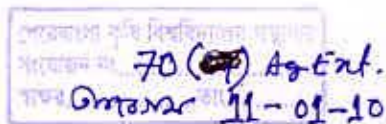


AWARENESS OF RURAL WOMEN ON THE ISSUE OF EMPOWERMENT

BY

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A thesis

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I further certify that any help or source of information, received during the course of this investigation has been duly acknowledged.

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**DEDICATED
TO
MY BELOVED PARENTS**

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The Author

AWARENESS OF RURAL WOMEN ON THE ISSUE OF EMPOWERMENT

MUBINA NISHAT JAHAN

ABSTRACT

The study was conducted in the Malkhanagar union of Shirajdikhan upazilla under Munshigonj district to find the awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment. Among the villages of Malkhanagar union Malkhanagar, Natersher, Kazirbag and Nagar Furshail were selected for conducting the study. Data were collected from 2nd May to 17th May 2008. From the findings it was revealed that among the respondents the highest 71.43 percent belongs to the group of medium aware group followed by 15.24 percent in high aware group and 13.33 percent in low aware group. Among the respondent rural women total 84.76 percent respondents' rural women were medium to low level aware in the issue of empowerment. Education level, husband's co-operation in household activities, participation in farm activities, knowledge on family management, personality, social participation, freedom of decision making and involvement with organization showed significant positive relationship with awareness of rural women in the issue of empowerment. Age showed significant negative relationship with awareness of rural women in the issue of empowerment.

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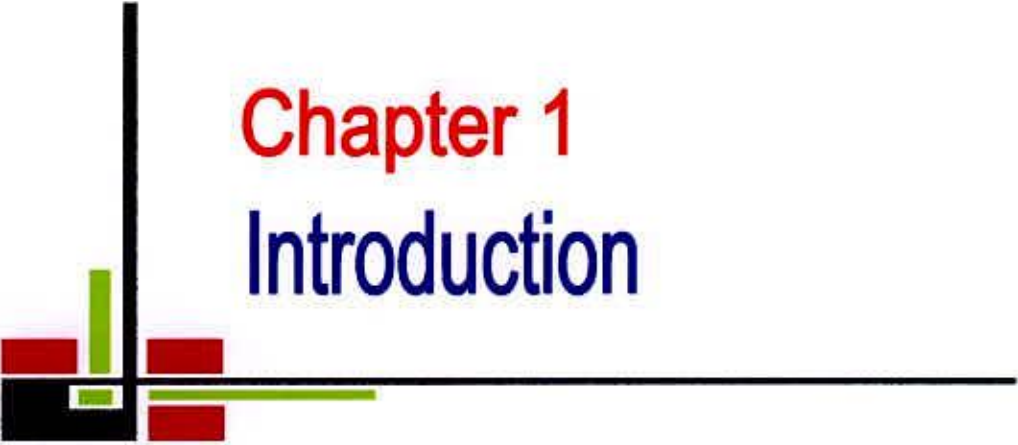


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Chapter 1

Introduction

INTRODUCTION

1.1 General background

Bangladesh is predominantly a rural and agrarian country having a population of 140.6 million. Women constitute roughly half of the population where male female ratio is 105:100 (BBS, 2007). Traditionally Bangladesh is a patriarchal country. In this male dominated society, man is the head of the family and he has full freedom to do anything. Usually women have less independence: "her father has authority over her childhood, her husband has authority over her youth and in the old age her son has authority over her". In this circumstances women obviously led a seclude life indoor. Without effective participation of women in development activities, it is impossible to develop overall development of the country. But they have little or no access to people or positions of influences, for the most part they are illiterate. They are often deserted when husband cannot find income in the villages and move away to pursue work (Lovell, 1991).

The domestic activities performed by women are seldom being considered as generating income for the household. Due to the lack of an independent income or employment women cannot acquire assets themselves. Thus land which is the most coveted and valuable assets, is owned by men and by virtue of this ownership they lord it over the women and dominate in the society and community (Islam, 2000). But women play significant and crucial role in the development of family and society (Samanta, 2005). Women play an important role in agricultural production, animal husbandry and other activities like storage of marketing product, food processing etc. Besides they spend 10 to 12 hours per day doing household activities (Devi, 1998).

Women's participation in the labor force also bring about change in awareness and attitudes which may have long-term benefits such as access to health and education programs, reduction in birth rates, thrift and savings etc. Economic independence of women will create long cherished social changes and prove

necessary for them to face injustice and discrimination (Ray, 1999). Available data on health, nutrition, education and economic performance indicated that the status of women in Bangladesh remains considerably lower to that of men. In custom and practice women remain subordinate to men in almost all aspects of their lives. Most women's lives remain center on their traditional roles and they had limited access to markets, productive services, education, health care and local government. This lack of opportunities contributes to high fertility pattern which diminish family well being, and frustrate educational and other national development goals (Anon., 2004).

Improved food and nutrition together with basic services such as health and education only directly improve the physical well being and quality of life of the rural poor, but can also directly raise their ability to contribute to national economy. For total development of the society, emphasis is given to the rural women than their counterpart (Samanta, 2005).

Women get less pay than men and face difficulties in owning their own property or land. This is reflected in health and social indicators that are honestly appalling. Bangladesh's maternal mortality rate is still one of the highest in the world: every year 320 women per every 10, 00,000 die in childbirth. This means that in Bangladesh a woman dies from childbirth every hour of every day.

At the same time, violence against women is increasingly understood as a serious and growing problem. A recent study found that around 53 percent of women in Dhaka reported at least one incidence of physical or sexual violence in their lifetime. These are Bangladesh's mothers, sisters, wives and daughters this is unblushing barbarous behavior (Anon., 2008). However, in this frustrating situation women see a ray of hope. By 2005, roughly equal numbers of boys and girls were enrolling in primary school.

The investment in women and girls is directly linked to their empowerment and to the full enjoyment of their rights in society. Women's property rights increase

women's status and bargaining power within the household and community. Secure land rights provide women with greater incentives to adopt sustainable farming practices and invest in their land. Although women work in the agricultural lands in the countryside, women in most developing countries do not have secure rights to the land they work. Empowerment of women in the economic and social fields constitutes one of the fundamental objectives of all development efforts in the region (Anon., 2008).

The UNDP's Human Development Report (2006) puts Bangladesh 137 among 177 countries in its Gender Development Index; and 67th of 75 countries in the Gender Empowerment Measure. It comes as no surprise that Bangladesh's Poverty Reduction Strategy states that "among all the inequalities in Bangladesh, discrimination against women reflect the most blatant form of injustice". Poverty alleviation benefits women because of higher levels of poverty of women and women's greater responsibility for family welfare. Women's individual economic empowerment is believed to be insignificant to wider social, political and legal empowerment and contributes to building social capital through developing and stranding women's network (Mahmud, 2002). No development objectives can be achieved without making women self reliant. Therefore, there is an urgent need to empower women to enable them to act upon swiftly to accomplish their total development and the development of the society. To empower women, at first we have to recognize and identify the level of empowerment and influencing factors of empowerment.)

(The empowerment of women is an essential precondition for elimination of world poverty and the upholding of human rights (DFID, 2008), in particular at the individual level, it helps building a base for social change. It is a well established fact that in a patriarchal society like Bangladesh, women are ascribed a lower status than men who have the sovereign power to control households and society as a whole, while women are often secluded in their homes (Balk, 1997).

The main difficulty for empowerment of women is the hostile attitude of the conservative society to women in developing countries. There is an urgent need to empower women to act upon swiftly to accomplish their total development and the development of the society. To empower women, at first we have to increase their level of awareness.

In order to identify the level and influencing factors of empowerment, the proposed study entitled “awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment” has been undertaken by the researcher.

1.2 Statement of the problem

A large number of GOs and NGOs are working in rural areas and emphasizing rural women to involve in different development programs e.g. microfinance program, homestead gardening program, goat rearing program etc. A large number of women also take part in these development programs. Different GOs and NGOs reported that they achieved success in their fields, enabled a large number of women to take part in their development programs, developed their socio economic condition etc. But no organization investigated and reported about the extent of empowerment of their beneficiaries. To identify the level of empowerment and formulate development strategies, it is necessary to conduct a study on women’s empowerment. In this regard the study aims to answer the following research questions. /

- i. To what extent rural women of Bangladesh have awareness on the issue of their empowerment?
- ii. What characteristics influence women to be aware of their empowerment?
- iii. What relationships exist between the women’s characteristics and their awareness on the issue of empowerment?

1.3 Specific Objectives

The main focus of the study was to determine the awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment. The following specific objectives were undertaken for the present study:

1) To assess the extent of awareness of rural women on the issue of their empowerment of the rural women.

2) To determine and describe some selected characteristics of rural women.

The selected characteristics are:

- a) Age
- b) Level of education
- c) Husband's co-operation in household activities
- d) Participation in farm activities
- e) Knowledge on family management
- f) Personality
- g) Social participation
- h) Freedom of decision making
- i) Involvement with organization

3) To explore the relationships between the selected characteristics of rural women and their awareness on the issue of empowerment.

1.4 Justification of the study

Rural women are still neglected. But national development is not possible without empowering themselves because 48.78 percent of the total populations are women and 79 percent of them are living in rural areas (BBS, 2007). In order to improve the position of women in society, first of all their contributions to different agricultural sub-sectors are to be recognized. Needless to mention again and again that rural women directly participate in various agricultural activities related to crop, livestock, fisheries and forestry. They look after the livestock and involve in post crop-harvest activities at home while male family members working in the

field. The vegetable cultivation in the rural families, poultry rearing, goat rearing, and child rearing are mostly undertaken by these women.

So, we cannot expect fluent and balanced socio-economic growth and development of the country without awareness of the rural women in the issue of their empowerment. In order to improve the position of women in society a large number of NGOs and GOs are working in the country. They work at grass root level for human right and to ensure the rural women's empowerment. Different activities are also taken by the government to increase the position of women. There was no previous research work that attempted to find out the awareness of rural women in the issue of empowerment. Therefore, the study "**Awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment**" has been undertaken.

