
A Study on Empowerment of Women in India

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ABSTRACT

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru once said: "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."

When women who contribute almost half of the population are empowered it will strengthen the national economy. Education is considered as a milestone for women empowerment because it enables them to respond to the challenges, to confront their traditional role and change their lives. Increasing access to education notwithstanding, gender discrimination still persists in India and lot more needs to be done in the field of women's education in India. Women have so much unexplored potential which has never been tapped. As education is an input of human development, educational equity will ensure enabling and entrepreneurial development. Education among women is the most powerful tool of attaining power in the society. It helps in reducing inequalities and functions as a means for improving their status within the family. As we all know that education is must for everyone but unfortunately, in this male dominating society, the education of women has been neglected for a long time. Empowering women is an important end in itself and as women acquire the same status, opportunities and social, economic and legal rights as men, as they acquire the right to health and gender based violence, human well-being will be enhanced. The present study explores the role of education in women empowerment and the status of women education in India. It shows that the education is most important part in the life of every woman.

KEYWORDS: *Women Empowerment, Education, Health, Crime against Women.*

INTRODUCTION

"To educate your women first and leave them to themselves, they will tell you what reforms are necessary." - Swami Vivekananda.

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 location (urban / rural) educational status social status (caste and class) and age. Policies on Women's empowerment exist at the national, state and local (Panchayat) levels in many sectors, including health, education, economic opportunities and gender based violence and political participation. However there are significant gap between policy advancements and actual practice at the community level. Women are the backbone of society. Society never complete without women. Women constitute almost half the human race. Education has been recognized as an essential agent of social change and development in any society of any country. Education is considered as a potential instrument through which processes of modernization and social change come to existence. Education exposes people to new thoughts and ideas which provides necessary skills.

According to the Government of India, "Empowerment means moving from a weak position to execute a power." It is the ability to direct and control one's life. It is a process in which women gain control over their own lives of knowing and claiming their right at all levels of society at the international, local and household levels. Women also bear almost all responsibility for meeting basic needs of the family.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Venkata Ravi and Venkatraman (2005) focused on the effects of SHG on women participation and exercising control over decision making both in family matters and in group activities.

Sethuraman K. (2008) The Role of Women's Empowerment and Domestic Violence in child Growth and under nutrition in a Tribal and Rural Community in South India. This research paper explores the relationship between Women's Empowerment and Domestic Violence, maternal nutritional status and the nutritional status and growth over six months in children aged 6 to 24 months in a rural and tribal community. This longitudinal observational study undertaken in rural Karnataka. India included tribal and rural subjects.

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.

Malik and Courtney (2011) studied that how higher education offers empowerment to women. The economic independence and increased standing with the family were the benefits of higher education. It also enabled the women to impact the discriminatory practices.

Noreen and Khalid (2012) explored the possibilities and opportunities for women empowerment and how the participants in the study understand the role of higher education in empowerment of women at home and at work. They found out that the women should continue higher education and career by strategizing and acknowledging the support of their family members.

Banerjee (2012) studied the empowerment of women through higher education. She concluded that the empowered women challenged the man in their workplace and were seen in the powerful corporate positions.

Sonowal (2013) studied the effect of the SC and ST women in the rural areas of Sonitpur district. He found that the status of women in the present society, attitude of parents and guardians towards girl education.

OBJECTIVES

There are three objectives of study:

- To study the role of education as challenge in women empowerment.
- To study the impact of women empowerment.
- To analyze the Factors influencing the Economic Empowerment of Women.

WOMEN EDUCATION STATUS

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. When we talk about our country, the country has grown from leaps and bounds since its 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. Additionally, the norms of culture that state that the man of the family is the be-all and end-all of family decisions is slowly spoiling the society of the country.

Literacy and educational levels are increasing for Indian women still there is gap between male and female literacy rate which can be seen in the following Table.

Table: Literacy Rate in India

Year	Persons	Male	Female
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	24.0	34.4	13.0
1971	29.5	39.5	18.7
1981	36.2	46.9	24.8
1991	52.1	63.9	39.2
2001	65.38	76.0	54.0
2011	74.04	82.14	65.46

