

Women Empowerment and Economic Development: A Review

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Abstract

Women empowerment and economic development are closely related with each other. In one direction, economic development plays a major role in lessening the inequality between men and women but in other direction, empowerment of women increases economic development. The implication here is that by ensuring just one of these two i.e. women empowerment and economic development would set everything right. Present paper is an attempt to review the literature on both sides i.e. women empowerment and economic development, and also to bring equality among men and women. To review the concept of women empowerment and economic development which is the focus of this paper, the agenda of women education has been taken here. Women education plays a very important role in the development of the country. Education is a milestone for women empowerment because it enables them to respond to challenges i.e. to change their traditional roles and routine life. We cannot neglect the importance of education in reference to women empowerment and economic development is concerned. In India women education has been the need of the hour because education is the foundation stone for empowerment of women. Women education has been a major concern of both government and society, as educated women play a very important role in the development of society. Education also brings a decrease in imbalances and functions as a tool to improve the status of women within the family and develop the concept of active participation of women in all spheres of life. We all should emphasize on quality and quantity education of women to attain both desired goals i.e. women empowerment and economic development.

Keywords: Education, Women Empowerment, Economic Development, Milestone, Society

INTRODUCTION

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".

Education is an important factor for women empowerment and economic development. In our society discrimination between men and women is a very common practice whether it is done knowingly or unknowingly. Right from birth and through the phases of life and up to the time of death women receive discrimination. There has been continued inequality and oppressed behavior that women receive in all sectors and spheres of life. Thus it is the need of the hour that women are empowered in all walks of life. Women need to fight against all gender biases which she naturally receive in due course of life. Women really have to fight against the system to live and breathe in fresh air. For this fight with the society, women require strength, stamina, will power and determination. These mentioned described prerequisites of fight will automatically be transferred in women with education alone. Education empowers women and increases the economic development and also develops her confidence level. According to the description of United National Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) the term women's empowerment means:

- Acquiring knowledge and understanding of gender relations and the ways in which 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 exercise bargaining power.
- Developing the ability to organize and influence the direction of social change, to create a more social and economic order, nationally and internationally.

The word 'Empowerment' describes a particular area or field within which women can have freedom of either choice or action. It also includes the list of activities which woman can perform or justify her 'self'. This 'self' concept of woman gives her strength to use her powers. Empowerment provides ability to women to act in a

way to put everything right in a system, systematic direction that is marginalized and disadvantaged woman aims to change the nature and direction of treatment which she gets in society. If we broadly talk about empowerment it can be economic, social and political. Thus empowerment directly leads to development and development is the ultimate ladder for greater empowerment. We all know that women contribute to almost half of the population and when women will be empowered they will be built strong nation and strong nation will ultimately be economically strong. Women of any nation will be empowered if and only if she will be educated.

Education is the backbone of the society because individuals will be strong only with education. Education is the basic tool for women to respond to challenges given by the society. It is a necessary input to ensure equity among men and women. Today education is considered as a basic requirement and a fundamental right for all citizens of a country. A greater part of women population of India is weak, backward, exploited, illiterate and oppressed. Our country India is developing country and can become a developed nation if the women of the country contribute best and best can be contributed if women are educated and empowered.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the impact of education on women empowerment.
- To study challenges and changes from education on women empowerment.
- To study relation between women empowerment and economic development.
- To study relation between women empowerment and education.

NEED OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Despite of growing economy (with a GDP of 6.1 per cent in 2018), certain issues such as poverty, corruption, and inequality continue to emerge in India. Women have been continuously excluded from all the domains like social, economic and political which presents an imbalance in society. India ranks 127 out of 188 countries in the gender inequality index as per Gender Inequality Index (UN) with a score of 0.524. Due to less literacy level and particularly 42% at graduation level women are not going into employment sector. But still the number of rural women who work in unorganized sector is quite good.

