

Women Empowerment in India: A Changing Scenario

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Abstract

Empowering women has always been a major concern around the globe. Women's empowerment has the ability to alter a variety of societal and national factors. If we want to turn our country into a developed nation, it is essential that men, the government, low-income women, and women themselves work to empower women. In the Indian society, gender discrimination and male predominance necessitated the empowerment of women. Empowering women is essential for a prosperous future in the family, society, and country. The present study focuses on women's empowerment in India using various indicators such as women's decision making, employment, equal remuneration, occupational health and safety, social security, financial independence, and education access. In every nation on the planet, gender inequality exists, despite the fact that women constitute half of the world's population. Until women are afforded the same opportunities as men, entire societies are doomed to fall short of their true potential. The most pressing need of the hour is a shift in the social attitude towards women. Education is a crucial instrument that enables women and girls to participate in decisions that affect their lives and to advance their social standing. Women empowerment makes them independent decision makers. It is possible for a country to achieve social, political, and economic growth through the empowerment of women. Consequently, a woman must be empowered from all angles for a nation to develop. For this reason, women should be granted additional opportunities and benefits. Women's integration into the mainstream of development may be the most effective method of emancipation. Women's empowerment will be genuine and effective only when they are endowed with income and property, allowing them to stand on their own two feet and establish their identity in the community. Government initiatives alone would not be sufficient to reach this goal. Society must take the initiative to foster an environment in which there is no gender discrimination and women have equal opportunities for self determination and participation in the social, political, and economic life of the nation.

Keywords: Women Empowerment; Decision Making; Economically Independent; Educational Empowerment.

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INTRODUCTION

Strengthening women's participation in decision making, which is the most crucial factor in socioeconomic progress, requires their empowerment. Due to its male dominated society, India is a developing nation with very poor economic conditions. A majority of the country's population, or about 50% of women, are still economically reliant and unemployed.

To ensure the bright future of the family, society,

and nation, women must be empowered. The term "empowerment of women" refers to the process of promoting women's economic independence, self-reliance, positive self-esteem, ability to overcome any obstacle, and active engagement in a variety of social and political development initiatives.

Human rights include rights for women. They cover every facet of life, including freedom from violence, economic security, political engagement, and good health. In order to achieve human rights, peace and security, and sustainable development, women must be allowed to fully and equally enjoy all types of discrimination.

Numerous NGOs are crucial to the empowerment of women. The government offers a variety of plans and initiatives towards women's empowerment. In India, empowering women has a significant impact on the nation's overall development. Women's empowerment is therefore a crucial instrument for the country in the changing social environment if it is to become fully developed. Indicators included in the current study to measure women's empowerment in India include their ability to make decisions, employment, fair pay, workplace health and safety, social security, financial independence, and access to education.

Objectives of the Study

The following are the specific objectives of the study:

1. To study the goals and objectives of women empowerment.
2. To know the characteristics of women empowerment.
3. To find out the economic empowerment of women.
4. To overview women empowerment schemes of the Government of India.

METHODOLOGY

This research was qualitative in nature. Data was gathered by the researchers in this study from a variety of secondary sources, including books, magazines, journals, various government agencies, websites, etc.

Review of Literature

Titus et al. (2017)¹ concludes that, despite the fact that women are empowered in metropolitan

settings, ultimate decisions in households are made only after spouses or parents have given their consent.

Pozarny (2016)² notes that in urban Nigeria, where women are regarded as inferior, it is vital to eliminate cultural barriers and include women in household decision-making.

Prasad (2014)³ investigated the function of female leaders as mayors, chairpersons, and counsellors and concluded that they are extremely successful because they have served as catalysts for social development and the development of girl child. In addition, he suggests expanding the number of female leaders in order to have an effect on issues of urban based governance knowledge, policy making, training, and involvement.

Anu Singh et al. (2009)⁴ proposed that women should be informed of their presence from birth onward. There is a need for a change in her upbringing and a refusal to diminish her function in society.

Lee and Koh (2001)⁵ further differentiated empowerment by examining the features of inferior and superior attributes.

However, as Ford and Fottler (1995)⁶ imply, genuine empowerment would most likely include decision-making authority over job content and employment context.

Goals and Objectives of Women Empowerment

1. Fostering an environment for women's full growth through sound economic and social policies so they can reach their full potential.
2. Women's equal participation in all political, economic, social, cultural, and civil spheres on an equal basis with men, in accordance with all human rights and fundamental freedoms.
3. Equal opportunity for women to participate in and make decisions in the social, political, and economic life of the country.
4. Equal access for women to social security, public office, excellent education at all levels, career and vocational guidance, employment, equal pay, occupational health and safety, and other services.
5. Developing stronger legal frameworks to eradicate all forms of discrimination against women
6. Changing society perceptions and local

customs by active involvement of both men and women.

