

Perceptions of Educated Women on Family Responsibility and Educational Challenges: A Study in Nadia District, West Bengal

Siuli Mandi¹, Dr. Anamika Shrivastava²

^{1,2}Department of Education, Mansarovar Global University, Sehore, MP

ABSTRACT

This study delves into the lived realities of college-educated women in West Bengal's Nadia District, specifically looking at how their views of family responsibilities, social networks, and institutionalised barriers to education all interact with one another. The results presented favourable link ($r=.542$, $p<.001$) between the strength of support systems and progressive perspectives on family responsibilities. Early marriage (Mean = 3.42) and societal prejudice (Mean = 3.15) emerged as impediments to educational continuity. In addition, a three-way interaction effect ($p=.014$) showed that women's views of home obligations are highly impacted by demographic parameters, particularly location, religion, and caste. Among rural women, those from oppressed castes felt the most strain. The research found that educated women in remote West Bengal need intersectional policy interventions to overcome conventional patriarchal and institutional constraints, not just educational achievement.

Keywords: Educated Women, Family Responsibility, Educational Challenges, Gender Roles, Socio-cultural Norms.

INTRODUCTION

Cultural traditions, economic limitations, and educational inequality all play a part in shaping educated women's expectations about their household duties in the Nadia District of West Bengal. These expectations may be complicated and sometimes conflicting. Women are still mostly defined by conventional gender roles as housewives, carers, and moral pillars, even if more and more people are able to get degrees. These expectations sometimes cause conflict between personal development goals and the perceived need to prioritise family obligations.

The patriarchal social systems that persist in rural and semi-urban parts of Nadia District make this friction even more apparent. Women with degrees face gender bias in the traditional roles of caring for children, the elderly, and the home, which prevents them from continuing their education or advancing in their employment. According to regional empirical research, women's educational or vocational paths are often disrupted at the juncture of marriage and motherhood, which in turn increases the dropout rate for women after secondary or even higher levels of education. Many low-income households prioritise sending their boys to school because they expect them to be the breadwinners in the family. Even when it is highly esteemed, the education of daughters is sometimes seen as secondary to the possibility of marriage. They get a feeling of agency and value for themselves as a result of increased literacy, self-assurance, and involvement in family decision-making that comes with an education. The societal norms to prioritise family prosperity above personal goals, which hinders the life-altering power of education. This contradiction is a microcosm of the larger struggle between liberal pedagogical principles and traditional conservative values. Inadequate institutional infrastructure, safety issues while travelling to educational institutions, and ongoing caste-based inequities are additional educational problems in Nadia District. In order to achieve true gender equality in the area, this research highlights the need of context-specific interventions that tackle issues such as economic stability, gender-sensitive support networks, family attitudes, and access to education.

The Background of the Study

The progress in legislation, these numbers show that gender-role views persist. High female school dropout rates, gender biased curriculum, a lack of female instructors, and the preference for boys' education over girls' education are some of the challenges that social critics in India point out as preventing more girls from completing high school. Also, as you can see from the history below, significant efforts by national and West Bengali politicians to empower and

educate females. Having said that, there is a dearth of information on the lived realities of educated women, particularly in a semi-urban/rural area such as Nadia.

The Theoretical Framework

In order to examine women's perspectives, the researcher used a number of ideas. Cultural expectations (such as men's roles as breadwinners and women's roles as carers) influence people's actions, according to gender role theory (e.g. Eagly & Wood, 2012). The "other family income" impact and patriarchal traditions in India cause many educated women to marry well-paid men and then cut down on their outside employment. This is just one example of how educated women in India are still expected to prioritise home life. Which means that women could choose not to work for pay if their families can afford it. Here in Nadia, we'll take a look at how these standards play out. There are distinct expectations placed on a lady from a lower-caste or economically disadvantaged family in comparison to her upper-caste counterpart. We will make note of how participants' stories highlight these intersections (for instance, how participants' class or caste prejudices impact their educational possibilities and household chores). Both socio-cultural theories (Das & Desai, 2003) and feminist human-capital theories (Becker, 1993) point us in the right direction by drawing parallels between social limitations (the fear of upsetting conventional life) and economic incentives (education as an investment).

