

Women Empowerment through New Technology in India

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Abstract

Women play an important role in various sectors such as economic, political, social, sports, educational, enterprising etc. Women are crucial part of Indian economy. Women can be empowered only if they are given education and made aware of their rights and hence they themselves prioritize their lives. Violence has to be completely eradicate from her life, then and only then can dream of empowerment becomes a reality. Women have to be given due respect in a society to have actual empowerment. The present study will discuss about the impact of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) on the women's life in India. As we know, accessing to ICT can promote sustainable socio-economic development and develop the women's life as a significant portion of the world's population. Technology exists in a social world and when technology is considered under the social context, the issues of women become of interest. This paper will explore that the empowerment of women can help to build their capacity to get involved in decision making in better way to effective overcome in era of social, political and economic barriers as well as strengthening them to participate in to the same processes. The present research work will also prove that the women should not be considered as passive recipients of information and technology but as a developer. With the help of this trend, women can acquire information about new trends, their usage and knowledge they can explore to sell or develop their products/services by using new trends of E-commerce. Knowledge of internet also can upgrade the knowledge of women about political, economic and social situation of whole world.

Keywords: Women empowerment, Information and Communication Technologies(ICT), E-commerce, Internet.

Introduction

Women's involvement in science and technology encounters bias in regard to disciplines and academic or professional level of responsibility. If women have to be successful in science, we need to create support structures and positive attitude towards science as a career for them. Therefore, empowerment of women has been recognized as a central goal in the development process in India. To achieve a sustainable development in any country, each member of society has to be given equal opportunities, to unfold one's inner potential. Women empowerment is an important part for the overall national development. In recent years, the empowerment of women has been recognized as the central issue in determining the status of women. There is need to understand the relationship between women and technologies; any technology that is not appropriate for women is not truly technology. It is universally accepted truth that information technology offer immense opportunities for development of economic, social, educational development of the people. The range of women's economic activities in developing countries is very broad. It includes formal sector and informal sector employment, as well as self-employment in farming, trading and crafts production etc. There are numerous possibilities for ICTs to improve women's economic activities in the

field of trade, governance, education, health, crafts, employment in formal as well as informal sector. ICT's bring lot of opportunities to women in the work situations and small business. Teleporting, flexi time and work from home arrangements are some of the gender dimensions of ICT's usages. Keeping these facts in mind, the proposed study identified the needs of infrastructure and policy intervention to make ICT sector and other various technologies to contribute towards enhancing empowerment of women in India. Studies have shown women entrepreneurs tend to be more successful because of their trusted status in the community. This happens due to Self Actualisation.



Literature Review

Laxmi R. and Vadivalagan G. in her research paper reported that women empowerment is the process in which women challenge the existing norms and culture to effectively promote their well-being. Participation of women in self-help groups empowers women in social and economic aspects. Chandrasekhar K.S. and Shivaprakash C.S. (Nov-2010) in their research paper reported that role of information communication technology has the vast potential for women empowerment. Social and economic barrier can be effectively overcome through this program. Tanuja Gill in her article explained the role of Information technology is most important for the development of women in various aspects such as education, training self-help groups, motivational aspects. Das Sanjay Kanti (June-2012) in his research paper reported that a self-help group plays an important role in developing decision making ability and leadership qualities. He further explained that women are very interested in education and improving their personal skills and competencies. Talwar Shalini (2012) reported that financial inclusion is a necessary condition for India to become a global economic power. There exists enough empirical evidence to prove that economic growth follows financial inclusion. Prasad P.N. and V. Sridevi in their paper reported that information technology offers time and space these offers valuable resources for women especially in developing countries who suffer from limited availability of the time, social isolation and lack of access of knowledge and productive resources.

Objectives of The Study

1. To assess ICT infrastructure in rural areas vis-a vis in urban areas for women empowerment.

2. To assess the impact of economic/social/academic background of women workforce in ICT.
3. To assess the status of ICT in education in terms of policies of scholarships, reservations, business development program for self-employment for women.
4. To assess social and health implication of ICT with reference to women workers.

Scope of The Study

Women are the equal beneficiaries to the advantages offered by technology, and the products and processes, which are by product of the technology use. However, it should not be confined to elite group of society but to flow to the other segments of women in Indian society. The study wanted to know about infrastructure (social, economic, educational, etc.) available to different segments of the women and social freedom and opportunities in rural and urban areas. The applicability may invite government intervention to stop digital divide among women and also to more empowerment for women with ICT usage.

