

## An Empirical Analysis of Women Empowerment within Muslim Community in Murshidabad District of West Bengal, India

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### Abstract

Women empowerment is a contemporary issue for developing countries like India. The rates of women empowerment are in a vulnerable condition within the largest Muslim minority community of India. In this paper, an attempt has been taken to present an empirical analysis of Muslim women empowerment within purposively selected Murshidabad district of West Bengal regarding the highest concentration of Muslim people (63.67%) all over the country. For showing the multidimensional aspects of women empowerment, a Cumulative Empowerment Index (CEI) has been constructed using 22 key indicators that act as explained variables covering four dimension of women empowerment, i.e. control over economic resources, control over household decision making, women's mobility and political awareness. Nine explanatory (independent) variables have also been selected as determinants of women empowerment (CEI). Based on the multiple regression results the study finds statistically significant impact of accessing any type of media, family structure, family headship, household income, paid work and duration of marital life on Cumulative Empowerment Index of Muslim women at the study area. It concludes that active participation of GO's and local NGO's in bringing change of traditional beliefs of Muslim family and gaining awareness about women's rights and practices can accelerate the women empowerment process within Muslim community of Murshidabad district.

**Keywords:** Women empowerment, Cumulative Empowerment Index, Muslim community, Multiple regression

### 1. Introduction

Empowerment, a multidimensional process comprising political, social, cultural, economic and legal empowerment helps one to gain control of their lives by raising their awareness. The term 'empowerment' denotes the process of increasing the assets and capabilities of individuals or groups to make purposive choices and to transform those into desired actions and outcomes (Chakrabarti et. al. 2008). Women empowerment can be treated as a process by which women can enjoy greater control over material and intellectual resources that will enable themselves to have greater autonomy over household decision making and economic resources. The women empowerment has been taken as a priority area in UN Millennium Development Goals. The kind of empowerment varies spatio-temporally, is direly needed to take into account the inter-relationship of various predictor variables that together contribute on women empowerment process of a particular region under study.

Although the present world has taken much more attention in achieving the equity of power between men and women, the women in developing world are still in darker position. To ensure the empowerment among the women it is necessary to change long back traditional socio-cultural norms along with redefining the concept of patriarchal societal pattern. The constitution of India grants equity to women in various strata of society by means of reservation and ensuring better involvement in various development projects. But a large number of women are either ill equipped or not in a position to propel themselves out of their traditionally unsatisfactory socio-economic conditions (Deshpande et. al. 2010). Muslims are the largest minority community of India constituting 14 percent of total population (Census-2001). The community has experienced slow pace of progress and remained socio-economically most backward. The Muslim women suffer from poor empowerment resulting from traditional conservative thinking and patriarchal societal condition. The present study conducted over Murshidabad district of West Bengal with an objective of empirical measurement of women empowerment within Muslim community people.

## 2. Literature Review

For accelerating the development process of a welfare state, women empowerment is the matter of concern for both developing and developed world. But it is necessary to develop proper way by which empowerment could be measured quantitatively as well as qualitatively to formulate effective action plan for betterment of the societal condition. Plenty of research work has been carried out at national as well as international level covering multidimensional nature of women empowerment. Most of the studies on Muslim women empowerment is confined within the Islam dominated states. Following are some reviews of significant studies.

Malhotra et. al. (2003) made a pioneer study of measuring and analysing women empowerment. Here six commonly used dimensions, viz. economic, socio-cultural, familial-interpersonal, legal, political and psychological including their potential operationalization in the household, community and broader arenas has been put forth. Parveen et. al. (2004) quantitatively measures rural women empowerment of Bangladesh at household level. Education, training and exposure to information media have the potential to increase women's empowerment to a large extent. Khan et. al. (2008) studied the women's empowerment in Faisalabad district of Pakistan based upon socio-cultural context of study area. The study suggests revolutionary changes in female education that will support gender awareness and self esteem among women. An empirical analysis made by Chaudhry et. al. (2009) shows diverse result of women empowerment in three different regions, viz. urban, rural and tribal areas of Southern Punjab (Pakistan). Besides education, access to media, socio-cultural norms of the community, job of women and household participation rate, a variable about the knowledge of an Islamic Concept of women empowerment has an effect upon women empowerment index constructed in the study. Varghese (2011) made a study of women empowerment in Oman based upon five independent variables and total women empowerment as dependent variable. It shows that women in Oman are better in household decision making and economic decision making than social empowerment.

