



# SOCIO-ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

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## ABSTRACT

Women are the backbone of families and communities. They provide care, support, and nurturing to their families and are essential to the development of children. Women also play a significant role in community building and often take on leadership roles in community organizations. Women's education in India has been a need of the hour, as education is a foundation stone for the empowerment of women. Education also brings a reduction in inequalities and functions as a means of improving their status within the family and develops the concept of participation. Empowerment can be viewed as a means of creating a social environment in which one can make decisions and make choices either individually or collectively for social transformation. Empowerment strengthens the innate ability by way of acquire knowledge, power, and experience. Empowerment is the process of enabling or authorizing individuals to think, autonomously take action, and control work. It is the process by which one can gain control over one's destiny and the circumstances of one's life. There are always several elements in society that are deprived of their basic rights in every society, state, and nation, but these elements lack awareness of their rights.

**KEYWORDS:** Educational equality, Women empowerment, Socio-economic development.

## INTRODUCTION

Women's empowerment is also essential for achieving social justice. Women and girls are often subject to discrimination, violence, and other forms of oppression simply because of their gender. Empowering women helps to create a more just and equitable society for everyone. There is a positive relationship between education and woman empowerment. Another important aspect in this regard is that in these societies the issue of women's empowerment has been facing certain serious challenges, which are the outcome of certain evil norms and attitudes such as child labor, child marriage, illiteracy, superstition, partial attitude of the parents, female feticides, etc. and in such a situation women empowerment is an urgent necessity. To promote women's empowerment, it is necessary to create an environment that will allow women to participate in educational programs and share the benefits. The educational and other policies for women's empowerment should be implemented in reality to empower women in the world. The evils of poverty, unemployment, and inequality cannot be eradicated by man alone. Equal and active participation of women is obligatory. Unless women are educated they will not be able to understand their rights and their importance. Women's economic participation promotes agricultural productivity, and enterprise development at the micro, small, and medium enterprise levels, as well as enhances business management and returns on investment.

According to Pandya and Reddy (2010), India is the hub of entrepreneurs worldwide. Women-owned businesses are highly increasing in the economies of almost all countries. The hidden power potentials of women have gradually been changing with the growing sensitivity to their role and economic status in society. Skill, knowledge, and adaptability in business are the main reasons for women to emerge into business

ventures. A Women Entrepreneur is a person who accepts a challenging role to meet her personal needs and become economically independent. A strong desire to do something positive is an inbuilt quality of entrepreneurial women, who are capable of contributing values in both family and social life. The challenges and opportunities provided to the women of the digital era are growing rapidly the job seekers are turning into job creators. In India, although women constitute the majority of the total population, the entrepreneurial world is still a male-dominated one. Women in advanced nations are recognized and are more prominent in the business world. According to Datta and Kornberg (2002), women empowerment refers to strategies that women use to increase their control of resources and generate decision-making capacity. According to Batliwala, (1994), empowerment is the process of challenging existing power relations and of gaining greater control over the sources of power'. Women's development and women's empowerment are two contemporary perspectives on the modalities of gender equity. The development strategy has come under severe interrogation not only for its failure to deliver its promise but also for working against the interest of women

According to Datta & Kornberg (2002), the concept of women empowerment seems to have been used in the 1980s by third-world feminists to address the issue of gender differences that exist in the control and distribution of resources. Women's empowerment came to be articulated in the 1980s and 1990s as a radical approach concerned with transforming power relations in favor of women's rights and greater equality between women and men. In the report of the World Health Organization (2013). Women with insecure, low-status jobs with little to no decision-making authority experience higher levels of negative life events, insecure housing tenure, more chronic stressors, and reduced social support. Low employment rank is a strong predictor of depression.

It is assumed that women's empowerment is a multidimensional process there is no specific definition of women's empowerment it is related to power; it is the phenomena that look to change society through a rearrangement of power' and refers to the expansion of freedom of choice and action in all spheres such as economic, political, social, cultural, personal and familial to shape one's life. Empowerment can be understood in different contexts by different people due to geographical, cultural, economic, social, political, environmental, and technological backgrounds. Sustainable development is a multidimensional concept; it embraces social and economic development as well as environmental protection. Attaining development among all the pillars of sustainable development is incredible without empowering women and obtaining gender equality, thereby using the entire potential of the country. Socio-economic development is the process of social and economic development in a society that is measured with indicators. Without active participation of women in the economic, social, political, cultural, and other areas of the country development cannot be achieved.