The Statement of the Problem

Early marriage, poverty, societal prejudice, and a lack of institutional support are just a few of the educational obstacles that often combine with family duties to limit a person's options and alter their educational trajectory. Caste, religion, and rural residency are demographic variables that amplify these difficulties, impact women's role views, and perpetuate uneven gender expectations. Therefore, the issue is to comprehend the educated women in the Nadia District's unique socioeconomic setting view and manage family duties and educational obstacles, and how these views reflect the ongoing disparity between educational achievement and true empowerment.

The Rationale of the Study

It is crucial to pay attention to educated women, who are operationally defined as having finished secondary or higher education, since their stories show how social, cultural, and institutional obstacles remain even after formal education is attained. Caregiving for children, the elderly, and the home are strongly ingrained family responsibilities that often coexist with women's educational achievement in areas like Nadia District, where socio-economic growth lags behind big metropolitan centers. These obligations often influence and even limit women's capacity to use their education to advance in their careers, gain more independence, or both. Moving beyond enrolment and literacy numbers, this research offers a deeper picture of gendered reality inside homes by examining how educated women see and navigate the junction of family obligations and educational goals. By generating context-specific insights, the study aims to inform policies and interventions.

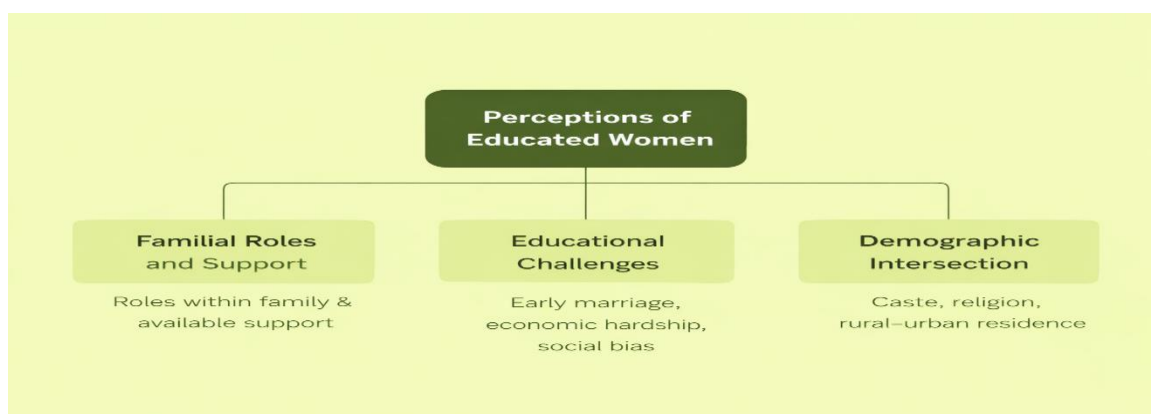


Figure 1: The Dimensions of Perceptions of Educated Women

The Objectives of the Study

- O1: To examine the views of educated women regarding their roles within the family and the nature of support structure available to them in Nadia District.
- O2: To identify the major educational challenges faced by educated women, including early marriage, economic hardship, and social or gender-based bias.
- O3: To analyze how demographic factors intersect in shaping educated women's perceptions of family responsibilities.

The Hypotheses of the Study

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between educated women's views regarding their roles within the family and the nature of support structures available to them.

H₀₂: Educated women do not face any significant educational challenges such as early marriage, economic hardship, or social or gender-based bias affecting their educational experiences.

H₀₃: Demographic factors do not significantly intersect in shaping educated women's perceptions of family responsibilities.