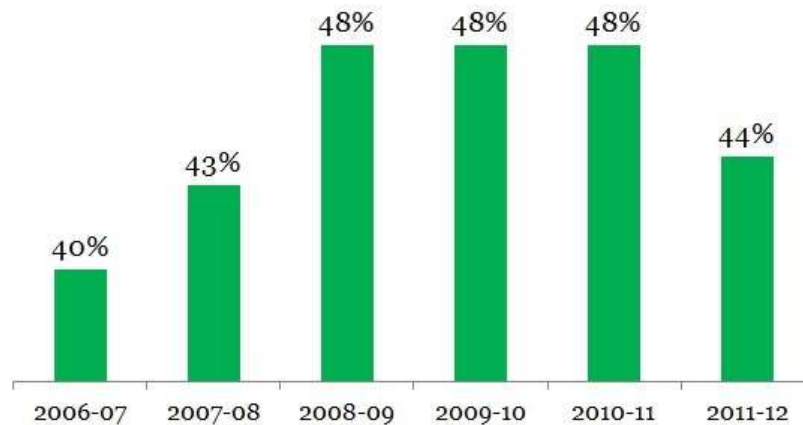
Research Methodology

To ensure credible results, blended techniques, both quantitative and qualitative were employed to investigate both initiatives. Reviews of current training materials, user feedback through questionnaires and focus group discussions were among techniques used. Views of trainers, course administrators and target group representatives were collected and analyzed. Data was also collected with the help of primary as well as secondary sources. Primary data are collected through the discussion with the members of self-help groups, observations and interview. Secondary data is collected through the books, internet, and journals.

Women Empowerment in India

Women's empowerment is a process in which women gain greater share of control over resources material, human and intellectual like knowledge, information, ideas and financial resources like money and access to money and control over decision-making in the home, community, society, nation, and to gain power. For women in India, this suggests empowerment in several realms: personal, economic and political. Thus, women's empowerment needs some basic ingredients which include fearlessness, freedom from drudgery of laborious domestic chores, economic earning and productivity, ability to travel and control speed, authority to take decision, sharing power and property with men and a liberalizing education that can prepare grounds for the above. Women can be empowered only if they are given education and made aware of their rights and hence they themselves prioritize their lives. Violence has to be completely eradicated from her life, then and only then can the dream of empowerment become a reality. Women have to be given due respect in a society to have actual empowerment. Basic skills and training should be given for the proper utilization of the finances. These basic things will need to be so focused that they ultimately enhance the dignity of women and also associate value to their socio-economic participation.

