

An Analytical Study on Issues and Challenges of Women Empowerment in India

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Abstract:

The present paper examines that the status of Women Empowerment in India and highlights the Issues and Challenges of Women Empowerment. Today the empowerment of women has become one of the most important concerns of 21st century. But practically women empowerment is still an illusion of reality. We observe in our day to day life how women become victimized by various social sins. Women Empowerment is the vital instrument to expand women's ability to have resources and to make planned life choices. Empowerment of women is essentially the process of upliftment of economic, social and political status of women, the traditionally underprivileged ones, in the society. It is the process of safeguarding them against all forms of violence. As a result acceptance of unequal gender norms by women are still prevailing in the society. The study concludes by an observation that access to Education, Employment and Change in Social Structure are only the enabling factors to Women Empowerment.

Key Words: Women Empowerment, Education, Health, Socio-Economic and Political Status, Crimes against women and Gender Global Index.

I.INTRODUCTION:

Women empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social, educational, gender or economic strength of individuals and communities of women. Women's empowerment in India is heavily dependent on many different variables that include geographical area (urban / rural) educational status, social status and their age. Policies on Women's empowerment exist at the National, State and Local (Panchayat) levels in many sectors, including health, education, economic opportunities, gender based violence and political participation. However there are significant gap between policy advancements and actual practice at the community level. Empowerment of women is essentially the process of upliftment of economic, social and political status of women, the traditionally underprivileged ones, in the society. It is the process of safeguarding them against all forms of violence. Women empowerment involves the building up of a society, a political environment, wherein women can breathe without the fear of oppression, exploitation, apprehension, discrimination and the general feeling of persecution which goes with being a woman in a traditionally male dominated structure. Women constitute almost 50% of the world's population but India has shown disproportionate sex ratio whereby female's population has been comparatively lower than males. As far as their social status is concerned, they are not treated as equal to men in all the places. In the Western societies, the women have got equal right and status with men in all walks of life. But gender disabilities and discriminations are found in India even today.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Dijkstra and Hanmer (2000) assessed the concept of GDI and pointed out how it suffered from several limitations. According to them GDI conflates relative gender equality with absolute levels of

human development and thus gives no information on comparative gender inequality among countries. Using GDI they further constructed a Relative Status of Women (RSW) index and admitted that RSW is also not an ideal measure of gender inequality. The paper was concluded by offering a conceptual framework that provides the basis for an alternative measure of gender inequality.

H. Subrahmanyam (2011) compares women education in India at present and Past. Author highlighted that there has a good progress in overall enrolment of girl students in schools. The term empower means to give lawful power or authority to act. It is the process of acquiring some activities of women.

M. Bhavani Sankara Rao (2011) has highlighted that health of women members of SHG have certainly taken a turn to better. It clearly shows that health of women members discuss among themselves about health related problems of other members and their children and make them aware of various Government provisions specially meant for them.

Doepke M. Tertilt M. (2011) Does Female Empowerment Promote Economic Development? This study is an empirical analysis suggesting that money in the hands of mothers benefits children. This study developed a series of non-cooperative family bargaining models to understand what kind of frictions can give rise to the observed empirical relationship

Duflo E. (2011) Women's Empowerment and Economic Development, National Bureau of Economic Research Cambridge The study argues that the inter relationships of the Empowerment and Development are probably too weak to be self-sustaining and that continuous policy commitment to equally for its own sake may be needed to bring about equality between men and women.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To identify the needs of Women Empowerment.
2. To assess the Awareness of Women Empowerment in India.
3. To analyze and compare the Factors influencing the gender gap index of India with China and Srilanka for the year 2018
4. To identify and analyse the Hindrances in the Path of Women Empowerment with help of crime report data
5. To offer useful Suggestions in the light of Findings.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

This paper is basically descriptive and analytical in nature and an attempt has been taken to analyze the empowerment of women in India. The data used in it is purely from secondary sources according to the need of this study.

V. CRIME AGAINST WOMEN:

The crimes against women fly directly against orchestrating Women Empowerment in India. A report on the crimes against Women by the National Crime Records Bureau comes up with alarming statistics.

