

A District-Level Analysis of Women Empowerment Issues in the Rural Areas of Darjeeling, West Bengal

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Abstract: Women empowerment has been globally recognized as a fundamental prerequisite for sustainable socio-economic development. Despite national policies and rural upliftment schemes in India, disparities in empowerment remain prominent in rural districts with complex socio-cultural fabrics such as Darjeeling in West Bengal. This study investigates the multi-dimensional aspects of women empowerment in the rural areas of Darjeeling, focusing on domains such as education, economic participation, decision-making autonomy, access to health services, and social mobility. Using primary survey data from 400 rural women across selected blocks, supplemented with secondary sources, the research evaluates the influence of socio-economic determinants on empowerment levels. Findings reveal that while literacy rates have improved, economic participation and decision-making autonomy continue to lag, primarily due to entrenched patriarchal norms and limited access to formal employment. The study underscores policy implications for targeted interventions in micro-credit access, skill training, and awareness programs to strengthen holistic empowerment.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Rural Development, Darjeeling, Socio-Economic Determinants, Gender Equality, West Bengal