1.5 Scope of the study

The present study was designed to have an understanding of awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment and explore its relationship with the selected characteristics of rural women.

The findings of the study were collected from Sirajdikhan Upazila under Munshiganj district. However, the findings may also be applicable to other areas of Bangladesh where socio-cultural, psychological and economic situation do not differ much than those of the study area. The findings may also be helpful to the policy makers to improve strategies of action for aware of the rural women on the issue of empowerment. Lastly, it is assumed that recommendation of this study will be helpful for researchers, NGOs, Government planners and policy makers to increase the level of awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment in this country and minimizing the discrimination between men and women and bringing women in the mainstream of development.

1.6 Limitations of the study

In order to make the study manageable and meaningful from the view point of research, it was necessary to impose some limitations as stated below:

- i) The study was confined in Sirajdikhan Upazilla under Munshiganj district.
- ii) There were many women in the study areas, but a small number of selected women were brought under the study.
- iii) Characteristics of the women are many and varied, but time, money and other resources did not permit the researcher to include all of them in the study. Hence, only 10 characteristics of the women were selected for investigation in this study.
- iv) Awareness is a relative concept. So, it is very difficult to measure awareness.

1.7 Assumptions of the study

An assumption is the supposition that an apparent fact or principle is true in the light of the available evidence (Goode and Hatt, 1952). The researcher had the following assumptions in mind while undertaking this study.

- i. The respondents selected for the study were capable to provide proper responses to the questions included in the instrument.
- ii. The responses furnished by the respondents were reliable. They expressed the truth about their convictions and awareness.
- iii. Views and opinions furnished by the respondents included in the sample were the representative views and opinions of the whole population of the study area.
- iv. The researcher who acted as interviewer was well adjusted to the social and cultural environment of the study area. Hence the respondents furnished their correct opinions without hesitation.
- v. The researcher distributed data considering the present situation for different variables. For same locality it showed considerable variations.

1.8 Definition of terms

The terms which have been frequently used throughout the thesis are defined and interpreted below:

Age

Age of a respondent defined as the span of her life and is operationally measured by the number of years from her birth to the time of interviewing.

Attitude

Attitude is a hypothetical construct that represents an individual's like or dislike for an item. Attitudes are positive, negative or neutral views of an "attitude object": i.e. a person, behaviour or event. People can also be "ambivalent" towards a target, meaning that they simultaneously possess a positive and a negative bias towards the attitude in question.

Awareness

Awareness comprises a human's or an animal's perception and cognitive reaction to a condition or event. Awareness does not necessarily imply understanding, just an ability to be conscious of, feel or perceive. In this study awareness referred to the conscians about the women empwerment.

Education

Education referred to the development of desirable knowledge, skill, attitudes, etc. of an individual through the experiences of reading, writing, observation and related matters. In this study education was meant for women education.

Family size

It referred to actual number of permanent members in a subject's family who live in a fixed dwelling unit and eat from the same cooking arrangement.

Farm size

Farm size referred to the total area on which a farmer's family carries on farming operations, the area being estimated in terms of full benefit to the farmer's family.

Empowerment

Empowerment is the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes.

Women empowerment

Women Empowerment is a process of awareness and capacity building of women that leading to greater decision-making power and control and to transformative action (Karl, 1995).

Knowledge

Literally knowledge means knowing or what one knows about a subject, fact, person etc. knowledge refers to the amount of facts or information about an idea, object or person, which a person knows. Knowledge gap can be defined as the difference of knowledge between the farmer and his wife.

Knowledge on agriculture, health and sanitation

Literally knowledge means knowing or what one knows about a subject, fact, person etc. Knowledge on agriculture, health and sanitation referred to one's understanding of the facts, phenomena and methods in different aspects of agriculture, health and sanitation.

Income Generating Activities

Income generating activities refer to those activities through which a woman earns directly by producing, making and selling different products.

Family co-operation

Family co-operation meant support and help both physically and mentally by other family members in the implementation of development activities.

Training received

It referred to the total number of days that a respondent had received training from NGOs or other organizations under different training programs.

Credit received

It referred to the total amount of taka that a respondent had received from different organization.

Mobility

It referred to the women's exposure outside her own social environment, her exposure to the nearest villages, own union or municipal, own upazilla, other upazillas, districts or places of social and agricultural importance.

Communication media exposure

This term referred to an individual's access to or contact with the different communication media and source being used for dispersion of new technologies and for other perspectives.

Social status

Social status can be understood as the degree of honor or prestige attached to one's position in society. Social status gap can be defined as the difference of Social status between the farmer and his wife.

Freedom in decision making

Freedom in decision making refers the value of decision of women in different family related activities such as children education, marriage, participation in cultural and development activities etc.

Husband's cooperation in household activities

Husband's cooperation refers the extent of cooperation that women received from her husbands in different household activities.

Participation in farm activities

Participation of farm activities refers the nature and extent of participation of women in different farm related activities.

Knowledge on family management

Knowledge on family management refers the knowledge of individual in different aspects of family management.

Personality

Personality means the personal ability of one in consideration of different social norms and practices.

Social participation

Social participation refers to the extent of participation of individuals in different social activities.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this Chapter is to review the past studies conducted by different researchers related to the present study. As far as possible the researcher tried to review the available literature from the studies conducted at home and abroad related to empowerment of women and other related matters. This chapter comprises of three sections.

- i. In the first section literatures relating to concept of empowerment have been presented.
- ii. The second and third sections deal with reviews related to concept of women empowerment and past studies in connection with the relationship of independent variables with empowerment of women and
- iii The fourth section of this chapter deals with the conceptual framework of the study.

2.1 Review Related to Concept of Empowerment

Empowerment can be conceived as a process that people undergo, which eventually leads to change. Empowerment as a process to change the distribution of power both in interpersonal relations and in institutions throughout the society or a process of acquiring providing, bestowing the resources and the means enabling the accesses to a control over such means and resources. Empowerment is a process in which women gain control over their own lives by knowing and claiming their rights at all levels of society at local and household level (Mathew, 2005).

Empowerment is a way of defining, challenging and overcoming barriers of one's life through which people increase their ability to shape their own lives and environment. Empowerment is a multidimensional process which enables individual or a group of individuals to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres of life. It consists of greater access to knowledge and resources, greater

autonomy in decision making to enable them to have greater ability to plan their lives and free from shocks imposed on them by custom, belief and practices (Kulandaivel, 2005).

Empowerment as the enhancement of assets and capabilities of diverse individual and groups to engage, influence and hold accountable the institutions which affect them (Bennett, 2002).

Empowerment is the process-and the result of the process-whereby the powerless or less powerful members of the society gain greater access and control over material and knowledge resources, challenge the ideologies of discrimination and subordination, and transform the institutions and structures through which unequal access and control over resources is sustained and perpetuated (Annonuevo, 1997).

Women's empowerment has been viewed by several people at several points of times in several ways, which have been described and categorized as traditional, conservative and radical views. But the alternate view for all these puts emphasis on women collectively coming together to recognize and address the gender issues which stand in the way of their advancement. Empowerment in this context involves the transformation through a process of enlightenment, conscientisation and collective organization and therefore necessitates collective action by women to discard the patriarchal beliefs and attitudes they have learned in their system (Longwe, 1997).

Empowerment as process to change distribution of power, both in interpersonal relationships and in institutions throughout society (Stromquist, 1996).

Empowerment in a process of awareness and capacity building, leading to greater decision-making power and control and to transformative action (Karl, 1995).

Empowerment is the process of challenging existing power relations and of gaining greater control over the sources of power. The goals of women's

empowerment are to challenge patriarchal ideology to transform the structures and institutions that reinforce and perpetuate gender discrimination and social inequality and to enable poor women to gain access to, and control over, both material and informational resources (Batliwala, 1994).

Empowerment as altering relations of power which constrains women's options and autonomy and adversely affects health and well being (Sen, 1993).

Women's empowerment framework

According to UNICEF (1994) the Women's Empowerment Framework model has the five levels of equality, where empowerment is seen as a necessary part of the development process at each level, for women to advance towards equal status.

The five levels of equality are:

1. Welfare: This addresses only the basic needs of women.
2. Access: Equality of access to resources.
3. Awareness-raising or conscientisation: An understanding of the fact that women as a group are subordinate and rejection of this subordination.
4. Participation: This is the point where women take decisions equally alongside men. Mobilization is necessary in order to reach this level.
5. Control: The ultimate level of equality and empowerment, where there is a balance or power between women and men and neither has dominance (UNICEF, 1994).

2.2 Reviews Related to Studies on Women Empowerment

Pankajam *et al.* (2005) observed that the women farmers had been associated with KVK (Krishi Vigyan Kendra) for about 12 years through various schemes like frontline demonstration program, demonstration of improved technologies,

improved seeds, INM, IPM etc. in groundnut, castor, red gram and green gram the women farmers could get more income.

Chandramani (2005) observed that involvement of women was essential in all stages of economic and social activities. Therefore, organizing women in self help group will enhance the status of women as participants, decision maker and beneficiaries in democratic, economic, social and cultural spheres of life. Self Help Groups (SHGs) have included a great confidence in the minds of rural women to succeed in their day to day life. So SHGs is a viable pathway for empowerment women.

Sulaiman *et al.* (2005) stated that special program for farm women enable/help women to access to improved information and resources which increase agricultural production significantly. They also stated that to make sustainable improvement in women's livelihoods, women's access to employment and income generating opportunities sources of credit, skill for establishing enterprises etc. should have to be improved.

Samanta (2005) stated that the contribution of rural women in agriculture and in homestead was huge both quantitatively and qualitatively. Without this on average rural women spend 40.4 percent and 15.4 percent time in home and farm related activities respectively. Although day to day life of rural women had been full of hardship, deprivation and struggle to survive.

Parkajam *et al.* (2005) found that the rural women was disadvantaged compared to her urban counterpart. The profile of rural women was that of illiterate, ignorant, superstitions, suppressed and oppressed because of their limited skills. The rural women need to be trained, educated and organized so that she is empowered to be equal to her counterpart in urban area.