The Crime Against Women Head Wise details of reported crimes during the year 2011 to 2015. Table 1

Crime Head	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Total no. of cases
1.Rape	24206	24923	33707	36735	34651	154222
2.Attempt to commit Rape	0	0	0	4234	4437	8671
3 Kidnapping & Abduction of Women	35565	38262	51881	57311	59277	242296
4 Dowry Deaths	8618	8233	8083	8455	7634	41023
5 Assault on Women with intent to outrage her Modesty	42968	45351	70739	82235	82422	323715
6 Insult to the Modesty of Women	8570	9173	12589	9735	8685	48752
7 Cruelty by Husband or his Relatives	99135	106527	118866	122877	113403	560808
8 Importation of Girls from Foreign Country	80	59	31	13	6	189
9 Abetment of Suicides of Women	0	0	0	3734	4060	7794
10 Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961	6619	9038	10709	10050	9894	46310
11.Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986	453	141	362	47	40	1043
12 Commission of Sati Prevention Act 1987	0	0	0	0	0	0
13 Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005	0	0	0	426	461	887
14 Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act	2436	2563	2579	2072	2424	12074
15. Grand total Crimes against Women	228650	244270	309546	337922	327394	1447782

Source: Crime in India-2015

GRAPHICAL REPRESENTATION:1



VI. STATUS OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT:

The status of Women Empowerment cannot be visualized with single dimension rather multidimensional assessment in terms of various components of women’s life and their status would bring a clear conception. So, this paper tries to give a basic idea about the condition and status of women in terms of employment, education, health and social status. Before going to elaborate separately let us have a quick view of the overall status of women in terms of gender gap index prepared by World Economic Forum in 2018. Details of gender gap index 2018 (Out of 135 Countries) are shown in the following.