In spite of a handful literature, found on women empowerment in India, only a few of them covers empirical analysis of women empowerment among Muslim community-the largest minority group in India. Bharathamma (2005) in his study of rural women empowerment in Gadag district of northern Karnataka found that education, land holding, income of the family, social participation and mass media participation have highly significant association with women empowerment. As per rural women's perception lack of education, over burdened with dual responsibilities, lack of proper training, family restriction from mobility and lack of sufficient finance is the root constraints of poor women empowerment. While Deininger (2005) in his study of women empowerment in rural India evaluated Andhra Pradesh District Poverty Initiatives Project (APDPIP) upon women empowerment, found that APDPIP not only improved access to credit and risk diversification but also significantly increased women's empowerment. Based on variables of empowerment and autonomy from NFHS (National Family Health Survey) -3, Tripathi (2011) attempts to draw a comparison and mapping of empowerment in fifteen major states of India using the technique of Displaced Ideal. The states of South India (Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka) experiences higher access to resources for women are poor in terms of indicators of autonomy. Similarly, the states of north-east India and Bihar high in autonomy are poor in empowerment. Das (2011) has identified various constraints of women empowerment among Karbi tribes of Assam, viz. social, political, economic, technological and psychological constraints. He further argues that 'lack of knowledge about new technology and information' was the main reason behind poor empowerment of such tribal women.

## 3. About the Study Area

Lying between 23<sup>o</sup> 43' and 24<sup>o</sup>52' north latitudes and 87<sup>o</sup>49' and 88<sup>o</sup>44' east longitudes, Murshidabad is the northern most district of the Presidency Division of West Bengal, India. With an area of 5324 square kilometer, the district has 26 Community Development blocks. The district is characterised with low level of urbanisation; consequently, almost 87.51 percent people reside in rural areas having absence of any proper development initiatives. According to Human Development index Murshidabad is ranked as 17<sup>th</sup> district out of 19 Districts in West Bengal (Source: Human Development Report, Govt. of West Bengal -2004). The district occupies 63.67 percent Muslim population i.e. highest in the state and occupies a prominent figure in the country. Various governmental as well as non-governmental reports identify Muslim community as the most socio-economically backward minority in India. Sachar Committee Report (2006) placed Murshidabad as one of the backward district out of 604 districts in India in terms of literacy, opportunities and awareness levels of specifically Muslim Women. West Bengal Human Development Report (2004) recognizes the district with a poor value of Gender Development Index i.e. 0.423 (16<sup>th</sup>

among the districts). Such picture clearly depicts the present pitiful condition of women in Murshidabad district.

#### 4. Materials And Methods

##### 4.1 Sources of Data

Since women empowerment is subjected to the data derived from primary field survey, three blocks viz. Domkal, Samsanganj and Hariharpara are randomly chosen for performing household survey. Questionnaire survey has been conducted over randomly chosen three villages from the respective blocks, viz. *Bagdanga (Domkal)*, *Kohetpur (Samsanganj)* and *Sundalpur (Hariharpara)*. Primary data is collected from married Muslim women between age group of 18-49 years excluding widows and divorced women in the sample villages. A sample of 150 women is selected (50 respondents from each village) using stratified random sampling technique.

##### 4.2 Selection of Variables

Measurement of women empowerment in a region involves the selection of suitable dependent and independent variables that shape the study a realistic one. In the present study, due attention has been paid in selection of variables. Following are those variables covering almost each pros and cons, every dimension related with women empowerment of the study area.

