

## Disempowerment of the Women in West Bengal: A Comparative Study of Howrah and Jalpaiguri Districts

**Senjuti Ghosh-Das**

Ph.D. Scholar

Department of Economics

Presidency University, Kolkata, India

E-mail: [senjuti82@gmail.com](mailto:senjuti82@gmail.com)

**Supravat Bagli**

Professor of Economics

Department of Economics

Presidency University, Kolkata, India

E-mail: [supravat.econ@presiuniv.ac.in](mailto:supravat.econ@presiuniv.ac.in)

### Abstract

*This study delves the disempowerment scenario and associated aspects in Jalpaiguri and Howrah districts of West Bengal – the districts which are socio-economically and demographically diverse. To capture the multidimensional aspects of disempowerment of women this study applies Alkire and Foster (2011) methodology using the data of 800 ever-married women within the age group 15 to 49 years from a primary household survey conducted in these two districts in 2022-23. Apart from the reporting of women disempowerment index (WDI) for the sample districts we have analysed the contributions of each selected indicators in disempowerment and contributions of different sub- groups, such as place of residence, official caste, religion and education, in district WDI. The study finds that half of the women are disempowered in both the districts. However, the disempowerment level of the women is not severe in the sample districts. The main barriers to women's empowerment are the restriction towards movement outside the family and acceptance of intimate partner violence (IPV). Further, in both the districts, the burden of disempowerment is borne more by the rural women, it is the highest among the women belonging to the scheduled castes (SC) and the illiterate women. Apart from these affinities in disempowerment, differences in disempowerment between the sample districts prevail in other aspects. There is rural-urban gap in disempowerment in both districts but this is more profound in Jalpaiguri district than that in Howrah district. Moreover, the contribution to disempowerment is more severe for SC women as well as illiterate women in Jalpaiguri district than in Howrah district.*

**Keywords:** *Women's Disempowerment Index, Freedom of movement, Howrah District, Intimate Partner Violence, Jalpaiguri District*

**JEL Code:** *C83, C87, J16, R10*

### Introduction

Women's empowerment is a well-recognised precondition for the economic development of any nation. It has been undertaken as a global agenda in various international forums like the Beijing Platform for Action since 1995 and the Cairo Programme for Action in 2019. Girl's and women's equal rights in all well-being parameters just like men and boys were targeted to be accomplished on these platforms. The importance of empowerment is also recognized in the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals to be achieved by 2030. According to the Capability Approach of development, empowerment is a multidimensional process that

empowers people to enlarge their opportunity set and helps to lead a life that they value. Equality of capabilities on the other hand is a prerequisite in having equal voice in decision making in household, workplace and other institutions (Melamed & Samman, 2013). Empowered women are instrumental in bringing in efficient allocation of financial and human resources in a household and leads to effective implementation of development programmes in the society. Still, equality of rights seems a distant dream for women in many parts of the world. Gender discrimination and disempowerment of women is a deep-rooted problem in Indian society. Although gender equality has been a constitutional right since 1950, limited access to the job market, asset ownership and higher education act as stringent barriers to achieving the empowerment of women in India (Kapur, 2024). Moreover, deteriorating sex ratio, increase in domestic violence and inequality in healthcare parameters like Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) and low Body Mass Index (BMI) are the outcomes of male dominance in fertility choices, stringent societal norms and lack of care in terms of women's health and nutrition. Although various policies have been adopted by the central and the state Governments, the current scenario of empowerment of Indian women is gloomy and seems a challenging target to achieve. The aspect of women's empowerment is not in good shape in West Bengal, rather the state lags behind the nation in many indicators of empowerment. According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) (2019-21), the share of employed women and the share of women with assets like a house or land possession has declined over the years in this state with a widening gap with the national average. Although the state literacy rate for women is higher than the national average, the girl children's drop-out ratio from school is much higher. However, despite all these challenges, West Bengal remains ahead of the national average in terms of women's antenatal check-up, nutritional parameters, hygienic practices during menstruation and access to their own bank accounts. However, the district level scenario of women's empowerment in West Bengal and other states is hardly reported in reliable documents.

### Literature Review

There is a vast literature focusing on the disparity in empowerment between rural and urban women in developing and underdeveloped countries. Relative to the rural women urban women have better access to healthcare and educational facilities and are more likely to enjoy higher decision-making power in different aspects of empowerment across the countries (Pozarny, 2016). Analysing Nepal Demographic Health Survey, Acharya et al. (2010) report that women from rural and Terai regions of Nepal have less autonomy in decision making regarding own healthcare, making major household purchases, purchasing daily household necessities and visits to family or friends. Boateng et al. (2014) reports the regional variation with respect to decision making power in healthcare, daily household purchases and mobility among the married women in Ghana. In India literate women in rural area compared to urban area are more engaged in workforce and hence economically more empowered (Biswas & Banu, 2022). Banerjee and Pan (2023) show that women's empowerment is higher in urban areas compared to rural areas in Birbhum district of West Bengal in some dimensions of empowerment. Women's perception about disempowerment varies from society to society and from place to place. Porter (2013) argues that cultural context plays an important role in women's idea of empowerment which he establishes by the data collected from Fiji, Timor Leste and Sri Lanka. It is by and large established that community, society and surrounding environment define women's perception of empowerment (Kabeer, 2001; Furuta & Salway, 2006; Jejeebhoy, 2002; Akram, 2018). Rettig et al. (2020) have formulated the Female Empowerment Index in Nigeria based on dimensions of violence against women, women's employment, women's education,

and decision-making power in house. They have found that although women's empowerment has increased over time, there is widening variation across the regions. Alkire et al. (2013) have explored the association of Women's Empowerment in Agricultural Index (WEAI) with socio-economic and demographic characteristics of women such as age, education, wealth, hunger, decision making power on health, autonomy to express religious faith, attitude against violence, engagement in daily household chores and use of family planning method. They have shown significant levels of inter-country variations in empowerment and its association with other variables in three different pilot survey regions of Bangladesh, Uganda and Guatemala. On similar notes, women's empowerment index designed using six domains of decision-making power, education, employment, reproductive healthcare, family planning and intimate partner violence, shows wide variation within countries in sub-Saharan Africa (Rettig and Hijman, 2022). Spatial disparity in women's empowerment in the Indian context is also recognised in literature. In terms of different empowerment aspects like household decision making power, freedom of mobility and gender preference, empowerment level varies across Indian society (Gupta & Yesudian, 2006). Narayanan et al. (2017) have developed Women's Empowerment in Nutritional Index, focusing on women's awareness about nutritional and health requirements in rural India with dimensions of food resources, health resources, fertility and social norms. The study explores regional variation in women's access to the selected dimensions as well as the level of empowerment across the studied states of Uttar Pradesh, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Bihar and Chhattisgarh. To explore if there exists any regional pattern and temporal variation of women's empowerment at sub-national level, Ghosh-Das & Bagli (2024) have formulated state level women's empowerment index using eight indicators from NFHS-5 data. The study reveals that there lies a regional pattern in women's empowerment as Southern and North-Eastern states exhibit comparatively higher degree of empowerment whereas Eastern and Central states remain laggard. Women's empowerment in India also varies across castes with lower caste women facing higher discrimination (Nite & Dash, 2022; Alvi, 2023). India's mission of women's empowerment cannot be fulfilled without empowering the Dalit and tribal women as they constitute a large proportion of the total women. However, SC and ST women face a double hurdle in the process of achieving empowerment, the first one for being marginalised in society and the second one for being women (Dreze & Sen, 2013; Sen, 2001; Paik, 2018). There is considerable evidence that lower caste women historically have lower access to education, healthcare facilities and working opportunities which in turn affect their process of empowerment (Manna, 2024). These discriminated women who also have lower social networking capabilities are more prone to exploitation (Bukhya, 2015). According to the NFHS-5, although reporting of IPV amongst SC and ST women has declined over the years, it is much higher than the other social castes (Chowdhury et al., 2022; Bukhya, 2015). Khandare (2017) argues that low level of autonomy in healthcare and economic activity are responsible for the high prevalence of IPV among scheduled caste women. The social disparity is argued to be prevalent in economic and social practices in Bengal as well (Mondol, 2021) where strong caste categorizations are found in the politics of Bengal villages (Roy, 2012). Literature is vast on the issue of empowerment inequality due to the urban rural division, regional diversity and caste component. However, there is dearth of literature that explores inter-district disparity in the empowerment of women in West Bengal. Two districts might be heterogenous in various aspects of economy, demography and other socio-economic characteristics. Whether these heterogeneities lead to varying degrees of obstacles against women's empowerment is something that needs the attention of researchers. Hence, this paper tries to perform a comparative analysis of women's empowerment in two districts of West Bengal namely Howrah and Jalpaiguri which are widely different in respect of their geography, demographic components, social, culture and economic activities.

