

CHAPTER-VIII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Summary:

The present research work as prepared in the preceding chapters endeavored an attempt to investigate the decision-making process within the households, the pattern of household decision-making with regard to all aspects of household, food expenditure, ownership of property, children's education, health care, contraceptive use, family planning, permission before leaving the house, wishes of household head's wife with regard to joining social group, permission with regard to visits of doctor for treatment of a child, control of finance, pooling of income, ownership of productive assets, and carrying out economic activities in Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri districts of North Bengal. The study reveals that participation in decision-making with regard to different issues in the household involves male (household head) or female (the respective spouse) or jointly (both male and female). The survey indicates that mostly there are households in which household head (male) participates in most of the issues of the household. Further, the survey also indicated that there is substantial disparity in terms of decision-making in most of the household aspects. Women participation in decision making continues to be less than their male counterparts, and they are discriminated with regard to educational and health outcomes. Women belonging to SCs and STSs communities' face many disadvantages in the household. There are inter village and intra village differences pertaining to decision-making, particularly with regard to pattern of participation in food expenditure and children's education.

Chapter-I states the research problem, review of literature, its objective, hypotheses, and policy prescription are the guide lines and direction to carry out the study. Methods and approaches such as descriptive statics, review of relevant literature and field observations have been employed.

Chapter-II deals with the different aspects of gender discrimination and decision-making ability of women. Women's autonomy in decision-making, ownership rights of women and decision-making status- women still face gender inequality with regard to ownership of property and fare worse than men in most measures of such inequality. Women's decision-making status and education, women's decision-making status and health are also two areas of examination.

Chapter-III deals with the demographic and socio-economic profile of the Darjeeling district, as they have influence on both the welfare of women population and the level of socio-economic development of the region.

An attempt is made to examine the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the respondents of Darjeeling district as well as of West Bengal for comparison. Comparison have been done in terms of total population, sex ratio, literacy rate for both (0-6 age group, and above 6), work participation rate under different categories. The study has revealed that women are at disadvantage in terms of number of demographic fronts. For instance, infant mortality rate in West Bengal was 17.2 per mille in comparison to 22.5 per mille in India in 2009, death rate in West Bengal 6.2 per mille in comparison to 7.2 mille in India in 2009, female life expectancy were 63.5 in West Bengal in comparison to 65 at all India level in 1999-2003. In the field of education, women in West Bengal are in a better position than the all India average. As per the Census of 2011, the total literacy rate in West Bengal was 77 percent as against 74 percent rate for India. While the male literacy rate was 82.7 percent (India 82.1 percent), female literacy rate stands at 71.2 percent (India-65.5 percent). Although the sex ratio of West Bengal have been increasing over the period 1951-2011 with the increase of female literacy rate, the work participation rate of main and marginal workers of West Bengal, have been lower over the period between 2001 to 2011. The male-female work participation rate of West Bengal, Darjeeling and chosen blocks and sample villages revealed that the work participation rate of women in Darjeeling district, Mirik Development Block and Phansidewa development Block have been much lower over the period 2001 to 2011. But at a village level a different picture has been revealed. Some sample villages have higher female work participation rate than men in comparison to state average. Although the female literacy rate of Darjeeling was 45.45 slightly higher than the West Bengal, the sex ratio was at 1000:970 in Darjeeling district followed by 1000:982.30 in Mirik block and 1000:971 in Phansidewa block. Similarly, the female work participation rate is 49.25.

Life expectancy at birth has a direct bearing with the level of socio-economic development of a region. In order to ascertain the physical well-being of any population, life expectancy at birth is the parameter. Although female life expectancy of West Bengal was higher than the males over the period 1999-2003 to 2003-2006, it was much lower than national level.

Chapter –IV deals with the demographic and socio-economic profile of Jalpaiguri district of North Bengal. It has analysed the nature of economic activities of men and women of the sample group of West Bengal, Jalpaiguri, and Alipurduar-I and Maynaguri blocks. There is not only low female work participation rate of total workers but also there are main and marginal differentials. The work participation rate of main workers is very low against their marginal female counterpart in West Bengal. Moreover, the female work participation rate of marginal workers of Jalapiguri district is higher than the state average. The employment indicators such as female WPR and also the proportion of main and marginal workers are close to the state average literacy rate of West Bengal.

The Census data relating to male-female work participation rate of main and marginal workers has revealed that the percentage of male main workers decreased while the percentage of female main workers has increased marginally from 15.33 percent to 15.60 percent during the period 2001-2011 in West Bengal. This trend is indicative of that work for female workers is available in both agricultural sector and in household industries where skill is not required. Also figures from the census show that, marginal female workers (defined as working for less than 183 days per year) has decreased from 55.2 percent to 44.46 percent during 2001 to 2011 period. Although there has been a decline in the proportion of female workers in the margina category, it is still therefore, these figures imply that there is more of feminization of the work force, because the number of marginal workers had increased.

