‘Awareness, Attitude and Application of Knowledge among Rural Women: A Case Study of Kasargod in Kerala’

Himanshu Tripathi1 and Sunita Yadav2

1Corresponding Author and Research Scholar (Education), Alagappa University, Karaikudi, Tamil Nadu.
Research Area: Higher Education, Economics of Education, Educational Technology
e-mail-ved.van.ved@gmail.com
2Research Scholar (Education), Devi Ahilya Vishwavidyalaya, Indore, Madhya Pradesh
Research Area: Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counselling

Abstract
In this paper an attempt has been made to know the situation of rural woman with regard to three dimensions of knowledge: awareness, attitude and application (3A). For the study, it is assumed that weak socio-economic background of a rural woman is pulling her back in every aspect of life. So, it is necessary to empower them by education/training. A training programme is developed to make women aware of their rights and privileges. The training package is applied upon 20 women village leaders (Group A) of Kasargod district in Kerala for two weeks in Jun 2017 to strengthen their awareness, attitude and application of knowledge (3A). These 20 women imparted non-formal training to 280 females (Group B) for three months from Jul 2017 to Sep 2017 in their respective areas. Later, the sample of 300 females was tested on an achievement test to know the effectiveness of training in terms of women’s awareness, attitude and application (3A). In the study it is found that 20 socio-economically sound females are much stronger in personal empowerment attributes than 280 females who have more strength in social empowerment area. There is change in the attitude of Group B females after the training. Group B is now more positive towards gaining knowledge and becoming aware of their rights. Though their changed attitude is not liked by their male family members. In the application field, Group B women are weaker than Group A. So, we can conclude that socio-economic factor is affecting woman’s empowerment. The time has come to make them more empowered by the way of education. Apart from education and training, it is the duty of their family members to invoke women for their position and participation in every field of life equally.

Keywords: women empowerment, awareness, attitude, application, rights

Introduction:
Traditionally, an Indian woman’s role was well defined as a daughter, wife, housewife (homemaker) and mother. Indian women exist because of the family and for the family. Men-folk used to discourage women from leaving their households for attending social functions. But, women in modern times are entering into certain new fields and actively participating in social, economic and political activities. Increased awareness and education has inspired women to come out of the four walls of the home. Many women have secured eminent positions and offices in administration and public life in modern India. Just like their men counterpart, women are also fond of attending social functions and value her social life quite a lot. Now with the spread of education, modern women has started caring for their health, figure, cultural needs and interests, academic pursuits, social intercourse, religious activities recreational needs, etc. As a wife, she has become more equitarian in character and much more companionable. More freedom of choice in marriage is thus an accompaniment to the change in form of the family. Education has helped them to become aware of political problems and fewer of them are gradually becoming active participants in politics at all levels. To fulfill the economic needs of the family and to achieve higher standards of living, women are participating in economic activities also. So, women are participating in socio-economic activities to maintain highest standard of living for their family. This is a one side story where this community is progressing because of educational knowledge and awareness. Still, women’s equality in terms of education, employment and power is still a dream to be achieved. Majority of our women are still accepting an inferior status. This is by and large due to the fact that, although legally women have equal rights with men, but there is only a minimal change in male dominated society to give equal or upper hand to females. Women are generally not aware of the provisions related to the improvement of their own position. Even if they know about some of the provisions related to their rights of succession, marriage or family, they do not desire to invoke them. The situation is worse in rural areas of India where they totally lack in awareness of their rights, attitude towards their right position/role in the society and knowledge of their rights. Various movement for raising the socio-economic status of women had only involved the middle-class educated women in major urban centers while the great mass of rural women are yet to enjoy their rights and privileges as enshrined in the Constitution.
In a state like Kerala, girls are 65 percent enrolled in Arts, Science and Commerce colleges and this number is highest in the country. Despite of their high number in education, 36.25 per cent of rural women are pursuing occupation in agriculture sector, 13.25 per cent in industrial sector and 30.25 per cent in the service sector (Devi & Vijayaragavan, 2010). Many initiatives like self help groups have been launched in the state for women empowerment. These groups were designed not only as a strategy for poverty alleviation, but also to increase women's access to resources and their power in household decision-making (Sundram, 2001). Likewise, Kudumbasree – a Government Organised Non Governmental Organisation (GONGO) in Kerala has been started towards social, economic and political empowerment of poor women since last few years George (2004).

