

Awareness among Rural Girls for Role of Home Science Education in Economic Empowerment

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ABSTRACT Women in India remain a disadvantaged section of society even in the context of continual advancement taking place. Opportunities must be created specifically for the rural women by empowering them and enabling them to acquire the skills necessary for entering into various occupations. Present paper studies awareness of rural girls about Home Science education. An exhaustive list of income generating avenues (of Home Science education) was prepared and used as a tool to educate masses; and lectures were arranged. Results indicate that none of the target group had any knowledge of career options of home science education in industry, freelancing, self-help groups, profit generating networks and agencies like NGO's and KVK's. Few girls had knowledge of consultancy services, home based industry and self-employment. Most of the young rural girls wanted to learn trade to go and work abroad for economic gains. So there is urgent need to start such awareness campaigns at root level, especially at the entry level to higher education.

INTRODUCTION

Female literacy rate in India though is gradually increasing, is less than the male literacy rate. However, in rural India, girls continue to be less well-educated than boys. According to the National Sample Survey Data of 2011, only the states of Kerala and Mizoram have approached universal female literacy and Punjab lags far behind. Although literacy rate in Punjab has seen upward trend and is 75.84 percent as per 2011 population census. Of that, male literacy stands at 80.44 percent while female literacy is at 62.52 percent. Reaching out young girls at school level; particularly with the aim of career counseling can go a long way in channeling the rural women who have tremendous potential to acquire skills and exploit them for income generation.

Empowerment strategies for strengthening women's position are varied. These consist of greater access to knowledge and resources, autonomy in decision making, ability to plan their lives and control over the circumstances that

influence their lives (Mishra 2005). Entrepreneurship development and income generating activities are a feasible solution for empowering women. Home science education develops need based abilities and capacities for becoming successful home maker, career oriented and an empowered women. This education thus has greater returns as compared to other education. It reaches unreached and thus one becomes job provider instead of job seekers. A job seeker too is not at the disadvantage as Home Science education gives a well-paid job, as one can earn a salary between Rs. 10000 – 15000 per month in the beginning.

Attention to customer services and nutrition is increasing at a tremendous rate, since numerous multinational firms are getting involved in these ventures. This makes a career in Home Science very promising. Home Science graduates can seek careers in the fields of community and social work as well as in NGOs, food and nutrition related activities in hospitals, and food services. Apart from working in the above areas of joining the teaching profession in universities and colleges, one can be education officers, social workers, psychologists and researchers. They can also work as nutrition consultants, research assistants, food scientists, demonstrators or food analysts and family counselors. One can be absorbed in food preservation production unit of any hotel, tourist resort, restaurant,

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food industry. One can undertake design related activities.

Looking at the scenario of the women in India and back home in Punjab state, there seems to be a missing link. With so many women friendly avenues; the roads which are opened by Home Science education their economic empowerment becomes mandatory. However, due to lack of awareness regarding vast branches and off shoots of this discipline, young girls by and large remain in dark when they have to take a decision about their future life, greater stability and economic freedom. There is a need to catch them young, at root level and channelize them; so that they can attain more respect, status and economic strength.

Objectives

1. To examine the awareness of selected young girls about role of Home Science education in their economic empowerment.
2. To know the effectiveness of 'earning through Home Science education campaigns' amongst selected young rural girls.

METHODOLOGY

Present study was conducted in Ludhiana district in 2013. Out of two randomly selected blocks; four villages were selected (two from each block). From each village 30 school girls, studying in class 10 were selected; constituting the sample of 120 respondents. All the respondents fell in the age range of 15- 17 years. Data was collected through personal contact method. An interview schedule was prepared and pre tested on non-sampled populations for this purpose. It covered background information of respondents and specific information included their awareness about existence of home science education at school and college level. Third part tested their knowledge regarding scope of home science education for earning money. In second phase of research, rural girls were imparted knowledge about sources of acquiring home science education and avenues opened to them for becoming economically independent. An exhaustive list of institutes, agencies, both Government and non-government schemes was also prepared and this check list was then used

as a tool to educate masses. Lectures were arranged at block level and pre test and post test method was used to see the impact of delivered knowledge. Pretest and posttest scoring was done to know the effectiveness of campaigns and fresh check list circulated. Percentages and mean scores were worked out to analyze the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio- economic Profile of Respondents

Table 1 illustrates the socio-economic features of respondents' families which include their religion; their family occupation and total family income. Demographic aspects included family type and family size.