###### 4.2.1 Measurement of Explained (Dependent) Variables

The explained variable of women empowerment has been constructed under the following four dimensions.

- A. Women's control over economic resources
- B. Women's control over household decision making
- C. Women's mobility
- D. Women's political awareness

Cumulative Empowerment Index (CEI) has been developed on the basis of composite assigned value of 22 explained variables covering all above four dimensions.

The first dimension i.e. Women's control over economic resources contained six explained variables, viz. buying routine household amenities; purchasing of expensive items; education and other expense of children; use of family savings; purchase, sale or exchange of property and purchasing of clothes and make up articles. It is computed on 4 point scale by using '0' for control of other family member, '1' for control of husband, '2' for joint control of husband and wife and '3' for control of wife.

The second dimension deals with women's control over household decision making containing seven explained variables, viz. children education, family planning, medical treatment of family, visiting relative's house, spending personal income, household finance and higher studies of respondents. It is also measured on 4 point scale by assigning '0' for control of other family member, '1' for control of husband, '2' for joint control of husband and wife and '3' for control of wife.

The third dimension i.e. women's mobility contained six explained variables. These are visiting women's parental home, visiting health centre, visiting hospital, visiting market, going to cinema hall or fair and attending religious occasion. It was computed on 4 point rating scale where '0' indicates never can go, '1' indicates with other family member, '2' means with husband and '3' represents wife alone.

The fourth dimension deals with women's political awareness consisting three explained variables, viz. casting of vote, standing for elections and participation in any political protest. It was measured on 4 point rating scale where '0' for control of other family member, '1' for control of husband, '2' for joint control of husband and wife and '3' for control of wife.

###### 4.2.2 Measurement of Explanatory (Independent) variables

A number of explanatory variables are chosen as predictors in order to check for their significance upon explained variable of women's empowerment. Their operational definitions and measurement techniques are as follows:

- 1) Type of family structure (Dummy variable) - '1' if live as joint and '0' if live as nucleus family structure.
- 2) Family headship (Dummy variable) - '1' for others and '0' for husband.

- 3) Paid work (Dummy variable) - '1' for yes and '0' for no answer.
- 4) Accessing any type of media (Dummy variable) - '1' if yes or '0' if not.
- 5) Educational status of women (Ordinal scale) – illiterate = '0', primary and middle school = '1' and secondary and above = '2'.
- 6) Sex of children (Ordinal scale) – '0' for no children, '1' for only daughter, '2' for both son and daughter and '3' for only son.
- 7) Husband's cooperation in family matter (Ordinal scale) – '0' for average, '1' for bad and '2' for good.
- 8) Duration of marital life is measured on ratio scale by taking the difference between respondents present age and age at marriage.
- 9) Household income was measured on ordinal scale where average monthly income was scored at the following way – Less than Rs.4000 = '0', Rs.4000 - 9000 = '1', Rs.9000 – 13000 = '2' and More than Rs.13000 = '3'.

#### 4.3 Methodology of analysis

Collected primary data has been analysed by the multiple linear regression technique. This technique involves prediction of dependent variable i.e. Cumulative Empowerment Index (CEI) based on selected independent or explanatory variables chosen in the present study. Mathematical expression of multiple linear regression technique is as follows.

$$Y = \beta_0 + \left( \sum_{i=1}^{10} \beta_i X_i \right) + \varepsilon$$

Where,

Y = Women's Cumulative Empowerment Index (CEI)

$\beta_0$  = Intercept

$\beta_i$  = Regression coefficient associated with variable  $X_i$  ( $i = 1, 2, 3, \dots, 10$ )

$\varepsilon$  = Error term

For an efficient and error free result, the procured data were analysed with the help of SPSS V.19 software package. Besides, so called descriptive statistical measure like frequency distribution, mean and standard deviation, a number of other statistical measurements were associated with the analysis. Beta (standardised regression coefficient) value is used to measure how strongly each independent variable influences the dependent variable. R-square value is used to measure the goodness of fit that lies between 0 and 1. It tends to correlate between the observed value and predicted value of the dependent variable. Value closer to 1 represents an ideal correlation and vice-versa. Finally ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) is used to assess the overall significance of the model.