The analysis of occupational structure reveals that substantial proportion of rural work force engaged in household industries and as agricultural laborers and small proportion have been engaged in cultivation in West Bengal. Agriculture is the main occupation to the large proportion of the working population. Around 91.81 percent of males are engaged as cultivators in West Bengal, 88.33 percent in Jalpaiguri district and 85.08 in Alipurduar-I block. While, 6.27 percent are females engaged as cultivators in West Bengal, 7.66 in Jalpaiguri and 6.64 in Alipurduar-I block in 2011. In fact percentage of female workers as engaged in agriculture are slightly more than average percentage of West Bengal. Female employment in agriculture is of seasonal nature. This does not require women workers being very far away from home for long period of time to far off places. Even when work has to be done by family it can be found in close neighborhood. In addition, the family structure is such that mothers have less personal responsibility since old lady of the family shoulders the responsibility of rearing and caring for the little children. Secondly, agriculture sector absorbs women with little or no skill also.

Majority of the female main workers are having occupation as either cultivators or agricultural laborers. As many as 6.27 percent of female main workers in West Bengal are cultivators and 15.78 percent are as agricultural laborers, 42.76 are working in household industries. In Jalpaiguri district, 7.66 percent of main workers are cultivators and 21.52 percent are agricultural laborers. In fact, it is observed that percentage of agricultural laborers is higher than West Bengal which implies economic conditions are poor and large number women are found to be landless.

As majority of female main workers are either agricultural laborers or engaged in household industries, therefore, Chapter V would examine the role of selected households in rural area of West Bengal where male head and respective spouse of the household participates in decision-making in different aspects of household. One of the roles of these rural women of selected households is economic contribution- through their agricultural labors in the fields and by producing goods in home industries. This chapter examines the pattern of decision-making as one of the roles in the household based on field survey data. For collection of the data, the technical design of the study required three stages stratified random sampling with Block as the first stage of the sampling unit, villages as the second stage of the sampling unit and the farm and nonfarm households as the third and ultimate stage of the sampling unit. The data were collected on the basis of interview method by asking research questions to the household head and respective spouse. Their responses were tabulated and classified as responses given by male, female and jointly. Such responses were tabulated against different aspects of household for the analysis of the decision-making role of male and female. In doing so, the attention was paid to the activities, such as participation in decision-making with regard to purchase of food items, property ownership children's education, accessing female healthcare, contraceptive use, family planning adoption, permission before leaving the house, membership in a social group (SHG) by the wife of household head, visits of natal family members, control of expenditure/finance, visits of doctor for treatment of a child, pooling of income, ownership of productive assets, participation in economic activities by the women. It has been found that percentage of joint decision-making is relatively greater in terms of purchase of food items, children's education, healthcare services, contraceptive use, family planning, joining of self help group, control of finance, pooling of income, taking up economic activities. Relatively higher percentage of involvement of women in decision-making is observed with regard to obtaining of permission before leaving the house, visits of doctor

for treatment of children. The study, therefore, shows that in most of the issues of household considered in the study, there is joint decision-making.

Chapter-V this chapter has examined the women's autonomy in rural areas of Darjeeling district by probing into the decision-making processes in the households of selected villages. The findings of the study revealed that on an average all the issues pertaining to household decision-making with regard to expenditure on food items has male dominance, ownership of property has joint participation on average, children's education has dominance of joint participation, and female health care has on average the dominance of joint participation, followed by female participation. Decision pertaining to family planning has dominance of joint participation followed by female participation, use of contraceptive, her wishes of joining self help group has dominance of joint participation in decision-making; visitation of natal family members has female dominance, followed by joint decision-making; control of finance has dominance of joint followed by female participation; visitation of doctors for child treatment has dominance of joint decision-making; pooling of income has dominance of joint participation; ownership of productive assets has male dominance followed by joint decision-making, and participation in economic activities has dominance of joint participation. While pattern of household decision-making on the basis of community with regard to allocation of expenditure on food items had male dominance in decision-making within SC community, among ST community, there was equal participation of male, female and joint. Ownership of assets had male dominance among General community on average and among SC community, there was male dominance and among ST community there were equal participation of female and joint categories. Pattern of participation in household decision-making with regard to children's education, had the dominance of male on average within the General category participation, male dominance within the SC community and dominance of joint participation within the ST community. Pertaining to female health care, there was male dominance among the General community, similarly, male dominance within the SC community and female participation a within the ST community. Pattern of household decision-making with regard to family planning, there was dominance of joint participation within the General community, dominance of male participation within the SC community and joint participation within the ST community.