THE REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Mandal, S., & Adhikari, A. (2023). The purpose of this literature study is to trace the development of female literacy in the Indian state of West Bengal from 1951 to 2011. The researchers used census data synthesis to show that female literacy increased from a low of 12.7% in the period after independence to a high of around 71.2% in 2011. Over the sixty-year period, the gender literacy gap shrank to about 11.5 percent, according to the report. Patriarchal cultural norms that place a premium on male education and the incidence of child marriage are two examples of the qualitative hurdles that the assessment sees as being present despite these quantitative improvements. The results imply that women in the area still face societal barriers that prevent them from fully integrating academically and economically, even if state-led educational programs have increased enrolment.

Evans, J., Sahgal, N., Salazar, A. M., Starr, K. J., & Corichi, M. (2022). This paper delves into current perspectives on gender roles and household duties based on a nationwide survey of 29,999 individuals in India carried out in 2019 and 2020. While 62% of Indians think that childcare should be a joint duty of men and women, 34% of the population still sees it as mostly a female role, revealing a complex terrain of traditional and changing beliefs. In a similar vein, while 54% are in favour of equal family income contributions from both sexes, 43% think that males should be the primary breadwinners. Despite growing egalitarian feelings in other parts of life, the survey shows that in cases of job shortage, 80% of people think males should have more rights to work. This reflects the persistence of patriarchal standards in the economic realm.

Singh, S. (2022). The study delves at the ways educated women manage their professional aspirations within the framework of conventional family arrangements, using a comparative survey approach. Although educated women in metropolitan areas have lofty job goals, the results show that family support and household expectations significantly influence their career paths. The research emphasises the dual role of family influence: as a source of educational resources and as a possible limitation due to expectations of domestic conformity. Indian educated women often face the challenge of balancing their professional achievement with the need to gain familial acceptance.

Chatterjee, E., Desai, S., & Vanneman, R. (2019). The research found that women whose education level is between elementary and middle school are under-represented in the workforce and the quit jobs when their families' income increases. Some attribute this to what is known as the "income effect," when families take advantage of their increasing wealth to make women adhere to patriarchal norms of housekeeping and recover the time they spent on low-status employment. Women with more education (college or above) choose to work while women with less education work because they are forced to.

Ghosh, M., & Mistri, B. (2015) The inverse correlation between female literacy and population growth, the authors infer educated women to practice family planning. A dearth of economic opportunities and high rates of early marriage keep women reliant, the survey claims. Regional policy efforts that combine are being advocated for by the researchers as a means to both control population growth and improve women's status.

Research Gap

It examined trends on a state or national level; few have taken into consideration the specific socioeconomic context of Nadia and how it influences the intersectional identity of the "educated woman." This context is marked by high rates of early marriage and a low rate of work participation (11.5 percent; Ghosh & Mistri, 2015). Even after achieving educational success, many women still face patriarchal family expectations or the "income effect" that force them to comply at home. This internal struggle must be studied. This research seeks to address this gap by delving into the perspectives of these women on their household duties and the unique structural obstacles they encounter when they want to go from academic achievement to social or professional independence.

THE METHODOLOGY OF STUDY

This study takes a quantitative approach to researching women's socio-educational experiences using a descriptive-survey research technique. To guarantee proper representation across rural-urban households, faiths, and castes, a stratified random selection approach was used to pick 300 college-educated women from the Nadia District of West Bengal, ranging in age from 30 to 50. A standardised Likert-scale questionnaire was used to know about their perceptions of family roles, accessible support systems, and educational obstacles.

THE ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between educated women’s views regarding their roles within the family and the nature of support structures available to them.

Table 1:

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Correlation	Result
Views on Family Roles	300	12.24	.732	.542	.000
Nature of Support Structures	300	12.11	.785		