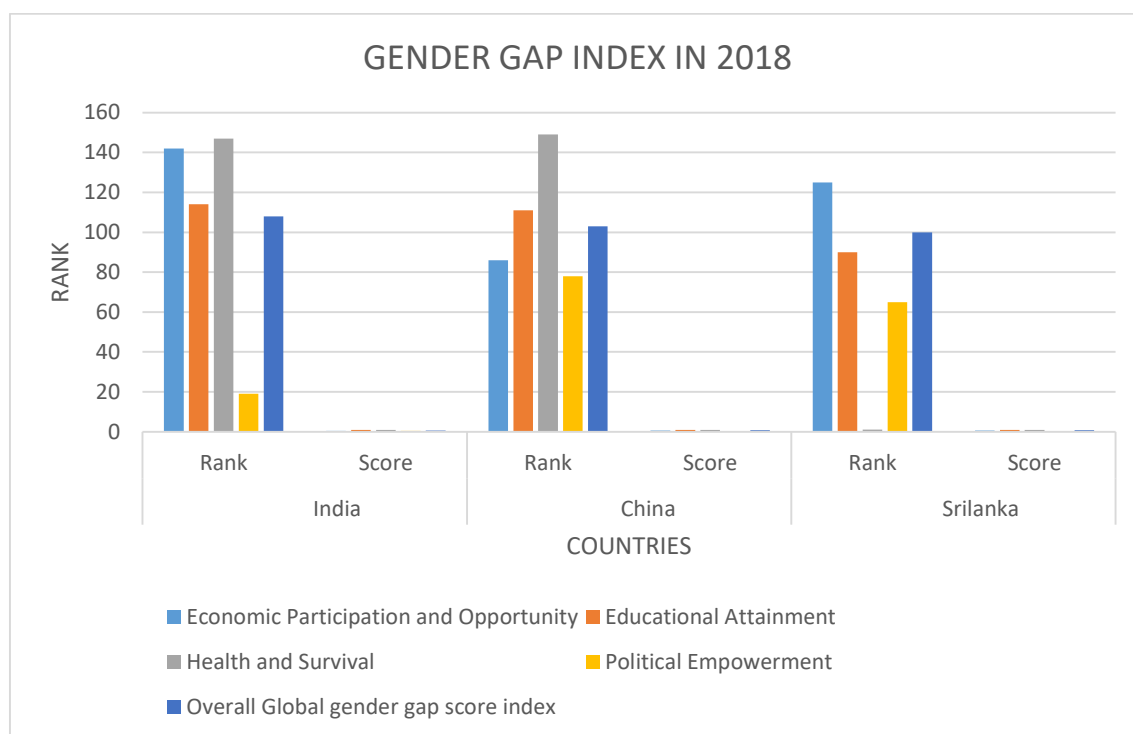
Table:2

Gender Indices	Gap sub-	India		China		Srilanka	
		Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score

Economic Participation and Opportunity	142	0.385	86	0.653	125	0.549
Educational Attainment	114	0.953	111	0.958	90	0.988
Health and Survival	147	0.940	149	0.915	1	0.980
Political Empowerment	19	0.382	78	0.164	65	0.188
Overall Global gender gap score index	108	0.665	103	0.673	100	0.676

Source: World Economic Forum (2018) Global Gender Gap Index – 2018

GRAPHICAL REPRESENTATION:2



The above table clearly indicates the status of low level of attainment of women in the varied field of their attainment. The ranking and scores for India amply proves that it is found in the lower rank even compared to Sri Lanka and china in all sub-indexes of gender equality. India gained fifth places (from 113 rank in 2011 to 108 rank in 2018) as a result of improvement in the educational attainments and political empowerment. Keeping aside the Political Empowerment, the other three indices is all above the rank of 100. The Political Empowerment ranks quite high may be due to the 73rd and 74th Constitution amendments of India providing greater opportunity to women to take part in active politics. Gender gap was measured across four key pillars -- economic opportunity, political empowerment, educational attainment, and health and survival. India ranks 108th in WEF gender gap index 2018

"It (India) needs to make improvements across the board, from women's participation to getting more women into senior and professional roles," said by WEF .

VII. PRESENT SITUATION OF WOMEN:

Being equal to their male counterparts is still a far cry for Indian women. Not only are they marginal as public figures an average Indian women can hardly call the shots at home or outside. In 2012, women occupied only 8 out of 74 ministerial positions in the union council of ministers. There were only 2 women judges out of 26 judges in the Supreme Court and there were only 54 women judges out of 634 judges in various high courts. Shocking Facts: According to 2013, UNDP report on Human Development Indicators, all south Asian Countries except Afghanistan, were ranked better for women than India It predicts: an Indian girl child aged 1-5 years is 75% more likely to die than the boy child. A women is raped once in every 20 min and 10% of all crimes are reported. Women form 48% of India's Population, only 29% of the National workforce, only 26% women have access to formal credit.

VIII. WHY NEED OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT?

In Indian culture the 'Vedic period' reflecting that, women is being worshiped such as LAXMI MAA, goddess of wealth; SARSWATI MAA, for wisdom; DURGA MAA for power. The status of women in India particularly in rural areas needs to address the issue of empowering women. About 66% of the female population in rural area is unutilized. This is mainly due to existing social customs. In agriculture and Animal care the women contribute 90% of the total workforce. Women constitute almost half of the population, perform nearly 2/3 of its work hours, receive 1/10th of the world's income and own less than 1/ 100th the world property. Among the world's 900 million illiterate people, women outnumber men two to one. 70% of people living in poverty are women. Lower sex ratio i.e. 933, The existing studies show that the women are relatively less healthy than men though belong to same class. They constitute less than 1/7th of the administrators and managers in developing countries. Only 10% seats in World Parliament and 6% in National Cabinet are held by women. Hindrances of Women Empowerment: The main Problems that were faced by women in past days and still today up to some extent: 1. Gender discrimination 2. Lack of Education 3. Female Infanticide 4. Financial Constraints 5. Family Responsibility 6. Low Mobility 7. Low ability to bear Risk 8. Low need for achievement 9. Absence of ambition for the achievement Social status Dowry Marriage in same caste and child marriage (still existing) Atrocities on Women (Raped, Kicked, Killed, Subdued, humiliated almost daily.)