### **Motivation and Objectives**

The researchers measure the degree of empowerment for exploring the achievement in respect of different dimensions and indicators. However, for policy perspectives the measures of the degree of deprivation or failure of attainment and its decomposability in respect of dimensions and subgroups are more intuitive and relevant. With this end in view, we have planned to measure the degree of disempowerment for the women and construct the women's disempowerment index. There is a vast literature that suggests that perception of women's empowerment varies from community to community. As the notion of women's empowerment/disempowerment is context-specific, the level of disempowerment can be presumed to incorporate inter-state as well as inter-district variation. However, district level data on women's empowerment/disempowerment is not robust in secondary sources like NFHS. Further, studies to capture how disempowerment varies with regional backwardness within a district is really scarce. The paucity of data motivated our study and led to data collection on multiple domains of women's disempowerment through field survey in the districts level. In order to explore the incidences and intensity of women's disempowerment due to geographical, social and economic activities we have selected two districts from two end of the state of West Bengal namely Howrah and Jalpaiguri. These two districts are highly diverse in their socio-economic as well as demographic characteristics. Howrah remains ahead of Jalpaiguri with respect to industrial activities as Jalpaiguri's economy is mostly agriculture dependent with a large tea belt. Howrah district is quite heterogenous in terms of religious division, while Jalpaiguri district is more so in terms of caste component. Scheduled castes (SC) and scheduled tribes (ST) comprise of a large proportion of Jalpaiguri's population (30.8%) while the share of Muslim population is high in Howrah district (22.22%). NFHS (2019-21) provides useful insights about socio-economic characteristics of women in these two districts. District of Howrah and district of Jalpaiguri registers literacy rate higher than the state average and slightly higher than the national average. Notably, literacy rate of women is higher in Howrah district (80.5%) than Jalpaiguri district (73.6%). Further, women's level of educational attainment is higher in Howrah district than Jalpaiguri district. Women with educational attainment beyond secondary level is 40.1% in Howrah district and 33.9% in Jalpaiguri district against 41% in India. In terms of health indicators like BMI of women, Howrah district remains ahead of Jalpaiguri district. The percentage of underweight women in Howrah district (10.3%) with BMI less than 18.5 is lower than the state average (14.8%) as well as the national average (19%). The percentage of underweight women in Jalpaiguri district (15.8%) is slightly higher than Howrah district but lower than the national average. West Bengal is a state with high dropout ratio of girl child from school and high incidence of child marriage. The proportion of young mothers aged 15 to 19 is higher in both the districts than the nation as a whole.

Against this backdrop, our study sets the following objectives:

First, we analyse and compare the incidence and intensity of disempowerment of the women in Howrah and Jalpaiguri districts and compute Women's disempowerment Index (WDI) for the sample districts based on the selected dimensions and indicators.

Second, sub-group decomposition across place of residence, social caste, religion and educational achievement is undertaken for both districts.

Third, contribution of each of the selected indicators under different dimensions are investigated to find out the major barriers against women's empowerment

## Methodology and Data

Widely accepted individual level measure of empowerment/disempowerment and its empirical analysis is rare in literature. WEAI reported by Alkire et al. (2013) is the pioneer in this area. The advantage of the index lies in its decomposability over dimensions as well as the population sub-groups. Based on its rationale of generic applicability, Alkire et al. (2013) methodology is applied in our study as well. To undertake the study, WDI is formulated using four dimensions of disempowerment keeping in parity with the dimensions of NFHS. These are a) financial disempowerment, b) freedom of movement, c) household decision making power and d) acceptance of IPV. This approach helps us to identify the major dimensions where women are disempowered and allows us to identify the key factors leading to disempowerment. The included dimensions have theoretical and policy justifications. The dimension of financial disempowerment directly follows definitions of women's empowerment given by Alsop & Heinsohn (2005) and Kabeer (1999) where empowerment is considered as exercising choices, in our study the choice is about financial autonomy. The four indicators included under the dimension are whether a woman has joint or single bank account, whether she has money for daily consumption, whether she has a voice when any expensive commodity is bought in the family and whether has decision making power in any kind of family investment. The dimension of freedom of movement is included in the study as women face stringent constraints in terms of their movement within or outside the society. Three indicators under this domain are selected. These are whether a woman has own mobile to access, whether she can visit her family alone and whether she is able to visit the market alone. The dimension of household decision making power is closely associated with women's empowerment, it is captured through indicators like whether a woman has autonomy in what to cook on a daily basis, decision making power in case child(ren) fall ill and decision-making power in case the woman herself falls sick. Acceptance of intimate partner violence (IPV) is an important aspect of empowerment especially in the context of patriarchal society of India and an empowered woman is expected to have a strong negative attitude towards IPV. Two indicators are chosen under this dimension namely whether beating by husband is justified if wife is disrespectful to him and whether IPV should be reported to police or local administration. For each of the indicator, the responses are binary, 1 if the respondent is disempowered in that particular indicator and 0 otherwise as specified in table 1. Each of the dimensions is weighted equally (one-fourth) and each indicator under each dimension has equal weightage as mentioned in Table 1.

**Table 1: Dimensions and Indicators of Women's Disempowerment in West Bengal**

Dimension	Disempowerment Indicators (D <sub>i</sub> )	Weight( w <sub>j</sub> )
Financial	1.Having own bank account (no=1, yes=0)	1/16
Decision- making Power	2.Access to money for daily expenditure (no=1, yes=0)	1/16
	3.Having voice in buying expensive items for the family (no=1, yes=0)	1/16
	4.Having voice in family investment (no=1, yes=0)	1/16
Freedom of Movement	1.Having own mobile (no=1, yes=0)	1/12
	2.Free to visit relative families (no=1, yes=0)	1/12
	3.Free to visit market (no=1, yes=0)	1/12
Household Decision Making Power	1.Decision making power about what to cook on daily basis (no=1, yes=0)	1/12
	2.Decision making power regarding illness of child(ren) (no=1, yes=0)	1/12
	3.Decision making power regarding illness of own (no=1, yes=0)	1/12
Acceptance of IPV	1.Whether husband beating unjustified (no=1, yes=0)	1/8
	2.Whether IPV should be reported (no=1, yes=0)	1/8

Source: Compiled by the Authors

In order to compute the incidence, intensity and finally WDI for each sample district first, we compute the disempowerment status of the individual women in respect of a particular indicator. Disempowerment status,  $D_{ij} = 1$  when  $i^{\text{th}}$  woman responses 'no' for  $j^{\text{th}}$  indicator and 0 otherwise.