Finally, the pattern of household decision-making on the basis of occupation of women among General, SC and ST Communities with regard to allocation of expenditure on food items, the study revealed the dominance of male members on average among paid

women within the SC community, while among the unpaid women, there was male dominance but equal participation of female and joint participation within the ST community. Pattern of household decision-making with regard to children's education, it was evident of male dominance among the paid women within the SC followed by again male dominance among unpaid women, and joint participation among the unpaid women within the ST community. The study also revealed the influencing factors in the matter of household decision-making such as women's access to household productive resources, women's mobility and purdah system, differential treatment of children by gender; inter-spousal communication, and literacy and prevalence of peace and tranquility within the family.

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Chapter VII deals with the econometric study (Ordered Probit Regression analysis) of participation of women in different spheres of decision making has been done to show the significance of socio-economic factors in decision making status of women.

Chapter VIII deals with the summary and conclusions, policy-prescriptions designed to improve and uplift the relative contributions of women in the study region.

8.2: Conclusions

The indicators considered above reveals the existing status of women. Literacy rates among women in blocks are lower than the males.

The findings of the study and conclusions are as follows:

1. It has been observed that the demographic characteristics- the percentage of female population is lower than the male, this seem to reveal the phenomenon of gender discrimination.
2. Majority of the female main workers are engaged in household industries and other category. Although a major proportion of women are engaged in unorganized sector, the participation of women in organized sector is low in Bengal.
3. Women participate practically in household work. They are mostly engaged in household farm work.
4. It has been found that the number of agricultural households is relatively more in Jalpaiguri district.

5. The study revealed that issues pertaining to household decision-making with regard to decision-making on ownership of property, expenditure on food items have male dominance. While the issues pertaining to decision on children's education, use of health-care services, contraceptive use, family planning, obtaining permission before leaving the house, joining of a social group, control of finance, visits to doctor for child treatment, pooling of income and participation in economic activities, all have joint participation in Darjeeling district.
6. The findings of the study revealed that issues relating to household decision-making on expenditure on food items, ownership of productive assets, children's education, female health care, family planning, use of contraceptive, women's wishes of joining self help group, visits to natal family members, control of finance, visits to a doctor for child treatment, pooling of income, and participation in economic activities, all of these issues have male dominance in Jalpaiguri district. Thus, patriarchal ideology is deeply entrenched in the communities of the surveyed villages in Jalpaiguri.

8.3 Suggestions:

Based on the existing findings, the following measures are suggested.

1. The demographic characteristics paint a picture of extreme gender inequality. In most of the households surveyed revealed male dominance in household decision-making.
2. Concluding with the findings of the study on work participation rate, and the gender division of labor which compels women to engage in domestic work, discourages household decision-maker investing in girl child's education. Therefore, an exposure to and integration into mainstream of life would help them to enhance their participation in household decision-making.
3. Employment of women in activities other than household farm would help them to have financial independence and power of bargaining.
4. Employment of women in agricultural sector is associated with low attainment of education because a girl would substitute mother for household chores.
5. In view of the male dominance in major issues of household decision-making, it is important that attention should be given to all round demographic and socio-economic development in the chosen districts. Improvement in women's status would ensure gender equality, enhancement of women's participation in decision-

making, reduction in infant mortality rate and consequent development across the state.

6. Pattern of participation in household decision-making in Jalpaiguri district among general community of paid and unpaid work revealed higher percentage of male dominance. In Scheduled Caste community also with paid and unpaid women's work participation, the findings of the study revealed male dominance in decision-making pattern, while in Scheduled Tribe community, sole female participation in decision-making was almost of same percentage to joint participation.
7. Women's empowerment is achieved when she has control over her life which implies that women's autonomy in decision-making is the key factor to empowerment. The empirical chapter endeavors to look into the decision-making status of women in the surveyed households. The results of the model shed light on household decision-making process and suggest guidelines to the researchers to classify decision-making of the married and cohabiting couples according to the gender of the person. Review of literature on models of household decision-making has been incorporated in the study to provide a theoretical basis for selection of the variables.

The significance of the gender variable has been considered specifically because women in the household cannot participate in the household decision-making independently or without the consent of her respective spouse. Although this issue has been recognized by the researchers and some empirical solutions have been provided but the influencing factors of issues considered are estimated. Sole participation in decision-making of female is not representative of the population. Thus, accurate identification of the decision-maker in the household is essential for empirical work in this area. Anecdotically, traditionally men have been participating in the household decision-making but there are evidences which reveal that women have been participating in household decision-making too. The purpose of chapter VII is to empirically estimate a model of household decision-making to determine the factors that influences the women in decision-making. Based on the existing findings, the following measures are suggested.