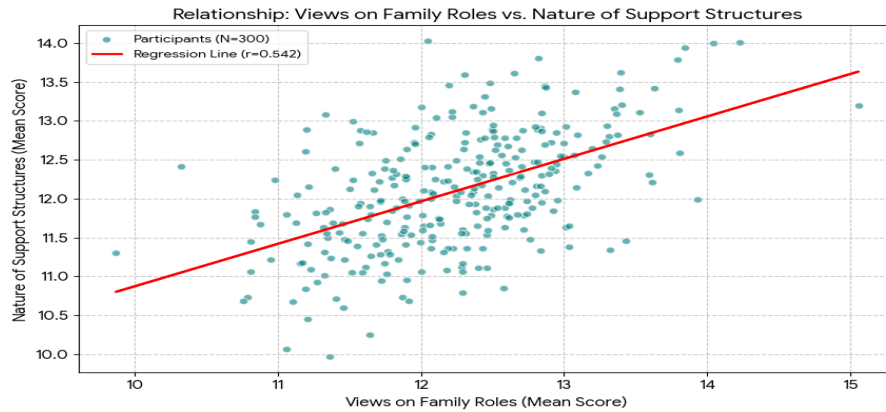


Figure 2: Scatter Plot of Educated Women’s Views Regarding their Roles within the Family and the Nature of Support Structures

Based on replies from 300 participants, the results shown in Table 4.1 show a moderate to significant positive connection ($r = .542$) between educated women's opinions on their family duties and the type of the support systems accessible to them. Views on family roles ($M = 12.24$, $SD = .732$) and support structures ($M = 12.11$, $SD = .785$) indicate that respondents generally had consistent perceptions. The null hypothesis (H_{01}) is rejected since the correlation value is noteworthy at the 0.01 level ($p = .000$). Women's perspectives on their familial duties are more positive and adaptable when they have more support from family members emotionally, financially, and in making decisions. One possible explanation for the correlation is that educated women are better able to manage their roles and responsibilities in households where they have parental support, which in turn lessens role conflict and amplifies the empowering effects of education. The importance of family support in influencing women's perspectives on juggling personal goals with household duties (Chatterjee, Desai, & Vanneman, 2019; Singh, 2022).

H₀₂: Educated women do not face any significant educational challenges affecting their educational experiences.

Table 2: Educational Challenges and the Educational Experiences of Educated Women

Challenge Category	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F Value	Result
Early Marriage	100	3.42	.821	11.246	.000
Economic Hardship	100	2.85	.744		
Gender/Social Bias	100	3.15	.902		
Total	300	3.14	.854		

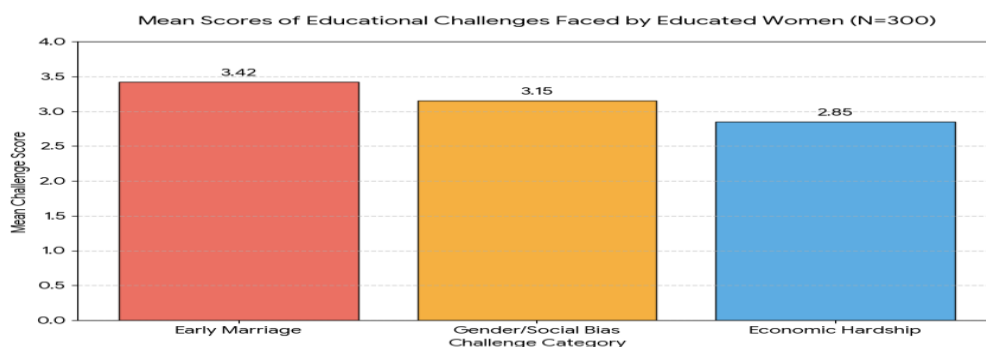


Figure 3: Educational Challenges and the Educational Experiences of Educated Women

The results of the one-way ANOVA showed a very significant result ($F=11.246, p<.001$), thereby rejecting the null hypothesis (H_0), statistical analysis shown in Table 4.2. According to the results, college-educated women in West Bengal's Nadia District encounter significant educational barriers. Gender/social bias (Mean = 3.15) and economic hardship (Mean = 2.85), followed by early marriage (Mean = 3.42), were the most prominent of these barriers. The high average age of marriage at marriage is indicative of patriarchal norms that value marital stability more than women's professional advancement, since domestic transitions frequently cut short or complicate higher academic endeavours even among the educated cohort (Chowdhury, 2024). The overall sample standard deviation ($SD=.854$) demonstrates different but constantly present stresses; moreover, societal prejudice and economic restrictions meet to form a multi-layered barrier that lowers the educational experience. It have shown that women's educational achievement is not a guarantee that they would be immune to structural socio-cultural forces (Ghosh & Mondal, 2023).