Despite of their high enrollment and initiatives by the State Government for their empowerment, there is a need to check their condition in the society with special focus upon rural women. Education has a great role in taking them out of backwardness; still rural woman condition is not dignified due to their weak socio-economic condition. Northern region of Kerala comprises of socially and economically backward districts. Hence, there is necessity to check the status of rural women in these districts with respect to awareness, attitude and application of knowledge (3A). Kasargod is one of the backward districts of northern Kerala, with 49 percent of Muslim community. There is a need to check 3A status among rural women in the district which will facilitate in empowering them individually and socially.

Objectives:
(i) To know the extent of awareness among rural women about their rights and privileges.
(ii) To know the attitude of rural women towards their position in the family and society.
(iii) To know the relevance/application of knowledge gained at the school/college level by rural women in their life.

Hypothesis:

There is no disparity among women community in awareness, attitude and application dimension of knowledge with regard to their socio-economic status in Kerala.

Methodology:

In this study, 280 rural women within the age group of 20-35yrs were randomly selected as sample. Their villages belong to four different directions in Kasargod district of Kerala. Out of those, 20 most literate females (Group A) with strong socio-economic background were separated. It is assumed that these 20 women are at par with urban women status with regard to 3A and three dimensions can be further strengthened by a short training. They were trained upon a training package comprising of material regarding awareness about their position, rights, equality provisions, progress prospects in and around the state, privileges provisioned by the state government, skill training courses etc. This Group A was trained enough to impart training to 280 women (each from Gp A trained 14 from Gp B) in their rural areas from Jul 2017 to Sep 2017. Later, an achievement test was conducted to know the development dimension of various personal and social attributes empowering these women in various areas. A comparative analysis shows the difference between personal and social empowerment attributes among the two groups.

Training and Empowerment of Rural Women

The purpose of training is to bring a change in the behaviour of rural women and make them more empowered. The objective of the training for rural women is to equip them with awareness of their right and privileges, positive attitude and application of knowledge (3A) in day to day life. Training involves transfer of knowledge, skills, change of attitude and promoting them towards achievement in order to make them empowered. 20 women (Group A) were trained enough to synthesise the information gained; knowledge and skills attained and get it transmitted to the rest 280 women (Group B) during three months of time in their area of residence. The training was provided by the researcher for a period of two weeks to Group A rural women.

Tool for Data Collection

Initially a preliminary interview of 20 socio-economically sound women was conducted to know their depth in awareness, attitude and application of knowledge in areas responsible for women empowerment. We can say that the interview schedule was the main tool used for collecting information. Later, 280 women were tested upon an achievement test which has open as well as closed ended questions. Questions were pertaining to personal and social empowerment attributes. Personal attributes are signifying areas like confidence, independence, self-respect, mutual respect, family acceptance and relative acceptance. While, social attributes are signifying areas like organisation skill, group cohesiveness, interactive skills, public speaking, awareness on rights, awareness on social problems, participation in social programmes and membership in other organizations (Minimol & Makesh, 2012). Results so obtained are shown in the following tables and figures.
Table 1. Personal empowerment (Group A-20, Group B-280)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributes ↓</th>
<th>Level of personal empowerment (number of individuals)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group →</td>
<td>A  B  A  B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>4  24  12  60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>7  27  9  69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self respect</td>
<td>6  23  11  57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual respect</td>
<td>3  49  5  70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family acceptance</td>
<td>2  51  5  68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatives acceptance</td>
<td>1  55  5  62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23  229  47  386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>3.8  38.1  7.8  64.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>19  13.6  39  22.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. Personal empowerment (Group A-20, Group B-280)

Table 2. Social empowerment (Group A-20, Group B-250)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributes ↓</th>
<th>Level of social empowerment (number of individuals)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group →</td>
<td>A  B  A  B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational skill</td>
<td>6  22  8  32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group cohesiveness</td>
<td>5  28  8  42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive skills</td>
<td>7  33  6  47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public speaking</td>
<td>6  28  5  52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness on rights</td>
<td>8  31  8  58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness on social problems</td>
<td>7  30  7  61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in social programmes</td>
<td>4  21  4  72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership in other organisations</td>
<td>2  20  3  68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>45  213  49  432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>5.62  26.6  6.1  54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>28.1  9.5  30.5  19.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The questions signifying above said characteristics were from the areas like rights, equality provisions, progress prospects in and around the state, privileges provisioned by the state government, skill training etc. The responses were marked on very high, high, moderate and low score levels. Number of individuals at each level is indicated in above tables against various personal and social empowerment attributes.