## 5. Results And Discussion

### 5.1 Descriptive analysis

Measurement of women empowerment depends upon several key socio-economic factors that vary from region to region. The present study conducted over Murshidabad district of West Bengal, India tries to include those predictor variables that have relevance with Muslim women empowerment of that specific area. The Multiple Regression Analysis is conducted to examine the effects of nine explanatory (independent) variables on Women Empowerment (CEI) of Murshidabad district. Table 1 summarizes the descriptive analysis of a total sample of 150 respondents based on the basic statistical technique, e.g. Mean, Standard Deviation. The mean Cumulative Empowerment Index (CEI) of the area is 27.3800 followed by Standard Deviation of 11.46320. The value of rest independent variables has presented in table 1.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics (Total sample, N=150)**

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
Cumulative Empowerment Index (CEI)	27.38	11.4632
Type of family structure	0.56	0.498
Family headship	0.37	0.485
Paid work	0.36	0.482
Accessing any type of media	0.41	0.494
Education status of women	1.02	0.67
Sex of children	1.82	0.86
Husband cooperation in family matter	0.45	0.782
Duration of marital life	12	6.28
Household income	0.61	0.732

**Source:** Computed by authors using SPSS V.19 software

*5.2 Role of Explanatory (Independent) Variables on Muslim Women Empowerment (Explained or Dependent Variable) in Murshidabad district*

**Family structure**

Family structure has laid a great influence upon empowerment of women. In the study area, 44% of respondents belong to nucleus family and rest 56% to joint family structure. The mean Cumulative Empowerment Index (CEI) of women belonging to nucleus families is 33.26 but it is just 22.76 in case of joint family structure (Table 2). In joint family the women has to comprise family matter strictly with other family member. The decision making power is shared equally with all other family member and husband even cooperating his wife with a good manner cannot interfere in this matter for the sake of peace family. There is a negative correlation (-.456) between family structure and CEI i.e. joint family structure responsible for decreasing women empowerment and vice-versa (Table 3). The value of regression coefficient i.e. -5.905 (P<.005) for family structure portrays that shift of family structure from joint ('1') to nucleus ('0') increase the CEI by 5.905 units (Table 4). Hence, it is convenient to say that family structure is a significant explanatory variable determining the women empowerment.

**Family headship**

In patriarchal society of India women are headed by his husband or other family member like father in-law or brother in-law. Family head holds the supreme authority not only in family decision making but also in positioning the role of women in family as well as surrounding world. In our study, 62.7% of respondents belong to husband headship and 37.3% with headship of other family member. Respondents under the headship of husband enjoy a mean Cumulative Empowerment Index (CEI) of 30.90 and the women having headship with other family member bears a poor CEI of 21.46 (Table 2). The women being much more flexible with husband in pertaining with family issues than other family member, the women empowerment tends to increase in headship of her husband than other member of her family. Family headship negatively correlated (-.400) with Cumulative Empowerment Index (Table 3). The obtained value of regression coefficient -5.037 at P<.010 shows that change of family headship from other family member ('1') to husband ('0') results an increase of CEI by 5.037 units (Table 4). The results justify the significant role of family headship as a predictor in women empowerment.