Thorough perusal of Table 1 reveals that most of the respondents (80.83 percent) were Sikhs. More than one-third (65 percent) belonged to farming families and earned less than Rs. 10,000/- per month as disclosed by 45 percent respondents. As regards their family's demographic features were concerned, more than 3/4th of them (73.33 percent) were living in joint family set up and their family size was large (more than 5 members living in one household). All the girls were in the age group of 15-17 years, since they were all students of class X.

Table 1: Socio-economic profile of respondents
N= 120

<i>Socio-economic features</i>	<i>Number of respondents</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>Religion</i>		
Sikh	97	80.83
Non Sikhs	23	19.17
<i>Family Occupation</i>		
Farming	78	65.00
Non farming	42	35.00
<i>Family Type</i>		
Joint	88	73.33
Nuclear	32	26.67
<i>Family Size</i>		
Up to 3 members	17	14.17
3-5 members	34	28.33
More than 5 members	69	57.50
<i>Family Income (Rs)</i>		
Upto 10,000/- pm	54	45.00
10,001 to 30,000/- pm	47	39.17
More than 30,000/- pm	19	15.83

Role of Home Science Education in Economic Empowerment

It is very important for the girls in present times to be economically empowered. Shaw

(2004) reported that economic empowerment results in women's ability to make decisions, increase their self-confidence, better status and role in household etc. Table 2 illustrates the awareness about income generation through networking and rapport building, entrepreneurial and professional development, Home Science education, Allied fields of Home Science education, Self-help groups, Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVK's) and freelancing. Networking and rapport building is with industries, Government and NGO's; for example, food processing; garment manufacturing, fashion and textile division, export units, printing and dyeing units, food and beverage services, front office operations, housekeeping, health care units, child care units, teaching-research and extension units. Data depicts that awareness regarding these avenues was minimal among respondents as only 4-10 percent of them knew about it. In fact, there can be linkages with SAU's was the fact not known to them. They also had no idea about linkages with KVK's.

Table 2: Awareness of respondents for role of Home Science education in economic empowerment (n=120)

<i>Avenue available to home scientists through...</i>	<i>Awareness of respondents</i>	<i>No. of respondents Percentage</i>
<i>Networking and Rapport Building</i>		
a. With industries	13	10.83
b. With government	05	4.16
c. With non-government agencies	08	6.67
d. Linkages with State Agricultural universities	-	-
<i>Entrepreneurial Development</i>	96	80.00
<i>Professional Development</i>	114	95.00
<i>Allied Fields of Home Science Education</i>	07	5.83
<i>Self-help Groups</i>	67	55.83
<i>Krishi Vigyan Kendras</i>	-	-
<i>Acquiring Jobs</i>	118	98.33
<i>Freelancing</i>	62	51.67

However, fairly good number of respondents has knowledge about free lancing and earning by support of Self-help groups as reported by 51.67 and 55.83 percent respondents respectively. Through free lancing one can be economically independent for example, catering, resource managers, interior designers, hobby centers,

health centers, beauty parlours, day care centres, old age homes, boutiques; was clear to them.