Lastly a discussion was conducted to know about the difficulties that these women are facing in the family and society.

**Analysis:**

From table 1, out of 20 trained women around 7.8 (39 percent) are having high personal attribute while only 4.3(22 percent) and 4(20 percent) have moderate and low attributes. The case is reverse in the 280 sample that are already having socio-economically weak background. Their numbers is highest in moderate level with 140(50.03 percent) figure while only 38(13.6 percent) with very high attributes. Comparing both the groups, Group A is having maximum rural women (39 percent) in high personal empowerment attribute level while group B has maximum (50.03 percent) in moderate personal empowerment attribute level.

From table 2, we can analyse that percentage of women with respect to very high and high social empowerment attributes is almost similar (28 & 30 percent) for Group A. But, A has lesser percentage (16.8 percent) of individuals in low attribute category than the women of the same group in personal attribute category (20 percent). Women of group A are having high attributes in organizational skills, group cohesiveness, interactive skills and public speaking; but their percentage falls down in participation in social programmes and membership in other organisations. Group B rural women are strong enough in these two social fields. Their number is 51 percent in the moderate level of attributes (maximum individuals of Group B).

During our initial interaction with 300 samples, it was a tough task to choose 20 socio-
economically sound women. Based upon the personal interview, we selected 20 empowered women and gave them training on women empowerment. Rest of the sample was very weak in the areas of personal and social empowerment. They were lagging behind in confidence, independency and self-respect. Though they have somewhat aware of their rights and privileges, but their attitude towards their own community was not positive. They do not have even an attitude of applying the knowledge they gained in educational institutions. According to them, knowledge so gained is to attain only a degree certificate and a job, preferably in government sector. This will ultimately push them towards settling down a happy married life. This ‘adjustment attitude’ is only weakening their position in the society. Moreover, their religion and culture is also responsible for pulling them towards household activities rather to claim for equalitarian position in the family.

**Conclusion:**

From this study, we can conclude that women in the northern Kerala belong to socio-economically weak background. Though their percentage in higher educational institutes is high in number, still they lag behind in awareness, attitude and application of knowledge. This is weakening the rural women in the area of empowerment. Despite of being educated, they even hesitate to raise their voice for equalitarian in the family. If they will be trained enough in these areas with proper guidance and support from the state government (self-help groups and kudumbashree programmes), definitely they will rise above the level of darkness. In the study during the discussion it came to the limelight that interaction of 280 women with 20 empowered women was not liked by the male family members of Group B. These women feel that they are just on the threshold of transition from tradition to modernity. Women themselves desire that their status and position in their society should rise higher. Though a proper climate for such a change is still wanting, yet there have been many structural and statutory innovations for the improvement of their position. The traditional status and role sets for women are breaking up and new role-sets based on achievement, independence and equality are gradually coming up. The awareness programme really helps them to know about their position, rights, equality provisions, progress prospects in and around the state, privileges provisioned by the state government, skill training etc. They can even guide their children about what they have learnt. We can conclude that there is disparity among women in awareness, attitude and application of knowledge among women in Kerala with regard to their socio-economic status. The weak background of women is greatly affecting their empowerment. This can be removed through awareness programmes in the state (self-help groups and kudumbashree programmes). Women empowerment initiatives through micro finance operations, micro enterprise promotion and convergent community action constitute the core activities of kudumbashree. These activities are carried out through community based organizations (CBO) of women below the poverty line. Apart from these initiatives by the state government, it is the duty of their family members to invoke women for their position and participation in every field of life equally.

**References**


Jacob John., 2009. A Study on KDS project-a poverty eradication programme in Kerala, Planning Commission, p.18


