

Women Empowerment: Higher Education & Issues and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

Men and women are two wheels of society who bear equal burden of responsibility in their respective field of work in their own ways. The topic on "Women Empowerment" is a burning issue all over the world. "Women empowerment" and "women equality with men" is a universal issue. Women Empowerment refers to the creation of an environment for women where they can make decisions of their own for their personal use as well as for the society.

I. INTRODUCTION

Women empowerment, referring to the empowerment of women in our present society, has become a significant topic of discussion in regards to development and economics. Women empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, 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 educational status social status and age. Policies on Women's empowerment exist various levels in many sectors, including health, education, gender-based violence and political participation. However there are significant gap between policy advancements and actual practice at the community level. 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.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. **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.
2. **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.
3. **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 equality for its own sake may be needed to bring about equality between men and women

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data Collection:

This paper is purely descriptive and analytical in nature. The information used in it is purely from secondary sources according to the need of this study.

Objectives

1. To study the Government Schemes For Women Empowerment
2. To assess the Awareness of Women Empowerment in India.
3. To know the need of Women Empowerment

Hypothesis

1. Change in mindset is necessary to person
2. There are several Government programs for women empowerment
3. Poverty and illiteracy is the barrier for women empowerment

Why Women Empowerment Is Important?

1. **National Development:** Women are increasingly participating in the national development process. They are making the nation proud by their outstanding performances almost every spheres including medical science, social service, engineering, etc.
2. **Under-employed and unemployed:** Women population constitutes around 50% of the world population. A large number of women around the world are unemployed. The world economy suffers a lot because of the unequal opportunity for women at workplaces.
3. **Overall development of society:** The main advantage of Women Empowerment is that there will be an overall development of the society. The money that women earn does not only help them and or their family, but it also help develop the society.
4. **Irreplaceable in some sectors:** Women are considered irreplaceable for certain jobs
5. **Reduce Poverty:** Women Empowerment also reduces poverty. Sometimes, the money earned by the male member of the family is not sufficient to meet the demands of the family. The added earnings of women helps the family to come out of poverty trap.
6. **Reduction in domestic violence:** Women Empowerment leads to decrease in domestic violence. Uneducated women are at higher risk for domestic violence than an educated women.
7. **Reduction in corruption:** Women Empowerment is also advantageous in case of corruption. Women empowerment helps women to get educated and know their rights and duties and hence can stop corruption.

Women Empowerment Schemes

1. Awardees of Stree Shakti Puruskar, 2014 & Awardees of Nari Shakti Puruskar
2. Awardees of Rajya Mahila Samman & Zila Mahila Samman
3. Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY) - A Conditional Maternity Benefit Scheme
4. One Stop Centre Scheme
5. Women Helpline Scheme

6. UJJAWALA : A Comprehensive Scheme for Prevention of trafficking and Resue, Rehabilitation and Re-integration of Victims of Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation
7. Working Women Hostel
8. Ministry approves new projects under Ujjawala Scheme and continues existing projects
9. SWADHAR Greh (A Scheme for Women in Difficult Circumstances)
10. Revision under IGMSY in Accordance with National Food Security Act, 2013 in XII th Plan
11. Support to Training and Employment Program for Women (STEP)
12. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme

Barriers Of Women Empowerment:

1. Gender gaps in higher education
2. Cast System
3. Poverty
4. Dowry as cordon
5. Demographic Factors
6. Higher dropout rate among girls.
7. Child Labour Practice
8. Female age at marriage

Strategies To Overcome Barriers Of Women Empowerment:

The following strategies can be considered for bringing phenomenal change in the plight women's education and empowerment in India,

1. The parents of children belonging to poor, underprivileged families must be specially educated with proper social formula to help them to understand the significance of education for their girl children as foundation for empowerment.
2. The Ministry of Education both at Centre and State level should work out strategic steps to stop firmly the ongoing high drop –outs among girls especially in rural, tribal and slums areas with the serious involvement of voluntary organizations in every locality to realize zero drop-out among girls.
3. The poverty stricken families can be identified through proper research and necessary poverty alleviation services is provided to strengthen the income thereby to enable the families to send their children to schools and colleges without much financial difficulties.
4. Appropriate steps should be taken by the educational authorities with the participation of communities in order to bring the girl children to the main stream of education and development at every level including family and community.
5. The enrolment can be made even mandatory for every girl by the government in the realm of compulsory education.
6. The Midday meal scheme and other educational supportive services like free text books, Note books, Fee uniforms, Free Bicycles, Free bus, scholarships free bus pass and so on as done in the state of Maharashtra can be provided in all states and union territories to lift up the literacy level among girls.

