

## Women economic empowerment with Handicraft activities: A study on Karupannya Rangpur Limited

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### Abstract

*This study is an attempt to explore the real scenario about women's economic empowerment by involving in handicraft activities in Bangladesh. It has evaluated various features of family affairs, accessibility and ownership related factors among the respondent in the study area. The study has employed both quantitative and qualitative methods to conduct the study. Rrandom sampling has been used to draw sample from five (5) working units of Karupannya Rangpur Limited to meet the requirements of the study. In addition, different statistical tools and techniques have been used to analyze the collected data. Besides, various qualitative techniques like case study, FGD have been administered. By applying multiple regression tools, the study found that women have been significantly empowered in the economic arena particularly in the field of family affairs, accessibility to resources, owner of assets, national level activities, and industry level activities working at Karupannya Rangpur Limited. As a result, the study rejected null ( $H_0$ ) hypothesis and accepted alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) indicating that handicraft industry (Karupannya Rangpur Limited) is playing vital role to get women economically empowered.*

**Key Words:** *Economic empowerment, handicraft, Karupannya Rangpur Limited, Hypothesis, Family affairs*

### Introduction

Handicraft is the ideograph of national culture of Bangladesh. Handicraft products are those produced by artisans either completely by hand, or with the hand tools. Handicraft is one of the major exports segments of Bangladesh. Handicrafts products will more exclusively helpful for increasing productivity which will ultimately raise GDP and desired economic growth will be attained easily deeming to ensure the women economic empowerment. Handicrafts are by nature traditional. By using their primitive instruments, hands, people make these to use in their daily life. It should be known that most of the time handicrafts have an aesthetic view and artistic value.

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Handicrafts are mostly defined as "items made by hand, often with the use of simple tools, and are generally artistic and for traditional in nature. They are also object of utility and object of decoration. Some common types of handicrafts are Textile based handicrafts, Clay, Metal, Jewelers, Woodwork, Stone Craft, Glass and Ceramic. Now in Bangladesh, most handicrafts are produced, traded and exported by the giant non-government organizations (NGOs) and private enterprises. Among them, Karupannya, Rangpur, Dhaka Trade, Kumudini, Aarong, Nipun crafts, Creation and Pioneers are exporting handicrafts to foreign countries. In these firms, there are professional designers with technical experts along with women that have given the women as self dependent identification.

Karupannya Rangpur Ltd. was founded in 1991 at station road, Rangpur by Md. Shafiqul Alam and become exported from 2004. It has mainly 7 types of articles to be traded. Currently 60% exports are conducted to European countries mostly in Germany and France, 20% in Asia, 10% to Russia and 10% to USA & Canada. It has Five (05) raw material processing and production units and they are in Ulipur of Kurigram, Lahirir hat, Robertsongon, Podagon and Pargachha of Rangpur. Robertsongonj is known as raw material processing centre (RMPC). This is playing a vital role with employment generation as well as meeting the demand for the handicraft product locally and nationally. It has one branch at Rangpur cantonment, Rangpur and one showroom at Shukrabad, Dhaka. The aim of this organization is to meet the local demand of handicraft as well as generate revenue through export, generating women employment to enable them financially solvent. There are about 5500 employees engaged in production center at Karupannya Rangpur Ltd. and most of the employments employed here in handicraft production are women. Karupannya has paved the way to explore the status of women economically.

### **Objectives of the study**

The objective of the study in the broader aspect is to analyze the scenario of women's economic empowerment and the role of handicraft industry in Bangladesh particularly in context of Karupannya Rangpur Limited.