We calculate the disempowerment score ( $S_i$ ) of the respondent woman  $i$ , adding up the disempowerment status ( $D_{ij}$ ) of each indicator multiplied by their respective weights ( $W_j$ ) as mentioned in table 1.

$$S_i = \sum_{j=1}^{12} W_j \times D_{ij} \quad (1)$$

$S_i$  ranges from 0 to 1 implying no disempowerment in any indicator and complete disempowerment in all indicators respectively. Then we compare the disempowerment score of  $i^{\text{th}}$  woman ( $S_i$ ) with the cut-off value ( $s$ ) to identify whether the woman is disempowered or not. Following UNDP we set  $s = 0.33$  for identifying disempowered woman such that  $S_i \geq s$  identifies  $i^{\text{th}}$  woman as disempowered.

*Incidence of women's disempowerment (I):* Incidence of women's disempowerment in a district is calculated as a proportion of the number of disempowered women to the total sample size.

$$I = \frac{m}{n} \quad (2)$$

where  $m$  denotes the number of disempowered women in the sample and  $n$  is the sample size.

*Intensity of women's disempowerment:* Intensity of women's disempowerment ( $A$ ) is calculated as the average of the disempowerment score of the disempowered women. To find it we define, the censored disempowerment score,  $S_i(s) = S_i$  if  $S_i \geq s$ ,  $S_i(s) = 0$  if  $S_i < s$  then

$$A = \frac{\sum S_i(s)}{m} \quad (3)$$

The WDI at the district level is then calculated as the product of the incidence of women's disempowerment and the intensity of women's disempowerment.

$$WDI = I \times A \quad (4)$$

By nature of construction, WDI has some useful properties like dimensional monotonicity and sub-group decomposability. Dimensional monotonicity implies that if a disempowered woman becomes deprived in an additional indicator, the value of WDI increases. It is computable to the ordinal, cardinal as well as categorical indicators of deprivation. We apply the property of decomposability to decompose WDI across residential regions, education level, religion and social castes to find the contribution of each of the sub-groups in WDI. In notation, the decomposition formula across residential regions can be written as

$$WDI_{\text{District}} = \frac{n_1}{n} WDI_{\text{Rural}} + \frac{n_2}{n} WDI_{\text{Urban}} \quad (5)$$

Here  $WDI_{\text{District}}$  is the WDI calculated at the district level,  $n$  is the total sample size,  $n_1$  ( $n_2$ ) is the sample women from rural(urban) area.  $WDI_{\text{Rural}}$  ( $WDI_{\text{Urban}}$ ) is the WDI calculated for all

rural (urban) women. We can decompose women's disempowerment index across the other sub-groups in a similar fashion. The contribution of each sub-group can be obtained as follows

$$\text{Contribution of subgroup } G = \frac{n_1 WDI_G}{n WDI_{District}} * 100,$$

$WDI_G$  = women's disempowerment index for sub-group G. If the contribution of a subgroup is higher than the population share of that sub-group, then we say that disempowerment of the women is disproportionately higher in that sub-group.

To find out the contribution of each of the twelve indicators in WDI, we need to decompose the district level WDI using the following formula

$$WDI_{District} = \sum_{j=1}^{12} W_j CI_j \quad (6)$$

where,  $W_j$  is the relative weight associated with the  $j^{\text{th}}$  indicator and  $CI_j$  denote the censored incidence of disempowerment for  $j^{\text{th}}$  indicator. The censored incidence of disempowerment for a particular indicator is the ratio of the number of disempowered women who are deprived in terms of that particular indicator to the total sample size.

$$CI_j = \frac{\sum_i^m D_{ij}}{n}$$

$D_{ij} = 1$ , when  $i^{\text{th}}$  disempowered women is deprived in  $j^{\text{th}}$  indicator and  $D_{ij} = 0$  otherwise.

The percentage contribution of each indicator to district level disempowerment index can be measured with the following formula.

$$\text{Contribution of } j^{\text{th}} \text{ indicator to WDI} = \frac{W_j CI_j}{WDI_{Dist}} * 100 \quad (7)$$

If the contribution of the  $j^{\text{th}}$  indicator is higher than the weight associated with that indicator, the disempowerment in that indicator is disproportionately high. Alternatively, a disempowered woman faces a significant amount of deprivation due to the  $j^{\text{th}}$  indicator.

The data for the study has been collected through a primary survey from 400 ever married women in each district within the age group 15-49 years making the total sample size of 800 ever married women. All the required indicators are incorporated and responses are collected using an individual level questionnaire. Data are collected from February 2022 to October 2023 from two community development blocks in each district based on Female Literacy Rate (FLR). One CD block where FLR is very close to the district average and another CD block whose FLR is lower than the district average are selected from each district. In the first stage of sample selection in Howrah, we have selected Sankrail Community Development (CD) block from Sadar sub-division where FLR (79.56%) is closest to district average (79.43%) and Uluberia-II Community Development (CD) block from Uluberia sub-division where FLR (73.23%) is lower than the district average (Howrah Statistical Handbook). In the second stage, two gram panchayats namely Panchpara and Duliya from Sankrail CD Block and Basudebpur and Char Panchla from Uluberia II CD Block are selected randomly. In the third stage, two villages from each gram panchayat are again selected randomly. Two wards from Howrah Municipal Corporation have been chosen randomly to complete the rural urban composition of the district sample. Following the same method of sample selection, we have selected Rajganj CD block which has closest FLR (65.18%) to district FLR (66.2%) and Mal CD block with lower FLR (58.17%) (Jalpaiguri District Statistical Handbook). From Mal CD block, the randomly selected GPs are Bagrakote and Damdim while the randomly selected GPs from Rajganj CD block are Binnaguri and Shikarpur. In the next stage two villages from each GP are selected randomly. Further two wards from the Siliguri Municipal Corporation which are

part of Jalpaiguri district are selected randomly. The sample size selected from each unit of sample collection is proportional to population. Thus, the sampling is done in a multi stage stratified random sampling method.

**Findings and Analysis**

Table 2 shows that there are similarities between the respondent women with respect to average family size, age, education, age at marriage and gender parity (number of sons to total number of children born to a woman). Degree of dispersion in these chosen parameters is also high and close across almost all the parameters between the two districts. Notably, Jalpaiguri is at a better position with respect to average per capita annual income although income inequality is higher in Jalpaiguri district than in Howrah district.