There are many terms for understanding the process of development, the crucial concepts of development are as follows- economic growth which encompasses quantitative changes considered as a reproduction in the material sphere, and; an increase in the volume of goods and services that are produced. Economic development which is a more complex process than economic growth encompasses both quantitative and qualitative changes such as transformation of production structure, implementation of new methods of management of resources, economic development, and increased opportunities of economic growth as it allows for the achievement of the higher approach of the latter (Kubiczek, 2014, Fritz, 2004). Socio-economic development is made up of processes caused by exo- and endogenous factors which determine the course and direction of the development. These processes do not work in isolation from other processes and that usually proceeded by, or is the consequence of, other processes. Factors of socio-economic development themselves cannot be described in general terms because they differ depending on the set of conditions produced by a concrete historical and geographical situation in which socio-economic changes take place. Socio-economic development is a key concept and central aspect of change in the socio-economic sphere. The concept of development functions as both, a product of an optimistic vision and an articulation of social interests, and a tool of analysis (Stemplowski, 1987). The construction of the concept of socio-economic development is based on two issues-(a) the scope of the concept of socio-economic development and its reference and (b) the nature of socio-economic development. According to the socio-economic development embraces changes taking place in the social sphere, mostly of an economic nature also economic aspects come to the fore in the research on change in the economy, and they cannot be isolated from social aspects. Chojnick (2010)

In 2011 the percentage of educated persons increased to 74.04% of which the male percentage was 82.14% and the female percentage was 65.46% respectively. The literacy rate among rural women is only 58.8 percent as per 2011 census. Female literacy was at a national average of 65.46 % whereas male literacy was 82.14%. Within the Indian states, Kerala has shown the highest literacy rate of 90.02% whereas

Bihar averaged lower than 50% literacy, the lowest in India. India is the world's largest democracy where billions of people live and of course, almost half of these are women. If girls are not educated, families suffer too. Educated mothers use their knowledge to improve the health of their children and other family members. Their knowledge about health risks protects their families against illness. The child mortality rate is much higher where mothers lack education than in families where mothers are educated. Girl's education emerging as one of the top priorities of Indian society. As per the United National Development Fund for Women, the term women's empowerment means:

- Acquiring knowledge and understanding of gender relations and how 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 and 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.

The inequalities between men and women and discrimination against women are an age-old issue all over the world. Thus, women's questions for equality with men are a universal phenomenon. Women should be equal to men in matters of education, employment, inheritance, marriage, politics, etc. Their question of equality has given birth to the formation of many women's associations and the launching of movements. The Constitution of our nation doesn't discriminate between men and women, but our society has deprived women of certain basic rights, which were bestowed upon them by our Constitution. Empowerment allows individuals to reach their full potential, to improve their political and social participation, and to believe in their capabilities. Importance of women's education, "If you educate a man you educate an individual, however, if you educate a woman you educate a whole family. Women empowered means mother India empowered".

### **IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN EDUCATION**

The education promotes teamwork rather than making a woman individualistic. Education allows her to choose a career that is best suited for her. Factors that affect women's role in leadership include attitudes that undermine women's participation, fear of geographical mobility and separation from family, patriarchal culture, gender, and sex-based discrimination, stereotyping, harassment, gender inequality, perceived incompetence, societal factors, institutional importance of women education are listed below.

1. Every woman has her aspirations which may be high or low, but education helps to maintain a balanced aspiration knowing her interests, ability, and potential which further helps her to choose the correct field of her work.
2. Education helps in balanced personality development by giving due weight to various aspects of personality.
3. The education of women also plays an important role in teaching their expression of feelings or through effective communication which can solve disputes and adjustment problems of any level.
4. An educated woman is a guiding light for the children, family members, society, and nation, she knows how to have a happy family and balanced and healthy relations with others.
5. Education gives power to a woman to become strong physically by giving her knowledge about sports, exercise, health-related aspects, and good physical health

Women's education in India has also been a major preoccupation of both the government and civil society as educated women can play a very important role in the development of the country. Education is considered a basic requirement and a fundamental right for the citizens of any nation. It is a powerful tool for reducing inequality as it can give people the ability to become independent. Women, who come across discrimination in many spheres, have a particular need for this. Women's Empowerment is a global issue and discussions on women's political rights are at the forefront of many formal and informal campaigns worldwide. The protective legislations which support women in their fight against injustice and discrimination are listed below.

1. The Child Labor (Prohibition & Regulation) Amendment Bill 2012
2. Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Notified Rules 2012
3. Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act 2012
4. The Right to Children to Free & Compulsory Education Act - 2009
5. Juvenile Justice Act (Care & Protection of Children) Amendment Act 2006
6. The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act -2006
7. The Pre Natal-Diagnostic Techniques Regulation & Prevention of Misuse - Amendment Act – 2002

The education of women is the most powerful tool for changing their position in society. Still, large women in our country are illiterate, backward, weak, and exploited. Education also reduces inequalities and functions as a means of improving their status within the family. Empowerment and capacity building provide women an avenue to acquire practical information and learning for their improved livelihoods. India can become a developed nation only if women contribute to the best of their capacity and ability which is possible when she is educated and empowered. The constitutional directive to provide free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14 years has remained unfulfilled till now. Educational experts admit that this failure is mainly due to the slow progress of education among girls. Literacy and educational levels are increasing for Indian women still there is a gap between male and female literacy rate

#### **EFFECT OF WOMEN EDUCATION ON SOCIETY**

The concept of Women's empowerment is a recent one. The first year of the New Millennium 2001 was declared as "Women Empowerment Year". Education of women leads to a better family and ultimately an ideal society for a progressive nation. A progressive nation is one where all the people of the country respective of sex, religion, caste, creed, and color are economically, socially, culturally, politically, and through all thoughts independent. New UNESCO data proves education transforms development. When we talk about the education of women, it is important to note that women's education has a ripple effect on society such as,