To serve the broader objective, the study examines the following specific objectives-

- i. To reveal the socio-demographic features of the respondents
- ii. To discover women's family level empowerment through handicrafts activities
- iii. To explore women's community/societal level empowerment through handicrafts activities
- iv. To unearth women's national level empowerment through handicrafts activities
- v. To find out the association between women's economic empowerment and role of handicraft activities

### **Literature review**

Handicrafts were fairly developed in India during pre British period. The policy of the British rulers of the country disturbed the artisan sector. Till 19th century there was no economic

development in the families of rural artisans. In 1957 the khadi and village industries (KVIC) were formed as a statutory organization to promote industries in backward areas for improving the people economic conditions of those particular areas. A number of women specific policies were enunciated in all plan documents from the fifth five year plan 1974-78 onwards; there has been a mark shift in the approach to women's issues from welfare to development. The year 2001 was observed as women empowerment year by United Nations. In the same year the National policy of Empowerment of Women was evolved and recognized the causes of gender inequality which are related to social and economic structure. Since 2008 onwards, the NGO has taken initiatives to empower women who belong to different crafts especially, potters and Bamboo works by replacing these craft works with Terracotta and Bamboo works according to the demand raised in the present market (Pushpalatha M. & Aseervadam M., 2014).

An effective study commissioned by Ms. Shreya Jadhav that, the handicraft industry in India involves large number of artisans from rural and semi urban areas. The rural segment accounts for 78.2% of the units produced and 76.5% of the artisans while the urban segment accounts for the rest. (Ernst & Young, 2012) Most of these are women & people from the economically disadvantaged groups.

Sociological aspects were the main focus of Gurpur's (1992). He propounded that handicraft ensure brotherhood and co-operation in a society which also ensures social harmony. He expressed that crafty wood works create many self-employment opportunities particularly for women. What is empowerment? The World Bank (2009) defines empowerment as "the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes."

Life for women in rural Bangladesh is heavily circumscribed by both the prevailing patriarchal system and religious taboos. Their presence at the market is forbidden and they are also not supposed to handle money, or exercise property rights, all of which severely restricts potential economic activities and choices leaving them subordinate and dependant on men. Traditionally women in Bangladesh have lower status as compared to men in every sphere of socio-economic and political life and they have very limited access to income generating activities due to a number of social, cultural and religious obstacles.(Rahman. M et al., 2013).

Women's entrepreneurship is an inevitable part of country's economic development process. The findings show that women's entrepreneurship of Bangladesh is growing at accelerating rate and their contribution to socio- economic development is significant. It is observed that 62.5% of the respondents took the SME loan to establish and run their business smoothly. This study found some problems facing by women's entrepreneur of Bangladesh.( Afiya Sultana, 2012).

Bangladesh is a least developing country of which more than 80% people live in rural areas. Women constitute almost half of the total population of the country (Sultana *et al.*, 2010). But it is a matter of regret that rural women are economically dependent and vulnerable, educationally backward as well as politically and socially disadvantaged (Sarker and Rahman, 2007). ). In this circumstance, handicraft activities have emerged as an important

financial pathway to eliminate poverty in Bangladesh. Microcredit program is a unique among the development interventions mainly because of its social transformational effects and ability to reach a diverse group of mass poor in rural areas (Dulal, 2007). Thus, micro credit program has significant impact on income and economic security on the socioeconomic lives of rural women (Afrin *et al.*, 2009). Jahan and Mahmud (2002) argue that women empowerment is the most important and pronounced issue of the present world. It is not only important for women development but also a prime step to face the broader problems of the world. The empowerment of women is to develop women's potentiality to control to a greater extent their own lives, positions and environment. Jahan and Mahmud (2002) attempted to reveal the sources of women empowerment in Bangladesh. In the words of Muhammad Yunus, "Mother has to go through the traumatic experience of not being able to feed her children during the days of famine and scarcity".

Many studies have been conducted on women empowerment in many areas in Bangladesh; however, study at the Rangpur region particularly in the Karupannya (handicraft) organization has not yet to study. Therefore, the current study has scrutinized various factors of women's economic empowerment in the field of household and national levels at Rangpur division to meet the study gap found in the prior researches.

## **Methodology**

Deriving accurate information is highly dependent on the survey method. The multiple techniques of collecting data are required to conduct such a study. Hence, both qualitative and quantitative techniques such as structured questionnaire, having open-ended and closed questionnaire survey, in-depth interview, case study method and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) would be utilized. The data for this study have been taken to reflect the objectives of the study. The data have been collected from Five (05) raw material processing and production units and they are in Ulipur of Kurigram, Lahirir hat, Robertsongonj, Podagonj and Pargachha of Rangpur of Karupannya Rangpur Limited visiting from February to April month, 2016.

