

## Preface

The importance of human capital juxtaposed with physical capital has been emerging since the end of the Second World War to pace economic development in the developing countries. Empowerment is no doubt the pivotal component of human capital. Empowerment of women has emerged as a developmental issue after the inception of the concept of ‘capability approach’ for development. Before that, women’s empowerment was the subject of the feminists and viewed as a socio-political issue. The feminists look women’s empowerment entirely as an instinct matter. After 1980s economists have recognized women’s empowerment as an instrument for human development. In addition to the feminist goals the instrumental idea of women’s empowerment have some important policy pay-offs. Advocates of instrumentalists have tried to define women’s empowerment with a broader vision compared to the vision of feminists. However, women’s empowerment has still not been clearly defined and segregated from other closely related concepts like gender inequality. Women’s empowerment is viewed as mechanism of improving the qualitative aspects of women. In this dissertation we have studied women’s empowerment as means and ends of forming human capital.

Nowadays women’s empowerment is a multidimensional and multi-level concept. The study of women’s empowerment is also context specific. We have premeditated empowerment at the household level and at the community level for the women of Bankura district. For this purpose we have considered five dimensions of women’s empowerment for each level. These are economic dimension, familial dimension, political dimension, social dimension and legal dimension. Further, each dimension has been covered by some suitable indicators in the context of Bankura district. Combining all the dimensions we have computed empowerment index for each sample woman at the household level and at the community level. This empirical study is based on a set a primary data collected from 580 women of Bankura district. An attempt has been taken to estimate the impact of women’s empowerment at the household level and at the community level on family planning decision, on the incidence of domestic violence against women, and on spending for children’s education in Bankura district. The study

has also analysed the nature and causes of the low level empowerment of the women in Bankura district.

The corpus of this dissertation has been structured into six chapters. In chapter one, we present the relevance and the objectives of this study. The second chapter deals with the review of relevant literatures. Chapter three has explained the theoretical framework for the estimation of the impact of women's empowerment on the issues of household welfare and for investigation of the factors affecting women's empowerment. Empirical models and hypotheses for empirical testing have also been formulated in this chapter. Chapters four has analysed the components of empowerment of the women in Bankura district, West Bengal. We have found that empowerment of the sample woman at the household level and at the community level have not reached at the creditable level. We have explained the empirical impact of empowerment variables along with other factors on household and child welfare in chapter five. In this chapter the empirical estimates of the women's empowerment have also been explained. Our empirical findings shows that women's empowerment is instrumental in improving the probability of taking family planning decision, in alleviating the incidence of domestic violence and in increasing the share of household income spend for children's education. Finally, we find age, personal occupation, personal income, financial inclusion, household's landholding, SHG-membership, educational background of the female household members as crucial factor for enhancing empowerment at the household level and at the community level. On the basis of the empirical findings, we draw the policy prescription in chapter six for improving household welfare and empowerment of the women in a better way.

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I am humble to state that I have prepared this dissertation with the best of my knowledge and efforts. Despite my sincere efforts in the preparation of this dissertation there may have some mistakes for which I am solely responsible.

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