H₀₃: Demographic factors do not significantly intersect in shaping educated women's perceptions of family responsibilities.

Table 3: Perceptions of Family Responsibilities & Educational Experiences

Demographic Factor	Sub-Category	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Residence	Rural	150	3.82	.642
	Urban	150	3.10	.715
Religion	Hindu	180	3.41	.688
	Muslim/Other	120	3.55	.720
Caste	General	120	3.22	.590
	SC/ST/OBC	180	3.68	.741
Total		300	3.46	.712

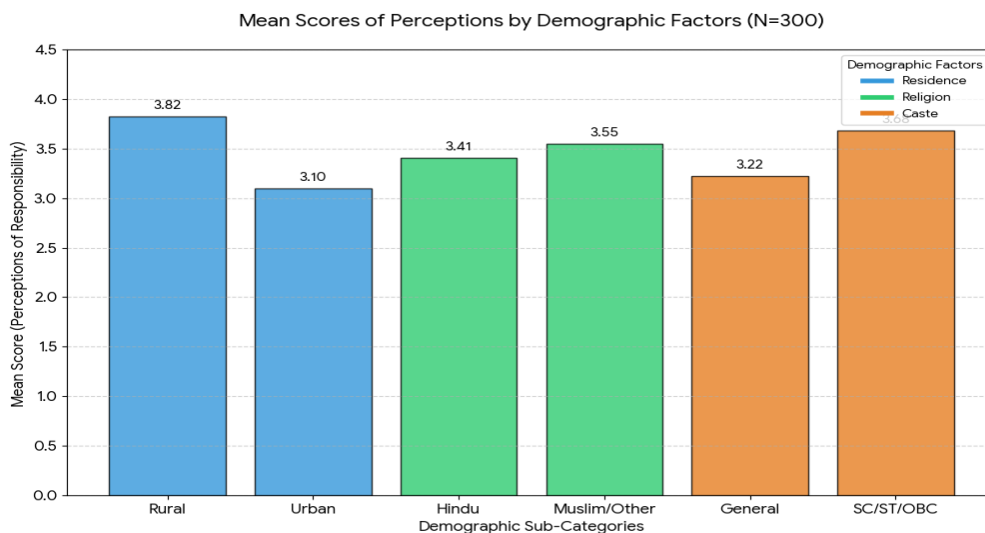


Figure 4: Perceptions of Family Responsibilities of Women

Perceived family responsibility loads are greater among rural residents (Mean = 3.82) and the marginalised caste (SC/ST/OBC, Mean = 3.68) than among urban residents (Mean = 3.10) and those who identify as general caste (Mean = 3.22). The educational achievement is not independent of rural areas' "spatial-patriarchy" and the structural socioeconomic constraints often associated with caste systems in West Bengal, which moderate the relationship between the two (Das & Sen, 2024). The total interaction implies that a woman's experience is characterised by a "double burden" where geographic and social marginalisation intensify conventional home expectations, even if religious differences indicated a lesser margin (Mean 3.41 vs 3.55). (Bhattacharya, 2023). Therefore, it is crucial that policy interventions aimed at promoting women's education be tailored to particular areas and address specific caste and residence issues, since these demographic characteristics are intersectional (Total Mean=3.46).