Information would be sought on different socio-economic aspects as well as life style, past-present status trends and so on through random sampling method. The researcher has put an endeavor to analyze different factors to be considered with different statistical tools. The descriptive statistics such as percentages, frequency table and cross tabulations were used to analyze primary data for this study. The researcher has tried to develop a multiple regression model to analyze the required data. The researcher in this study has put effort to try utilizing the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) 16 version to analyze the data. The secondary sources include the different articles, business magazines, newspapers and internet document.

### Regression Model development:

The researcher have used the women economic empowerment as dependent variable where as family affairs, accessibility to resources, owner of assets, national level activities, and industry level activities as independent variable.

$$WEE_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 FA_{it} + \beta_2 AR_{it} + \beta_3 OA_{it} + \beta_4 NL_{it} + \beta_5 IL_{it} + e_{it}$$

Where,

WEE<sub>it</sub> = Dependent variable (Women Economic Empowerment)

FA<sub>it</sub> = Family affairs related variables

AR<sub>it</sub> = Accessibility related variable

OA<sub>it</sub> = Ownership of Asset related variable

NL<sub>it</sub> = National level variables

IL<sub>it</sub> = Industry level variable

e<sub>it</sub> = Error term

Where  $\beta_0$  is constant and  $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4, \beta_5$  are coefficients to estimate.

### Hypothesis:

H<sub>0</sub> = Women have not been economically empowered through handicraft activities.

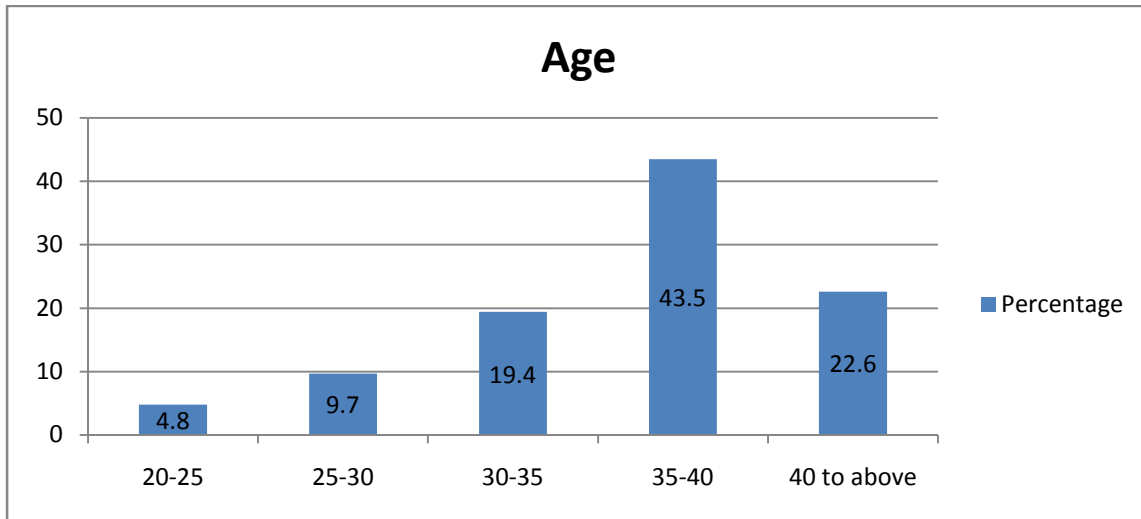
H<sub>1</sub> = Women have been economically empowered through handicraft activities.

(Hypothesis has been tested with 5% level of significance.)