**Table 2: Socio-Economic-Demographic Profiles of the Sample Women (n=800)**

Statistics	Family Size		Per Capita Annual family Income (₹'000)		Respondent's Age (year)		Respondent's Education (year)		Age at Marriage (year)		Gender Parity at Household(%)	
	Hwrh	Jlpg	Hwrh	Jlpg	Hwrh	Jlpg	Hwrh	Jlpg	Hwrh	Jlpg	Hwrh	Jlpg
Mean	4.23	4.25	80.53	85	36.19	37.46	9.10	8.31	19.82	20.17	57	54
Median	4	4	40	48	35	38	9	9	19	19	50	50
SD	1.33	1.50	121.02	157.37	7.93	8.05	5.10	5.18	3.97	4.02	42	43
C.V.	31.42	35.29	150.27	183.13	21.91	21.75	56.06	62.33	20.64	19.93	74.29	79.69
Min	2	2	5	3	18	17	0	0	12	11	0	0
Max	12	15	833	1.5	49	49	22	17	44	28	100	100

Source: Compiled by the Authors #Hwrh stands for Howrah District and Jlpg stands for Jalpaiguri District

**Table 3: Socio Economic Attributes of the Sample Women**

Attributes	Howrah district		Jalpaiguri district	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Family Type: Nuclear	262	65.50	247	61.75
Joint/ Extended	138	34.50	153	38.25
Major Occupation of the Household: Cultivation	13	3.25	0	0
Labour	113	28.25	135	33.75
Self-Employed	128	32.00	133	33.25
Service-holder	138	34.50	117	29.25
Others	8	2.00	15	3.75
Income Quartile				
1 <sup>st</sup> Quartile	104	26.00	98	24.50
2 <sup>nd</sup> Quartile	126	31.50	108	27.00
3 <sup>rd</sup> Quartile	83	20.75	122	30.50
4 <sup>th</sup> Quartile	87	21.75	72	18.00
Place of Residence: Urban	169	42.25	110	27.50
Rural	231	57.75	290	72.50
Religion Hindu	286	71.50	360	90.00
Non-Hindu	114	28.50	40	10.00
Social Caste: General	103	25.75	156	39.00
OBC	147	36.75	39	9.75
SC	145	36.25	135	33.75
ST	5	1.25	70	17.50
Education: No Formal Education	50	12.50	77	19.25
Education up to Secondary Level	208	52.00	197	49.25
Education Beyond Secondary Level	142	35.50	126	31.50
Access to Hygienic Sanitation at Home: yes	355	88.75	375	93.75
Access to Clean Drinking Water: yes	283	70.75	350	87.50
Access to LPG: Yes	318	79.50	284	71.00
Own a house/land: yes	29	7.25	50	12.50
Occupation of the Respondent: Labour	6	1.75	62	15.50
Self-Employed	40	10.00	39	9.75
Service-holder	25	6.15	37	9.25
Housewife	329	82.00	262	65.50

Source: Compiled by the Authors

Table 3 reveals the similarity between the sample districts in certain parameters like family structure and major occupation of the household while there are visible differences in other parameters. The composition of surveyed working women is quite different between the sample districts. Most of the working women in the sample from Jalpaiguri district work as tea garden workers while working women in Howrah mostly are self-employed doing zari embroidery works. Also, more respondent women are working in Jalpaiguri district compared to Howrah district in our sample due to the presence of tea garden labourers in Jalpaiguri district. In terms of educational achievements, the respondent women from Howrah district are better positioned than Jalpaiguri district. The percentage of women from Jalpaiguri district is higher in 'illiterate' category while lower in 'up to secondary' and 'higher secondary' category compared to Howrah district. Further, more respondent women reside in rural areas and belong to the SC and ST community in Jalpaiguri district than in Howrah district. Nonetheless, women from Jalpaiguri district compared to Howrah district have a better standard of living in terms of access to proper sanitation and clean drinking water. In both the districts, very low percentage of women has any land or house held by them although the women in Jalpaiguri district are slightly ahead than Howrah district in this respect. Thus, the descriptive statistics of the sample women are similar to the secondary source of data. So the data are representative for the analysis of disempowerment of women at the district level.

**Table 4: Disempowerment of Women in terms of the Selected Indicators**

Indicator-wise disempowerment #	Howrah District				Jalpaiguri District			
	Urban (%)	Rural (%)	Pctg Point Gap	Combined (%)	Urban (%)	Rural (%)	Pctg Point Gap	Combined (%)
<i>BNKACCNT</i>	19.41	24.67	5.26	22.04	16.36	11.38	-4.98	13.87
<i>MONEDAL</i>	36.47	40.69	4.22	38.58	10.91	41.38	30.47	26.14
<i>DECEXP</i>	28.23	27.70	-0.53	27.96	10.00	22.41	12.41	16.20
<i>FMINVS</i>	54.11	58.44	4.33	56.27	30.00	48.62	18.62	39.31
<i>MOB</i>	25.29	39.82	14.19	32.39	5.45	44.14	38.68	24.79
<i>FAMLVST</i>	63.52	65.80	2.28	64.66	65.45	67.24	1.79	66.34
<i>MRKTVST</i>	61.17	65.36	4.19	63.26	60.91	55.52	-5.39	58.21
<i>CKNG</i>	17.05	34.63	17.58	25.84	4.55	15.17	10.63	9.85
<i>ILLNSCHLD</i>	14.70	22.07	7.28	18.43	11.82	19.66	7.84	15.74
<i>ILLNSOWN</i>	17.05	39.39	21.20	28.45	14.55	37.93	23.39	26.23
<i>HBTNGLSTN</i>	9.41	18.61	8.99	13.96	0.00	11.38	11.38	5.68
<i>PRTST</i>	57.05	44.15	-12.94	50.67	38.18	63.45	25.27	50.81

Source: Compiled by the Authors

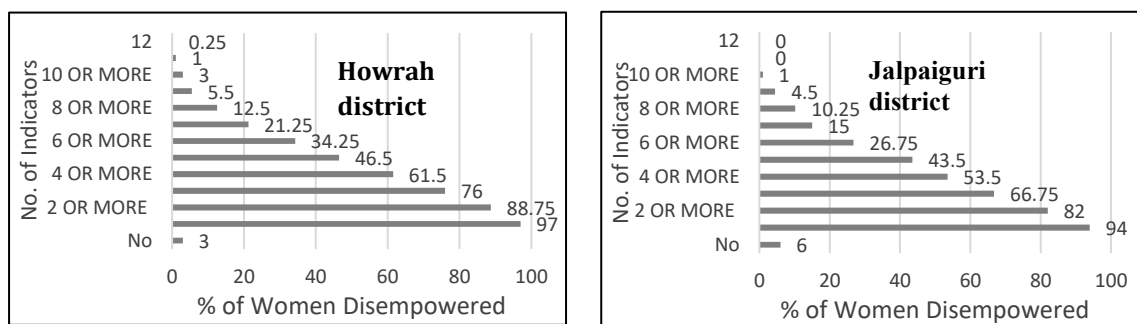
# *BNKACCNT*= not having own or joint bank account, *MONEDAL*= having no access to cash for daily expenditure, *DECEXP*= no decision making power in buying expensive household goods, *FMINVS*= no decision making power in family investment, *MOB*= no access to own mobile set, *FAMLVST*=cannot visit family and friends without permission, *MRKTVST*= cannot visit market places without permission, *CKNG*= no decision making power in cooking, *ILLNSCHLD*=no decision making power if a child falls sick, *ILLNSOWN*=no decision making power if the woman herself falls sick, *HBTNGLSTN*= perception that beating by husband is justified, *PRTST*=perception that reporting should not be done in case of intimate partner violence

Table 4 shows the percentage of surveyed women disempowered in various indicators, in both the sample districts. Women's deprivation are found to vary widely between these two districts in each indicator. In both the districts, the largest proportion of women faces restriction in the dimension of the freedom of movement. In both the districts two third of the women face restriction to visit the relatives, particularly natal house and more than half of the sample women are not free to move market alone. This fact is invariant across the rural urban division of the districts. Moreover, half of the sample women willingly or unwillingly accept IPV in

both the sample districts. Therefore, the dimensions of the freedom of movement and acceptance of IPV are the prominent factors for the disempowerment of women in the sample districts.