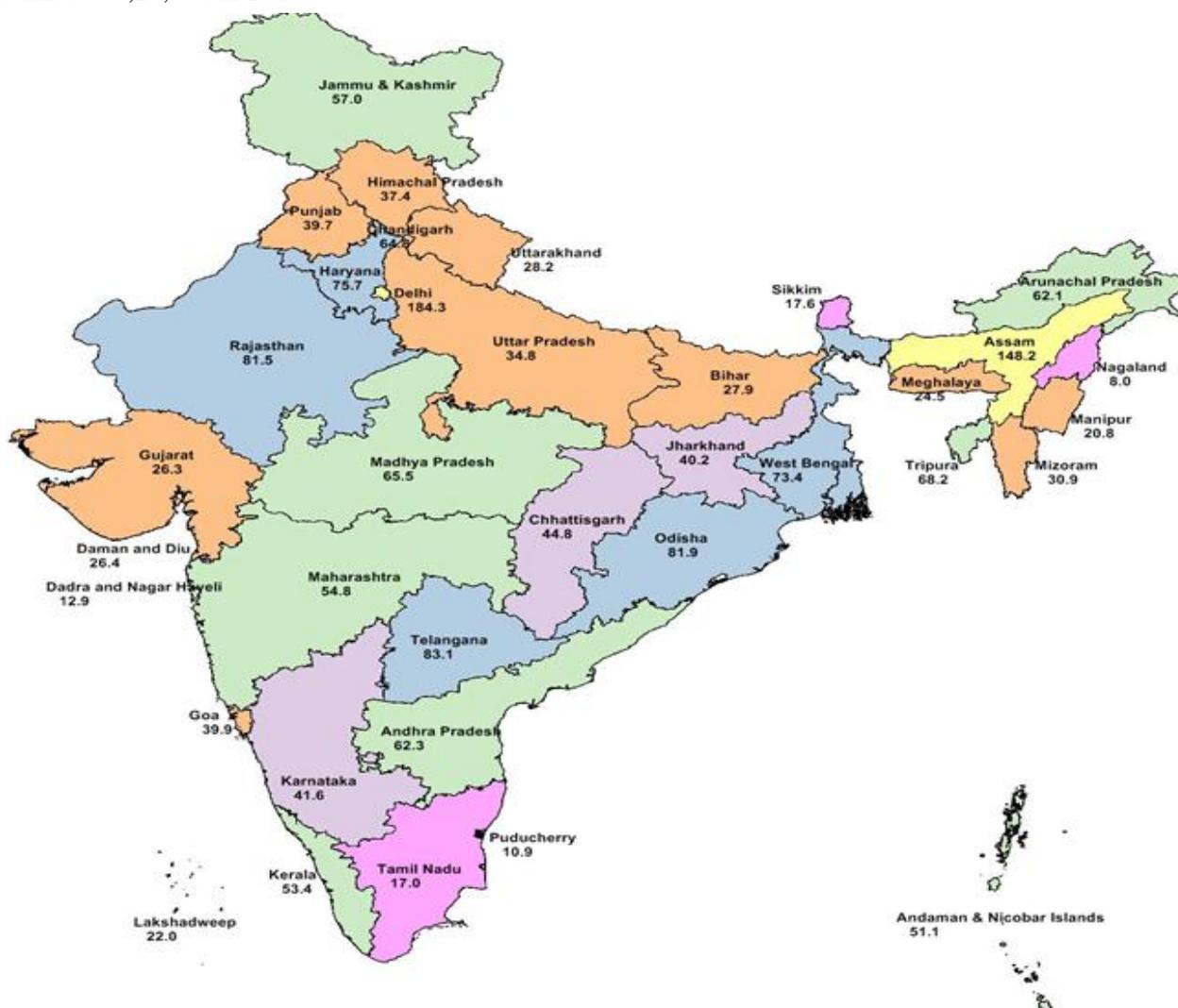
Source: Census of India (2011)

Female literacy was at a national average of 65.46 % whereas the male literacy was 82.14%. Within the Indian states, Kerala has shown the highest literacy rates of 90.02% whereas Bihar averaged lower than 50% literacy, the lowest in India.

The Ministry for Women & Child Development was established as a department of the Ministry of Human Resource Development in the year 1985 to drive the holistic development of women and children in the country. In 2006 this department was given the status of a Ministry, with the powers to formulate plans, policies and programs, enacts/amends legislation, guiding and coordinating the efforts of both governmental and non-governmental organizations working in the field of Women and Child Development.

CRIME AGAINST WOMEN

A total of 3,27,394 cases of crime against women (both under various sections of IPC and SLL) were reported in the country during the year 2015 as compared to 3,37,922 in the year 2014, thus showing a decline of 3.1% during the year 2015. These crimes have continuously increased during 2011 - 2014 with 2,28,650 cases in 2011, which further increased to 2,44,270 cases 2012 and 3,09,546 cases in 2013, to 3,37,922 cases in 2014. It declined to 3,27,394 in 2015.



Crime Rate:

The crime rate under crimes against women was reported as 53.9 in 2015. Delhi UT has reported the highest crime rate (184.3) compared to 56.3 at all India level during the year 2015, followed by Assam (148.2), Telangana (83.1), Odisha (81.9), Rajasthan (81.5), Haryana (75.7) and West Bengal (73.4).

PROPORTION OF CRIME AGAINST WOMEN (IPC) TOWARDS TOTAL IPC CRIMES

The proportion of IPC crimes committed against women in total IPC crimes has increased during last 5 years from 9.4% in the year 2011 to 10.7% during the year 2015. Previous year (from 674 cases in 2014 to 557 cases in 2015). Maharashtra (139 cases with 141 victims) has reported the highest such incidence followed by Rajasthan (98 cases with 98 victims), Delhi (80 cases with 80 victims) and Kerala (70 cases with 71 victims).