### Findings and analysis

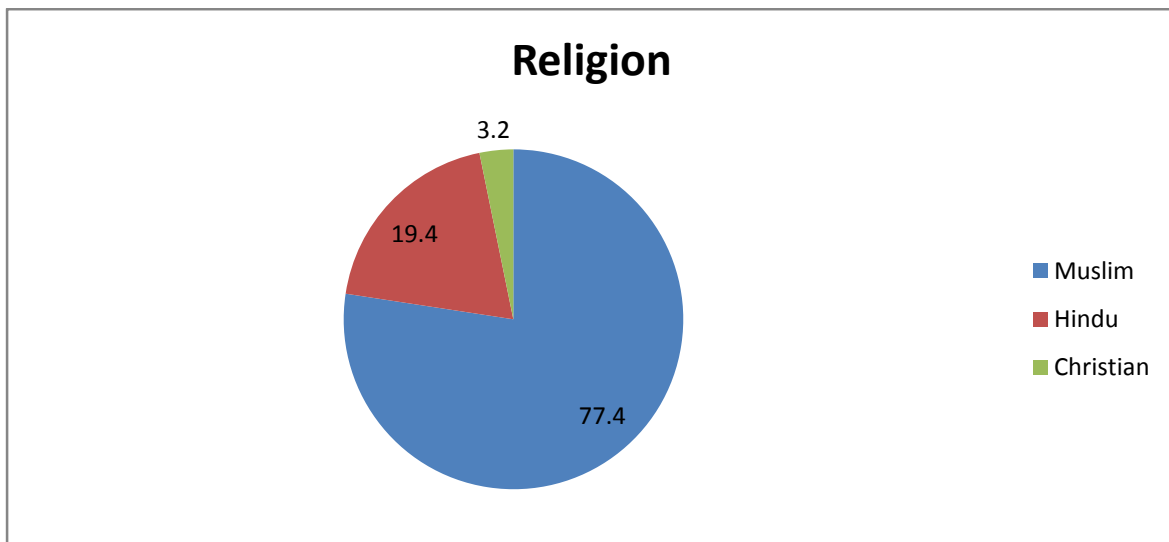
#### Socio-demographic characteristics of the Respondents:

The socio- demographic factors indicate different variables such as age, gender, occupation, monthly income, religion and level of education etc. As the nature of study indicates only female respondent in terms of gender and in terms of ethnicity all are from Bengali, so they don't need to mention the percentage at the figure independently.



(Source: Field survey, February to April 2016)

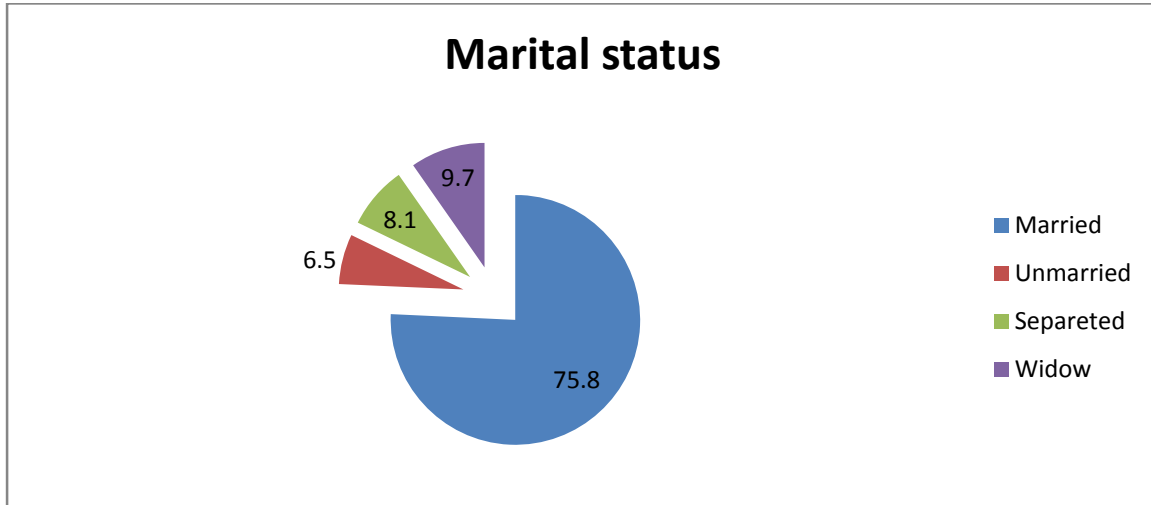
The above graph and annex: Table-01 showed that the range of the age group was from ‘20’ to ‘above 40’ where the age group ‘35 to 40’ belonged to the highest (43.5%), respondents followed by 22.6% as the second highest age group of 40 to above and 19.4% within 30-35, 25-30 age group holds 9.7% and finally the lowest holding of 4.8% is in the age group of 20-25. Generally the age group of ‘30 to 40’ represents highly competitive in terms of physical and mental strength in Bangladesh context. They are more likely to take the challenges to meet the economic solvency. The elderly who are not extremely older they are also careful about their economic solvency.



