



WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND WORKING WOMEN CONCEPT IN INDIA

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Abstract

The present paper is an attempt to analyze the status of women empowerment in India using various indicators based on data from secondary sources. The study reveals that women of India are relatively disempowered and they enjoy somewhat lower status than that of men in spite of many efforts undertaken by government. Gender gap exists regarding access to education and employment. Household decision making power and freedom of movement of women vary considerably with their age, education and employment status. It is found that acceptance of unequal gender norms by women are still prevailing in the society. More than half of the women believe wife beating to be justified for one reason or the other. Fewer women have final say on how to spend their earnings. Control over cash earnings increases with age, education and with place of residence. Women's exposure to media is also less relative to men. Rural women are more prone to domestic violence than that of urban women. A large gender gap exists in political participation too. The study concludes by an observation that access to education and employment are only the enabling factors to empowerment, achievement towards the goal, however, depends largely on the attitude of the people towards gender equality.

Keywords: *Women, Empowerment*

INTRODUCTION

Women were worshipped and regarded as deities in ancient Indian civilization. However, during the mediaeval ages, women's position had plummeted significantly. Women are solely valued in society for their ability to raise children, care for other family members, and conduct other home tasks. For years, people have held the old and traditional belief that men are for the field and women are just for the house. Women are now breaking down all of the societal obstacles and challenges that have been placed against them in society. Previously, women faced several challenges as a result of a male-dominated, patriarchal societal structure, the observance of old conventional beliefs, and so on. Women were only accountable for conventional tasks such as child carrying and child rising. Even in the modern world, when women's standing has improved slightly, they continue to face challenges. They must carry out both familial and professional commitments without the assistance of their spouses. In certain circumstances, women's

conditions worsen when they are mistreated by family members rather than receiving assistance. Sexual harassment is more widespread at home and in the workplace, and it is perpetrated by family members, relatives, neighbours, acquaintances, bosses, and others. They must endure a great deal in their everyday lives in order to support their careers while also preserving their family bonds. Women performed diverse management and non-managerial roles in the decision-making process since the universe's inception. The earliest and most reliable evidence is how Eve convinced Adam to eat the forbidden fruit from the forbidden tree. Women are revered in all religions and ideologies. Governments in modern society have begun policy initiatives to defend women's rights and to prevent crimes against them. These policies have come together to form a plan for women's empowerment. Traditionally, the status of Indian women has been one of universal servitude to men. Even in matriarchal communities, males held the majority of authority in the family. The United Nations in 1948 opened the doors of freedom to women all over the world by recognising equality as a fundamental human right, regardless of gender, race, or ethnicity; as a result, women today are striving to bridge the centuries-old gap between the man's and the so-called woman's sphere of work. Despite their large numbers, women earned just a limited fraction of development chances. Women make over half of India's population, and they are crucial and productive employees in the country's economy. Despite the fact that women make up one-third of the overall labour force in India, women's productivity is increasing. Women were barred from further education, better occupations, and political engagement. Data regarding women's positions in the globe now show that, aside from doing two-thirds of the world's work, they earn just 10% of the world's income and own 1% of the world's property. According to the United Nations, report (1993)², no country treats women as well as it does males. Despite their huge numerical power, women were excluded in society due to a variety of socioeconomic restrictions. As a result, women's standing in society cannot be enhanced until they are empowered. Improving women's productivity and quality of life necessitates a multifaceted contribution to overall growth and development. As a result, the government implemented a variety of initiatives to increase women's position and involvement.

Women are breaking through social and psychological barriers and taking on new duties in India's cities and countryside. Women's economic horizons, which were traditionally limited to domestic servanthood or farm labour, have grown significantly. Women from various walks of life began to work in different industries. It is unavoidable that women are increasingly filling positions in organizations nowadays. Modern India has eased women's admittance into all spheres of activity, as well as their empowerment, which was uncommon three to four decades before.

OBJECTIVE

1. Study on Women Empowerment and Working Women.
2. Study on Women are breaking through social and psychological barriers and taking.

THE CONCEPT OF EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment refers to policies and initiatives that aim to strengthen people's and communities' autonomy and self-determination in order for them to be able to represent their interests in a responsible and self-determined manner, acting (again) on their own authority. Empowerment refers to both the process of self-

empowerment and professional help that enables people to overcome their perception of powerlessness and lack of influence, and to discover and eventually exploit their resources and opportunities. Empowerment is a multifaceted process that should allow women or groups of women to achieve their full identity and authority in all aspects of life. It comprises of better access to information and resources, increased autonomy in decision making to allow individuals to have greater capacity to organise their lives or greater control over the conditions that impact their lives, and freedom from shocks imposed by habit, belief, and practise. In general, growth with justice is intended to produce factors that contribute to the empowerment of diverse sectors of a country's population and increase their status, particularly in the case of women. "Empowerment originates from women's groups that aspire to empower themselves via increased self-sufficiency. They have the right to make their own decisions in life. They also want power and access to resources."