7. Including a gender perspective throughout the entire development process.
8. The abolition of prejudice, all forms of violence against women, and the female child.
9. The development and reinforcement of alliances with the wicked society, notably women's organisations.

Characteristics of Women Empowerment

The following characteristics of women's empowerment are processed:

1. Women's empowerment involves providing women power and improving their lives.
2. Women who are empowered can feel more independent and more confident in themselves.
3. Women's empowerment is a process of developing power so that they can grasp their rights and carry out their obligations to themselves and to others in the most effective way possible.
4. Women's empowerment gives them the ability or capability to combat inequality imposed by a society that is predominately male.
5. Women's empowerment enables them to organise for greater independence.
6. Women who are empowered have more financial security.
7. Women's control over material possessions, intellectual resources, and ideologies is referred to as empowerment of women.
8. Women's empowerment puts existing power structures and relationships to the test.
9. Women's empowerment eliminates all gender based prejudice in all organisations and social structures.
10. The engagement of women in home and public policy and decision-making processes is a key component of women's empowerment.
11. Advancing women's empowerment entails highlighting the oppressive nature of current social and gender dynamics.
12. Women who are empowered are more equipped to handle life's problems and get over their limitations, handicaps, and inequities.
13. Women's empowerment paves the way for them to fully grasp who they are and how powerful they are in all aspects of life.
14. Equal status for women also entails empowerment.
15. Giving people more freedom from the restrictions imposed on them by traditional belief and practise, better access to information and resources, and increased autonomy in decision-making are all examples of empowerment.
16. Women's empowerment occurs on many different levels, including the person, the group, and the community, and in sociological, psychological, political, cultural, and economic contexts.
17. Women's empowerment is an ongoing, dynamic process that strengthens their capacity to alter the institutions and ideas that maintain their subordination.
18. Building awareness and capability are two aspects of women's empowerment.

Economic Empowerment of Women

Women have been fighting against issues including child marriage, domestic violence, the selling of females, and dowries together. If measures are implemented to support women, they can improve their family, social, and economic standing and fight against the various atrocities. This makes it necessary to create an atmosphere where women may benefit from the allocation of authority and resources, the ability to engage in productive work, the chance of access to education, employment, medical care, and other services, among other things.

Discovering the responsible impacts of women's empowerment and their significance to enhance empowerment is crucial in the search for the most appropriate policies for women's empowerment. A higher level of female empowerment raises the importance of women in the household and in society.

Development planning for women during the past 60 years has straddled philosophies as diverse as welfare, development, equality, efficiency, and empowerment. Women are the greatest group that

is denied the advantages of social and economic progress despite making up half of the world's population.

Empowerment can take many different forms, from a low level of true involvement and devolution of authority to a high level of superficial empowerment.⁷ Women's empowerment is the process of giving women a greater degree of control over resources such as tangible objects, human and intellectual aspects such as knowledge, information, and ideas, and financial resources such as money, access to and control over decision-making in the home, community, society, and nation, as well as the ability to rise to positions of authority.⁸

Gaining the capacity and chance to take part in decision-making and decision implementation with the necessary understanding of self dignity and self confidence is a process known as empowerment. Women who live their own lives as they see fit, according to their state of family circumstances, qualities, and capacities of those things, and who believe they are the best judges, are the only ones who can be considered empowered.

Programs focusing on discovering, creating, and promoting alternative techniques to strengthen women's access to and control over the means of subsisting on a sustainable and long term basis are necessary for economic empowerment of women, including the decrease of female poverty.

Women may be given the strength to challenge their social subordination through the process of empowerment. It is necessary to develop strategies to increase women's capacity and give them the confidence they need to deal with the potential negative social and economic effects of globalisation.

Various measures of human development reveal that women have fewer access to resources, education, health care, earned income, and eventually, poorer involvement in the job market, and last but not least, less decision making authority. The ability to make decisions, or autonomy, is empowerment.

A key component of women's empowerment is financial freedom. Women in metropolitan areas have higher levels of social, political, and economic empowerment, according to a study on the numerous programmes available to uplift women in developing countries. They are respected, yet they deal with more mental stress and sadness than rural women.⁹

Organizing a group collectively, group individuality, and group pressure; capacity

building and skill development capability to plan, to decide, to organise, aptitude to manage, capacity to carry out activities, and ability to interact with people and institutions in the world are all part of the empowerment of women.