(Source: Field survey, February to April 2016)

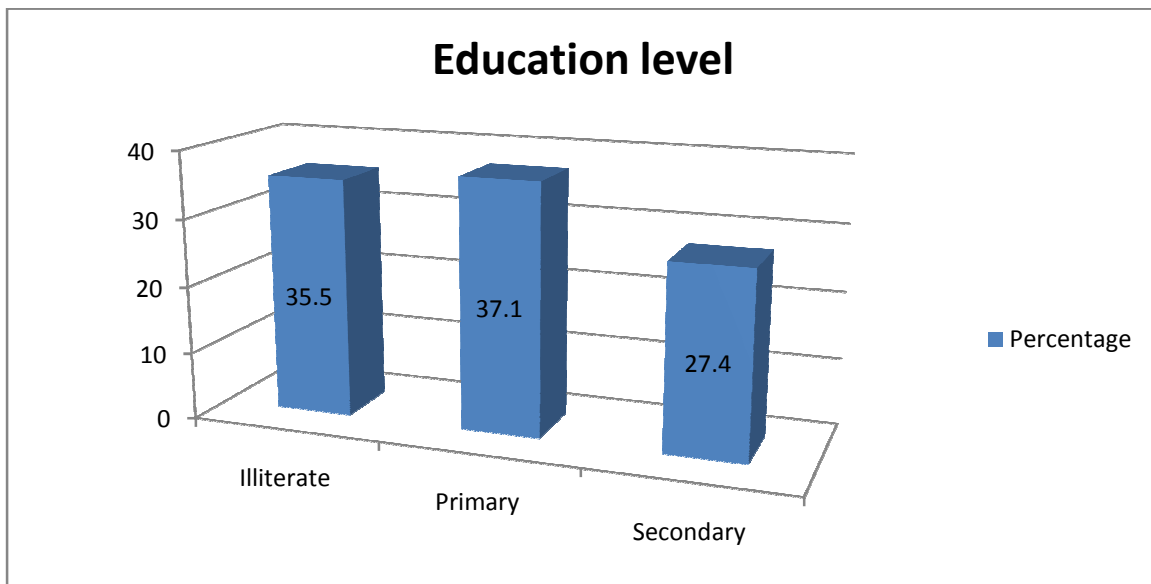
From the figure above and annex: Table-02 we can see that many religions are there and the majority respondents are from Muslim and indicate the percentage of 77.4%, Hinduism with

the second highest and with percentage of 19.4%. Since the Christian are the minority in terms of population in Bangladesh, so they are with only 3.2% considering the total respondents.



(Source: Field survey, February to April 2016)