IX. Need for Women Empowerment:

Women are deprived of, Decision Making Power, Freedom of Movement, Access to Education, Access to Employment, Exposure to Media, Domestic Violence.

X .Hindrances of Women Empowerment:

The main Problems that were faced by women in past days and still today up to some extent:

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| 1. Gender discrimination | 9. Absence of ambition for the achievement |
| 2. Lack of Education | 10. Social status |
| 3. Female Infanticide | 11. Dowry |
| 4. Financial Constraints | 12. Marriage in same caste and child marriage |

5. Family Responsibility Subdued,
6. Low Mobility
7. Low ability to bear Risk
8. Low need for achievement
13. Atrocities on Women (Raped, Kicked, Killed, humiliated almost daily.)

XI.WAYS TO EMPOWER WOMEN:

- Changes in women's mobility and social interaction
- Changes in women's labour patterns
- Changes in women's access to and control over resources and
- Changes in women's control over Decision making
- Providing education
- Self employment and Self help group
- Providing minimum needs like Nutrition, Health, Sanitation, Housing
- Other than this society should change the mentality towards the word women
- Encouraging women to develop in their fields they are good at and make a career.

XII.CHALLENGES:

There are several constraints that check the process of women empowerment in India. Social norms and family structure in developing countries like India, manifests and perpetuate the subordinate status of women. One of the norms is the continuing preference for a son over the birth of a girl child which is present in almost all societies and communities. The society is more biased in favor of male child in respect of education, nutrition and other opportunities.

Poverty is the reality of life for the vast majority women in India. Due to this, women are exploited as domestic helps.

There are several challenges that are plaguing the issues of women's right in India. Targeting these issues will directly benefit the empowerment of women in India Education: While the country has grown leaps and bounds since independence where education is concerned. the gap between women and men is severe. While 82.14% of adult men are educated, only 65.46% of adult women are known to be literate in India. The gender bias is in higher education, specialized professional trainings which hit women very hard in employment and attaining top leadership in any field.

Health and Safety: The health and safety concerns of women are paramount for the wellbeing of a country and is an important factor in gauging the empowerment of women in a country. However there are alarming concerns where maternal healthcare is concerned.

Professional Inequality: This inequality is practiced in employment and promotions. Women face countless handicaps in male customized and dominated environs in Government Offices and Private enterprises.

Mortality and Inequality: Due to gender bias in health and nutrition there is unusually high mortality rate in women reducing their population further especially in Asia, Africa and china.

Household Inequality: Household relations show gender bias in infinitesimally small but significant manners all across the globe, more so, in India e.g. sharing burden of housework, childcare and menial works by so called division of work.

SUGGESTIONS:

1. The first and foremost priority should be given to the education of women, which is the grassroots problem. Mere access to education and employment can only help in the process of empowerment. These are the tools or the enabling factors through which the process gets speeded up. Hence, education for women has to be paid special attention.
2. Awareness programmes need to be organized for creating awareness among women especially belonging to weaker sections about their rights.
3. Women should be allowed to work and should be provided enough safety and support to work. They should be provided with proper wages and work at par with men so that their status can be elevated in the society.
4. Strict implementation of Programmes and Acts should be there to curb the mal-practices prevalent in the society.

Conclusion:

Accordingly, the attainment in the field of income / employment and in educational front, the scenario of women empowerment seems to be comparatively poor. The need of the hour is to identify those loopholes or limitations which are observing the realization of empowerment of women and this initiative must be started from the women folk itself as well as more importantly policy initiative taken by the state and society. Let us take the oath that we want an egalitarian society where everybody whether men or women get the equal opportunity to express and uplift one's well being and well being of the society and nation as whole. Women empowerment will be real and effective only when they are endowed income and property so that they may stand on their feet and build up their identity in the society. The Empowerment of Women has become one of the most important concerns of 21st century not only at national level but also at the international level. Government initiatives alone would not be sufficient to achieve this goal.

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