Parveen (2004) conducted a study at three village in Mymensingh district. She collected data from 156 respondents and found that the majority of rural women had a very low to moderate (82%) level of empowerment.

Mahmud (2002) found, "the women who spent greater number of year in school have more empower, women who are engaged in income earning work have more empower compared to women who are not, women who are able to visit the public domain have more empower than women who are unable to do so".

Fisher and Sriram (2002) reported that Indian micro-finance to explore how, it can be design in practice, to contribute in a wide range of development objectives. They also reported that including providing social and economic security, promoting livelihoods; building democratic people's organizations; empowering women and changing wider system within society.

Chao *et al.* (2001) noted that most women in the technical professions Taiwan have low self-esteem and this probably could apply to women elsewhere. Although a substantial number of women is involved in the technical professions, the number of women holding managerial posts with decision-making powers is insignificant. Again, Primavera and Bueno (2001) suggested that this perception could reflect social values that hold men superior. In some countries, women do not enjoy basic rights (right to vote, Choice of career and even dressing), which many from the developed countries take for granted. Merely involving women in development programs without delving into issues of culture and the state will not contribute to sustainable development and correct the disparities between the sexes, hence the need to consider gender.

Swati *et al.* (2001) observed that self help group (SHG) in India has emerged as a very successful concept of empowering rural women by providing not only easy credit and thrift facilities but also many other opportunities for their self development.

Sudha and Jothimani (1999) conducted a study on "Profile of self help groups (SHGs) in Karanmandai block" and found that SHGs organized women into group for group cohesion and dynamic and introduce women in all spheres and phases of development.

Sangeetha and Thangamani (1999) studied on “Initiating self help group (SHGs) in Combatore Corporation” and reported/pointed that the SHGs had successfully mobilized saving and extended credit out of its own funds with a good repayment record and the group was linked to bank for availing credit facilities.

Kaveri and Leelavathy (1999) conducted a study on “Initiating Income generating activities for women in rural areas” and found that the women who were resort to self employment, they wanted to improve their economic status.

Puhazhendh and Jayaraman (1999) observed that the group approach play an important role in empowering women in rural areas. The informal groups of rural poor with active intervention of NGOs adequately supported by training and financial systems, ensured and also significantly improved women’s participation both from economic and social aspects.

Kabeer (1999) stated that empowerment is seen to occur at a number of different levels, to cover a range of different dimensions and to materialize through a variety of different processes. Empowerment rests upon the notion power as determining choice ability to choose, and how the lack of power and choice is disempowering.

Murshed *et al.* (1999) conducted a research on the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) to see how far it has been able to implement poverty alleviation and empowerment of the poor, particularly the rural women. They observed that through its multifaceted programs, enterprise development, health care, non-formal education for girl child and human rights and legal education, BRAC has been able to bring girl-child and human improvement to the lives of the poor and disadvantaged women of rural Bangladesh.

Sharmiladevi and Sithalakshmi (1998) conducted a study on “Initiating self help groups (SHGs) among urban and rural women”. Where 462 women are in urban and 164 women are in rural areas. The researchers pointed out that the SHGs were

facilitating income-generating activities for socio-economic upliftment of members and streamlining the procedures of repayment.

Kasthuri (1997) stated, "Empowerment is a challenge to society because it breaks the long established pattern of family life. Women need support counseling and training in order to become empowered. Her desires and her goal finally enable her to break the barriers to reach her goal"

Banu (1996) in her research work "The Impact of Training on Rural Women's Empowerment in Bangladesh" examined the relationship between women's access to training and women's empowerment with special reference to Bangladesh situation. Banu examined two issues to find out the relationship between training and women's empowerment in her study. Empowerment of women in Bangladesh is measured in terms of raising awareness, self-confidence, economic independence and decision-making process in the household. It was revealed that training had an impact on the behavioral predisposition. Skills of women also developed through skill development training.

Pitt and Khandkar (1995), Zaman (1998) found, "Empowerment is influenced by participation in any development program because participation women were more likely to accesses to self employment and ability to visit in the NGO office or the health center."

Chen and Mahmud (1995) found, "Empowerment may be triggered by specific events in women's lives like schooling, labor force participation and participation in Micro-credit and other development programs. Women's empowerment also influence by secular life cycle events like marriage, birth of children, setting up of separate household, marriage of children and divorce or widowhood." They also presented a framework of women's empowerment as a process of positive change in women's lives that improves their fallback position and bargaining power within a patriarchal structure, and which evolves in response to events and experiences over the life cycle.

✓ Amin and Pebley (1994) found that while programs after about two years had a statistically significant impact on gender inequity within the household in terms of women's participation in decision making and control over resources, women's attitudes and aspiration in decision regarding marriage and education for their daughters is slower to change.

✓ Pitt and Khandker (1995) stated that access to credit was seen as a mean of empowering on the assumption that the increased labor time of women spent in income earning work as a result of credit led to greater influence of women in household decision making.

Khan (1994) carried out a study on the concepts of participation and empowerment in the development process and discussed how these issues were considered within the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC). This organization works to empower the most disadvantage people, particularly the poor rural women through participation in development activities. For positive impact of BRAC activities, the study suggested for intensification of BRAC efforts for devising programs aiming at empowerment of women in economic activities and in the household decision making affairs.

✓ Airun (1992) in her study identified women's contribution in homestead farming and household activities. She also showed women status in decision-making process of family affairs. It was observed that the average women spent 30 percent of their daytime in household activities and another 30 percent on agricultural activities. Women contributed 58 to 235 labor days per hectare for production of homestead vegetables compared to 50 to 212 by men. It further revealed that women earned on an average Taka 4339 per year from different income earning activities. In the case of decision making men enjoyed overwhelming right to make major decisions.

Sen *et al.* (1987) stated, "Access to extension services and training will empower women. Technology will equip them to acquire new skill and to learn their drudgery. Educated women have greater multiple effect than educated men".

Sen (1989) concluded that women had limited command and control over resource and assets which prevent them from getting equal opportunities and fair share of the returns in the society as well as in the family. In primary sector women contribute more than men but enjoy no control over their earnings.

Ahmed (1987) mentioned impact of various programs on women and stated that significant changes in income and employment of the participants took place due to involvement in Rural Development Program activities. He found that real income per-capita of the participants increased by 116% between 1981 and 1987.

Hussain (1985) showed that women were involved in most of the pre and post harvest operations of vegetables production. He also advocated some measures to be taken by the government, policy makers, planners, development workers and researchers for the effective integration of participation in different homestead production and management activities like vegetable growing, livestock raising, fish cultivation, postharvest operation and household decision making.

Mojumder (1983) conducted a study on women participation in agricultural and non-agricultural activities in Bangladesh villages. It portrayed the pattern and nature of activities of the rural women along with their socio economic conditions in the study area. The study revealed that no housewife was a sole decision maker in the family affairs.

Ali and Rahman (1978) found that women were engaged in both productive and household activities. The production and income generating activities improved their socioeconomic conditions. The women contributed about 13 percent to the total family income of the sample houses. They also found that the women were still facing the problems of poverty, lack of education facility, social and religious binding and lack of scope for women to work.

2.3 Reviews on Relationship between Selected Characteristics of Rural Women and their Empowerment

Very few studies were been found to be specifically undertaken in a scientific way in the direction of the recent study. An effort has been made in subsequent subsection to review some interlinked literature in this aspect.

2.3.1 Age and empowerment

Goetz and Gupta (1995) said that women's control over loans depends on several factors such as their age, education, marital status, size of the loan etc.

Bhaumik *et al.* (1996) in their combined study found that there was a significant and negative relationship between age of rural women and their participation in decision making role.

Kumari (1999) in a study found that age of rural women had significant relationship with their performance in farm decision-making.

Begum *et al.* (2000) in their study found that there was no significant effect of age of women on their taking household decisions.

Akter (2000) in a study found a positive significant relationship between age of the women and their participation in decision-making role in the family.

Asaduzzaman (2003) found no significant relationship between age of rural women and their decision-making ability.

Biswas (2003) found that age of the rural women had a significant but negative relationship with their accessibility to family decision-making process.

Naoroze (2004) in their study found that age of the rural women had no significant relationship with their empowerment.

2.3.2 Education and empowerment

Kaur (1986) found that education increased the role of farm young women in decision making about home as well as farm practice.

Chen *et al.* (1995) found significant relationship between schooling of women and their empowerment.

Akter (2000) in his study found that there was a positive significant relationship between education of women and their participation in decision-making role in the family.

Mahmud (2002) found significant relationship between number of schooling spent by women and their empowerment.

Biswas (2003) found that education of the rural women had a significant and positive relationship with their accessibility to family decision-making process.

Asaduzzaman (2003) found significant relationship between education of rural women and their decision-making ability.

Parveen (2004) concluded that education enhance women's empowerment.

Naoroze (2004) in his study found that personal education of the rural women had a significant relationship with their empowerment.

2.3.3 Participation and empowerment

Chen *et al.* (1995) found that there was significant relationship between participation of women in income generating activities and their empowerment.

Pitt *et al.* (1995) found that there was significant relationship between participation of women in earning activities and their empowerment.

Devadas (1999) stated that rural women's participation in income generating activities was believed to increase their status and decision making power.

Zaman (1998) found that there was significant relationship between participation of women in earning activities and their empowerment

2.3.4 Communication and empowerment

Bhaumik *et al.* (1996) in their study found that there was no significant relationship between contact with extension personnel of the rural women and their performance in decision-making process.

Islam (1996) studied women's participation in some agricultural income generating activities like vegetable product, poultry, livestock and fish culture. The findings indicated that mass media was found to be significantly associated with women's extent of participation in agricultural activities.

Pattnik (1996) observed that the non-participation and participation of women in farm management and other areas of decision making was due to inadequate exposure to the mass media lack of extension contact.

Pitt *et al.* (1995) found that empowerment was influenced by participation in development program because participant women were more likely to access to self employment and ability to visit in the NGO office or the health centre. Zaman (1998) found the similar findings.