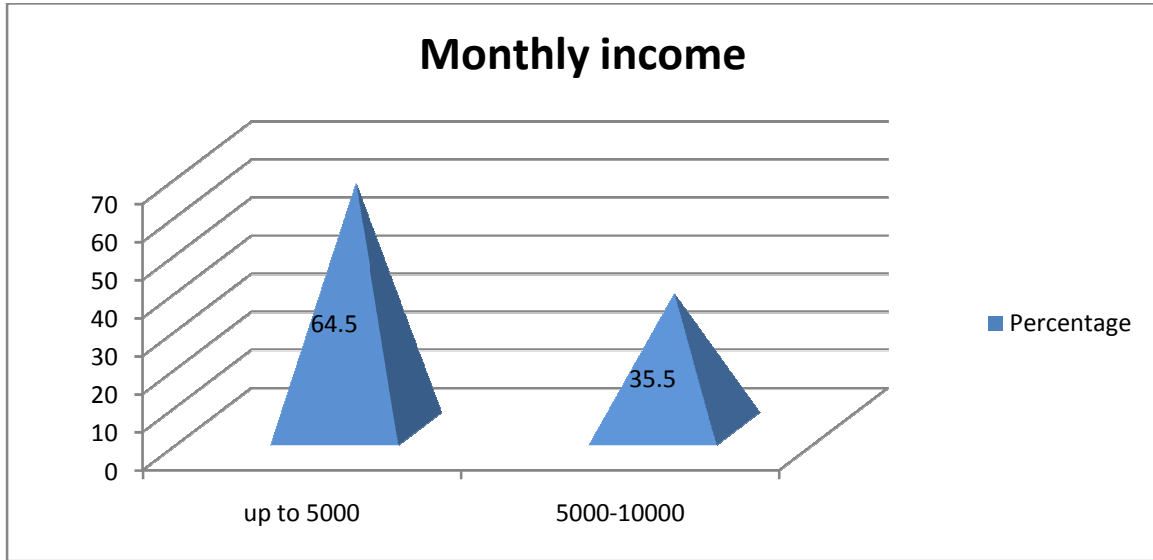
The marital status from above graph and annex: Table-03 shows who are mostly careful about their economic empowerment married, unmarried, separated or widow. The above graph shows that highest 47% respondents are married and careful about their empowerment, widow are with 9.7%, separated are with 8.1% and lastly 6.5% are unmarried.



(Source: Field survey, February to April 2016)

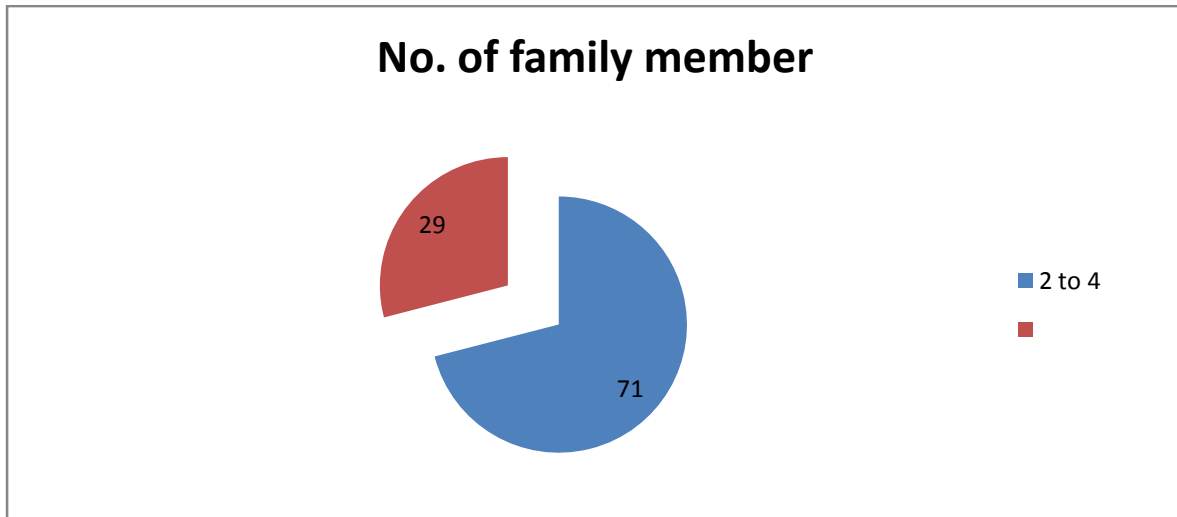
The study and annex: Table-04 illustrated maximum 37.1% respondents have completed only primary level of education followed by 35.7% were illiterate, they don't know even how to

read and write. And 27.4% respondents have passed secondary level whereas no one of respondents' education level was with higher secondary and degree level of education respectively.