Empowerment is a process that assists people in gaining control of their life by developing awareness, taking action, and trying to achieve more control. Empowerment is the psychological energy that is activated in order to achieve one's goals. Until now, the term "empowerment" has not been particularly specifically defined, and it may be considered that the phrase can be construed contextually and situationally dependent on context. However, in the context of women, empowerment essentially refers to a sense of awareness of one's own situation backed up by knowledge, skills, and information that could enable women to gain higher self-esteem and facilitate their role as decision-makers in today's patriarchal society where women have always been subordinate to men. Empowerment is the process of enhancing an individual's or a community's spiritual, political, social, or economic strength. It frequently entails the empowered gaining confidence in their own abilities.

ROLE OF EDUCATION IN EMPOWERING WOMEN

Empowerment may be considered as a technique of creating a social context in which one can make decisions and make choices for social progress, either individually or collectively. By gaining knowledge, power, and experience, empowerment improves the intrinsic ability. Empowerment is the process of allowing or permitting an individual to think, act, and govern their job autonomously. It is the process of gaining control over one's fate and the conditions of one's life. In any community, state, and nation, there are always a number of components who are denied of their basic rights, but these elements are unaware of their rights. If we include such variables from society, women would be at the top of the list. Women are, in reality, the most significant component in any community. Even though everyone is aware of this reality, no one is willing to accept it.

As a result, women's prominence in today's society is diminishing. As a result of this rising trend of underestimating women to the point of relegating them to a secondary place in society and depriving them of their basic rights, the necessity for women's empowerment became apparent. Women's empowerment has become a major topic of debate and attention all across the world. Today, we enjoy the benefits of being citizens of a free society, but we must consider if everyone of our country's residents is truly free or experiencing freedom in the true meaning of the term. Inequalities between men and women, as well as discrimination against women, have long been a problem all across the world. As a result, women's struggle for equality with men is a global phenomenon. Women should be treated equally with males in

education, work, inheritance, marriage, and politics, among other things. Their struggle for equality has resulted in the development of several women's organisations and the initiation of movements. Our nation's Constitution does not discriminate between men and women, yet our culture has denied women of many fundamental rights granted to them by our Constitution. Individual empowerment enables people to attain their full potential, better their political and social engagement, and believe in their own skills.

In the context of development, education is a tool for achieving equality of opportunity. Due to limiting societal views and preconceived conceptions about women's non-productive responsibilities, the denial of education to women has resulted in the continuation of an unequal position. Women have been used and tormented for centuries as a result of their ignorance. It is a purposeful error that they constitute half of our community, without which national progress suffers. Being a male-dominated culture in which men have a monopoly on women's rights. An illiterate woman is unaware of her family's status. As a result, she becomes a puppet in her husband's hands and dances to his song. Education, on the other hand, has shown ignorance and illiteracy. Another essential aspect of women's education is raising awareness of their position.

IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN EDUCATION

"Educating a man educates an individual; but, educating a woman educates an entire family." Women's empowerment equals mother India's empowerment." JAWAHARLAL NEHRU, PT. Women's education in India is critical to the general growth of the country. It not only aids in the development of half of the human resources, but also in the improvement of the quality of life at home and in the community. 1 It is not incorrect to assert that education is the key to solving all issues. There have been several definitions of education proposed by thinkers, but the most important definition is that proposed by M. Phule. "Education is that which illustrates the distinction between what is good and what is bad," M. Phule says. If we evaluate the preceding definition, we may conclude that whatever revolutions have occurred in our history, education has been at the heart of them. 2 Education entails changing one's behaviour in all aspects, including mindset, viewpoint, and attitude. Educated women not only encourage their female children's education, but they can also give greater advice to all of their children. Furthermore, educated women can aid in the lowering of newborn mortality and population increase. Obstacles: Gender inequality remains in India, and much more has to be done in the subject of women's education. The disparity in male-female literacy rates is only a basic indication. While male literacy rates exceed 82.14 percent, female literacy rates are at 65.46 percent. (b). Women were considered exclusively housewives, and it was preferable for them to stay at home.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH EDUCATION