S. No.	Year	Total IPC Crimes	Crime against Women (IPC Cases)	Percentage to Total IPC Crimes
1.	2011	23,25,575	2,19,142	9.4%
2.	2012	23,87,188	2,44,270	10.2%
3.	2013	26,47,722	2,95,896	11.2%
4.	2014*	28,51,563	3,25,327	11.4%
5.	2015*	29,49,400	3,14,575	10.7%

Various problems faced by Indian women:

1. Gender Discrimination
2. Unequal sex ratio
3. Negligence and poor health
4. Violence against Women
5. Organizational problems
6. Violence against Women
7. Dowry a curse
8. Un-attraction of Female Education
9. Sexual Harassment
10. Familiar and Social Problems

POSITION OF WOMEN IN CURRENT SCENERIO

The status of women in ancient India was quite high esteemed however it got deteriorated with the passage of time and mentality of people towards women. Slowly the practice of polygamy, sati pratha, dowry system, female infanticide, etc. became dominated and gave rise to the male dominated country. Great Indian leaders had worked a lot to again raise the status of women in the Indian society. Because of their hard work bad practices against women in the Indian society have been banned to a great extent. Government of India has implemented various effective laws regarding safety and empowerment of the women.

Now in India, women are still facing different obstacles in male-dominated cultures. Now a day's women are coming the main stream of development. The government of India established a special commission for the women development (Women commission in India). Today, women are having the position in every place. Women are facing various problems, heinous practice of female feticide and infanticide wherein nearly 10 million baby girls have been killed in the last twenty years alone. In fact, safety is an obsolete word in today's India. Even law enforcement is unable to control the situation in India. Every person should think about women development. This is the need of the hour. Everyone must think of changing society. This situation has caused immense loss to their self-dignity as human beings and also their independent entities, associated with men, apart from other matter, in context with intellectual and professional capability. In spite of all these, the

patience of greatness of Indian women to serve the family and the society is incomparable. That's why she deserves the designation Goddess worth to be worshipped.

WHY NEED OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Empowering women usually involves giving them opportunity for better education. Focus on the overall development in India is the main work of women empowerment commission in India. The need for women's empowerment is felt because of the status they have in society since the beginning. There is a need to redefine the status of women in the society. A change can be brought through the constitution and supportive legislations. The Constitution of India gives a women status equal to men. There have been attempts to reserve seats for women in political bodies. This is no doubt a step in the right direction. Women have the ability to judge for themselves and take right decisions. However merely allowing for reservation of women in Panchayat and legislative bodies without empowering women individually falls short of actual emancipation. Women have been excluded from centers of power as a result of systematic conspiracy by patriarchal thought most common in India Khap Panchayat that has relegated women to an allotted and confined space.. The impoverished and illiterate status of most women in society is due to their inability to attain sufficient levels of economic power. To sustain any level of empowerment women have to be educated to be aware of their rights and privileges in a modern society. It is only when they become aware of their status in society that they will be able to take full advantage of the concessions offered to them as a corrective measure.

There are some factors that defines Women are deprived are:

1. Access to Education
2. Freedom of Movement
3. Access to Employment
4. Exposure to Media
5. Decision Making Power

There are some ways to empower Women:

1. Providing good education & Resources.
2. Providing minimum needs like Health, Food, Housing etc.
3. Changes in women's control over Decision making
4. Self-employment
5. Encouraging women to develop in their fields they are good at and make a career.

PLANS, POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES FOR EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

The importance of women as an important human resource was recognized by the Constitution of India which not only accorded equality to women but also empowered the State. Time to time different schemes and plans has been implemented for the success of women by The Government of India,

Which are:

1. Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao
2. Training and Employment Program for Women
3. Central Social Welfare Board
4. Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana
5. Short Stay Home for Women and Girls
6. Swadhar
7. Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls

8. Rashtriya Mahila Kosh
9. Swayam Siddha Yojana
10. One Stop Centre Scheme
11. Women Helpline Scheme
12. Mahila police Volunteers
13. UJJAWALA
14. Nari Shakti Purushkar
15. Mahila-E-Haat

SUGGESTIONS

The first and foremost priority should be given to the education of women, which is the grassroots problem. Hence, education for women has to be paid special attention. 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. Strictly implementation, creation and support of legislative, judiciary will be beneficial to sort out the women related problems in India. To stop the women exploitation, rape sexually harassment, acid throwing, domestic violence, child marriages and female feticide with effective instruments and control on these problems.

CONCLUSION

To conclude the present scenario, it may be said that woman in the modern hi- tech society which is moving very fast under the shadow of population explosion, conflicts, chaos and corruption can mold the personality of the adolescent and youth in a proper direction and perspective, provided the woman are themselves in power.

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 empowerment has been facing certain serious challenges, which are outcome of some certain evil norms and attitude 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. In order 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 empowerment should be implemented in reality for empowering women in the world.

“When women move forward the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves”. It is essential as their thought and their value systems lead the development of a good family, good society and ultimately a good nation. The best way of empowerment is perhaps through inducting women in the mainstream of development. 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.

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