Challenges of Women Empowerment in Indian Context:

1. Today there are lots of things that are happening in the name of women empowerment in India and lot of resources are spent in this direction. Keeping this in mind it is crucial to have a reality check on what is happening on paper and what is the actual ground situation.

2. One of the major challenge of women empowerment in India is to change the attitude of society towards women.
3. The female child in Indian culture especially in rural, tribal and poor families is expected to develop the qualities of inferiority; subservience and domesticity which place sever limitations on her education and development
4. The lower enrolment of girls in schools is one of the foundational factors which stand as stumbling block for women empowerment in India.
5. In many families girl children play the role of second mother by shouldering the responsibilities of household work such as looking after the sibling, fetching water, collecting firewood, bringing fodder for cattle, cleaning and cooking etc.
6. Women have never been part of the mainstream society in India and they are still considered as a great liability.

Discussion With Challenges Of Women Empowerment Overcomes Through Higher Education

Higher education is a important tool to become empowerment of women. The greatest single factor which can incredibly improve the status of women in any society is education. It is indispensable that education enables women not only to gain more knowledge about the world outside of her hearth and home but helps her to get status, positive self esteem, and self confidence, necessary courage and inner strength to face challenges in life. Apparently it also facilitates them to procure a job and supplement the income of family and achieve social status. Education especially of women has a major impact on health and nutrition as an instrument of developing a sustainable strategy for population control.

Moreover educated women can play an equally important role as men in nation building. Thus there is no denying fact that education empowers women. Indeed the different organs of the United Nations and experts on women's liberation argue for women's education as the basic step to attain equality with men.

The National Literacy Mission is another positive step towards eradication of illiteracy in the age group of 15-35 years. Women' education has assumed special significance in the context of India's planned development, as it is incorporated in every Five-year plans as the major program for the development of women. By having very high education, women are expected to get a very good job in order to save their own life. It is cannot be neglected that higher education is really important for everyone since it is the source of knowledge which must be implemented in everyday life. That's why the need to know what field every individual can hold is the most important one.

IV. FINDINGS

1. There needs to be a sea – change in the mind set of the people in the country. Not just the women themselves, but the men have to wake up to a world that is moving towards equality and equity. It is better that this is embraced earlier than later for our own good.
2. There are several Government programs and NGOs in the Country, there is still a wide gap that exists between those under protection and those not.
3. Poverty and illiteracy add to these complications, The Empowerment of Women begins with a guarantee of their health and safety.

4. Empowerment of Women could only be achieved if their economic and social status is improved. This could be possible only by adopting definite social and economic policies with a view of total development of women and to make them realize that they have the potential to be strong human beings.
5. In order to create a sustainable world, we must begin to Empower Women.
6. Globalization, Liberalization and other Socio - Economic forces have given some respite to a large proportion of the population. However, there are still quite a few areas where women empowerment in India is largely lacking.

V. SUGGESTIONS

1. Sufficient and regular rural development program for women is to be adopted in rural areas
2. Proper rural development policy for woman is to be adopted within the stipulated time period.
3. The exiting program should be revised and new program is to be adopted in practice.
4. The concern organization should be provided required facilities for rural women for the rural development.
5. All the rural women should be given opportunity for advantage without any prejudice.
6. The concern organization and other related agencies should come forward for making awareness for rural woman on various rural development facilities provided in the rural areas.

VI. CONCLUSION

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. Women empowerment seems to be comparatively poor. Women represent half the world's population and gender inequality exists in every nation on the planet. Until women are given the same opportunities that men are, entire societies will be destined to perform below their true potentials. The greatest need of the hour is change of social attitude to women. "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. Government initiatives alone would not be sufficient to achieve this goal. Society must take initiative to create a climate in which there is no gender discrimination and women have full opportunities of self decision making and participating in social, political and economic life of the country with a sense of equality. For centuries women were not treated equal to men in many ways.

VII. REFERENCES

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