulated value was 0.197 at 0.05 level of probability with 98 df which was than that of calculated value, so the hypothesis may be accepted. Thus the relationship between credit received and empowerment was insignificant and followed a positive trend. That is credit received of a women worker did not play any role in empowerment process. The tabulated value was 0.197 at 0.05 level of probability and 0.257 at 0.01 level of probability with 98 df which was than that of calculated value, so the hypothesis may be rejected. Thus the relationship between training and empowerment was significant and followed a positive trend. That is training received of a women worker did not play any role in empowerment process. There was no relationship between of problems faced by the women worker and their empowerment. The tabulated value was less than 0.197 at 0.05 level of probability and 0.257 at 0.01 level of probability with 98 df which was than that of calculated value, so the hypothesis may be accepted. Thus the relationship between problems faced by the women worker and empowerment was not significant. That is problems faced by women worker did not play any role in empowerment process.

Conclusion

Women tea garden workers were empowered by influencing in family decision making, participation in social and political activities. They can go their

relatives' houses, village fair and religious programme. Now change was observed in their situation through income from tea garden directly. They are involving in work

and being more empowered day by day. This study found that the women empowerment status was very low (43% women had very low empowerment status) and they are found to be involved in various activities. The study revealed that educational level, marital status, family size and training received had positive significant relationships with empowerment of women tea garden workers. Based on the findings of the study some essential policy recommendations have been arisen which are: different NGOs and GOs should take different programmes for improving their

level of education, empowerment of women can be increased by providing training in various aspects. The study conceals that women take major decision about their daily food menu, daily house expenditure, children education and buying cloths but they have little decision making power on economic activities. Without economic power, it is not possible to improve their position both their family and society. So it may be concluded that women were very low empowered but their position can be improved by increasing their involvement in economic activities.

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