Mahmud (2002) found that women's participation in development program was more effective in promoting women's empowerment (decision making, mobility, access to resources etc.)

Biswas (2003) found that extension contact of the rural women had a significant and positive relationship with family decision-making process.

Parveen (2004) in her study found that information media exposure increased the level of women's empowerment.

Naoroze (2004) in his study found that there was a significant relationship between extension media contact of rural women and their empowerment.

2.4 The Conceptual Framework of the Study

In scientific research, selection and measurement of variables constitute an important task. The hypothesis of a research when constructed properly contains at least two important elements i.e. “a dependent variable” and “an independent variable”. A dependent variable is that which appears, disappears or varies as the researcher introduces, removes or varies the independent variables (Townsend, 1953). An independent variable is that factor which is manipulated by the researcher in her attempt to ascertain its relationship to an observed phenomenon.

The conceptual framework of Rosenberg and Hovland (1960) was kept in mind while making structural arrangements for the dependent and independent variables. This study was concerned with the empowerment of women. Thus the empowerment was the dependent variable and 10 selected characteristics of the women were considered as the independent variables. Empowerment of an individual may be affected through interacting forces of many independent variables. It is not possible to deal with all independent variables in a single study. It was therefore, necessary to limit the independent variables, which included age, level of education, husband co-operation in household activities, participation in farm activities, knowledge on family management, personality, social participation, freedom of decision making and involvement with organization.

In order to have a clear understanding of the nature of empowerment, the dependent variable was considered as awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment. These were mobility, participation in household decision, participation in social political activities and control over capital. In the light of the foregoing discussion, a conceptual framework has been developed for this study, which is diagrammatically shown in the Figure 2.1.

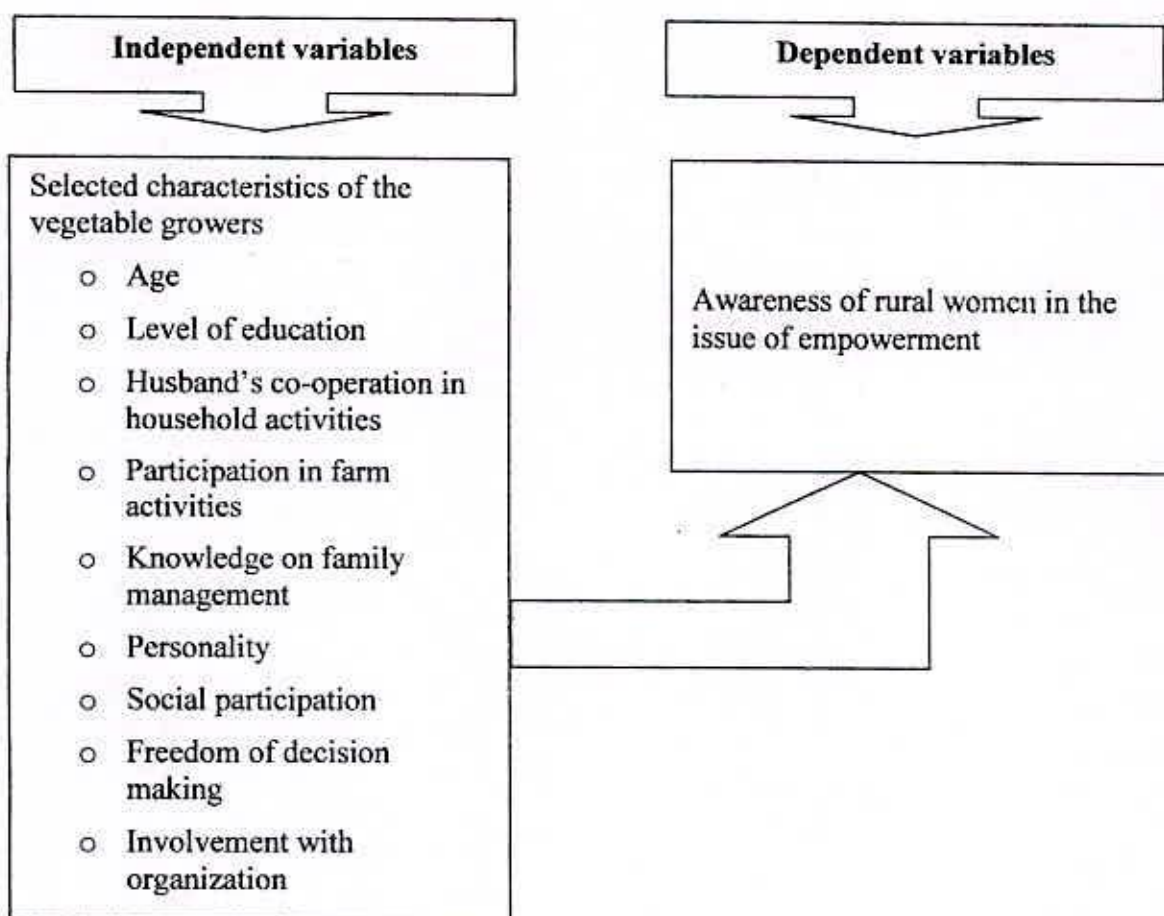
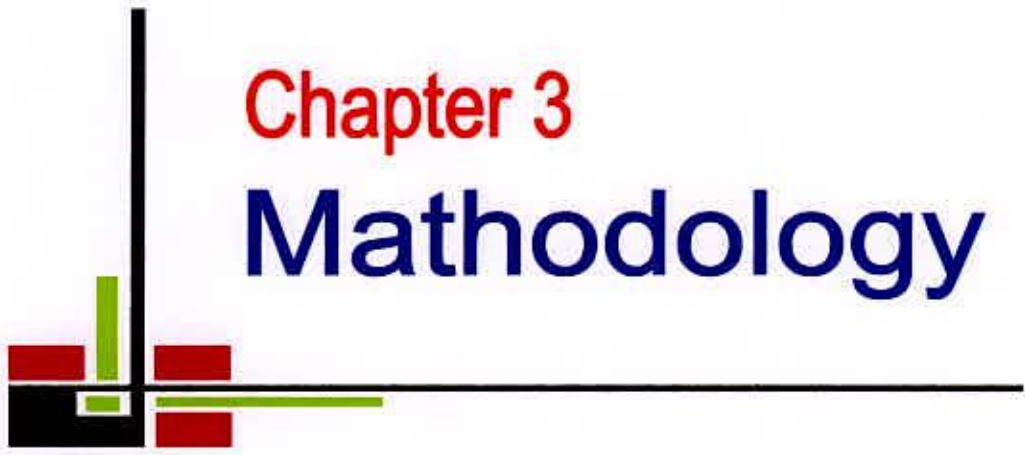


Figure 2.2. The conceptual framework of the study

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Chapter 3

Methodology

METHODOLOGY

Methods and procedures used in conducting research need very careful consideration. Methodology should be such that enables the researcher to collect valid information and to analyze the same properly to arrive at correct decisions. The methods and procedures followed in conducting this research are being described below.

3.1 Locale of the study

The study was conducted in Shirajdikhan upazilla under Munshiganj district. This upazilla is situated 20 km east from Munshiganj district head quarters. The selected areas located within 7-10 km from upazilla sadar. Among the 11 union of Shirajdikhan upazilla Malkhannagar union was randomly selected. There are 13 villages in Malkhannagar union. Among them Malkhannagar, Nateswar, Kazirbag and Nagar Furshail were randomly selected for conducting the study. A map of the study area presented in Figure 3.1

3.2 Sampling Design

All the women of the villages Malkhannagar, Nateswar, Kazirbag and Nagar Furshail constitute the population of the study. There were 2112 women in these selected villages. Out of the total population, 105 (5% of the total population) of the women were selected as sample by using a Table of Random Numbers (Kerlinger, 1973). The village wise distributions of the population, sample as well as reserve list are shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Distribution of population and sampled of respondents in selected villages of under Malkhanagar union

Name of villages	Number of women	Sample size	Sample under reserve list
Malkhanagar	422	21	4
Natersher	563	28	5
Kazirbag	644	32	5
Nagar Furshail	483	24	4
Total	2112	105	18