Women's empowerment is critical in every culture, state, or country. In a child's fundamental existence, a mother is the dominant figure. Women have a crucial role in our culture. Education as a tool of empowering women can result in a positive attitude shift. As a result, it is critical for India's socioeconomic and political development. The Indian Constitution permits the state to take affirmative steps to encourage ways and means of empowering women. Education has a tremendous impact on the lives of women. 3 Women's empowerment is a global topic, with discussions on women's political rights

at the forefront of many formal and informal initiatives across the world. In 1985, the notion of women's empowerment was launched during the International Women's Conference in NAROI. Education is a watershed moment in women's empowerment because it allows them to respond to difficulties, face their established roles, and transform their lives. As a result, we cannot overlook the significance of education in terms of women's empowerment. Given the advancements in women's education, India is expected to be the world's next superpower in the future years. The growing shift in women's education and empowerment has been identified as a critical factor in defining women's status. 4 In order to become a superpower, we must primarily focus on women's education. As a result, women's empowerment will be forced. Women's empowerment, according to the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), means:

- Acquiring knowledge and understanding of gender relations and the ways in which these relations may be changed.
- Developing a sense of self-worth, a belief in one's ability to secure desired changes and the right to control one's life.
- Gaining the ability to generate choices exercise bargaining power.
- Developing the ability to organize and influence the direction of social change, to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally.

Thus, empowerment is defined as a psychological sense of personal control or influence, as well as a concern for actual social influence, political authority, and legal rights. It is a multi-level construct that refers to individuals, organizations, and communities. It is an international, continuous process centred in the local community that involves mutual respect, critical thought, compassion, and group engagement, allowing individuals who do not have an equitable share of valued resources to achieve greater control over these resources.

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THE INDIAN WOMAN'S CORPORATE WORLD

The Indian woman had a long journey and is one of the few people in the world who did not have to struggle for the right to vote. The independence fight against the colonial British authorities meant that women battled alongside men for freedom. From the beginning of the country's independence, Indian officials made it plain that women's involvement in the labour sector was critical to the country's success. That was the rallying cry for Indian women to empower themselves and play a part in India's socioeconomic and political development.

However, the scenario in corporate India would not have been the same without the trailblazers, the first few women who opted to enter male-dominated industries. These women entered the labour during a period when male employers designated particular jobs as suitable for women. This blazing attitude was maybe a global factor that kept women from earning more and taking on more demanding leadership roles. Indian women have just recently assumed positions of leadership. Questioned women were not at the top lately, according to Bachhi Karkaria, writer for The Times of India, but enormous changes have occurred in the last decade. Furthermore, women were not present in the start. This is due to the fact that they were not nurtured for the top. Women are now being groomed for positions of power. While Indian women are more successful in fields such as education, health, journalism, and even politics, women leaders in business are still uncommon. This might be a sign of a glass ceiling in the circumstance.

EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN EXECUTIVES

The concept of empowerment has grown in popularity in business and academic circles due to the prevalent belief that delegating greater decision-making authority to organisational members will improve productivity and performance. The term "empowerment" is used frequently these days, however it is not well defined or understood. The definitions that follow cover a wide range of topics and represent the knowledge of the concept's proponents and practitioners.

In a nutshell, empowerment is giving workers with an atmosphere, tools, and resources that allow them to perform to their full potential, as well as management assisting them in achieving their goals through delegation, training, and development.

Empowerment is defined by Conger and Kanungo as a process of increasing organisational members' feelings of self-efficacy through the identification of conditions that foster powerlessness and their removal through both formal and organisational practises as well as informal techniques of providing efficacy information.

Empowerment is the cutting-edge "technology" that delivers both the strategic advantage sought by businesses and the opportunity sought by individuals. Empowerment can help to tap into every employee's knowledge, skills, experience, and motivation. The true essence of empowerment is from unleashing the knowledge, experience, and motivating power that individuals already possess but are grossly underutilized¹⁴. The key to competitive success is empowered dynamic initiatives. Approaches that encourage participation from all levels of the organization can make a difference. Combining the concepts above, it is clear that empowerment is the act of unleashing employees' full potential in order for them to take on increased responsibility and authority in decision-making, as well as providing the tools for this to happen.

CONCLUSION

It is critical to put measures in place to mitigate problems and provide opportunities for advancement. Family duties are crucial, but a well-educated woman's job advancement is equally important, and any kind of responsibilities should not be a hindrance. The female employees appeared to believe that they were unable to fully exploit their potential, and that they had to make career sacrifices due to family duties at times. This might possibly be because they believed that prioritising a job over a family led to social dissatisfaction and rejection, and they also believed that the significant duty of child development hampered the ability of female employees to advance. Women have a critical role in propelling a nation forward and guiding it toward growth. They are necessary belongings of a vibrant humanity required for national advancement, thus if we want to see a bright future for women in our country, educating them must be a priority. Moving from a weak position to exercise power is what empowerment entails. Women's education is the most potent instrument for changing society's stance. Education also reduces inequities and serves as a tool of increasing one's standing within the family.

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