**Table 2: Percentage distribution of response pattern of Explanatory variables and Mean Cumulative Empowerment Index (CEI) corresponding to each variable**

Explanatory variables	Total respondent (N=150)		Mean Cumulative Empowerment Index (CEI)
	Number	Percentage	
Type of family structure			
<i>Joint</i>	84	56	22.7619
<i>Nucleus</i>	66	44	33.2576
Family headship			
<i>Others</i>	56	37.3	21.4643
<i>Husband</i>	94	62.7	30.9043
Paid work			
<i>Yes</i>	54	36	36.4815
<i>No</i>	96	64	22.2604
Accessing any type of media			
<i>Yes</i>	62	41.3	35.0645
<i>No</i>	88	58.7	21.9659
Educational status of women			
<i>Illiterate</i>	32	21.3	20.8750
<i>Primary and middle school</i>	83	55.3	27.5181
<i>Secondary and above</i>	35	23.3	33
Sex of children			
<i>No children</i>	4	2.7	11.2500
<i>Only daughter</i>	59	39.3	27.0339
<i>Both son and daughter</i>	47	31.3	28.2128
<i>Only son</i>	40	26.7	28.5250
Husband's cooperation in family matter			
<i>Average</i>	109	72.7	26.4587
<i>Bad</i>	14	9.3	16.8571
<i>Good</i>	27	18	36.5556
Duration of marital life (years)			
<i>Below 12</i>	80	53.3	24.1783
<i>12 to 20</i>	54	36	29.5222
<i>21 &amp; above</i>	16	10.7	25.4167
Monthly Household income			
<i>Less than Rs. 4000</i>	76	50.7	22.8816
<i>Rs. 4000-9000</i>	62	41.3	31.2419
<i>Rs. 9000-13000</i>	7	4.7	29.4286
<i>More than Rs. 13000</i>	5	3.3	45.0000

**Source:** Calculated and compiled by authors

**Paid work**

Paid work is an important factor in attaining self dependency as well as women empowerment in family decision making. The rate of women employment is quite poor in Murshidabad district as only 36% of the respondents involves in paid work besides domestic work. While women engage with any paid work bears a significant mean Cumulative Empowerment Index (CEI) value of 36.48, respondents of unpaid work is characterised with a poor CEI value of 22.26 (Table 2). Involvement in paid work not only strengthens the women's position in society but also makes the chance of social interaction. Positive correlation (+.597) exists in between paid work involvement of women and CEI (Table 3). A value of regression coefficient 4.061 at  $P < .040$  indicates that shift in independent

variable from '0' to '1' (as '0' and '1' represents 'no' and 'yes' answer about paid involvement of respondents respectively) results an increase of 4.061 units in CEI (Table 4). Hence, the results establish the crucial role of paid work involvement in enhancing Muslim women empowerment of Murshidabad district.

#### **Accessing any type of media**

The traditional Indian Muslim orthodoxy does not allow the women to come in contact frequently with the neighbouring people as well as outer world. In such circumstances, media, the window to the world, (both electronic and print) can play a pivotal role in acquainting the women about their rights and updating them in accordance with the present dynamic world. At the study area only 41% women has come in contact with media mainly electronic and about 59% of respondents does not access any type of media. Women's accessing any type of media bears a Cumulative Empowerment Index (CEI) of 35.06. On the other side, women without having access of any type of media pursue CEI 21.97 (Table 2). Women's empowerment positively correlated with access of media (+.565). The value of regression coefficient 7.459 at  $P < .001$  represents the change of response pattern from '0' (no) to '1' (yes) results an increase of CEI by 7.459 units (Table 4). It strongly supports the role of media in empowering the women especially those from Muslim community.

#### **Educational status of women**

As women empowerment largely depends on awareness of women rights and practices, education can provide the passage for enriching the knowledge base, which ensures bargaining power of women on family matter. Although recently Murshidabad district has made progress in women education especially in Muslims, the rate is not quite satisfactory as found in our field survey. As per field report, 21.3% Muslim women are illiterate, deprived of institutional education; followed by 55.3% of primary and middle school and 23.3% are of secondary and above educated. Illiterate women experiences low Cumulative Empowerment Index (CEI) 20.88. As educational level increase, the CEI has reached from 27.52 (primary and middle school) to 33 (secondary and above) (Table 2). The value of correlation +.354 also proves positive relationship between educational status of women and CEI (Table 3). Regression coefficient .359 at  $P < .800$  indicates the increase of CEI by .359 units subjected to shift of one's educational level from illiterate to upper educational category i.e. primary and middle school or above category i.e. secondary and above (Table 4). It summarizes that in the absence of other predictor variables education alone cannot make a significant change of women empowerment.