In each of the indicator of financial disempowerment dimension, more women are disempowered in Howrah district than in Jalpaiguri district, in both the urban and rural areas except the fact that rural women in Howrah district have slightly higher access to cash for daily expenditures than rural women in Jalpaiguri district. This might be due to the fact that many respondent women in Jalpaiguri district are tea garden workers whose family income is really low. In Jalpaiguri district more urban women are disempowered than rural women in respect of the indicator of having own bank account, because majority of the rural poor women are having access to own bank account under the state run schemes. In the dimension of freedom of movement, it is found that urban women in Jalpaiguri district are in a much better in position than women in urban Howrah district with respect to access to mobile, however in other two indicators i.e. freedom to visit market and family, the percentage of disempowerment is very close in both districts. In rural Jalpaiguri, where study is done mostly in SC and ST dominated areas, women are more disempowered in respect of the indicators of access to mobile and freedom to visit family than women in the rural Howrah district. In respect of the dimension of decision-making power in household, the women from both urban and rural areas of Howrah district lag behind the women from urban and rural areas of Jalpaiguri district respectively. Furthermore, irrespective of rural and urban area women from Howrah district have higher acceptance of beating by husband than that of Jalpaiguri district. Similarly, in respect of the indicator of reporting the IPV, the percentage of disempowerment is much lower among the urban women in Jalpaiguri district compared to urban women in Howrah district. However, percentage of women who feel IPV should not be reported is much higher in rural Jalpaiguri compared to the rural Howrah, due to the fact that the SC and ST women from rural Jalpaiguri are mostly averse about protesting. Further if we consider the percentage point gap in disempowerment between urban and rural women, it is higher in Jalpaiguri district than Howrah district. It reflects the fact that disempowerment gap between urban Jalpaiguri women and women from backward tea belts and other underdeveloped areas who mainly represent SC and ST community in Jalpaiguri district is more profound than urban rural divide in Howrah district. Notably, in respect of the indicator of the acceptance of IPV the percentage of disempowerment is higher among the urban women than the rural women in Howrah district. One of the reasons may be the religious belief of the respondent women in urban Howrah. In our sample majority of the Muslim women in urban Howrah opined that reporting IPV is not justified.

**Figure 1: Cumulative Incidence of Disempowerment with respect to the Indicators**

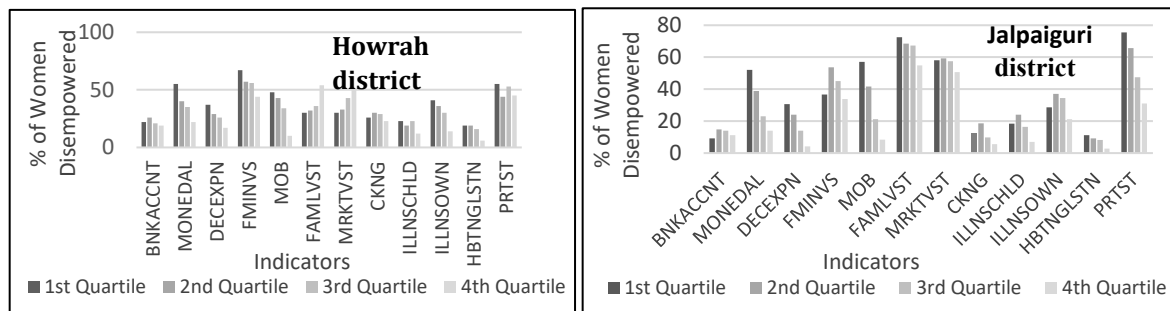


Source: Compiled by the Authors

Figure 1 displays that only 3% (6%) of the sample women in Howrah (Jalpaiguri) district are completely empowered. Thus most of the women in both of the sample district are

disempowered in respect of at least one indicator in the selected dimensions. The burden of disempowerment is more severe in Howrah district than in Jalpaiguri district with respect to the number of indicators in which women are disempowered. The higher percentage of women's disempowerment in Howrah district than in Jalpaiguri district remains true from the degree of no disempowerment to complete disempowerment.

**Figure 2: Percentage of Women Disempowered in Various Indicators according to Income**



Source: Compiled by the Authors

The respondent women are categorized into four categories according to income quartiles of the households. Notably, for most of the indicators higher family income has steadily decreased women's disempowerment for both the districts (Figure 2). Irrespective of the sample districts higher level of family income leads to higher decision-making power in buying expensive items for the family and higher access to cash for family expenditure in both Howrah and Jalpaiguri districts. Similarly, higher family income increases women's access to mobile and freedom to visit market in both the districts. With increase in family income, the attitude of acceptance of beating by husband reduces in both districts as well. Table 5 depicts the women's disempowerment indices for the sample districts and decomposition of women's disempowerment across various sub-groups such as place of residence, ethnicity religion and education. First of all, we see that incidence and intensity of women's disempowerment are almost same for the sample districts. Approximately half of the sample women are disempowered in the sample districts. Although, the incidence of women's disempowerment helps the policy makers to identify the disempowered women, it has little policy implications. The policy makers, who plan for empowering women, would get an incentive to reduce only the marginally disempowered women deliberately ignoring the women having overlapping disempowerment. In this situation, policy implementers may get incentive to be corrupted by putting effort/fund less for empowering women. Against this backdrop, we measure the intensity of women's disempowerment for the districts. The value of the intensity of women's disempowerment for Howrah (Jalpaiguri) district is 0.50 (0.49) which is actually the average deprivation of the disempowered women. Finally, the estimated WDI for Howrah district is 0.26 which is 0.24 for Jalpaiguri district. WDI can be viewed as the adjusted incidence of women's disempowerment. WDI can be seen as the proportion of deprivation experienced by the disempowered women out of the maximum possible disempowerment scores within the district. The result indicates that level of women's disempowerments in northern and southern zones of the state of West Bengal is slightly different. The estimate of WDI has wide policy implications, because to reduce the value of WDI policy makers need to emphasize on incidence and intensity of disempowerment for reducing the degree of women's disempowerment. The sub-group decomposability of the WDI is its salient property. It has important implication in formulation of decentralised planning for empowering women. The incidence, intensity and the value of disempowerment index are higher in the rural region compared to the urban region in both districts. However, the contribution of the rural women in district level WDI is much higher in Jalpaiguri district than in Howrah district. Among the

disempowered women, women belonging to Scheduled Caste (SC) category have the largest incidence and WDI value in each of the districts. Further, the contribution of SC women in district WDI is much higher than their population share in both Howrah and Jalpaiguri districts whereas the contribution of the women belonging to general castes and other backward classes (OBC) are lesser than their population share. However, contribution of SC population to disempowerment is stronger in Jalpaiguri district than that in Howrah district. The incidence as well as the index value of disempowerment is higher among the Hindu women than the non-Hindus in both districts. It is found that incidence as well as the value of WDI is the highest for the women with no formal education and the lowest for women with education beyond secondary level in both districts. Women with no formal education and women with education up to secondary level have higher share in district MDI compared to their population share in Howrah district as well as in Jalpaiguri district. Thus, women with lower level of education are sharing higher burden of disempowerment in the studied areas, but with a higher contribution to disempowerment by illiterate women in Jalpaiguri district compared to Howrah district. All these findings are supported by empowerment literatures. Studies by Friedman et al., 2016, Khatri, 2016 and Shetty & Hans, 2015 have shown that literacy is strongly associated with empowerment. Literature also suggests that the incidence of intimate partner violence is most prevalent among SC women in India (Chowdhuri et al., 2022) and West Bengal's SC women are no exception with respect to various exploitations (Majhi & Sardar, 2019; Biswas et al., 2023). The decomposition analysis also reveals that the burden of disempowerment is more severe for women in Jalpaiguri district who live in rural areas, have no or less education and belong from backward caste than women from same cohort in Howrah district. It indicates that women's degree of disempowerment varies not only with broad geographical variation; regional backwardness enhances the degree of disempowerment among women even within a state.

