



**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

**A SOCIO-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE OF WOMEN EDUCATION AND  
EMPOWERMENT IN RURAL BANGLADESH**

**MST SULTANA.**

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**A SOCIO-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE OF WOMEN EDUCATION AND  
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**By**

**MST. SULTANA**

**Thesis Submitted for the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,  
in Fulfilment of the Requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**February 2006**



## **DEDICATION**

*To My Family and To the World's Women Whose Struggles Are Yet To Be Told*



Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment  
of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

**A SOCIO-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE OF WOMEN EDUCATION AND  
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**February 2006**

**Chairman : Professor Jayum Anak Jawan, PhD**

**Faculty : Human Ecology**

The main focus of this study was to examine the role of education in increasing the level of women's empowerment particularly in the decision-making process at the household level and to find out how the socio-cultural factors (for gender-based awareness and the use of *Purdah*-related norms) influence women's education as well as empowerment in rural Bangladesh. The study was conducted in one of the districts of Dinajpur in Bangladesh. Three villages namely, Mashimpur, Mohiskotha and Jugibari which are situated under the Union of Auliapur at Sadar thana (sub-district) were chosen as study areas. The respondents of the study consisted of 340 women from the selected areas. To gather qualitative information, 27 respondents were also involved in this study. In order to gather the depth information, both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed in this study.

The first objective of the study was to examine the awareness of gender-based factors in rural women's education as well as their empowerment. The study



showed that in Bangladesh, socio-cultural ideology generates gender-based inequalities in education. As a result of the patriarchal ideology, most respondents consider sons as 'assets'. On the other hand, daughters are treated as non-permanent family members in their natal home since they will move into their husband's house after marriage. Due to such beliefs and practices, women received less attention in education and as a result lack empowerment.

The second objective of the study was to identify the role of the practice of *Purdah*-related norms and its influence on rural women's education as well as their empowerment. The results indicated that in Bangladesh most respondents had a 'non-traditional' ideology or non-conservative ideology about the practice of *Purdah*. Correlation coefficient was also conducted to examine the relationship between respondent's *Purdah* ideology and the socio-economic variables and the results showed that among the socio-economic variables religious status, education, occupation, income, total number of children and son's education were positively correlated with *Purdah* awareness although the strength of the relationship was weak.

The third objective of the study was to examine the role of education and how education might help in increasing women's decision-making power (empowerment) at the household level. The results showed that women with higher education level i.e. those with higher secondary education and graduates, had more decision-making power compared to illiterate, primary and secondary educated women. Similarly, it was found that the women who full-time employed had more



decision-making power than housewives and self-employed women. The findings also showed that respondent's educational attainment ( $r = 0.47$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), occupation ( $r = 0.61$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) and income ( $r = 0.60$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) were positively related to their decision-making power.

The fourth objective of the study was to determine the factors (particularly the independent variables) that might affect women's decision-making power (empowerment) at the household level. A multiple linear regression analysis was carried out and the results revealed that education, occupation, income and gender-based awareness had a significant influence on women's decision-making power (the level of empowerment). The analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed the overall significant of the linear regression model with F-test ( $p < 0.001$ ) for considerable adjustment of the model with the regression coefficient (R square) of 51.6. Overall, the study suggests that improvement in women's access to education particularly the higher level of education opportunities would increase women's employment and income. This could expand their ability to make decisions in the family and would play a key role in the empowerment of rural women.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**PERSPEKTIF SOSIAL BUDAYA DALAM PENDIDIKAN WANITA DAN  
PENDAYAUPAYAAN DI LUAR BANDAR BANGLADESH**

Oleh

**MST. SULTANA**

**Februari 2006**

**Pengerusi : Professor Jayum Anak Jawan, PhD**

**Fakulti : Ekologi Manusia**

Fokus utama kajian ini adalah untuk menilai peranan pendidikan dalam meningkatkan pendayaupayaan wanita dalam proses membuat keputusan di peringkat keluarga dan melihat bagaimana faktor sosial-budaya (iaitu yang melibatkan ketidaksamaan berdasarkan gender dan norma-norma berkaitan amalan pemakaian *purdah*) mempengaruhi pendidikan dan pendayaupayaan wanita di luar bandar Bangladesh. Kajian ini dibuat di daerah Dinajpur, Bangladesh. Tiga buah kampung dipilih, iaitu Mashimpur, Mohiskotha dan Jagibari yang terletak dibawah Gabungan Auliapur di Sadar thana (sub-daerah) sebagai kawasan kajian. Responden kajian pula terdiri daripada 340 wanita dari kawasan kajian yang terpilih. Data-data kajian diperolehi melalui borang soal-selidik, temubual, dan perbincangan fokus serta melalui pemerhatian. Kedua-dua teknik kualitatif dan kuantitatif digunakan di dalam kajian ini, bertujuan untuk mendapatkan maklumat yang lebih terperinci.