#### **Sex of children**

Since the people of developing countries like India, expect that sons can only provide them all the necessary care and support when they get old; they earnestly opted for son's birth and cachet mothers giving male child as possible. On the other hand, daughters regarded as a great burden for family because of they have to arrange lump some amount for dowry at the time of marriage of them without having any return from daughters earning. The daughter bearing mothers, without having any paid work (i.e. the only interest of family member including husband) are treated as curse for the whole family. The respondents having only son holds mean Cumulative empowerment Index (CEI) of 28.53. On the contrary respondents having only daughter or both son and daughter experience relatively lower CEI i.e. 27.03 and 28.21 respectively. The sterile respondents (having no child) receive maltreatment and are enured as culprit in all aspects of family matter and tortured physically and mentally. The mean CEI of them are only 11.25 (Table 2). Regression coefficient .534 at  $P < .500$  indicates that a shift in value of independent variable from '0' to '3' (here '0' for no children, '1' for only daughter, '2' for both son and daughter and '3' for only son) results the increase of Cumulative Empowerment Index (CEI) by .534 units (Table 4). Although the degree of correlation (+.133) between CEI and sex of children is not much higher, this predictor more or less influences the empowerment of women within Muslim community of Murshidabad district.

#### **Husband cooperation in family matter**

Since the typical Indian married women psychologically accept their husband as guardian in all aspects of her life, husband's supports and cooperation in family matter determines their levels of empowerment colossally. Almost 73% of respondents receives 'average' cooperation from their husband in family matter, followed by 9% 'bad' and 18% 'good' cooperation. It is observed that in case of average cooperation of husband in family matter the mean Cumulative Empowerment index (CEI) remains only 26.46. When husband cooperation is good, the mean CEI significantly increased upto 36.56. Women's getting a bad cooperation from husband in family matter suffers with a

considerably lowest mean CEI of 16.86 (Table 2). The women empowerment positively correlated (+.261) with the predictor variable 'husband cooperation in family matter' (Table 3). The value of regression coefficient 1.054 at  $P < .250$  suggests that one unit increase in independent variable (husband cooperation in family matter) results to 1.054 points increase in women's Cumulative Empowerment Index (Table 4). It may be ratiocinated that husband's cooperation in family matter is an important predictor determining the empowerment of women.

#### **Duration of marital life**

After spending a long time in family the women can acquire some decision making power in the aid of his family experiences. It is found that when duration of marital life is below 12 years the mean Cumulative Empowerment Index (CEI) 24.18 i.e. comparatively much lower with that of spending 12 to 20 years (29.52). But in the latter stage when daughter in-law dominates in family matter over his mother in-law, a slight change of empowerment (25.42) has been seen in those women spending more than 21 years (Table 2). Regression coefficient .267 at  $P < .040$  suggests that one year change of duration of marital life can affect upto .267 units change of CEI (Table 4). The value of correlation +.044 also summates that the less imperative power of duration of marital life on women empowerment in the area under study.

#### **Household income**

Household income determines the status of family and levels of living has an ample significance over women empowerment process. As the study area is beforehand characterised with a slow pace of economic development process, it is noteworthy that income level of people is not sufficient to support the family demands. In the present study, 50.7% of respondents belong to less than Rs.4000 monthly income level followed by 41.3% Rs.4000-9000, 4.7% Rs.9000-13000 and only 3.3% more than Rs.13000 monthly income level. When monthly income level is under lowest group, the mean Cumulative Empowerment Index (CEI) remains 22.88. It tends to increase correspondently with an increase of monthly income level of family. At highest level of monthly income, CEI raises upto 45, followed by 31.24 in Rs.4000-9000 and CEI 29.43 in Rs.9000-13000 monthly income level (Table 2). The positive interrelationship between household income and women empowerment can be precised from the obtained value of Pearson's correlation +.426 (Table 3). The value of regression coefficient 2.771 at  $P < .025$  indicates that shift in one unit of household income from lowest level to highest level leads to increase of CEI by 2.771 units (Table 4). Hence, the results amply signify the crucial role of household income in women empowerment of Murshidabad district.