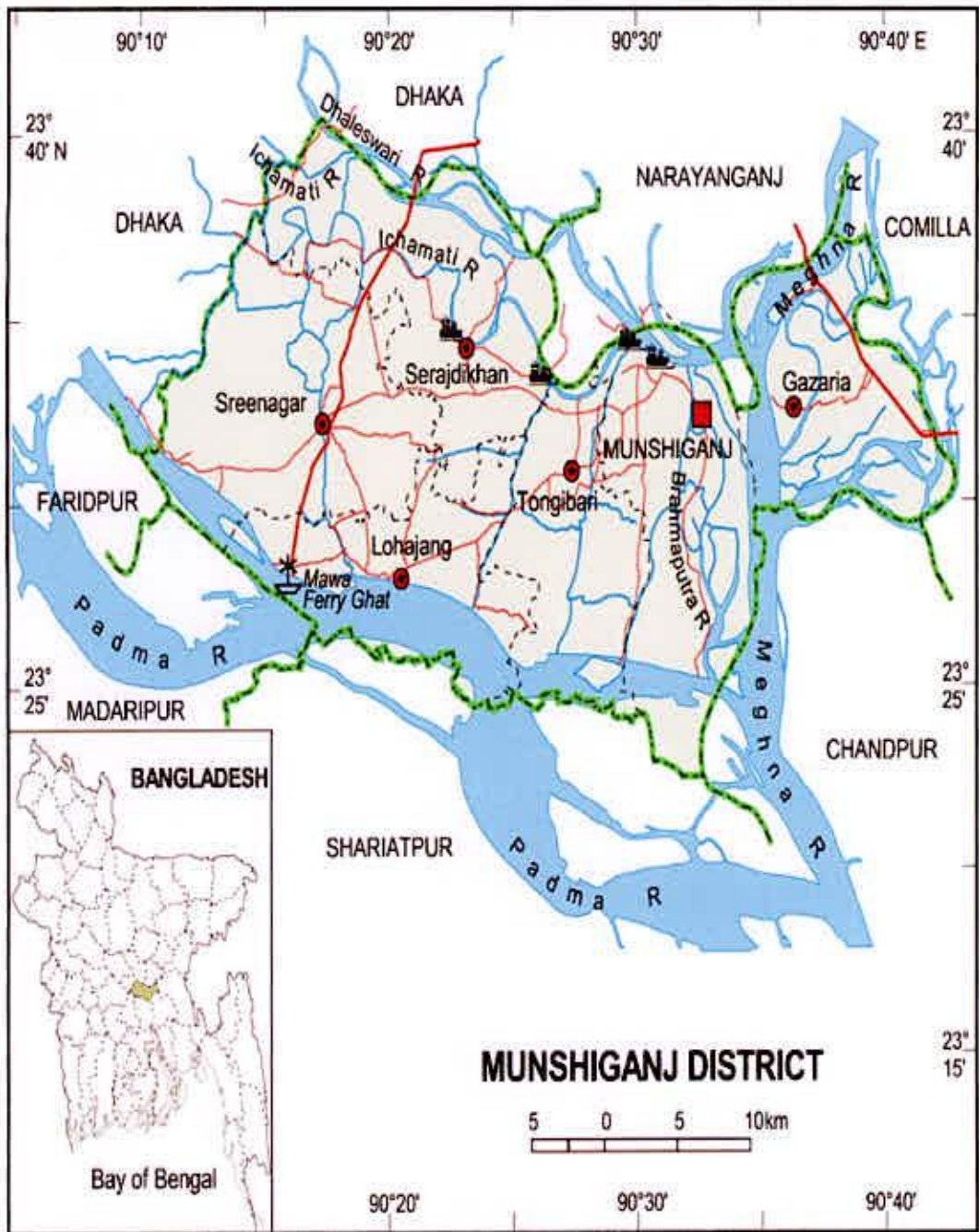


Figure 3.1 A map of the study area

3.3 Instrument for Data Collection

In a research study requiring data from the respondents, preparation of an interview schedule for information collection requires a very careful consideration. So, a structured interview schedule was used for collection of relevant data for the study. Closed form questions were included in the schedule. Simple and direct questions were also included to ascertain the opinion of the women regarding a number of aspects. Scales were developed to measure awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment. The draft interview schedule was prepared in accordance with the objectives of the study. The interview schedule was pre-tested with 10 women from the study area. Necessary corrections, additions and modification were made in the interview schedule based on the pretest results. The modified and corrected interview schedule was then printed in final form in English (*Appendix A*).

3.4 Data Collecting Procedure

Data were collected through personal interviewing by the researcher herself. The researcher requested them to provide necessary help and co-operation for data collection. The researcher made all possible efforts to establish rapport with the respondents so that they could feel to respond to the questions contained in the schedule. All possible efforts were made to explain the purpose of the study to the respondents and their answers were recorded sincerely. Whenever, any respondent felt difficulty in understanding any question, care was taken to help her getting understand of the same. The researcher in collecting data faced no serious problem. Collection of data took 15 days from 2nd May to 17th May 2008.

3.5 Selection of Dependent and Independent Variables

The researcher employed adequate care in selecting the variables of the study. Considering personal, economic, social and psychological factors of the rural community, time and resources availability to researcher, reviewing relevant literature and discussing with relevant expert, the researcher selected the variables for the study.

Awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment was the main focus of this study and it was considered as the dependent variable. The researcher selected nine selected characteristics of the rural women as independent variables i.e. age, education level, husband's co-operation in household activities, participation in farm activities, knowledge on family management, personality, social participation, freedom of decision making, involvement with organization.

3.6 Measurement of Variables

3.6.1 Measurement of independent variables

The procedures for measuring independent variables are presented below-

3.6.1.1 Age

The age of a respondent was measured by counting the period of time from her birth to the time of interview on the basis of response of the respondent and was expressed in terms of complete years.

3.6.1.2 Education

Education of a respondent was measured in terms of classes passed by her in formal education system (i.e. school, college and university). If a respondent passed the final examination of class V in a school, a score of five was taken for calculating her education score. If a respondent had education outside the school and if the level of education was seemed to be equivalent to that of class V of the school, then her education score was taken as five. A respondent who can sign only had education score (0.5) and a respondent who did not know reading and writing had education score of zero.

3.6.1.3 Husband's co-operation

Husband's co-operation was determined in terms of the co-operation in different aspects of household works such as marketing of homestead products, exposure to some organizations, poultry and dairy rearing, post harvest activities and storage of agricultural products, decision making, homestead gardening, health care of the family member, freedom of use of the profit of the farm, fish culture and children

education. The scores were made on the basis of the extent of husband's support along a 4-point scale: "sufficient", "substantial", "little" and "not at all". The cooperation of husband in household activities measured with 10 issues related to household activities. The possible score could range from 0-30. 0 mean no cooperation and 30 means sufficient cooperation.

3.6.1.4 Participation in farm activities

Participation in farm activities was measured by computing a participation score on the basis of some selected activities related to farming. The activities were homestead vegetable cultivation, postharvest activities of field crops and vegetables, poultry rearing, goat rearing, cattle rearing, fish culture, plantation and nursing of fruit trees, nursery, homestead agriculture and marketing of farm products. The scores were made on the degree of participation in different household activities as regularly, occasionally and never. For regular participation the respondents scored 2 and for occasionally the respondents scored 1 and 0 for never. The possible score could range from 0-20. Zero means no participation in farm activities and 20 mean regular participation.

3.6.1.5 Knowledge on family management

For measuring knowledge on family management, the researcher asked 10 questions to each respondent. Each question was assigned a score of 2 marks. For correct answer one could get 2 for wrong answers she could get 0, but for partial correct answer she could get 1. The total score of knowledge as family management stood as 20. Thus the knowledge on family management of the respondents could range from 0 to 20, 0 indicating no knowledge and 20 indicating very high knowledge on family management.

3.3.1.6 Personality

Personalities of the rural women were measured on the basis of 10 personality questions that were the reflection of their personality. They were social interaction, communication behavior, self idea advice, group organizing, leadership behavior, confront family problem, proper guidance to the children,

maintain acceptable interaction among the family members, hard work and perseverance and accept any change. Extent of personality was measured on the basis of the degree of possession of personality qualities. The degrees of personality qualities were considered as excellent, good, fair, not bad and bad and they were score as 4, 3, 2, 1 and 0, respectively. The score of personality could range from zero to 40. Zero indicating no personality and 40 indicating excellent personality.

3.6.1.7 Social Participation

Social participation was measured by (i) identifying social activities performed by the respondent women, (ii) determine the extent of participation as frequently, occasionally, rarely and not at all and (iii) assigning scores against the extent of participation 3, 2, 1, 0, respectively. The possible score could range from 0-30. Zero means no participation and 30 means frequent participation.

3.6.1.8 Freedom of decision making

Freedom of decision making of a respondent was referred to the degree of freedom extended to her decision making process. Each respondent indicated the degrees of freedom by checking only one of the responses: “totally free”, “moderately free”, “little free” and “not free”. For computing the freedom of decision making of a respondent score was assigned against each degree of freedom.

Degree of freedom	Score assigned
Not free	0
Little	1
Partial free	2
Totally free	3

3.6.1.9 Involvement with organization

Involvement with organization score was computed for each respondent on the basis of her duration of organizational participation with four selected

organizations. It was expressed in years of involvement as ordinary members, as executive members and as officer. The possible score could range from 0-12. Zero means no involvement and 12 means high involvement.

3.7 Measurement of Dependent Variables

Awareness of rural women empowerment was the dependent variable in this study. It was measured by computing empowerment awareness based on 10 statements expressing positive feelings towards rural women's empowerment. Highly aware, more aware, moderately aware, less aware and not aware were considered as degrees of awareness on the specific statement. Scoring was done by assigning 4, 3, 2, 1 and 0 to the five alternative responses as highly aware, more aware, moderate aware, less aware and not aware, respectively.

Hence score of a respondent was obtained by summing up her scores for all the 10 statements in item no. 10 in the interview schedule. Awareness score obtained by a respondent could range from 0 to 40, where 0 (zero) indicated not aware of and 40 indicated highly aware of on the issue of their empowerment.

3.8 Statement of Hypothesis

In order to guide relevant data collection, analysis and interpretation of data, a set of hypothesis was formulated for empirical testing. The following null hypothesis was formulated to test the relationships of 10 independent variables with awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment.

"There is no relationship between the awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment and each of the above mentioned independent variables of the study"

3.9 Data Processing and Analysis

3.9.1 Compilation of data

After completion of field survey data from all the interview schedules were coded, compiled, tabulated and analyzed in accordance with the objectives of the study.

In this process, all the responses in the interview schedule were given numerical coded values. The responses to the questions in the interview schedules were transferred to a master to facilitate tabulation.

3.9.2 Categorization of data

For describing the different characteristics and their empowerment, the respondents were classified into several categories on the basis of score obtained.

3.9.3 Statistical technique

The analysis was performed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) computer package. Descriptive analysis such as range, number and percentage, mean, standard deviation and rank order were used whenever possible. Pearson's Product Moment Co-efficient of Correlation was used in order to explore the relationship between the concerned variables. Throughout the study, at least five-percent (0.05) level of probability was used as basis of rejecting a null hypothesis.



Chapter 4

Results and Discussion



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter deals with the findings of the study that was collected in accordance with the objectives and possible interpretation. The chapter contains in three (3) sections.

- a. The first section deals with the characteristics of the respondent rural women.
- b. The second section deals with the awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment.
- c. The third section deals with the relationship between characteristics of rural women and their awareness on the issue of empowerment.

4.1 Characteristics of the rural women

Rural women possess various interrelated characteristics that might affect on the awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment. However, the nine selected characteristics of the rural women such as age, education level, husband's co-operation in household activities, participation in farm activities, knowledge on family management, personality, social participation, freedom of decision making, involvement with organization that are likely to influence the awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment have been presented below-

4.1.1 Age

The age of the rural women ranged from 18 to 55 years with a mean and standard deviation of 31.90 and 9.047, respectively. Considering the observed age of the rural women they were classified into three categories namely 'young aged (< 35 years)', 'middle aged (35–50 years)' and 'old aged (>50 years)' as shown in Table 4.1. Number and percentage distribution of the respondents are presented in Table 4.1 according to their age category.