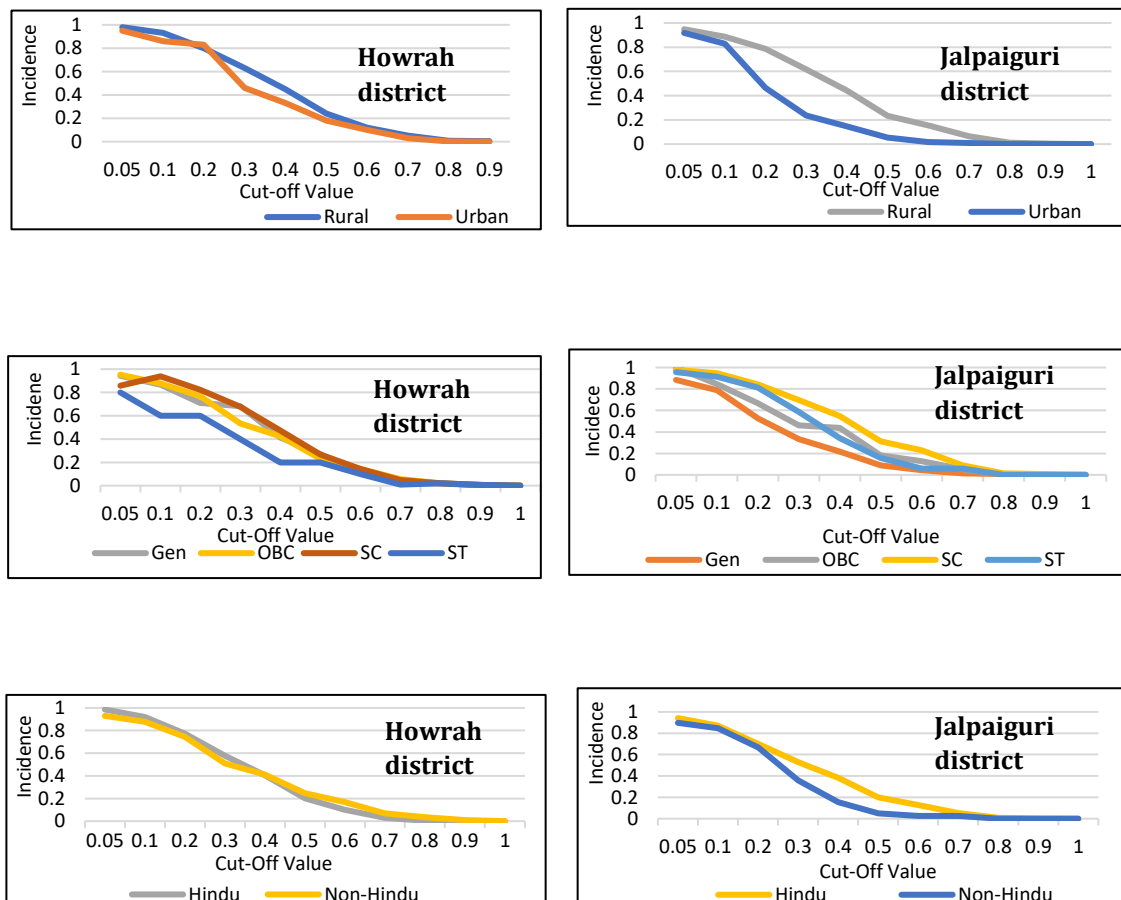
**Table 5: WDI and its Sub-group Decompositions**

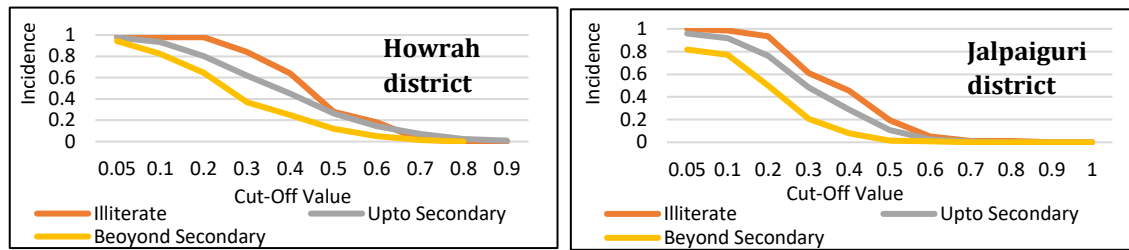
Howrah District							
	Sub-Groups	Sample size	Number of disempowered women (%)	Incidence (H)	Intensity (A)	WDI	Contribution (%)
Area of Residence	Total Sample Size	400	211(52.75)	0.53	0.50	0.26	100
	Rural Area	231 (57.75)	136 (58.87)	0.59	0.51	0.30	65.38
	Urban Area	169 (42.25)	75 (44.37)	0.44	0.50	0.22	34.61
Official Castes	General Caste	103 (25.75)	39 (37.86)	0.37	0.48	0.18	18.07
	Other Backward	145 (36.25)	73 (50.34)	0.50	0.53	0.26	36.92
	Scheduled Caste	145(36.25)	95(57.38)	0.65	0.49	0.32	42.30
	Scheduled Tribe	7(1.75)	4 (1)	0.57	0.32	0.18	1.15
Religion	Hindu	286 (71.50)	154 (53.84)	0.54	0.49	0.27	71.85
	Non-Hindu	114 (28.50)	55 (48.24)	0.48	0.54	0.26	28.45
Education	No formal Education	50 (12.5)	42 (84)	0.84	0.48	0.40	19.23
	Up to secondary	208 (52)	120 (57.69)	0.57	0.52	0.29	58.85
	More than Secondary	141 (35.25)	48 (34.04)	0.34	0.47	0.16	21.54
Jalpaiguri District							
	Total Sample Size	400	195 (48.75)	0.48	0.49	0.24	100
Area of Residence	Rural Area	290 (72.5)	172 (59.31)	0.59	0.50	0.29	87.5
	Urban Area	110 (27.5)	23 (20.9)	0.21	0.45	0.09	12.5
Official Castes	General Caste	156 (39.0)	49 (31.15)	0.31	0.47	0.15	23.45
	Other Backward	39 (9.75)	16 (41.02)	0.41	0.52	0.21	8.64
	Scheduled Caste	135 (33.75)	91 (67.41)	0.67	0.52	0.35	48.97
	Scheduled Tribe	70 (17.5)	50 (71.4)	0.57	0.46	0.26	18.93
Religion	Hindu	360 (90.00)	184 (51.11)	0.51	0.50	0.26	95.83
	Non-Hindu	40 (10.00)	12 (3.00)	0.30	0.42	0.13	5.33
Education	No formal Education	77 (19.25)	50 (64.93)	0.64	0.52	0.34	26.74
	Up to secondary	197 (49.25)	113(57.36)	0.57	0.50	0.29	58.37
	More than Secondary	126 (31.50)	32 (25.39)	0.25	0.45	0.11	14.78

Source: Compiled by the Authors

In our analysis the cut-off value for the incidence of disempowerment is 0.33 for identifying disempowered women. However, there is debate among the economists in fixing this cut-off value in identifying multidimensional deprivation. In order to validate the sub-group comparison, we report the robustness of the disempowerment of women altering the cut-off values and perform the dominance analysis. Figure 3 shows the dominance analysis across place of residence, social castes, religion and educational achievement of the respondent women with various levels of second cut-off values. The curve for each category in the figure shows the different levels of incidence of disempowerment corresponding to different cut-off values for that category. If the curve corresponding to one category lies completely above other curves, then that category dominates other categories in terms of disempowerment. The figure reveals that the incidence curve of disempowerment in rural areas remain slightly above than that of urban areas in both the districts throughout the entire range of cut-off values. The dominance analysis across castes reveals a stable consistency in terms of incidences of disempowerment. SC women’s incidence of disempowerment is the highest for the entire range of cut-off values in both the districts. The dominance analysis based on religion in Howrah district shows that incidence of disempowerment more or less same for all cut-off values. On the other hand, in Jalpaiguri district, the incidence of disempowerment curve of Hindu women dominates the non-Hindu women’s curve through the entire range of cut-off values. The dominance analysis for different education group shows that women with no formal education has dominance in terms of incidence of disempowerment over other two education groups in most part of the cut off values in Howrah district as well as Jalpaiguri district. Thus, we find steady dominance of a particular category over other categories for both districts in each dominance analysis except the religion sub-groups in Howrah district.