Objektif pertama kajian ini adalah untuk menilai pengaruh ketidaksamaan berdasarkan gender dalam pendidikan wanita serta pendayaupayaan mereka. Kajian menunjukkan di Bangladesh, ideologi sosial-budaya menimbulkan ketidaksamaan dalam pendidikan. Kesan daripada ideologi patriakal ini menyebabkan kebanyakan wanita beranggapan bahawa anak lelaki adalah satu 'aset'. Manakala, anak-anak perempuan di layan sebagai ahli sementara keluarga asal kerana andaian bahawa mereka akhirnya akan mengikuti keluarga pihak suami apabila berkahwin kelak. Disebabkan oleh kepercayaan dan amalan sebegini, wanita kurang diberi perhatian dalam pendidikan dan akibatnya mereka kurang pendayaupayaan.

Objektif kedua kajian pula ialah untuk mengenalpasti peranan amalan berkaitan pemakaian *Purdah* dan kesan-kesannya terhadap pendidikan wanita serta pendayaupayaan mereka. Kajian menunjukkan amalan berkaitan pemakaian *purdah* tidak banyak mempengaruhi pendidikan wanita serta kurangnya pendayaupayaan dikalangan mereka. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa *purdah* bukan sahaja dilihat sebagai 'kepercayaan agama' tetapi juga dilihat sebagai norma-norma 'sosio-budaya'; iaitu 'pengasingan wanita' dan 'status keluarga'. Didapati juga bahawa, di Bangladesh kebanyakan wanita memiliki ideologi 'non-tradisional' atau ideologi 'non-konservatif' terhadap amalan pemakain *Purdah*.

Objektif ketiga kajian adalah untuk menilai peranan pendidikan dan bagaimana pendidikan boleh meningkatkan tahap pendayaupayaan (kuasa membuat keputusan). Untuk mengukur tahap pendayaupayaan, kuasa membuat keputusan wanita di peringkat keluarga turut dipertimbangkan di dalam kajian, dan ia di ukur



menggunakan kedua-dua kaedah kualitatif dan kuantitatif. Kajian menilai kuasa membuat keputusan wanita pada setiap peringkat pendidikan yang berbeza dan hasilnya menunjukkan bahawa wanita yang memiliki tahap pendidikan yang tinggi iaitu peringkat menengah atas dan graduan, mempunyai kuasa membuat keputusan yang lebih berbanding mereka yang 'buta huruf' iaitu mereka yang hanya memiliki pendidikan peringkat rendah dan menengah. Didapati juga bahawa, wanita yang bekerja sepenuh masa mempunyai lebih kuasa membuat keputusan dari suri rumah dan wanita yang bekerja sendiri. Lebih tepat, tahap pendidikan seseorang wanita, merupakan variabel penting dalam mempertingkatkan peluang bekerja disamping meningkatkan pendapatan mereka.

Objektif keempat kajian adalah untuk menentukan faktor-faktor (terutamanya variabel bebas) yang mungkin akan mempengaruhi kuasa membuat keputusan wanita (tahap pendayaupayaan) pada peringkat keluarga. Analisa "multiple linear regression" dilakukan untuk menentukan faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi tahap kuasa membuat keputusan. Hasil kajian menunjukkan pendidikan, pekerjaan, pendapatan dan kesedaran ketidaksetaraan berdasarkan gender adalah tinggi iaitu pada  $p < 0.001$ . Manakala pendapatan, hanya signifikan pada  $p < 0.05$ . Analisa varians (ANOVA) menunjukkan signifikan keseluruhan model regresi linear dengan F-test ( $P < 0.001$ ) untuk perubahan ketara model dengan 'regression coefficient' (R square) pada 0.51. Pada keseluruhannya, kajian mencadangkan peningkatan peluang pendidikan terutamanya peringkat lebih tinggi akan meningkatkan peluang pekerjaan dan pendapatan wanita. Ini akan mengembangkan kebolehan mereka dalam membuat keputusan di peringkat keluarga dan memainkan peranan penting dalam pendayaupayaan wanita luar bandar.