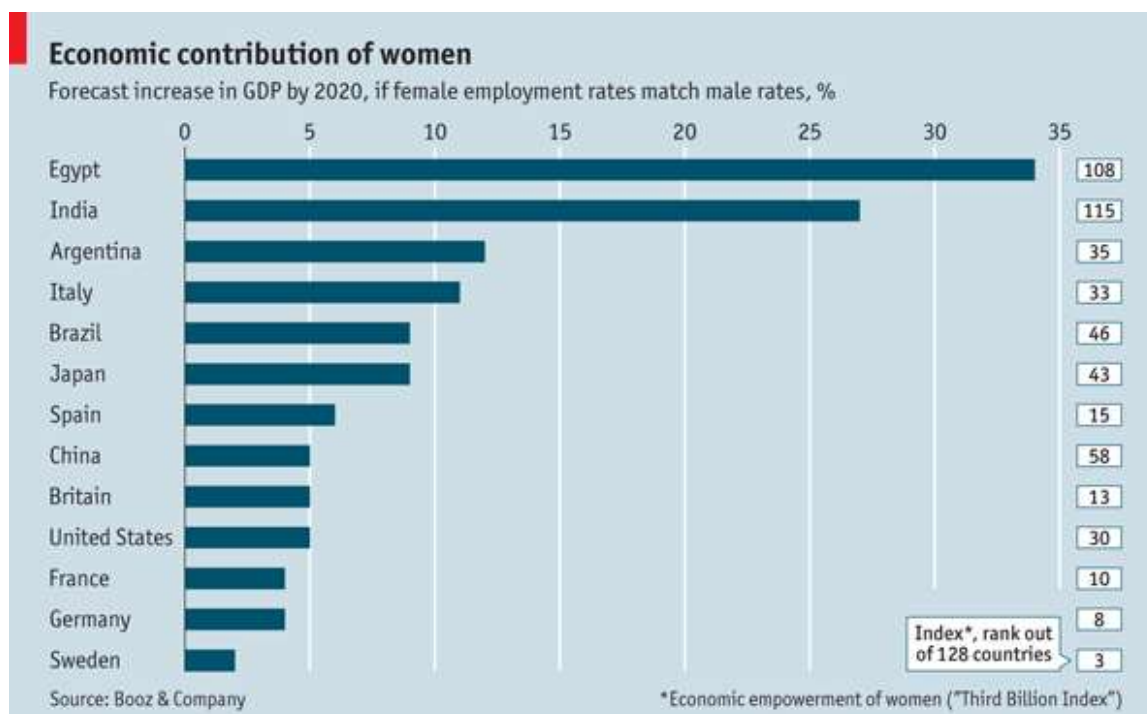
Women Share Of Employment In NREGA



Source: Parliamentary Committee On Empowerment Of Women, 2012

Women in Science and Technology

Science and technology have been an integral part of Indian civilization and culture. Women and men have been active in science from the inception of human civilization. Science is the creation of structure. Women and men have researched and solved each emerging need. Women everywhere may believe they have more important problems to solve than gaining education in science and mathematics which ultimately fosters economic development. Yet, experts say women must become involved if they are to have input into the manner in which science and technology are used. Further, because social change takes decades, patience could be a key virtue when considering issues of equality. Some expert notes that perspective is needed on women 's progress. The experts believe that the international community must pay more attention to women 's basic needs, such as adequate food, shelter, medical care, safety, and education. The argument runs that women have the obligation to see that science and technology are used in beneficial rather than in destructive ways. This is a key point, in which science and technology should be institutionalized. This would focus the role of science and technology in solving women 's issues by women in science and technology within agencies that work to see these disciplines used in their own countries and internationally. Women becoming more involved in science and technology could mean that science and technology is used more often for constructive purposes than for destructive purposes. Women's rights and issues have always been a subject of serious concern of academicians, intelligentsia and policy makers. From pastoral society to contemporary information and global society, the role of women has changed drastically. The continuity of changes in socio-economic and psycho-cultural aspects of human living has influenced the role of women. India ranks second position in economic contribution done by women. This means women in India contribute significantly in economic growth.



With the process of Industrialization, Modernization and Globalization showing its deep impact on the human society all over the world, the role and responsibilities of women has attained new definition and perspective. The women issues have received tremendous attention in the planning India's well established academic institutions are generating about half a million engineers a year. Women's representation in technical field is growing. For example, the percentage of women engineers graduating from IIT Bombay has grown from 1.8% in 1972 to 8% in 2005. In western and Eastern countries women are participating around 50% in Science and Engineering and 20-30% are towards pursuing doctorates.

Women And ICT

Since globalisation is opening up the Indian economy suddenly at a very high speed, during the past decades, advances in information technology have facilitated a global communications network that transcends national boundaries and has an impact on public policy, private attitudes and behaviour, especially of children and young adults. More women are involved in careers in the communications sector, but few have attained positions at the decision-making level or serve on governing boards and bodies that influence media policy. The areas in which ICT can put a greater control in the hands of women is wide and continuously expanding, from man - aging water distribution at the village-level to standing for local elections and having access to lifelong learning opportunities. ICT in convergence with other forms of communication have the potential to reach those women who hitherto have not been reached by any other media, thereby empowering them to participate in economic and social progress and make informed decision on issues that affect them. Barriers to engendering knowledge networking processes with the inception of ICT and convergence technologies, it is possible to bring up a significant fraction of women communities in a more symbiotic digital network which focuses on localized information and customized solutions and works on the theme of Global Technologies for Local Use.

Importance of Information Technology for Women Empowerment

Social Empowerment

1. New knowledge and information.
2. Awareness and understanding of issues.
3. Skills, abilities and competence.
4. Support, friendship and inspiration.
5. Participating in group activities with women.

Political Empowerment

1. Participating in policy making.
2. Taking action to change your life or your community.
3. Networking and lobbying.
4. Changing stereotypes about rural women.

Technical Empowerment

1. Knowledge about ICTs.
2. Awareness and understanding about ICTs.
3. Skills and competence in using new ICTs.
4. Ongoing support and advice in using ICTs.
5. Access to high quality technologies.
6. Confidence to use and speak about ICTs.