**Figure 3: Dominance Analysis of the Incidence of Women’s disempowerment**





Source: Compiled by the Authors

The indicator wise decomposition analysis (Table-6) suggests that in both districts the attitude of remaining silent in case of IPV has the largest contribution to MDI. The finding reflects the abysmal scenario of either acceptance or oppression with respect to marital violence faced by married women in our state. This finding has special significance on the background of worrisome scenario of marital violence across the country. Using national level data in India, Akter & Chindarkar (2019) finds that women victim of IPV has increased by more than 30% in 2011-12 compared to 2004-05 in India. The situation is even grave for West Bengal. Study by Dandona et al. (2022) suggests that the reported cases of cruelty by husbands and in-laws is one of the highest in West Bengal during 2001 to 2018, almost six times higher than the national average. This high rate of incidence combined with the attitude of non-reporting of IPV lead us to believe that the true incidence of IPV is more horrifying than reported. The second and third largest contributors to WDI are the indicators of freedom to visit market and freedom to visit pre-natal family from freedom of movement dimensions in both districts. The issue of restricted movement of girls and women coupled with lack of safety and security issues within and outside the households are the major challenges against gender equality and women’s empowerment in India. Restricted movement of girls and women is a form of control imposed on them in our patrilocal culture and reduces women’s agency significantly (Mehta & Sai, 2021). There is a common notion that women belonging to the states with stringent patrilineal culture face more restrictions and immobility of movement. However, our study reveals that the restriction on mobility is a widespread problem not restricted to certain specific states. Our study in West Bengal where patrilineal rules are comparatively relaxed reveals that majority of women here faces restrictions with respect to freedom of movement.

**Table 6: Contribution of Each Indicator in Disempowerment: Howrah & Jalpaiguri**

Indicator	Howrah	Jalpaiguri
Not having own Bank Account	3.84	2.44
No access to Money for Daily Expenditure	6.92	6.54
No decision-making power in case of buying expensive item	5.38	5.34
No decision-making power in case of family investment	8.84	8.29
Not having access to mobile	6.15	8.64
No freedom to visit market	11.53	13.11
No freedom to visit pre-natal family	12.53	15.22
No decision-making power on what to cook on daily basis	6.53	3.29
No decision-making power in case a child falls sick	4.61	5.34
No decision-making power if respondent herself gets sick	8.07	8.65
Acceptance of domestic violence	6.92	3.70
Non-reporting of IPV	17.69	20.19

Source: Compiled by the Authors

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

This study analyses the variation in the inter-district women's disempowerment scenario in Howrah district and Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal. In respect of the disempowerment status at individual indicator, women from Howrah district are more disempowered relative to the women in Jalpaiguri district in most of the indicators. However, in respect of the adjusted incidence of women's disempowerment, which is very much relevant for policy perspectives, the disempowerment level is two percentage points higher in Howrah district compared to Jalpaiguri district. The urban-rural gap in disempowerment is more profound in Jalpaiguri district while the incidence and intensity of women's disempowerment are almost equal in both the districts. Further, dimensional breakdown of multidimensional disempowerment reveals that the largest three contributors to women's disempowerment remains the same for both districts. The strongest contributor to disempowerment is the perception of non-reporting in case of intimate partner violence in both districts, followed by the no freedom to visit alone to the relatives and market places. A number of policies and laws are implemented to promote equal rights for women since independence including the Dowry Prohibition Act 1961, the Equal Remuneration Act 1976, the amendment to the Hindu Succession Act 2005, the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005, the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (PREVENTION, PROHIBITION and REDRESSAL) Act 2013, among others. However, as long as women's gender perception and attitude towards remaining silent in case of IPV do not change, implementation of acts and policies will not deliver the targeted outcome. Igniting the social awareness about evil consequences of IPV, community mobilization, therapeutic programmes to alter attitudes about gender norms can be key instruments to dismantle gender beliefs and open up against IPV. Freedom to visit marketplaces and freedom to visit family and friends are the other two major barriers to empowering women in these districts. Restriction in movement restrict educational achievement, restrict job market participation and limit the access to healthcare services (Asi, 2021). Lack of freedom of mobility manifests from the patriarchal societal norms and lack of safety issues for women. Ensuring more safety of women in public transport and other places outside home, strict and early verdict against any kind of crime against women and most importantly respectful mind towards women may be instrumental in increasing women's freedom of mobility. In both Howrah district and Jalpaiguri district, the burden of disempowerment is disproportionately higher for less educated women. Thus, promoting education among women across every corner of society will be a key policy instrument to increase empowerment among women. A vast literature can be found discussing the role of education in empowering women. However, the discrimination faced by girl child and women in getting quality education in the developing world is a matter of serious concern. The developing world still witnesses high dropout rate for girls at primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education, due to poverty, child marriage and gender-based violence (UNICEF, 2024). Sarva Shiksha Aviyon, Samagra Shiksha Aviyon, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao are some flagship programs of the Central Government while Kanyashree is a much-celebrated financial aid program of the West Bengal Government. Despite all these policies, the drop-out rate among girls in West Bengal is higher than the national average according to NFHS-5, 2019-21. Creating a gender-inclusive classroom environment through teacher training programmes, providing separate safe, hygienic toilets in schools for girls and organizing awareness programs to make people understand the benefits of sending girls to schools can be effective to increase educational attainments among girls which may be beneficial for empowering women in near future.