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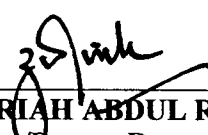
I certify that an Examination Committee has met on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2006 to conduct the final examination of Mst. Sultana on her Doctor of Philosophy thesis entitled “A Socio-cultural Perspective of Women Education and Empowerment in Rural Bangladesh” in accordance with Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Act 1980 and Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Regulations 1981. The committee recommends that the candidate be awarded the relevant degree. Members of the examination Committee are as follows:

**Nobaya Ahmad, PhD**  
Lecturer  
Faculty of Human Ecology  
Universiti Putra Malaysia  
(Chairman)

**Maimunah Ismail, PhD**  
Professor  
Faculty of Educational Studies  
Universiti Putra Malaysia  
(Internal Examiner)

**Zahid Emby, PhD**  
Lecturer  
Faculty of Human Ecology  
Universiti Putra Malaysia  
(Internal Examiner)

**Dimbab Ngidang, PhD**  
Professor  
Faculty of Social Sciences  
Universiti Sarawak Malaysia (UNIMAS)  
(External Examiner)

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**ZAKARIAH ABDUL RASHID, PhD**  
Professor/Deputy Dean  
School of Graduate Studies  
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date: 27 MAR 2006



I certify that an Examination Committee has met on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2006 to conduct the final examination of Mst. Sultana on her Doctor of Philosophy thesis entitled “A Socio-cultural Perspective of Women Education and Empowerment in Rural Bangladesh” in accordance with Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Act 1980 and Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Regulations 1981. The committee recommends that the candidate be awarded the relevant degree. Members of the examination Committee are as follows:

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Lecturer

Faculty of Human Ecology

Universiti Putra Malaysia

(Chairman)

**Maimunah Ismail, PhD**

Professor

Faculty of Educational Studies

Universiti Putra Malaysia

(Internal Examiner)

**Zahid Emby, PhD**

Lecturer

Faculty of Human Ecology

Universiti Putra Malaysia

(Internal Examiner)

**Dimbab Ngidang, PhD**

Professor

Faculty of Social Sciences

Universiti Sarawak Malaysia (UNIMAS)

(External Examiner)

  
ZAKARIAH ABDUL RASHID, PhD

Professor/Deputy Dean

School of Graduate Studies

Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date: 27 MAR 2006

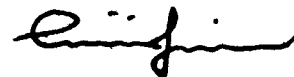


This thesis submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee are as follows:

**Jayum A. Jawam, PhD**  
Professor  
Faculty of Human Ecology  
Universiti Putra Malaysia  
(Chairman)

**Sharifah Norazizan Syed Abd. Rashid, PhD**  
Lecturer  
Faculty of Human Ecology  
Universiti Putra Malaysia  
(Member)

**Mohammad Shatar Sabran, PhD**  
Lecturer  
Faculty of Human Ecology  
Universiti Putra Malaysia  
(Member)



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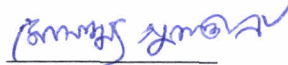
**AINI IDERIS, PhD**  
Professor/ Dean  
School of Graduate Studies  
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date: **13 APR 2006**



## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis is based on my original work except for quotations and citations, which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted for any other degree at Universiti Putra Malaysia or other institutions.



**MST SULTANA**

Date: 16/02/2006

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATION**

<b>BBS</b>	<b>Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics</b>
<b>BRAC</b>	<b>Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee</b>
<b>NGO</b>	<b>Non Governmental Organization</b>
<b>UNDP</b>	<b>United Nation Development Program</b>
<b>GB</b>	<b>Grameen Bank</b>
<b>WHO</b>	<b>World Health Organization</b>
<b>CEDAW</b>	<b>Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women</b>
<b>DAWN</b>	<b>Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era</b>
<b>ILO</b>	<b>International Labour Organization</b>
<b>DFID</b>	<b>Department for International Development</b>
<b>BANBEIS</b>	<b>Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics</b>
<b>DMPI</b>	<b>Decision-Making Power Index as the Level of Empowerment.</b>
<b>SIDA</b>	<b>Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency</b>





## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background to the Research

Although a half of the world's populations are women, it has been noted that most of the development programs are focused on men rather than on women. The latter are often described as illiterate, unskilled and poor and segregated in any occupation that pays wages. Women constitute about 70 percent of the World's poor (Saadallah, 2001). According to Snyder (1980), the only development assistance which usually reaches women directly is of the welfare type-mother and childcare which is not enough. Sipila (1979), Assistant Secretary General for Social Development and Human Affairs of the United Nations stated in her report that where there is poverty there are women who suffer from its worst effects. Although women make tremendous contributions to the economy, women's contributions are not valued in the same way as men. As a result women consistently find themselves at a lower economic status than men.

According to the Human Development Report (1999), various UN/World Bank reports and the report of the Mahbub-ul-Haq Human Development Centre, Islamabad, the South Asian region is fast emerging as one of the most deprived regions in the world. It is the poorest region in the world with a GNP per capita of US \$ 452 in 1997. South Asia has the largest number of people living in poverty,