(Source: Field survey, February to April 2016)

The study found that majority of the respondents income (64.5%) was upto Tk. 5000. Among the respondents, 35.5% are with income level of between 5000-10000. (Annex: Table-05)



(Source: Field survey, February to April 2016)

The number of the family member is the focusing catalyst for being economic consciousness in the poor family due to meeting their basic needs. The study reveals that among the respondents 71% are with 2-4 numbers of family members where as rest of 29% respondents are with 5-7 numbers of family members.(Annex: Table-06)



### **Socio-economic factors and women's economic empowerment based on Correlation analyses:**

Correlation between the items measures the co- relationship between the items and dictates the co-movement of them corresponding to each other. In the annex, the statistical findings present that women economic empowerment strongly/ significantly co-related to different many socio-economic factors been considered as independent variable in this study. In the annex-Table:01, In case of **family affairs:** Budgeting of family expenses( $p<0.05\%$ ), decisions regarding large purchases ( $p<0.05\%$ ), decisions about small purchases( $p<0.05\%$ ), consulting family budgeting( $p<0.05\%$ ), go for shopping freely( $p<0.05\%$ ), to start a new business( $p<0.05\%$ ), children's skill development( $p<0.05\%$ ), children education dressing( $p<0.05\%$ ) mention significant relationship between dependent and independent variable.

Statement of respondents from FGD:

Before being employed I struggled with hunger with family and punished by husband due to poverty but now I can earn and not to be punished any more. Besides I can afford to meet the demand of my old parents as well with their foods, medical treatment, medicine etc. Moreover I have saving also. (Loxshi Rani; 34 years, survey source)

**Accessibility to Resources:** Accessibility to resources delineates the basic rights and entrance power to own and social resources and found the strong co-relationship between them. Thus, in the annex- Table: 02, scope or power equal consumption of food ( $p<0.05\%$ ), power handling and spending money ( $p<0.05\%$ ), power selling of minor products ( $p<0.05\%$ ).

**Ownership of Assets:** the annex- Table:03, Statistically found that women empowerment ownership to fixed & current assets have significant relationship to each other since own land and can enjoy over it( $p<0.05\%$ ), own cattle or goat and can enjoy over it( $p<0.05\%$ ), own poultry or cash savings and can enjoy over it( $p<0.05\%$ ), own jewelry and can enjoy over it( $p<0.05\%$ ), own television or radio and can enjoy over it( $p<0.05\%$ ), own small vehicle and can enjoy over it( $p<0.05\%$ ).

FGD statement:

I was forced to dropping from primary school because of poverty in the family and I got here from then. Now I am happy with solvency and have authority of taking decisions, purchasing ornaments, land and besides I have a grocery shop also. (Shilpi Akhter; 40 years, survey source)

**National Level:** the annex- Table: 04, operate private business ( $p<0.05\%$ ), to Govt. welfare organization ( $p<0.05\%$ ), now national asset ( $p<0.05\%$ ) indicate that positive correlation are there between the dependent and independent variable.

**Industry level:** Considering the handicraft industry (Karupannya Rangpur Ltd.) statistical calculation found that different independent variables are positively correlated with dependent variable since the annex- Table:05, economically developed ( $p<0.05\%$ ), raise your voice working here ( $p<0.05\%$ ), increases your purchasing power ( $p<0.05\%$ ).

**Respondent’s statement:**

I am widow. I have passed many days without foods and with poor shelter but now I am able to ensure good food, shelter and education of my children and meeting their basic needs. Handicraft industry gives me opportunity to be economically improved. (Golapi Begum; 47 years, survey source)

**Analyses with Multiple regression models:**

**Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics	
					F	Sig. F Change
1	.953 <sup>a</sup>	.909	.850	.33227	15.386	.000

(Source: Regression analysis, 2016)

The adjusted R-square value of the above regression table is 85%, which obviously shows that 85% variation of the dependent variable (women economic empowerment) is due to the independent variables, which in fact, is a strong explanatory power of regression.

**ANOVA<sup>b</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	40.770	24	1.699	15.386	.000 <sup>a</sup>
	Residual	4.085	37	.110		
	Total	44.855	61			

(Source: Regression analysis, 2016)

From the ANOVA table above the value of F-stat is found to be 15.386 and is significant as the level of significance is less than 5%. Hence it was found that family affairs, Accessibility to Resources, Ownership of Assets, Industry level, National Level have impact on women empowerment.