## References

- Acharya, D., Bell J., Simkhada, P. Teijlingen, E., Regmi, P. (2010) 'Women's Autonomy in Household Decision-making: A Demographic Study in Nepal,' *Reproductive Health*, 7:15. <http://www.reproductive-health-journal.com/content/7/1/15>
- Akram, N. (2018) 'Women's Empowerment in Pakistan: Its Dimensions and Determinants,' *Social Indicators Research*, 140:755-775.
- Akter, S. & Chindarkar, N. (2019) 'An Empirical Examination of Sustainability of Women's Empowerment Using Panel Data from India,' *The Journal of Development Studies*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2019.1605054>
- Alkire, S. & Foster, J. (2011) 'Counting and Multidimensional Poverty Measurement,' *Journal of Public Economics*, 95(7-8): 476-487.
- Alkire, S., Meinzen-Dick, R., Peterman, A., Quisumbing, A. & Seymour, G. (2013) 'The Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index,' *World Development*, 52: 71-91.
- Alsop, R. & Heinsohn, N. (2005) 'Measuring Empowerment in Practice: Structuring Analysis and Framing Indicators,' World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 3510.
- Alvi, M. (2023) 'Caste, Religion and the Labor Force Participation of Women: Evidence from India,' *Review of Social Economy*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00346764.2023.2223167>.
- Asi, Y. M. (2021). Freedom of Movement as a Determinant of Women's Health: Global Analysis and Commentary. *World Medical and Health Policy*, 13(4), 641–652. <https://doi.org/10.1002/wmh3.402>
- Banerjee, D. & Pan, U. (2023) 'Empowerment of Rural and Urban Women in West Bengal: A Case Study in Birbhum District,' *International Journal of Management and Humanities*, 10(4), <https://doi.org/10.35940/ijmh.D1673.1210423>.
- Biswas, B. & Banu, N. (2022) 'Economic Empowerment of Rural and Urban Women in India: A Comparative Analysis', *Spatial Information Research*, 31:73–89.
- Biswas, S., Pramanik, K. R. & Sonowal, C. J. (2023) 'Marginalised Social Group Differentials in Nutritional Status among Reproductive aged Women in West Bengal,' *BMC Public Health*, 23. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-023-15635-6>.
- Bukhya, R. (2015) 'Empowerment of tribal women in India,' *Indian Journal of Research*, 4(4): 4-5.
- Boateng, G., Kuire, V., Ung, M., Amoyaw, J., Armah, F., Luginaah, I. (2014) 'Women's Empowerment in the Context of Millennium Development Goal 3: A Case Study of Married Women in Ghana,' *Social Indicator Research*, 115: 137-158.
- Census of India (2011), Union Primary Census Abstract.
- Chowdhury, S., Singh, A., Kasemi, N. & Chakraborty, M. (2022) 'Decomposing the Gap in Intimate Partner Violence Between Scheduled Caste and General Category Women in India: An analysis of NFHS-5 data,' *SSM-Population Health*, 19: 1-10.
- Dandona, R., A. George, S., Kishan, S. & Kumar G.A. (2022) 'Domestic Violence in Indian Women: Lessons From Nearly 20 Years of Surveillance,' *BMC Women's Health*, 22 (1), [10.1186/s12905-022-01703-3](https://doi.org/10.1186/s12905-022-01703-3).

District Statistical Handbook, Howrah.

District Statistical Handbook, Jalpaiguri.

Dreze, J. & Sen, A. (2013) '*An Uncertain Glory-India and Its Contradiction,*' Princeton University Press.

Friedman, W., Kremer, M., Miguel, E. Thornton, R., (2016) 'Education as Liberation?' *Economica*, 83 (119): 1-30.

Furuta, M. & Salway, S. (2006) 'Women's Position Within the Household as a Determinant Of Maternal Health Care Use in Nepal,' *International Family Planning Perspectives*, 32(1): 17-27.

GhoshDas, S. & Bagli, S. (2024) 'Women's Empowerment and Son Preference: The Case of India,' *Indian Journal of Human Development*, 18(2), 201-223.

Govt. of India & UNDP (2020) 'Enhancing Effectiveness of Tribal Development in India, 2020,' Annual Progress Report.  
[https://info.undp.org/docs/pdc/Documents/IND/0011079\\_APR2020\\_109173.pdf](https://info.undp.org/docs/pdc/Documents/IND/0011079_APR2020_109173.pdf).

Gupta, K. & Yesudian, P. (2006) 'Evidence of Women's Empowerment in India: A Study of Socio-Spatial Disparities,' *Geo Journal*, 65: 365-380.

Jejeebhoy, S. (2002) 'Convergence and Divergence in Spouses' Perspectives on Women's Autonomy in Rural India,' *Studies in Family Planning*, 33(4): 299-308.

Kabeer, N. (1999) 'Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Empowerment,' *Development & Change*, 30(3): 435-464.

Kabeer, N. (2001) 'Reflections on the measurement of women's empowerment'. in: Sisask, A, (ed.) *Discussing Women's Empowerment: Theory and Practice*. pp. 17-57. SIDA studies, Sweden.

Kapur, R. (2024) 'Promoting Empowerment Opportunities is Fundamental in Leading to Well being of Individual, Communities and Nation,' *International Journal of Information*, 16(1): 90-100.

Khandare, L. (2017) 'Domestic Violence and Empowerment: A National Study of Scheduled Caste Women in India,' (Report No: 0104D\_10217). Indiana University.

Khatri, R. (2016) 'The Role of Education towards Women Empowerment in India,' *International Journal of Advanced Research*, 4(11): 550-555.

Majhi, S. & Sardar, B, (2019) 'Disparity in Education among the Scheduled Caste Women in West Bengal, 2011,' *Indian Journal of Spatial Science*, 10(1): 32-38.

Manna, A. (2024) 'Empowerment and Gender Equality Among Tribal Women,' *Integrated Journal for Research in Arts and Humanities*, 4(1): 11-17.

Mehta, V. & Sai, H. (2021) 'Freedom of Movement: Studying Women's Mobility in North India,' *Urbanisation*, <https://10.1177/24557471211022566>.

Melamed, C. & Samman, E. (2013) 'Equity, Inequality and Human Development in a Post-2015 Framework,' United Nations Development Programme

Mondol, S. (2021) 'Demystifying Caste in Bengal,' *Economic & Political Weekly*, LVI (3): 21-23.

- Nite, D. & Dash, B. (2022) 'Caste, Class and Development Experiences: Discourses on Social Inequality/ Equality, Merit and Welfare in Modern India,' *The International Journal of Community and Social Development*, 4(4): 411– 425.
- Narayanan, S., Fontana, M., Lentz, E. & Kulkarni, B., (2017) 'Rural Women's Empowerment in Nutrition: A Proposal for Diagnostics Linking Food, Health, and Institutions' Paper presented at the UN Women Session in Collaboration with the FAO, IFAD and WFP in Rome, Italy.
- National Family Health Survey, India Report, 2020.  
[dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR375/FR375.pdf](https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR375/FR375.pdf)
- Paik, S. (2018) 'The Rise of New Dalit Women in Indian Historiography,' *History Compass*, 16:e12491. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hic3.12491>.
- Porter, E. (2013) 'Rethinking Women's Empowerment,' *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, 8(1): 1-14.
- Pozarny, P. (2016) 'Gender roles and opportunities for women in urban environments,' (GSDRC Helpdesk Research Report 1337). Birmingham, UK: GSDRC, University of Birmingham.
- Roy, D. (2012) 'Caste and Power: An Ethnography in West Bengal, India,' *Modern Asian Studies*, 46(4): 947-974.
- Rettig, E.M., Fick, S.E. & Hijmans, R.J (2020) 'The Female Empowerment Index (FEMI): Spatial and Temporal Variation in Women's Empowerment in Nigeria,' *Heliyon*, 6:1-9.
- Rettig, E. & Hijmans, R. (2022) 'Increased Women's Empowerment and Regional Inequality in Sub-Saharan Africa Between 1995 and 2015,' *Plos One*, 17(9): e0272909.
- Sen, A. (2001) 'The Many Faces of Gender Inequality,' *The New Republic*,18(22), <https://www.sas.upenn.edu/~dludden/MANY%20FACES%20OF%20GENDER%20IN%20EQUALITY.html>
- Shetty, S. & Hans, V. (2015) 'Role of Education in Women Empowerment and Development: Issue and Impact,' Paper presented at the National Seminar on Education for Building People's Capacity towards Sustainable Development, Mangalore.
- UNICEF (2024) Girls' Education, Gender equality in education benefits every child. <https://www.unicef.org/education/girls-education>, accessed on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2025.