Table-3 portrays the degree of correlation between independent variable and dependent (Cumulative Empowerment Index) variable. Except family structure (as the value of '0' and '1' indicates nucleus and joint respectively) and family headship (as the value of '0' and '1' represents husband and others respectively) all the other explanatory variables shows positive relationship with Cumulative Empowerment index (CEI). Table-4 depicts the beta value for several independent variables, which means larger the beta, and t-value at small significance level suggests that an independent variable is having a large impact on the dependent variable (CEI). The largest beta value .321 and t-value 4.243 at  $P < .001$  for the independent variable – 'accessing any type of media' indicates the highest influencing power of concerned variable on women empowerment at the study area. It is well followed by other independent variables like family structure (beta - .257 and t-value -3.262 at  $P < .005$ ); family headship (beta -.213 and t-value -2.823 at  $P < .010$ ); household income (beta .177 and t-value 2.341 at  $P < .025$ ) and paid work involvement of women (beta .171 and t-value 2.084 at  $P < .040$ ) which also significantly contributed on empowerment of Muslim Women in Murshidabad district. The value of adjusted R square 0.573 indicates that all the variables included in present linear regression model accounts for 57.3% of variance in the dependent variable women's empowerment. Finally, table-5 reports the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) in which the calculated value of F is 23.235 at  $P < .005$  which is higher than the table value of 2.71 at 5% level. Hence, the results support the overall significance of present multiple regression model i.e. Muslim women empowerment (dependent variable) in Murshidabad district depends upon a set of independent variables.

**Table 3: Correlations between Explained and Explanatory variables of Women Empowerment (Total sample N=150)**

	Cumulative Empowerment Index	Type of family structure	Family headship	Paid work	Accessing any type of media	Education status of women	Sex of children	Husband cooperation in family matter	Duration of marital life	Household income
<b>Pearson Correlation</b>										
Cumulative Empowerment Index (CEI)	1.000	-.456	-.400	.597	.565	.354	.133	.261	.044	.426
Type of family structure	-.456	1.000	.656	-.259	-.156	-.154	-.014	-.105	.180	.111
Family headship	-.400	.656	1.000	-.119	-.032	-.085	.001	.082	-.079	.114
Paid work	.597	-.259	-.119	1.000	.640	.477	.174	.330	-.067	.557
Accessing any type of media	.565	-.156	-.032	.640	1.000	.502	.224	.276	-.221	.453
Education status of women	.354	-.154	-.085	.477	.502	1.000	.065	.264	-.343	.345
Sex of children	.133	-.014	.001	.174	.224	.065	1.000	-.077	-.122	.057
Husband cooperation in family matter	.261	-.105	.082	.330	.276	.264	-.077	1.000	-.176	.325
Duration of marital life	.044	.180	-.079	-.067	-.221	-.343	-.122	-.176	1.000	.194
Household income	.426	.111	.114	.557	.453	.345	.057	.325	.194	1.000
<b>Significance (1-tailed)</b>										
Cumulative Empowerment Index (CEI)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.052	.001	.294	.000
Type of family structure	.000	.000	.000	.001	.028	.030	.433	.101	.014	.088
Family headship	.000	.000	.000	.073	.348	.151	.494	.161	.167	.083
Paid work	.000	.001	.073	.000	.000	.000	.017	.000	.209	.000
Accessing any type of media	.000	.028	.348	.000	.000	.000	.003	.000	.003	.000
Education status of women	.000	.030	.151	.000	.000	.000	.216	.001	.000	.000
Sex of children	.052	.433	.494	.017	.003	.216	.000	.173	.069	.243
Husband cooperation in family matter	.001	.101	.161	.000	.000	.001	.173	.000	.015	.000
Duration of marital life	.294	.014	.167	.209	.003	.000	.069	.015	.000	.009
Household income	.000	.088	.083	.000	.000	.000	.243	.000	.009	.000