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	2.873	.438		6.557	.000
Are you able to make decisions about the budgeting of family expenses	.429	.118	.420	3.627	.001
Are you able to make decisions regarding large purchases	-.170	.137	-.150	-1.238	.223
Are you able to make decisions about small purchases	.092	.127	.101	3.723	.004
Are you able to consulting family budgeting	-.009	.014	-.039	-.649	.520
Are you able to go for shopping freely	-.063	.133	-.053	-.471	.640
Are you able to start a new business	.271	.185	.306	1.466	.151
Are you able to make your children's skill development	.357	.142	.375	2.518	.016
Are you able to make decisions about your children education dressing	.010	.110	.010	.087	.931
Have you access to the right scope or power equal consumption food	-.266	.165	-.208	-1.618	.114
Have you access to the right scope or power handling and spending money	-.140	.147	-.144	-.948	.349
Have you access to the right scope or power selling of minor products	.478	.115	.531	4.161	.000
Have you access to the right/ scope or power inter personal communication	-.188	.146	-.167	-1.282	.208
Have you access to the scope or power rural cooperative and bank	.262	.188	.244	1.394	.172

Have you control at your own cattle or goat and can enjoy over it	-.036	.118	-.035	-.307	.760
Have you control at your own poultry or cash savings and can enjoy over it	-.148	.163	-.132	-.909	.369
Have you control at your own jewelry and can enjoy over it	-.044	.110	-.039	-.402	.690
Have you control at your own television or radio and can enjoy over it	.184	.143	.173	1.288	.206
Have you control at your own small vehicle and can enjoy over it	.124	.143	.152	.871	.389
Are you in any prestigious position in Non-Govt. business	-.850	.344	-.644	-2.474	.018
Are you able to operate private business	1.072	.204	1.279	5.254	.000
Can you able to contribute to Govt. welfare organization	-.881	.319	-.663	-2.761	.009
Do you think you are now national asset	-.173	.148	-.142	-1.166	.251
Do you think handicraft activities increases your purchasing power	-.039	.118	-.049	-2.331	.010
Do you produce product as per customers specification	-.197	.177	-.201	-1.118	.271

a. Dependent Variable: Have you developed economically by involving handicraft activities? (Source: Regression analysis, 2016)

To assess the significance of each independent variable on the dependent variable (women economic empowerment), it has been found that the budgeting of family expenses, about small purchases, children's skill development, scope or power selling of minor products, handicraft activities increases yours purchasing power, operate private business, contribute to Govt. welfare organization, position in Non Govt. business affect women empowerment as their t-sig are less than 5%. However, the others have insignificant effect on women empowerment as the t-sig is >5%.

#### Hypothesis tests:

Since the F-value (15.386) is greater than tabulated value at 5% significant level thus rejecting the Null ( $H_0$ ) hypothesis and accepting the Alternative ( $H_1$ ) hypothesis which mention that women have been economically empowered through working at Karupannya Rangpur Limited.

## Conclusion

The study conducted on women economic empowerment with different independent variables covering the handicraft industry mentioning the Rangpur Karupannya Limited. Many factors assuming the independent variable show their significant association with the dependent variables such as Budgeting of family expenses, decisions regarding large purchases, decisions about small purchases, consulting family budgeting, go for shopping freely, to start a new business, children's skill development, children education dressing, scope or power equal consumption of food , power handling and spending money , power selling of minor products , own jewelry and can enjoy over it, own television or radio and can enjoy over it, own cattle or goat and can enjoy over it, operate private business ,to Govt. welfare organization ,raise your voice here, increases your purchasing power and finally become economically developed. The study was based on handicraft industry and Rangpur Karupannya Limited playing a vital role and creating path for women for being economically empowered since the result of the study proves that.

Finally, multiple regressions delineate the result that shows the impact of different independent variables on women economic empowerment. However, the study was based on Rangpur region and comparatively smaller sample size; the findings may show different result. Yet, the study might act as a pilot study to handicraft considering Rangpur region and the result will help the decision maker who will work for women empowerment by detecting the area to be developed.

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