Economic Empowerment

1. Women's control over income.
2. Relative contribution to family support.
3. Employment opportunities.

Benefits of Digital Technology for Working Women

Information technology has catalyzed the process of women's empowerment by opening up avenues for women to freely articulate and share their experiences, concerns and knowledge created the possibility of their further enrichment. The use of IT has broadened the scope of their activities and enabled them to address issues previously beyond their capacity. It opened a direct window for women to the outside world. Information flows to them without any distortion and censoring. This leads to broadening of perspectives; greater understanding of their current situation. IT also has played an important role in changing the concept of work and workplace. Now, women have employment options as flexibility and work at home concept. IT has made the role of time and distance less significant in organizing business and production related activities. As a result of technology, a high proportion of jobs outsourced by big firms are going to women. IT offers women flexibility in time & space. Women, therefore can work from outside the office, often from their home and at any time and raise extra income to become more financially independent and empowered. New areas of employment such as telemarketing, medical transcriptions etc. have also opened up tremendous job opportunities for women. These jobs are definitely underpaid and fall at lower segment of IT Jobs, nevertheless, they are opening up avenues where none existed before.

Failure of Women career in Science and Technology

Education is a key factor in deciding the future career path of students, and educational institutions are also important in their success or otherwise in training individuals to make a living out of what they have learned. Societal and cultural factors are the key to defining which subject a woman might choose for her education. Arriving at a higher rate of women's presence in science and technology fields requires a thorough understanding of the barriers they face at the time skilled women enter the job market. Among the factors that have restrained women's further involvement in science and technology, the following three could be the most important: (i) gender pay gap, (ii) culture and gender inequity, and (iii) lack of political will. To make the decision-making process more sensitive to the problems faced by women, the number of women on decision-making and policy advisory bodies has to be increased. The implications of the absence of women at these top-level positions in the science and technology sphere are significant and leads to the marginalization of women in the allocation of opportunities such as research funding and employment. The absence of women in top political and managerial positions in educational and research institutions eliminates the opportunity of hearing the voices of women in key decisions on the current and future orientation of science and technology. New technologies can improve women's competitiveness in selected areas where intellectual competence supersedes physical strength. However, whether women are able to take advantage of these opportunities depends primarily on socio-economic factors. It is quite difficult to assess career opportunities in general, as career paths are rarely organized and documented, shortage of data makes any such assessment difficult.

Specific Detriments to the ICT

1) Awareness

Governments and civil society organizations have still not fully absorbed the full potential of ICT in gender development and therefore are far from the stage of creating enabling frameworks and spaces for the growth of endangered ICT-models. This is often because the use of ICT in knowledge networking is a fairly new process and requires a medium of sensitization and belief in the technology which is a factor of time as well as the willingness to adopt.

2) Access issues

The new technology comes at a financial cost, which hinders its penetration to the individual and sometimes even at the community level. The problem is even more compounded by the fact that women in developing countries have little control over the household income and do not have the decision-making power to invest in these technologies.

3) Capacity and skills

Initiating knowledge networking processes and benefiting from them requires a threshold level of capacity and trained human resource power to handle technology and networking issues. Women because of their backward position, are, therefore, at an even more disadvantaged position than men in developing countries to fully benefit from knowledge networking.

4) Linguistic barriers

Ironically, much of the knowledge present in the global pool is in the English language, which is not understood by the poorest communities. There is very little content in the global pool in the vernacular

language of non-English speaking communities. This makes the amalgamation of local knowledge of women with the global knowledge a difficult task.

Conclusion

The study demonstrated that the majority of women seek to obtain ICT training with the intention to enhance the quality of their lives through acquiring knowledge, enhancing their employment position and earning power, or enhancing their employment opportunities. The analysis has revealed that the majority of women, whether in employment or not, did perceive a positive impact in terms of ability to gain economic empowerment. Science and technology brings economic growth and well-being to people and it is not only the empowerment of women through science and technology, but also the enrichment of science and technology through women's participation. It is not the concern of one nation only, but there are many players and stakeholders in the aim to reach this millennium goal. We just hope that women become empowered at 100% and become equal to men so that both of them may work side by side for a better world of today. It is necessary to recognize that the participation of women in science and technology is no longer simply an issue of gender equity: it is also an issue that should be considered in national economic development. Women are both consumers and producers, they can make a difference if they are involved and considered in economic development plans. With science and technology at the heart of economic development, women's participation in science and technology is therefore an essential part of economic development strategies. Government's role is crucial in bringing about these changes, through providing an adequate social infrastructure and policy environment which facilitate women's entry into the fields of science and technology.

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