Source: Computed by authors using SPSS V.19 software

**Table 4: Regression Coefficients of the Independent variables of Women Empowerment**

Independent variables	Dependent variable: Cumulative Empowerment Index (CEI)				
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t-value	Significance level
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	21.317	2.690		7.924	.000
Type of family structure	-5.905	1.810	-.257	-3.262	.001
Family headship	-5.037	1.784	-.213	-2.823	.005
Paid work	4.061	1.949	.171	2.084	.039
Accessing any type of media	7.459	1.758	.321	4.243	.000
Education status of women	.359	1.183	.021	.303	.762
Sex of children	.534	.751	.040	.711	.478
Husband cooperation in family matter	1.054	.890	.072	1.185	.238
Duration of marital life	.267	.122	.146	2.197	.030
Household income	2.771	1.184	.177	2.341	.021

N=150; R square = 0.599; Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = 0.573

**Table 5: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to test the significance of Multiple Linear Regression model**

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Significance
Regression	11727.710	9	1303.079	23.235	.000
Residual	7851.630	140	56.083		
Total	19579.340	149			

## 6. Concluding Remarks

Empowerment is one of the main ceremonial concerns when addressing human rights and development. Women Empowerment includes the capabilities to make decisions about personal/collective circumstances, decision-making ability, ability to choose a range of options, ability to exercise assertiveness, ability to inform others' perceptions through exchange, education and engagement, increasing one's positive self-image and overcoming stigma, increasing one's ability in discreet thinking to sort out right and wrong etc. According to the United Nations Millennium Campaign, women work two-thirds of the world's working hours, with growing food, cooking, raising children, caring for the elderly, maintaining a house etc., and universally is accorded by low status with no pay. The paper dealing with the pragmatic measurement of women empowerment within Muslim community people of India conducted over randomly chosen three villages, wraps up that the results of significance of present multiple linear regression model that Muslim women empowerment in Murshidabad district depends upon a set of independent variables. Murshidabad ranks 16<sup>th</sup> in Gender Development Index within state, and is further overshadowed by the curse of Muslim women status. Among the nine independent variables, six are dominant determining variables in influencing the CEI. These are accessing any type of media, family structure, family headship, household income, paid work and duration of marital life. Education- a major determinant of women empowerment, do not form the six dominant determining variables. This may be due to the backwardness of the previously dominating less education in the areas. While 21.3% are illiterate, a major portion i.e. 55.3% are having primary and middle school education that can hardly being returns from jobs. Even the remaining 23.3% of secondary and above educated lay as housewives. Backwardness even denies job through education to the women. Sex of children though does not leave a large impact, has a great impact in the family.

At the length it may be convenient to say that the task of empowering of women is not an easy task rather, it is difficult one in such typical area like Murshidabad district where still a major portion of Muslim women are unaware about their self identity and esteem in the pressure of family matter. Permissive poverty of people along with traditional beliefs and orthodoxy for women folk is solely responsible for such immense deplorable condition of women. Although GOs, NGOs and WOs are working for the minority groups in a district like Murshidabad, the achievement lags far behind its aim. This may be due to greater emphasizing on overall minority development in lieu of women empowerment. As women is the center of family orbit, programs on specially women empowerment can draw drastic result for the aim dreamed of. Self help groups that have presently emerged as an earning tool of women in rural side, it can prove as a media of empowering this deplored class by rendering various governmental as well as non-governmental aids and training them to earn by their own, which can further change the gross socio-economic condition of in situ Muslim community.

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