Income can be earned through entrepreneurial development in catering/food services, interior designing, crèches and day care centers, academies/training schools/nanny schools, rehabilitation centers/old age homes, shops (boutique, beauty parlour, florist, gift wrappers), agents/home operators, small scale businesses, event management etc. was also known to 30.00 percent of the sample. Maximum awareness was regarding acquisition of jobs after they have attained a professional degree/diploma or certificate, as revealed by 98.33 percent respondents. They knew of production jobs (food preservation, dress-making, specialized cooking, etc.), researchers, salesmen, service providers, teachers and technicians etc.

Ninety five percent respondents knew about their professional development through Home science education. By becoming professionals, that is, getting in government or private sector, in tourism industry (chefs/guides/receptionists), as care givers/nurses/welfare officers /designers, scientists/ teachers/ demonstrators/ technicians, extension workers/social workers/NGO's (Non-Government Organizations); member consumer forums and other bodies of society; promoters (of food products/consumer goods etc.); consultants; nutritionists/dietitians/health care; psychologists; counselors; consumer consultants they can be empowered economically.

Awareness about Direct Income Generating Avenues

Table 3 presents results regarding awareness level of school going girls regarding income earning avenues available through formal Home Science education by using direct means. There are some direct placements or avenues open to Home Science students by virtue of possessing any formal degree, diploma or training in any branch of specialization. Table clearly indicates none of the respondent had any idea about placement as house keeper, after studying Home Science which even had a wide scope for settlement abroad. Even event management is a fast growing area for earning income and Home Science students get formal training for handling and arranging all types occasions, still only 2 students knew this fact.

Table 3: Awareness of respondents regarding income generation through Home Science education

<i>Direct avenues of income generation</i>	<i>Responses (n=120)</i>		<i>Nil (n=120)</i>	<i>Awareness level</i>	
	<i>Job prospects</i>	<i>Self employment</i>		<i>Pre-test</i>	<i>Post-test</i>
Housekeeping	-	-	120	0.00	2.17
Event management	-	02 (1.67)	118	0.12	2.37
Textile designing	10 (8.33)	-	110	1.06	2.16
Extension work	24 (20.00)	-	96	2.37	2.61
Interior decoration	05 (4.17)	28 (23.33)	87	0.76	2.63
Bakery and confectionary	12 (10.00)	24 (20.00)	84	1.13	2.76
Consultancy	06 (5.00)	40 (33.33)	74	1.05	1.94
Hospitals and health services	-	120 (100.0)	65	3.00	3.00
Demonstrators	62 (51.67)	-	58	2.08	2.49
Research work	78 (65.00)	-	42	1.59	1.98
Art and craft	93 (77.5)	93 (77.5)	27	2.18	2.41
Cooks	04 (3.33)	90 (75.00)	26	1.98	2.87
Catering	34 (28.33)	72 (60.00)	19	2.02	2.54
Food preservation	07 (5.83)	100 (83.33)	-	2.67	2.98
Beauty parlours	120 (100.0)	120 (100.0)	-	3.00	3.00
Boutiques	24 (20.00)	100 (83.33)	-	3.00	3.00
Play schools	120 (100.0)	-	-	2.88	2.74
Teaching/coaching	120 (100.0)	120 (100.0)	-	3.00	3.00
Media	-	120 (100.0)	-	2.87	3.00

Entering the field of textile designing is another option they were mostly aware of as only 8.33 percent knew this fact. This was followed by options available to Home Science to become extension workers as only 20 percent respondents knew job prospects after doing Home Science degree. Other less known career options were: working as interior decorator, earning through bakery and confectionary shops, charging money for consultancy services, working in hospitals as dietitians, and other health service providers; and working as field demonstrators.

Possibility of entering the field of research work, art and craft, as cooks and caterers; was little known to them as only one third of the respondents had this knowledge. Income generation through food preservation, beauty parlours, boutiques, play schools, teaching, coaching and through media was known to all the respondents but their knowledge regarding self employment was incomplete. Table clearly indicates that more students knew about job prospects more definitely than self employment concept. In the scenario where getting jobs is very tough; one needs to acquire and practice knowledge to become employer oneself. So the formula of becoming job providers than job seekers is the key to their economic empowerment. Post test results clearly states (Table 3) that there was significant increase in their awareness level after the series of lectures and interactive sessions took place indicating positive impact of the imparted knowledge.