Table 4.1 Distribution of the rural women according to their age

Categories	Number of respondents	Percent	Mean	Standard deviation
Young aged (below 35 years)	76	72.38	31.90	9.047
Middle aged (35-50 years)	25	23.80		
Old aged (above 50 years)	4	3.81		
Total	105	100		

Table 4.1 indicates that the young aged rural women constitute the highest proportion (72.38 percent) followed by middle aged category (23.80 percent) and old aged category (3.81 percent). Thus, the young and middle aged rural women constitute about 96.2 percent of the respondents.

In the rural society of Bangladesh maintains traditional norms, values and customs are maintained in order to continue sustainable family and social impact relationship among the people. An overwhelming majority of rural women being young and middle aged they can keep the society living involving in family, social and other welfare activities. The young and middle aged rural women are perceived as the most potential and productive group from the view point of development. Therefore, they are much more aware of their legitimate social power. If they could have opportunity and scope to share power with their male counterpart surely they would be able to break through toward development.

4.1.2 Education level

The educational scores of the rural women ranged from 0 to 14 with a mean and standard deviation of 6.37 and 2.919, respectively. Based on their educational scores, the rural women were classified into four categories such as 'illiterate' (0), 'primary education' (1 to 5), 'secondary education' (6 to 10), higher secondary and above (above 10). The distribution of the rural women according to their level of education has been presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Distribution of the rural women according to their education

Categories	Number of respondents	Percent	Mean	Standard deviation
Illiterate (0)	6	5.71	6.37	2.919
Primary education (1-5)	33	31.43		
Secondary education (6-10)	63	60.0		
Above secondary (above 10)	3	2.86		
Total	105	100		

Data in the Table 4.2 show that a large proportion (62.86%) had secondary and above secondary level of education compared to 31.43 percent of them having primary education. However, overall educational level in the society was very much encouraging. Education broadens the horizon of outlook of rural women and expands their capability to analyze any situation related to empowerment. It also helps them to be aware of sharing of power.

Education changes human behavior, it helps an individual to become rational, conscious and to get useful information to solve their day to day working problems.

4.1.3 Husband's cooperation in household activities

Husband's co-operation in household activities score of the rural women ranged from 5 to 28 with a mean and standard deviation of 17.62 and 6.226, respectively. According to husband's cooperation in household activities scores the rural women were classified into three categories viz. 'Low cooperation (< 10), 'medium cooperation (10-20) and 'high cooperation (>20)'. The distribution of the rural women according to husband's cooperation in household activities has been presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Distribution of the rural women according to their Husband's cooperation in household activities

Categories	Number of respondents	Percentage	Mean	Standard deviation
Low cooperation (below 10)	39	37.14	17.62	6.226
Medium cooperation (10-20)	55	52.38		
High cooperation (above 20)	11	10.48		
Total	105	100		

Data in Table 4.3 indicate that the medium level of cooperation in household activities by husband constitutes the highest proportion (52.38 percent) followed by low level cooperation in household activities (37.14 percent) and high level cooperation (10.48 percent). Thus, the Table that about two-thirds (62.86 percent) of the respondent women received cooperation from their husbands in household activities. In the present findings husband's co-operation was available to quite a great majority of the rural women low to medium level. It is to be remembered that about 96 percent of rural women of the study area were educated and they could manage their husband's to be cooperative in their household works.

4.1.4 Participation in farm activities

Participation in farm activities scores of the respondents' rural women ranged from 5-18 with a mean and standard deviation of 11.29 and 3.326, respectively. On the basis of their participation in farm activities scores of the rural women were into three categories, such as "low participation (<10)", "medium participation (10-15)" and "high participation (>15)". The distribution of the rural women according to their participation in farm activities has been presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 Distribution of the rural women according to their participation in farm activities

Categories	Number of respondents	Percent	Mean	Standard deviation
Low participation (below 10)	31	29.52	11.29	3.326
Medium participation (10-15)	47	44.76		
High participation (above 15)	27	25.72		
Total	105	100		

The rural women family having medium participation in farm activities constituted the highest proportion (44.76 percent) followed by low participation (29.52 percent) and high participation (25.72 percent). Rural women generally dominate more in their homestead activities than their male counterparts. Almost all the rural houses had some kind of vegetable cultivation, fruit cultivation and poultry rising. Majority of the activities are mostly agriculture related which bring income for their survival.

4.1.5 Knowledge on family management

Distribution of the rural women on the basis of their knowledge on family management scores has been presented in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 Distribution of the rural women according to their knowledge on family management

Categories	Number of respondents	Percent	Mean	Standard deviation
Low knowledge (below 10)	21	20.00	14.18	3.438
Medium knowledge (10-15)	43	40.95		
High knowledge (above 15)	41	39.05		
Total	105	100		

The knowledge score of the rural women ranged from 5-20 against the possible range of 0 to 20, with an average of 14.18 and standard deviation 3.438. Analysis

of the data presented in Table 4.5 reveal that over 40.95 percent of the respondents fell under medium knowledge on family management and 39.05 percent fell under high knowledge categories. However, 20.00 percent belonged to low knowledge on family management category. It is very much encouraging that four-fifth of the respondents (80 percent) ranged from medium to high category. In fact all the respondents had family management knowledge. Knowledge on family management of rural women plays an important role in their empowerment.

4.1.6 Personality

Personality of the respondent rural women has been presented in Table 4.6. The personality scores of rural women ranged from 4 to 38 with average 25.22 and standard deviation 7.043. The findings in Table 4.6 indicate that more than half (58.09 percent) of the rural women had medium personality compared to almost equal proportion of low personality (24.77 percent) and high personality (17.14%). Data in the table show that rural women of the study area had sufficient personality and it is hoped that they are much more aware of their empowered.

Table 4.6 Distribution of the rural women according to their personality

Categories	Number of respondents	Percent	Mean	Standard deviation
Low personality (below 15)	26	24.77	25.22	7.043
Medium personality (15-30)	61	58.09		
High personality (above 30)	18	17.14		
Total	105	100		

4.1.7 Social participation

The observed scores of social participation of the rural women ranged from 6-28, the mean being 17.87 and standard deviation 4.879. Based on their social participation scores, the rural women were classified into three categories: "low

social participation" (<15), "medium social participation" (15-30) and "high social participation" (>30). The distribution of the rural women according to their social participation is shown in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7 Distribution of the rural women according to their social participation

Categories	Number of respondents	Percent	Mean	Standard deviation
Low social participation (below 15)	37	35.24	17.87	4.879
Medium social participation (15-30)	63	60.0		
High social participation (above 30)	5	4.70		
Total	105	100		

From the above Table 4.7, it was observed that the highest portion (60.00 percent) of the rural women had medium social participation, while 35.24 percent of them had low social participations and only 4.76 percent high social participation. Most of the rural women in the study area had social participation ranging from medium to high. Women of the study area were expected to gain empowerment through participation in social welfare activities like cultural programs, village fair, religious and cultural festivals etc.

4.1.8 Freedom of decision making

Freedom of decision making is an important factor for empowerment of the rural women. Scores obtained on freedom of decision making varied from 3 to 26. The average was 17.72 and standard deviation 4.797 that were presented in Table 4.8. Based on the obtained scores the rural women were categorized into three category namely "low freedom (<15)", "medium freedom (15-30)" and "high freedom (>30)" which were presented in Table 4.8.



Table 4.8 Distribution of the rural women according to their freedom of decision making

Categories	Number of respondents	Percent	Mean	Standard deviation
Low freedom (below 15)	23	21.90	17.72	4.797
Medium freedom (15-30)	77	73.33		
High freedom (above 30)	5	4.76		
Total	105	100		

Data in the Table 4.8 revealed that the highest proportion (73.33 percent) of the rural women had medium freedom of decision making, while 21.90 percent of them had low freedom and only 4.76 percent high freedom. Thus, that than three-fourths (78.09 percent) of the rural women of the study area had empowerment to make decisions to the extent of medium to high. In fact it is not absolutely true that rural women of Bangladesh are powerless. Rural women of Bangladesh may not have freedom like Western women but it was evident from the data that rural women enjoying more or less freedom in Bangladesh.

4.1.9 Involvement with socio-economic organizations

The observed score of involvement with organization of the rural women ranged from 0-7, the mean being 2.12 and standard deviation 1.561. Based on their involvement with organization scores the rural women were classified into three categories: "low involvement" (below 4), "medium involvement" (4-6) and "high involvement" (above 6). The distribution of the rural women according to their involvement with organization is presented in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9 Distribution of the rural women according to their involvement with organization

Categories	Number of respondents	Percent	Mean	Standard deviation
Low involvement (below 4)	86	81.90	2.12	1.561
Medium involvement (4-6)	18	17.14		
High involvement (above 6)	1	0.95		
Total	105	100		

From the above Table 4.9, it was observed that the highest portion (81.90 percent) of the rural women had low involvement with organizations, while 17.14 percent respondents had medium involvement. More than 99 percent rural women of the study area had low to medium level of involvement with organizations. It is true that more involvement with social-economic organizations by the rural women more awareness of empowerment is expected. But conclusion can be drawn from analysis of data that BRAC, PROSHIKA, Grameen Bank worked in the study area for their own business not for rural women empowerment.

4.2 Awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment

Awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment was measured on the basis of 10 awareness dimensions. Awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment score of a respondent was determined by adding scores obtained by an individual against all the 10 statements. Thus awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment scores could range from 0 to 40. Zero (0) indicate no awareness and 40 indicate highest awareness on the issue of empowerment. The findings are presented in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10 Distribution of the rural women according to their awareness on the issue of empowerment

Categories	Number of respondents	Percent	Mean	Standard deviation
Low aware (below 15)	14	13.33	22.42	6.386
Medium aware (15-30)	75	71.43		
High aware (above 30)	16	15.24		
Total	105	100		

The awareness of rural women empowered score ranged from 3-34 and the average being 22.42 with standard deviation 6.386. Based on the obtained score of awareness towards rural women empowerment the respondent classified into three categories namely low awareness, medium awareness and high awareness. Among the respondents the highest 71.43 percent belongs to the medium awareness group followed by 15.24 percent belonging in high awareness group and 13.33 percent low awareness group.