1. Lessening in Population Explosion: Educated ladies will, in general, have fewer children. Unlike before with the elevation of women's education around the world and reproductive precautions made publicly available, women do not bear more than two children, thus helping in the reduction of the population problem of the country.
2. Improved Socio-economic Growth: Educated ladies have a noteworthy possibility of getting away from neediness, driving more beneficial and progressively gainful lives, and increasing the expectation of living for their children, families, and social networks.
1. Future Educated Generations – An African axiom says that if we teach a young woman, we instruct an entire family – and an entire country. By sending a young girl to a school, she is unmistakably guaranteeing that her kids likewise get an education thus benefiting the country. The educated woman also, directly and indirectly, contributes to increasing infant and maternal mortality rates.
2. Reduction in Child Marriage: Child marriage – at times includes young girls as young as 6 or 8 years – quite often brings about the finish of that girl's education. The outcome is unskilled or scarcely proficient young moms without satisfactory instruments to manufacture solid, taught, and functional families. Educated women know that only an educated woman would bring more to the table with her partner; therefore, before she is married off, she should first be given the necessary education.

Women are an important section of our society. Education as a means of empowerment of women can bring about a positive attitudinal change. It is, therefore, crucial for the socioeconomic and political progress of India. The Constitution of India empowers the state to adopt affirmative measures for prompting ways and means to empower women. Education significantly makes a difference in the lives of women. Women's Empowerment is a global issue and discussions on women's political rights are at the forefront of many formal and informal campaigns worldwide. To see the development in women's education India is supposed to upcoming superpower of the world in recent years.



With the increasing change in women's education, the empowerment of women has been recognized as the central issue in determining the status of women. It is true that, to become a superpower we have mostly to concentrate on women's education. By which it will force on women's empowerment.

Thus, empowerment means a psychological sense of personal control or influence and a concern with actual social influence, political power, and legal rights. It is a multi-level construct referring to individuals, organizations, and communities. It is an international, ongoing process centered in the local community, involving mutual respect, critical reflection, caring, and group participation, through which people lacking an equal share of valued resources gain greater access to control over this resource. Women's participation may be used both for support by an agency and as a control device by the lawmakers. Participation may be direct or indirect, formal or informal; it may be political, social, or administrative in nature. Women's participation in Panchayat Raj institutions may take many forms. It refers to all those activities that show the women's involvement in the processes and administration, that is, participation in policy formulation and Programme planning, implementation, and evaluation of policies and programs meant for development target groups.

## CONCLUSION

The world has achieved equality in primary education between girls and boys. But few countries have achieved that target at all levels of education. The political participation of women keeps increasing. In January 2014, in 46 countries more than 30% of members of parliament in at least one chamber were women. In many countries, gender inequality persists and women continue to face discrimination in access to education, work, and economic assets, and participation in government. Socio-economic development can both empower women and raise the status of the Indian economy. Women need employment justice. Education, vocational training, and skill improvements would increase the capacity for gainful economic participation of women in India. United Nations (UN) declared 1975 as the 'International Women's Year'. This was followed by the UN's Decade for Women from 1976-1985 and the theme was "Equality, Development and Peace". Women's participation in politics remained quite inconsequential in India even today but some sort of improvement took place by the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendment acts which gave a boost to the status of women at the political level by giving opportunity to women in the process of decision-making. The 73rd and 74th Amendments (1993) to the constitution of India have provided for reservation of seats in the local bodies of panchayats and Municipalities for women, laying a strong foundation for their participation in decision-making at the local level. The 5 pillars of women's empowerment are education, Health, Security, Finances, and Emotion. Educational equality is another area in which women's equality has shown a major improvement as a result of adult literacy programs in the area of enrolment of boys and girls in schools. As a result of the higher participation of women in literacy campaigns, the gender gap in literacy levels is gradually getting reduced. Even more significant is the fact that the disparity in enrolment of boys and girls in neo-literate households is much lowered compared to the non-literate householders.

Gender equality and women's empowerment aren't a part of development but at the core of development. To get rid of this we have to make some educational awareness programs on gender equality and women empowerment for cementing our commitment to supporting women and girls. Women play an imperative role in making a nation progressive and guiding it towards development. They are essential possessions of lively humanity required for national improvement, so if we have to see a bright future for women in our country, giving education to them must be a preoccupation. Empowerment means moving from a weak position to executing a power. To encourage the education of women at all levels and to dilution of gender bias in providing knowledge and education, established schools, colleges, and universities even exclusively for women in the state. Education develops the idea of participation in government, panchayats, public matters, etc. for the elimination of gender discrimination. The education of women is the most powerful tool to change the position of society. Education also brings a reduction in inequalities and functions as a means of improving their status within the family. Women's education is of utmost importance in society, if women are educated then their participation in society increases everywhere. If a woman is educated then a positive aspect of her will come out in society and she can become a participant in every decision of society.

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