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AWARENESS OF RURAL WOMEN ABOUT THEIR RIGHTS ON DOWRY

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Abstract:-In the present investigation an attempt has been made to find out the Awareness of rural women about their rights on dowry". This paper aims to focus on the following objectives: a) To study the socio personal characteristics of the respondents b) To determine the extent of awareness of the respondents about their rights on dowry and c) To find out the relationship between level of awareness about their rights with the selected socio-personal variables. The findings of the study revealed that a large percentage (52%) of respondents were from middle age group, 43 per cent of respondents belonged to schedule caste, 72 percent were married women and 14 percent of them had qualification up to high school standard. The respondents in large number (56%) were belonged to nuclear families. Majority (95%) of respondents were not gainfully employed but homemaking. Measuring the awareness level it was found that a large percentage (55%) of women were not aware about their rights on dowry.

Keywords: Awareness, rural women, dowry rights.

INTRODUCTION:

Dowry means any property or vulnerable security given or agreed to be given either directly or indirectly by one party in marriage to the other party by the parents of either party to a marriage or by any other person, to either party to the marriage or to any other person. Dowry or Dahej is the payment in cash or kind by the bride's family to the bridegrooms family along with the giving away of the bride (called kanyadaan) in Indian marriage. Originally, the purpose of a dowry was to provide seed money or property for the establishment of a new household, to help a husband feed and protect his family, and to give the wife and children same support if he were to die. But now a days, it has become a fashion for all to lead a luxurious life .According to Dowry Prohibition Act. 1961, if someone is harassed since after the marriage either by husband or by other family members under the following conditions than the person can go to the court to protect them self from such violence such as if any one was forced to give dowry since after the marriage as well as demand of household articles like refrigerator, furniture, electrical appliances at the time of the settlement of marriage. Besides, these any demand such as purchase of a car since after the marriage, or any demand for giving or taking of dowry. Apart from these, if the demand was made at the time when marriage ceremony was in progress and was repeated after the marriage as well as any property given or agreed to be given by the parents of a party to the marriage in connection with marriage, if a sum amount of money was demanded by husband or family members and if it was not paid accordingly for which if the wife is tortured or threatened to go for a another marriage the accused are punished under law.

SCOPE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The study undertaken by the investigator was a current as well as burning one. Rural women have very poor knowledge on different aspects like marriage, property, domestic violence, dowry, divorce and maintenance as a result of which they are deprived of getting all the opportunities provided by law for their better protection of life. Such women are worst sufferer in the whole world. Visibility of these sufferings of women are also found more in the developing country like India. This is just because of lack of proper knowledge of these women on different opportunities of rights provided by law. Besides various research studies, it also shows that, due to lack of ignorance regarding their rights, women encounter with violence and harassment in various manner at any phase of their life. In spite of various provision of law favourable to women,

women suffer from all kinds of violence basically because of their ignorance about it. Theoretically it sounds good that there are various provisions in favour of women but practically it is not so. It is observed that rural women at large not exercising their rights in their real life situation just because of their ignorance or poor knowledge about it. So there is a big gap between the provision in law and its use by the women in general and rural women in particular. Being an extension person it is our moral duty to minimize this gap because mere provision of law alone will not serve our purpose unless and until it reaches the unreached for whom it was made.

Therefore, the present research study is very much important for the investigator to find out the level of ignorance of rural women about their rights available in Indian constitution for their own safeguards. The outcome of the results would serve as an eye-opener for the rural women to come out seeking ways to improve their awareness level about constitutional rights. It is also expected that, the findings of the present study will be helpful for the investigator to recommend some intervention training package with the help of NGO's, government and social workers by creating a climate for total improvement of level of awareness of rural women about constitutional rights for their future protection.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A number of studies have been done related to the present problem, few studies reviewed have been presented as follows. The court records in Maharashtra (2000) showed 120 cases of dowry deaths and all the women were below 25 years of age. Another study from Delhi revealed that 56 per cent of all suicides were by women, "Marital discord" was the common reason. Bloch and Rao (2002) conducted a study of dowry violence in Rural India, focusing on its use as a bargaining instrument. The author revealed that violence is not only closely linked to low dowry payments, but that a woman who comes from a weak family is more likely to be beaten by her husband in an effort to extract higher transfer from her parents. HUMAN (2003) conducted a study in Terai region of Nepal and revealed that dowry is very prevalent in the southern region of Terai bordering with India, particularly the Bihar and Uttar Pradesh state of India. The study further stated that, dowry system originated and spread from Indian states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh and spread to southern Terai in Nepal. Tandon (2007) reported that young married women become victims of dowry in Punjab every week. On an average, 55 women aged 18-35 die every year due to their inability to meet dowry related demands. Davis (2008) in its study, pointed that those households with lower levels of education, that owned less land, had fewer assets and had many young children and elderly relatives, faced the most difficulty in escaping poverty.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To study the socio personal characteristics of the respondents
2. To determine the extent of awareness of the respondents about their rights on Dowry
3. To find out the relationship between level of awareness about their rights with the selected socio-personal variables.

METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE DESIGN:

The study was conducted under Simple Random Sampling method. This study was carried out in the two districts of Assam- Jorhat and Lakhimpur districts. In Jorhat district there are three sub-divisions via, Jorhat, Titabor and Majuli. Out of these, Jorhat sub-division was selected purposively. Lakhimpur district comprised of two sub-divisions - North Lakhimpur and Dhokuakhana. Out of these North Lakhimpur sub-division was selected purposively for the present investigation. Jorhat sub-division and North Lakhimpur sub-division consists of five development blocks. Koliapani Development Block of Jorhat district and Narayanpur Development Block of Lakhimpur district were selected respectively. Five villages were selected randomly from each Kaliapani and Narayanpur Development block. From each village, ten respondents were selected for this investigation randomly. A total sample of hundred rural women were selected from these villages. Eight statements as stated in the constitution were framed covering all the aspects of dowry. Further the statements were validated by the legal experts for clarity and relevancy of the statements.

TOOL FOR DATA COLLECTION

In order to elicit the information regarding awareness of rural women about their rights on dowry a structured interview schedule was prepared. The collected data were coded, tabulated and analyzed in accordance with the objectives of the study by using appropriate statistical techniques such as number and percentage, mean scores, correlation coefficient and t-test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS:

a) Socio-personal characteristics of the respondents.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents according to their socio-personal characteristics

Sl. No.	Variables	Characteristics	Percentage (%)
1.	Age	18-28 years	46
		28-38 years	52
		38 & above	2
2	Caste	General	32
		OBC	25
		SC	43
3	Education	Primary level	30
		Middle school level	35
		Up to HSLC	35
		HSLC	14
		HSSLC	13
		Graduate	8
4	Marital status	Unmarried	19
		Married	72
		Widow	6
		Separated	3
5	Family type	Nuclear	56
		Joint	35
		Extended	9
6	Occupation of the family	Agriculture	24
		Service	17
		Business	27
		Wage earners	32
7	Occupation of the respondent	Service	5
		Home making	95
8	Membership in organization	Member of self help group.	39
9	Exposure in mass media	Television	14
		Radio	40
		News paper	40
		Internet	5
		Extension bulletin	1

1. Age

The data presented in the Table 1 indicates that 46 percentage of the respondents belonged to young age group of 18-28 years, and 52 percentage respondents belonged to middle age group 28-38 years. Only 2 per cent respondents were in the old age group of 38-48. It is clear from the table that since a large majority of the respondents belonged to the young and middle age group whose level of awareness about rights was measured in the present investigation will be of much use for giving some required intervention and support.

2. Caste

It is evident from the Table 1 that a sizable percentage (43%) of respondents belonged to schedule caste followed by

32 percent from general caste. This finding revealed that the respondents were from different caste.

3. Educational Qualification .

Table 1 reflects that a large percentage (35%) of the respondents had education up to middle and HSLC standard, followed by a small percentage (8%) of the respondents were graduates. It is encouraging to see that rural women had varied level of educational back ground which might have some role to play in their level of awareness about their rights in this investigation.

4. Marital status

It is clear from the table 1 that a large percentage (72%) of the respondents were married .Since a large percentage of respondents were married followed by a small percentage(19%) which was unmarried, the rights regarding maintenance would be of much value to measure their level of awareness.