Among the rural women of the study area a total of 86.67 percent had awareness on the issue of their empowerment to the extent of medium to high. It fact, it could be concluded from the findings that the rural women were more or less aware of their empowerment such as – husband and wife possess equal right, access to decision making, access to social arbitration, access to politics, access to education, access to income generating activities, access to business, access to group information, access to religious activities, access to purchase of land.

4.3 Relationship of selected characteristics of rural women with their awareness on the issue of empowerment

Pearson Product Moment correlation co-efficient was computed in order to find out the extent of relationship between the dependent variable and independent variables. To reject a null hypothesis at 0.05 level of probability was used as the basis. The findings on the correlation tests are presented in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11. Correlation coefficients showing relationship between dependent (awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment) and independent variables

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Value of co-efficient of correlation
Awareness of rural women in the issue of empowerment	Age	-0.240*
	Education level	0.546**
	Husband co-operation in Household activities	0.314**
	Participation in farm activities	0.162
	Knowledge on family management	0.405**
	Personality	0.137
	Social participation	0.716**
	Freedom of decision making	0.623**
	Involvement with organization	0.492**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level;

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

4.3.1 Relationship between age and awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment

The coefficient of correlation between age and awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment were presented in Table 4.11. The coefficient of correlation between the concerned variables was found -0.240. The following observations were made on the basis of the value of correlation coefficient between the two variables of the study.

- *The calculated value between the concerned variables " r " = -0.240 was greater than the tabulated value ($r = 0.196$) with 103 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of probability.*
- *The null hypothesis was rejected.*
- *The relationship between the concerned variables was statistically significant at 0.05 level of probability.*
- *The relationship showed a negative trend between the concerned variables.*

Based on the above findings it could be concluded that age had a negative significant relationship with awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment. This represent that age of the rural women was an important factor in awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment and with the increases of age of the respondent's their awareness level decreases. That is age of the rural women is an influencing factor be influences aware about power.

4.3.2 Relationship between education level and awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment

The coefficient of correlation between education level and awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment were presented in Table 4.11. The coefficient of correlation between the concerned variables was 0.546. The following observations were made on the basis of the value of correlation coefficient between the two variables of the study.

- *The calculated value between the concerned variables "r" = 0.546 was greater than the tabulated value (r = 0.196) with 103 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of probability.*
- *The null hypothesis was rejected.*
- *The relationship between the concerned variables was positively and statistically significant at 0.01 level of probability..*

Based on the above findings it could be concluded that education level had significant positive relationships with awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment. This represent that education level of the rural women was an important factor in awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment and with the increases of education level of the respondent's awareness level also increases.

4.3.3 Relationship between husband's cooperation in household activities and awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment

The coefficient of correlation between husband's cooperation in household activities and awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment were presented in Table 4.11. The coefficient of correlation between the concerned two variables was 0.314. The following observations were made:

- *The calculated value "r" = 0.314 between the concerned variables was greater than the tabulated value (r = 0.196) with 103 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of probability.*
- *The null hypothesis was therefore, rejected.*
- *The relationship between the concerned variables was positive and statistically significant at 0.01 level of probability.*

Based on the above findings it could be concluded that husband co-operation in household activities had significant positive relationship with the awareness of

rural women on the issue of empowerment. This represent that husband's cooperation in household activities of the rural women was an important factor in creating awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment and with the increase in husband's cooperation in household activities. Thus is a corresponding increase in the awareness level of the rural women.

4.3.4 Relationship between participation in farm activities and awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment

The coefficient of correlation between participation in farm activities and awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment were presented in Table 4.11. The coefficient of correlation between the concerned variables was found 0.162. The following observations were made on the basis of the value of correlation coefficient between the two variables of the study.

- *The calculated value between the concerned variables " r " = 0.162 was smaller than the tabulated value ($r = 0.196$) with 103 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of probability.*
- *The null hypothesis was accepted.*
- *The relationship between the concerned variables was insignificant at 0.05 level of probability.*
- *The relationship showed a positive trend between the concerned variables.*

Based on the above findings it could be concluded that participation in farm activities had insignificant relationships with awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment. This represent that participation in farm activities of the rural women was not an important factor in awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment but with the increases of participation in farm activities of the respondent's awareness level also increases.

4.3.5 Relationship between knowledge on family management and awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment

The coefficient of correlation between knowledge on family management and awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment were presented in Table 4.11. The coefficient of correlation between the concerned variables was found 0.405. The following observations were made on the basis of the value of correlation coefficient between the two variables of the study.

- *The calculated value between the concerned variables "r" = 0.405 was greater than the tabulated value ($r = 0.196$) with 103 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of probability.*
- *The null hypothesis was rejected.*
- *The relationship between the concerned variables was statistically significant at 0.01 level of probability.*
- *The relationship showed a positive trend between the concerned variables.*

Based on the above findings it could be concluded that knowledge on family management had significant positive relationships with awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment. This represent that knowledge on family management of the rural women was an important factor in awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment and with the increases of knowledge on family management of the respondent's awareness level also increases.

4.3.6 Relationship between personality and awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment

The coefficient of correlation between personality and awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment were presented in Table 4.11. The coefficient of correlation between the concerned variables was found 0.137. The following observations were made on the basis of the value of correlation coefficient between the two variables of the study.

- *The calculated value between the concerned variables “r”=0.137 was smaller than the tabulated value (r = 0.196) with 103 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of probability.*
- *The null hypothesis was accepted.*
- *The relationship between the concerned variables was insignificant at 0.05 level of probability.*
- *The relationship showed a positive trend between the concerned variables.*

Based on the above findings it could be concluded that personality had insignificant positive relationships with awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment. This represent that personality of the rural women was not an important factor in awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment but with the increases of personality of the respondent’s awareness level also increases.

4.3.7 Relationship between social participation and awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment

The coefficient of correlation between social participation and awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment were presented in Table 4.11. The coefficient of correlation between the concerned variables was found 0.716. The following observations were made on the basis of the value of correlation coefficient between the two variables of the study.

- *The calculated value between the concerned variables “r” (0.716) was greater than the tabulated value (r = 0.196) with 103 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of probability.*
- *The null hypothesis was rejected.*
- *The relationship between the concerned variables was statistically significant at 0.01 level of probability.*

- *The relationship showed a positive trend between the concerned variables.*

Based on the above findings it could be concluded that social participation had significant positive relationships with awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment. This represent that social participation of the rural women was an important factor in awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment and with the increases of social participation of the respondent's awareness level also increases.

4.3.8 Relationship between freedom of decision making and awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment

The coefficient of correlation between freedom of decision making and awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment were presented in Table 4.11. The coefficient of correlation between the concerned variables was found 0.623. The following observations were made on the basis of the value of correlation coefficient between the two variables of the study.

- *The calculated value between the concerned variables "r" (0.623) was greater than the tabulated value ($r = 0.196$) with 103 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of probability.*
- *The null hypothesis was rejected.*
- *The relationship between the concerned variables was statistically significant at 0.01 level of probability.*
- *The relationship showed a positive trend between the concerned variables.*

Based on the above findings it could be concluded that freedom of decision making had significant positive relationships with awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment. This represent that freedom of decision making of the rural women was an important factor in awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment and with the increases of freedom of decision making of the respondent's awareness level also increases.

4.3.9 Relationship between involvement with organization and awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment

The coefficient of correlation between involvement with organization and awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment were presented in Table 4.11. The coefficient of correlation between the concerned variables was found 0.492. The following observations were made on the basis of the value of correlation coefficient between the two variables of the study.

- *The calculated value between the concerned variables “r” (0.492) was greater than the tabulated value ($r = 0.196$) with 103 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of probability.*
- *The null hypothesis was rejected.*
- *The relationship between the concerned variables was statistically significant at 0.01 level of probability.*
- *The relationship showed a positive trend between the concerned variables.*

Based on the above findings it could be concluded that involvement with organization had significant positive relationships with awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment. This represent that involvement with organization of the rural women was an important factor in awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment and with the increases of involvement with organization of the respondent’s awareness level also increases.



Chapter 5

Summary of Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations



SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study was conducted in the Malkhannagar union of Shirajdikhan upazilla under Munshiganj district. Among the villages of Malkhannagar union Malkhannagar, Nateswar, Kazirbag and Nagar Furshail were selected for conducting the study. A well structured interview schedule was developed based on objectives of the study for collecting information. The researcher herself was collect data from the sample respondents through personal contact. The independent variables were: age, education level, husband's co-operation in household activities, participation in farm activities, knowledge on family management, personality, social participation, freedom of decision making and involvement with organization. The dependent variable of this study was awareness of rural women on the issue empowerment. Data collected from the respondents were compiled, coded, tabulated and analyzed in accordance with the objectives of the study. Various statistical measures such as frequency counts, percentage distribution, average, and standard deviation were used in describing data. Co-efficient of correlation test was used to explore relationship between the concerned variables. The major findings of the study are summarized below:

5.1 Summary of findings

5.1.1 Characteristics of the respondents

The average age of the rural women was about 32 years and majority of them belonged young category of below 32 years. There average education was 6.37 years of schooling and about 63 percent of them had secondary to above secondary level of education.

Rural women under 'above secondary level' category constitute the highest proportion (60.0 percent) compared to 37.43 percent primary education and 2.86 above secondary education category.

The medium levels cooperation in household activities by husband constitutes the highest proportion (52.38 percent) followed by low level cooperation in household activities (37.14 percent) and high level co-operation (10.48 percent).

