

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

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Abstract

The empowerment of the women is a highly significant issue of our times. The empowerment of women is a multi-dimensional aspect which demands active participation of various stakeholders in a developing nation.

The physical, social, economic, political and legal empowerment of women includes health, status of the family, and freedom for marriage, employability, life expectancy and growth, fundamental rights, political participation and political leadership development of women. Education is the key factor for women empowerment, prosperity, development and welfare. There is continued inequality and vulnerability of women in all sectors. The educational qualifications play a significant role in women empowerment. Education is one of the most important means of empowering women with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process.

The objective of this paper is to analyze the significant role played by various factors in women empowerment.

Key Words: Women empowerment by Education, power, decision making, social action.

Introduction:

Women empowerment is the creation of an environment where women can make decisions independently and be treated as equal in society. For improving women strength and skills the Training cum employment programme was launched in 1987. In India women empowerment is dependent on different variables, namely, social status, education, geographical location such as urban areas/ rural areas. Education exposes people to new thoughts and ideas provide necessary skills.

Educated women can be empowered only when they are literate. When women are given the requisite education, relevant to their needs and environment, they will gradually become more visible and recognized in the mainstream of activities both at home and in society at large.

Women empowerment brings change in mind set of peoples. The role of women in development is most intimately related to the goal of comprehensive socio-economic development. This is a new venture in the women empowerment and social development angle. Increasing realization is incomplete without involvement of women

When American women realized this, they opposed this unfairness which was meted out to them by way of a huge movement, through which they asked for equal rights. For eliminating this injustice, the UNO (United Nations' Organization) framed an agreement which is

called 'The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women' (CEDAW), which further led to the formation of Women's Commission.

Empowerment implies a state of mind and attitude of a person. It is a process through which people or communities increase their control or mastery of their own lives and the decision that affect their day-to-day life. Awareness is a necessary part of empowerment. Awareness of rights is required for a person to develop his capacity of self-control, self-strength and self-reliance and to build freedom of choice and action. Empowerment is about change, choice and power. It is a process of change by which the individual and groups with little or no power gain the power and ability to make choices that affect their lives.

Objectives of the paper

Elimination of discrimination and all forms of violence against women.

- Provide an opportunity for decision-makers.
- Equal access to women on quality education, choice on career, employment, equal remuneration.
- Create a social awareness "save a Girl child, Educate a Girl child".
- To increase self employment groups.

Review of Literature

Women education in India plays a very important role in the overall development of the country. Women education

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has improved the quality of life at home and outside. Education has led to modification of behaviour in every aspect, such as mentality, attitude, outlook etc. Social divisions among urban women also have a similar impact on empowerment indicators. Upper class and educated women have better access to health, education, and economic opportunities, whereas lower class, less educated women in urban settings enjoy these rights significantly lesser.

The constitutional directive is to provide free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14 years. Though literacy and educational levels are increasing for Indian women still there remains a gap between male and female literacy rate which can be seen in the following Table.

Table - 1 : Literacy Rate in India

Year	Overall	Males	Females
1901	5.3	9.8	0.7
1911	5.9	10.6	1.1
1921	7.2	12.2	1.8
1931	9.5	15.6	2.9
1941	16.1	24.9	7.3
1951	16.7	24.9	7.3
1961	24	34.4	13
1971	29.5	39.5	18.7
1981	36.2	46.9	24.8
1991	52.1	63.9	29.2
2001	65.38	76	54
2011	74.04	82.14	65.46

Source : Census on India (2011)

As Table 1 shows the pre-Independence time literacy rate for women had a very poor stream in comparison to literacy rate of men. In 2011 the percentage of educated persons increased to 74.04% of which male percentage was 82.14% and female percentage was 65.46% respectively. Literacy rate among rural women is only 58.8 percentage as per 2011 census.

Decision Making Power

Decision making power of women in households is one of the important indicators of women empowerment. It is found that only 37 per cent of currently married women participate in making decisions either alone or jointly with their husband on their health care. Women are thus, important to the family as a mother as well in a society. Women are working in the family without any compensation but in the workplace they earn more money with their high *position* (Fig. 2)

Table - 2 : Do married women participate in other household making?

Decisions	Make decision alone or jointly with husband
Own health care	62
Making major household purchases	53
Making purchases for daily household needs	60
Visits to family or relatives	61
All four	37
None of above	21

The process of empowerment should start from our own home. Women's position in the household determines women's autonomy in the family. It is worth to examine whether they can decide about household matters like buying household assets and jewellery, having access to money, having mobility to go to relatives' houses or getting health care facilities. In nuclear families men and women jointly take decisions but in joint family decisions are taken mostly taken by male heads of household. If a woman is educated and she is economically active in any work then her decision making power is higher as compared to illiterate or non working women.

Empowerment does not means setting women against men. Indeed, it means making both men and women realize their changing roles and status and develop a consensus for harmonious living in the context of an egalitarian society. It means redistribution of work roles, redistributing their values to the changing world and attitudes and evolving new kinds of adjustments, understanding and trust with each other.

Entrepreneurship

Women's entrepreneurship is an indicator about women's position in society and about the role of entrepreneurship in the same society. The development of women entrepreneurship is very low in India, especially in the rural areas. Entrepreneurship amongst women has been a recent concern.

Women Entrepreneurship may be defined as a woman or group of women who initiate, organise and run a business enterprise. Government of India has defined women entrepreneurs as owning and controlling an enterprise with a woman having a minimum financial interest of 51% of the capital and giving at least 51% of the employment generated in the enterprise to women.

Conclusion:

Mahatma Gandhi very aptly said "if you educate a man you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman you educate an entire family". So education is also one of the prime needs of women towards its development and empowerment in the society. Men and women are the two wheels of the vehicle called 'progress For development we need to understand and eliminate the main cause of the ill practices against women in our society. In order to really bring women empowerment in the Indian society, it needs to understand and eliminate the main cause of the ill practices against women which are patriarchal and male dominated system of the society. It needs to be open-minded and change the old mind set against women together with the constitutional and other legal provisions.

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