5 Family type

Table 1 shows that highest percentage (56%) of the respondents belonged to nuclear family and a small percentage (9%) of respondents belonged to the extended families. This is interesting to see that nuclear family trend is coming in useful place in rural areas too.

6. Occupation of the family

It is clear from Table 1 that a large percentage (32%) of respondent's family occupation was daily wage earner, followed by 27 per cent families engaged in business. A dispersed family occupational variation were reflected in this study.

7. Occupation of the respondents

Table 1 highlights that a large majority (95%) of respondents were having home making as their main occupation and only a small percentage (5%) of respondents were engaged in service. Although women's emancipation in the work force is increasing, it is heartening to see that the rural women in the present investigation were predominantly taking home making responsibilities against some services out side home.

8. Membership in organization

Table 1 shows that a sizable per cent (39%) of respondents were from member of one organization. This finding revealed that social participation through membership in this study although found not very high but quite encouraging.

9. Mass media exposure

It is observed from the Table 1 that a large percentage of respondents (40%) used radio and news paper as means of mass media followed by only a sizable percentage (14%) of respondents used television. The findings revealed that respondents of this investigation used varied means of mass media of which radio and news paper were dominant among others.

a)Extent of awareness of the respondents about their rights on Dowry:

Table 2. Ranking based on mean scores showing awareness of the respondents in the domain of Dowry.

Statements	Mean Score	Rank
1. If you and your family was forced to give dowry since after your marriage.	1.20	I
2. Demand of household articles like refrigerator, furniture, electrical appliances at the time of the settlement of marriage.	0.99	II
3. Demand for the purchase of a car since after the marriage.	0.91	III
4. Demand for giving or taking of dowry.	0.85	IV
5. Demand was made at the time when marriage ceremony was in progress and was repeated after the marriage.	0.31	V
6. Any property given or agreed to be given by the parents of a party to the marriage in connection with marriage.	0.27	VII
7. Demand from husband a sum amount of money some days after the marriage from his father-in-law and not being given became angry, tortured the wife and threatened to go for another marriage.	0.29	VI

Table 2 highlights that the statement reflecting forcible demand for dowry after marriage ranked I, followed by the statement demand of various house hold articles ranked II. Statements like demand for purchase of car, giving or taking of dowry, demand of dowry during or after the marriage, torturing and threatening of married women by husband or in laws for not giving dowry ranked III, IV, V, VI and VII, respectively. Thus, the statements at lower position in the ranking should be considered while prioritizing the transfer for knowledge to rural women about their rights in the domain of dowry.

c) Relationship between level of awareness about their rights with the selected socio-personal variables.

Table 3. Relationship between awareness of respondents about their rights with selected independent variables in the domain of Dowry

Area	Independent variables	r value	t value	Significant (S) / non-significant (NS)
Dowry	Age	0.40	0.37	NS
	Education	0.00	0.04	NS
	Member of organization	0.47	5.22**	S
	Mass media exposure	0.00	0.05	NS

* Significant at 5% level of significance

** Significant at 1% level of significance

Table 3 indicates that, there was no significant relationship between awareness of respondents about their rights with

age, education and mass media exposure in the domain of dowry. However, the table indicates that there was a significant relationship about their rights with their membership in organization in the domain of Dowry at 1 per cent level of significance. Therefore, it can be concluded that it is very important for the women to be involved with any organization to increase their awareness level in different aspects of life .

CONCLUSION:

The investigator concludes from the present investigation that there was a significant relationship between awareness of the respondents about their rights with their membership in organization. Membership in organization give ample scope to an individual to interact with fellow women which helps her to develop awareness in the context of Dowry. Membership in organization was also found highly significant in the area of Dowry. Hence it is concluded that women should be encouraged to become member of some organization to update their knowledge and awareness in different aspects of life through some constructive interaction among the members of the organization such as Self Help Groups. Rural women should also be helped to exercise their rights with proper care and support from different educational institutions and organizations working for rural development through adequate counselling and intervention programme planned meticulously.

RECOMMENDATION

Those who render rural development services

Encourage rural women to be a member of some organization . eg. SHG.

Organize training intervention programme using local advocates for rural women.

For lawyer and advocates

To produce leaflets and folders on different rights of women in easy to understand local language and distribute to members involved in rural development for transferring the literature.

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