The rural women family having medium participation constitute the highest proportion (40.00 percent) followed by the rural women family having low participation (32.38 percent) and high participation (27.62 percent).

Among the respondent 40.95 percent fell under medium knowledge on family management and 39.05 percent fell high category, however about 20.95 percent belonged to low knowledge on family management category.

The highest portion (60.00 percent) of the rural women were medium level social participation group, while 35.24 percent respondents were low level social participation group and only 4.76 percent were high level social participation group.

The highest 73.33 percent rural women had medium freedom of decision making, while 21.90 percent rural women had low freedom of decision making and only 4.76 percent had high freedom of decision making ability.

The highest portion (81.90 percent) of the rural women were low level involvement with organization group, while 17.14 percent respondents were medium level involvement with organization group and only 0.95 percent were high level involvement with organization group.

5.1.2 Awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment

Among the respondents the highest 71.43 percent belongs to the group of medium awareness group followed by 15.24 percent in high awareness group and 13.33 percent low awareness group. Among the rural women a total of 84.76 percent had medium to low level of awareness on the issue of empowerment.

5.1.3 Results of hypothesis testing

- Age had significant negative relationships with the awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment.
- Education level had significant positive relationships with the awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment.
- Husband's cooperation in household activities had significant positive relationships with the awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment.
- Participation in farm activities had significant positive relationships with the awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment.
- Knowledge on family management had significant positive relationships with the awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment.
- Personality had significant positive relationships with the awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment.
- Social participation had significant positive relationships with the awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment.
- Freedom of decision making had significant positive relationships with the awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment.
- Involvement with organization had significant positive relationships with the awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment.

5.2 Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study the following conclusions have been drawn:

1. Among the rural women young aged constitute the highest proportion (72.38 percent). Therefore, it may be concluded that most of the women of the study area were young aged.

2. The highest 60.0 percent under the group of secondary level educated. Therefore, it may be concluded that the education level of the women of that area were satisfactory level.
3. Among the total respondents medium husband cooperation constitutes the highest proportion (52.38 percent). Therefore, it may be concluded that the above fifty percent women enjoy their husband co-operation.
4. Among the respondents medium participation in farm activities constitute the highest proportion (40.00 percent), therefore, it may be concluded that the large portion respondents participate in farm activities.
5. In consideration the knowledge on family management all of them have management knowledge and medium and high management knowledge has maximum proportion. Therefore, it may be concluded that the respondents had sufficient family management knowledge.
6. Among the respondents above two third had medium to high personality. Therefore, it may be concluded that most of the respondents women carrying considerable personality.
7. The highest portions (60 percent) of the women have medium level social participation. Therefore, it may be concluded that the women of that area were socially aware.
8. Among the respondents the highest 73.33 percent had medium freedom of decision making. Therefore, it may be concluded that the respondents have freedom in decision making.
9. Among the respondent highest 81.90 percent have low involvement with organization. Therefore, it may be concluded that the respondents have low involvement with organization.
10. Education level, husband's co-operation in household activities, participation in farm activities, knowledge on family management, personality, social participation, freedom of decision making and

involvement with organization showed significant positive relationship with awareness of rural women in the issue of empowerment.

11. Age showed significant negative relationship with awareness of rural women in the issue of empowerment.

5.3 Recommendations

5.3.1 Recommendation for policy implication

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study following recommendation are made for policy implication:

1. All concern should undertake appropriate strategies for increasing empowerment situation of women in Bangladesh.
2. GOs and NGO should undertake different income generating activities which were appropriate for women i.e. livestock rearing, tailoring, handicraft etc.
3. Necessary literacy programs should be undertaken to educate women by different NGOs so that women can be aware about their position in the family and society.
4. Different NGOs have to take such program for women with landless and marginal families to utilize their homestead so that they can earn within household and they need not depend on land.
5. Different GOs and NGOs undertake systematic way of social participation.
6. It is necessary to increase the organizational involvement of women.



5.3.2 Recommendation for further study

The following recommendations are put forwarded for further research studies:

1. The present study was conducted only in Shirajdikhan upazilla under Munshiganj district. Similar studies may be undertaken in other area of Bangladesh with same socio-economic conditions.
2. There are various dimension by which empowerment can measure. Further study may be conducted by considering the different dimension of empowerment.
3. Relationship of nine characteristics of women was investigated in this study. Further research should be conducted to explore relationship of other characteristics of the women for measuring awareness of rural women in the issue of empowerment.



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Appendices



APPENDICES

Appendix A. Interview Schedule

Department of Agricultural Extension and Information System
 Sher-e- Bangla Agricultural University
 Sher-e- Bangla Nagor, Dhaka-1207.

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR A RESEARCH STUDY ON

AWARNESS OF RURAL WOMEN ON THE ISSUE OF EMPOWERMENT

Serial no.....
 Name of the respondent:.....
 Village..... Union.....
 Upazila..... District.....

(Please answer the following questions)

1. Age:

How old are you? years .

2. Level of Education:

What is the level of your education?

- I. Can not read and write
- II. Can sign only
- III. Read up to class

3. Husband's Co-operation in household activities:

Please mention the extent your husband's co-operation in the following activities:

SL. No.	Activities	Extent of husband's support			
		Sufficient (3)	Substantial (2)	Little (1)	Not at all
1	Marketing of homestead products				
2	Exposure to some organization				
3	Poultry & dairy rearing				
4	Post harvest activities & storage of agril. Products				
5	decision making				
6	Homestead gardening				
7	Health care of the family member				
8	Freedom of use of the profit of the farm				
9	Fish culture				
10	Child education				

4. Participation in farm activities:

Please indicate your extent of participation in the following farm activities.

SL. NO.	Activities	Regularly (2)	Occupationally	Never (0)
1	Homestead vegetable cultivation			
2	Post harvest activities of field crops & vegetables			
3	Poultry rearing			
4	Goat rearing			
5	Cattle rearing			
6	Fish culture			
7	Plantation & nursing of fruit trees			
8	Nursery			
9	Homestead agriculture			
10	Marketing of farm products			

5. Knowledge on family management:

Please answer the following questions

Sl. No.	Questions	Full number	Obtained number
1.	Name four common nutritious food item		
2.	Which vegetables contain vitamin C		
3.	Name two medicine that are used against cold fever and headache		
4.	What is balance diet?		
5.	Mention three diseases of child?		
6.	Mention two types of Family Planning Method		
7.	How do you maintain family budget ?		
8.	Which vegetables contain Vitamin A?		
9.	How do you process vegetables for cooking?		
10.	Why doctor suggests you to drink boiled water?		

6. Personality:

Please mention your extent of personality on the following aspects as performed by you.

SL. NO.	Items	Extent of personality			
		Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Fair (2)	Not bad (1)
1	Social interaction				
2	Communication behavior				
3	Self idea / advice				
4	Group organizing				
5	Leadership behavior				
6	Confront family problem				
7	Proper guidance to the children				
8	Maintain acceptable interaction among the family members				
9	Hard work & perseverance				
10	Accept any change				

7. Social participation:

Please mention the nature of your participation in the following social organization:

SL.No.	Name of social activities	Extent of participation			
		Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely	Not at all
1	Participate in marriage ceremony				
2	Participate in Birth day & death anniversary				
3	Participate in Milad-mahafil				
4	Participate in Kulkhani / Chehleum Shradha				
5	Took part in Cultural Programs				
6	NGO meeting programs				
7	Participate in story telling program				
8	Participate in Folklore song				
9	Visit neighbors house				
10	Visit village fair				

8. Freedom of decision making :

Please mention whether have free decision making ability on the following aspects:

SL. NO.	Items of opinion	Degrees of freedom			
		Totally free (3)	Partially free (2)	Little (1)	Not free (0)
1	Opinion on Household work				
2	Opinion on homestead gardening				
3	Decision making in Family planning				
4	Family expenditure				
5	Health & family care				
6	Sending children to school				
7	Buying household activities				
8	Rearing & selling of poultry birds				
9	Purchasing essential goods				
10	Donation / gift				

9. Involvement with socio-economic organization:

Please mention how you are involve in following organizations

Sl. No.	Name of organization	No participate	Duration of participation (Years)		
			As ordinary member	As executive member	As Officer
1	BRAC				
2	Padma (Proshika)				
3	Oparagita (Asa)				
4	Malkhamagar vumihin mohila shamity (Grameen Bank)				

10. Awareness on women empowerment:

Please indicate your awareness on the following facts:

SL. NO.	Items	Degree of awareness				
		Highly aware (4)	More aware (3)	Moderate aware (2)	Less Aware (1)	Not Aware (0)
1	Husband & wife possess equal right					
2	Access to decision making					
3	Access to social arbitration					
4	Access to politics					
5	Access to education					
6	Access to income generating activities					
7	Access to business					
8	Access to group information					
9	Access to religious activities					
10	Access to purchase of land					

Thank you

Signature of the interviewer

Appendix B. Correlation Matrix

Characters	Age	Education level	Husband co-operation in Household activities	Participation in farm activities	Knowledge on family management	Personality	Social participation	Freedom of decision making	Involvement with organization	Awareness of rural women in the issue of empowerment
Age	1.00									
Education level		1.00								
Husband co-operation in Household activities	-0.121	0.453**	1.00							
Participation in farm activities	0.012	0.364**	0.645**	1.00						
Knowledge on family management	0.542**	-0.012	0.125	0.362**	1.00					
Personality	0.253**	0.362**	0.011	-0.148	0.215*	1.00				
Social participation	0.425**	0.004	0.632**	-0.452**	0.451**	0.325**	1.00			
Freedom of decision making	-0.148	0.632**	0.078	0.362**	0.452**	0.063	0.842**	1.00		
Involvement with organization	0.231**	0.458**	0.092	-0.120	0.081	0.121	0.326**	0.105	1.00	
Awareness of rural women in the issue of empowerment	-0.240*	0.546**	0.314**	0.325**	0.405**	0.668**	0.716**	0.623**	0.492**	1.00

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

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