The term "empowerment of women" refers to a variety of issues, including economic opportunity, property rights, political representation, social equality, individual liberties, and others. Women need to multitask and have support from a network of people. Studies show that adolescent urban girls have greater employment opportunities than rural girls, yet the majority of them work in jobs like hair dressing or cleaning, neither of which are particularly lucrative long term careers.¹⁰

Encouraging the development of self esteem and confidence in women would allow them to realise their potential and increase their collective bargaining power.¹¹ A key component of empowering women to achieve their full potential is ensuring that they have the literacy, communication, and leadership skills they need to succeed.¹² Rural women in India are lifted by SHGs in a developing country because they gain a sense of self-worth and independence that is otherwise unnoticed by the rest of society.¹³

With SHG credit disbursement, women have a better opportunity to participate equally in all aspects of society's spheres of influence and influence in their own right.¹⁴

Therefore, in order to fully empower women, certain prerequisites must be met, such as fearlessness (i.e., no crimes against women), freedom from the shackles of menial domestic work, economic productivity, the ability to travel, the right to decide, sharing power and property with men, and a liberalising education that can lay the foundation for the aforementioned.¹⁵

Empowering Women Through Education

Women's empowerment will only be more meaningful if women are educated. Education is essential for the empowerment, growth, and welfare of women. Education has been acknowledged as a crucial agent of social transformation and national development in all societies and nations. Education is crucial for equipping women with the knowledge, skills, and self-assurance they need to effectively participate in the development process.

Education is necessary for the survival and empowerment of women and girls, but important for all. Education of women aids in eradicating numerous social ills, such as the dowry problem,

unemployment, etc. Additionally, social harmony can be easily formed. If women lack education, subsequent generations will lack education as well. The milestones of women empowerment are education and employment because they allow women to respond to challenges, confront their traditional roles, and change their lives.¹⁶

Cultural and traditional values prevent girls from receiving an education. Education and social lives of women have been transformed by causes such as cultural, social, political, and technical changes in the world. Enhanced awareness and knowledge have encouraged women to leave their homes. Changes in industrialization and technology have created extensive work prospects for women in several sectors of the national economy. Today, Indian women travel to factories, offices, schools, and colleges to earn a living. Today, women have significant roles as investors, consumers, entrepreneurs, scientists, attorneys, and physicians.

Education raises women's awareness. As a result, the ladies strive to improve their situation. Education influences societal and cultural transformation. Its effect is found in women also. In the economic, political, and social spheres, education enables men and women assert their rights and develop their potential. Cultural and traditional values prevent girls from receiving an education.

Women Empowerment Schemes of the Government of India

Empowering women is crucial to the socio-economic growth of a community and integrating SGSY women engaged in income creation into the mainstream of national development has been a top priority for the government.

In its programmes, the ministry of rural development includes special components for women, and monies are designated as "Women's component to ensure the flow of enough resources for the same."

Women's development is the focus of the Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY), the Indira Awas Yojana (IAY), the National Social Assistance Programme (NASP), the Restructured century Rural Sanitation Programme, the Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme (RCRSP), the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), the Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCR), and the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY).

The Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) and the Central Social Welfare Board

(CSWB) are executing numerous initiatives and programmes for the welfare of Indian women. These plans and initiatives are outlined below:

1. Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (RGSEAG): Sabla.
2. Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY).
3. Support to Training & Employment Programme for Women (STEP).
4. Working Women Hostel (WWH).
5. Women Empowerment and Livelihood Programme in Mid Gangetic Plain (Priyadarshini).
6. Swadhar Scheme for Women in Difficult Circumstances.
7. Scheme for Combating Trafficking.
8. Family Counseling Centers (FCCs).
9. Short Stay Home Programme.
10. Awareness Generation Programme (AGP).
11. Condensed courses of Education for Adult Women (CCE).
12. Integrated Scheme for Women's Empowerment (ISWE).
13. Gender Budgeting Scheme (GBS).
14. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme.
15. One stop centre scheme
16. Women Helpline Scheme.

CONCLUSION

In order for women and girls to have a voice in the decisions that influence their life and improve their social position, education is an essential instrument. As a result of women's empowerment, they can make their own choices. The advancement of a country's social, political, and economic spheres can be facilitated with the participation of more women. So, in order to grow, a rural woman must be given the tools she needs from a variety of sources. To achieve this, women should be given more opportunities and perks.

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