Awareness about Indirect Income Generating Avenues

One must also know the fact that getting education to applied science like Home Science; the allied fields of income generation open up automatically. However, lack of awareness may deprive one of availing such opportunities. Table 4 illustrates some facts regarding low level of knowledge amongst young rural girls. Ministry of Agriculture (of Indian Government), has opened up *Krishi Vigyan Kendras* (called KVK's) in all states which branch out at every niche and corner of the country and provide ample employment to the youth. Sridhar et al. (2013) also reported that KVK's are playing vital role in raising the socio-economic status of the rural community. Total lack of awareness was seen about this area as revealed by all respondents under study.

Getting jobs as technical experts and as welfare officers was the fact known to only 1.67 percent respondents. Vast majority (91.17 percent) respondents also had no idea about scope of Home Science education in the sector of service providers, social and community workers; and as radio jockeys. Employment as entrepreneur was far easy and profitable for the person who had acquired enough practical hand on training in any of the specialized area of Home Science; but only one third (70 percent) respondents knew this fact. Forming Self Help groups for self reliance and income generation was bet-

Table 4: Awareness level of respondents regarding income generation through allied use of Home Science education

Direct avenues of	Responses (n=120)		Nil (n=120)	Awareness level	
	Job prospects	Self employment		Pre-test	Post-test
Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVK)	-	-	120	0.82	2.65
Technical experts	118 (98.33)	-	118	0.57	1.02
Welfare officers	-	02 (1.67)	118	2.01	2.74
Service providers	110 (91.17)	-	110	0.89	2.61
Social/community workers	-	10 (8.33)	110	0.79	2.08
Radio jockeys	-	10 (8.33)	110	0.69	2.13
Entrepreneur/manufacturer	24 (20.00)	12 (10.00)	84	1.87	2.98
Self help groups	-	78 (65.00)	78	2.59	2.87
Running rehabilitation centers and old age homes	23 (19.17)	46 (38.33)	74	1.95	2.51
NGO's	06 (5.00)	50 (41.67)	64	0.21	1.49
Salesmanship	36 (30.00)	22 (18.33)	36	1.05	2.54
Running hobby centers	-	120 (100.0)	-	3.00	3.00

ter known to many of the young girls sampled for the present investigation; reason for this may be that they belonged to rural areas where such strategies has been used by various agencies to empower economically weaker women folk. How can one be part of NGO or establish own NGO was also lesser known fact to the respondents as only half of them reported a positive response. Thirty percent respondents had an idea that how Home Science knowledge can be exploited to turn to salesman ship. The only indirect avenue they knew of was of 'running hobby centers' as all the respondents disclosed this fact.

More respondents knew about job prospects then self employment options in the indirect mode of income generation; as it can be seen the results given in the Table 4 However, the knowledge campaign turned out to be a big success as the post test scoring improved drastically in all the areas explored in this study. The results are thus clearly indicative of an urgent need of knowledge empowerment of rural girls at root level for tapping their energies to develop their natural skills and get expertise through formal and informal Home Science education so that they can become economically independent.

CONCLUSION

The results indicate of an urgent need to start such awareness campaigns at root level, especially at the entry level to higher education. Need of the hour is to send to send message across to young girls, wives, mothers and under privileged women; that women should be an empowered person who can shoulder responsibilities of life

along with her husband and not merely remain a liability. Especially when she can access to formal education in Home Science; there can be no stopping for her to attain the goal of empowerment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that curriculum in schools should focus on the specific needs of the female gender for making them aware of the kind of education which can liberate them from the age old socio- cultural barriers coming their way of independence. There is also a need to establish counseling cells in rural schools which can tap the potential of young girls and guide them to enter the path of economic and social empowerment.

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