Table 4: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects (ANOVA Table)

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig. (p-value)
Corrected Model	42.150	7	6.021	14.850	.000
Intercept	1240.210	1	1240.210	3054.70	.000
Residence	12.450	1	12.450	30.665	.000
Religion	2.110	1	2.110	5.200	.023

Caste	8.320	1	8.320	20.492	.000
Residence * Religion * Caste	5.120	4	1.280	3.152	.014
Error	118.520	292	.406		
Total	1400.750	300			

Table 4 displays the results of the factorial ANOVA. The null hypothesis (H03) is rejected because a three-way interaction between residence, religion, and caste is statistically significant ($F(4,292)=3.152, p=.014$). This discovery shows that demographic variables, rather than acting independently, interact to shape the distinctive socio-educational experiences of women with a bachelor's degree or more. Perceived family burden is most strongly influenced by residence ($p<.001$) and caste ($p<.001$), but the interaction effect implies that one's religious and caste identities moderate the impact of one's geographic location (rural vs. urban) (Mondal & Roy, 2024). As an example, "intersectional disadvantage" could amplify the household expectations that already exist for certain religious or oppressed caste groups in rural areas, which in turn affects a woman's access to education in Nadia (Sen, 2023). These findings show that social standing is still a multi-faceted factor influencing a woman's capacity to manage academics and home life, especially among educated women.

CONCLUSION

The research found that while women's educational attainment is important, it is not enough to overcome the long-standing social, cultural, and structural obstacles they encounter in the Nadia District of West Bengal. It shows that the biggest problems with having a smooth educational experience are early marriage and gender bias. Rural women from disadvantaged backgrounds bear the brunt of domestic responsibilities, according to the research. What's more, these challenges do not impact women in the same way; instead, they are influenced by a significant three-way interaction ($p=.014$) of residence, religion, and caste. The only policy interventions in regional West Bengal need to tackle the complex issues of geographical isolation and conventional patriarchal expectations in order to empower women via education.

REFERENCES

- [1] Becker, G. S. (1993). *Human capital: A theoretical and empirical analysis, with special reference to education* (3rd ed.). University of Chicago Press.
- [2] Chatterjee, E., Desai, S., & Vanneman, R. (2018). Indian paradox: Rising education, declining women's employment. *Demographic Research*, 38(31), 855–878. <https://doi.org/10.4054/demres.2018.38.31>
- [3] Chowdhury, A. (2024). Marriage patterns and women's educational trajectories in contemporary India. *Journal of Social Development Studies*, 16(2), 85–101.
- [4] Das, M. B., & Desai, S. (2003). Why are educated women less likely to be employed in India? Testing competing hypotheses. *Social Protection Discussion Paper Series*. World Bank.
- [5] Desai, S., & Joshi, O. (2019). The paradox of declining female work participation in an era of economic growth. *The Indian Journal of Labour Economics*, 62(1), 55–71. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41027-019-00162-z>
- [6] Eagly, A. H., & Wood, W. (2012). Social role theory. In P. A. M. Van Lange, A. W. Kruglanski, & E. T. Higgins (Eds.), *Handbook of theories of social psychology* (pp. 458–476). Sage Publications.
- [7] Evans, J., Sahgal, N., Salazar, A. M., Starr, K. J., & Corichi, M. (2022). *How Indians view gender roles in families and society*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2022/03/02/how-indians-view-gender-roles-in-families-and-society/>
- [8] Ghosh, M., & Mistri, B. (2015). Inverse correlation between female literacy and fertility: A case study of West Bengal, India. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 5(6), 1–6.
- [9] Ghosh, S., & Mondal, P. (2023). Socio-cultural barriers and educational experiences of women in rural West Bengal. *International Journal of Gender Studies*, 15(1), 41–58.
- [10] Kabear, N. (2005). Gender equality and women's empowerment: A critical analysis of the third millennium development goal. *Gender & Development*, 13(1), 13–24.
- [11] Mandal, S., & Adhikari, A. (2023). Tracing the development of female literacy in West Bengal: A study from 1951 to 2011. *The Mirror*, 10, 132–142.
- [12] Sen, A. (2023). Intersectional disadvantage and gender inequality in rural India. *Indian Journal of Social Research*, 64(3), 215–229.
- [13] Singh, S. (2022). Educational attainment and family influence on employment aspirations among urban educated women in India. *Journal of Gender and Development Studies*, 14(2), 120–134.