We need women empowerment because for the following reasons:-

- Gender Discrimination - Although in our constitution men and women have been granted equal rights but still there is discrimination among male and female. This gender discrimination also snatches human rights. This scene is prevalent not only in India but it is a worldwide truth that women are inferior to men.
- Women Education - Female education is very important because it involves health education, sex education, religious education, political education and also cultural education. The issue of education of women has been raised in the introduction of this paper.
- Female Foeticide - Female foeticide is the killing of female foetus in the womb of women. Gender is detected medically by ultra sound or any other techniques and before birth female foetus is aborted in the womb. This evil can be eradicated if women are educated.
- Female Infanticide - Female infanticide is the deliberate killing of newborn female child. The main reason behind female infanticide is dowry system. The government is taking steps to abolish dowry system but complete success has not been achieved yet.
- Dowry System - In India dowry system is quite old and is increasing day by day. It includes giving of goods, cash, property, electrical appliances and other household items to the groom side at the time of marriage and also in various family functions after marriage too. In order to stop or to eradicate this evil women need to be educated.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH EDUCATION

Women are very important section of a society, state or country. Education which is very important for empowerment can bring positive changes. The constitution of India also suggests adopting affirmative measures for spreading different means to empower women. Education can bring significant and important differences in the lives of women. The concept of women empowerment being a global issue was introduced at the International Women Conference at Nairobi in 1985. The importance of women education cannot be neglected in reference to women empowerment. Changes in women education on global scenario are also observed and India to be in pace with the increasing changes in education has to concentrate on women education.

Literacy Rate in India

Year	Total Literacy	Male Literacy (%)	Female Literacy (%)
1951	18.3	27.2	8.9
1981	43.7	26.6	29.5
1991	52.2	64.1	39.3
2001	65.38	75.85	54.16
2011	69.30	78.88	59.28
2018	74.34	82.37	65.79

*Source: Census of India (2011) & Statista

Today, the female literacy levels according to the Literacy Rate 2018 census are 65.79% where the male literacy rate is over 80%. Even beyond literacy there is much that education can do for women's rights, dignity and security. Education is the key to unlock the golden door of freedom for development.

In India, from the ancient times to the present, men have always exceeded in getting education than women. This has been an important factor for the country to not develop in all spheres and fields like social, political, economic etc. The above table clearly reflects that there has not been any time in India when the literacy rate is either equal or near to it. Though we got freedom and are free to do anything but women have always received a lower position or status in the context of education and equality. The reason behind getting lesser percentage of education is that women have not been able to change her situation due to being marginalized or uneducated or less educated. Women empowerment which is the focus of the paper cannot flourish or effected unless strong focus is laid on education of women

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Women empowerment and economic development are inter related to each other. One cannot increase significantly until and unless the other does not. Duflo's explanation is that there is a positive relation between women's rights and per capita GDP in terms of cost benefit calculations. From his point of view it is clear that by increase in women empowerment the economic development may raise. There is an urgent need to educate women to empower them. This will ultimately lead women to the doorway of economic development. Though women are actively participating in all fronts but still women empowerment and economic development needs uplift.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND EDUCATION

"To educate girls is to reduce poverty" - Kofi Annan

In the present century both men and women are getting equal opportunities for education. This golden opportunity of getting equality in education will definitely lead any country to the powerful economy. Female education plays following important roles in the family, society and country.

- Female education contributes towards health of the family.
- Female education contributes towards national income of country.
- Female education will ensure nutritious food habits to the children
- Educated women are always active in political field.
- Educated women are well aware of their rights and duties.

Former World Bank President, James Wolfensohn, addressing the Fourth UN Conference on Women, said:

"Education for girls has a catalytic effect on every dimension of development: lower child and maternal mortality rates; increased educational attainment by daughters and sons; higher productivity; and improved environmental management. Together, these can mean faster economic growth and, equally important, wider distribution of the fruits of growth.... More education for girls will also enable more and more women to attain leadership positions at all levels of society: from health clinics in the villages to parliaments in the capitals. This, in turn, will change the way societies will deal with problems and raise the quality of global decision-making."

SUGGESTIONS

Some suggestions are hereby given to improve level of women empowerment in the country.

1. Priority should be given to women education which is the grass root of every problem in society.
2. Awareness programs need to be organized for giving primary education and higher education to every girl of a country.
3. Safety and support should be given to women to work in a healthy environment.
4. Strict rules and policies must be framed to control the malpractices in the society.
5. Vocational training programs should be organized to educate women.

6. Govt. should increase the annual budget for Women Empowerment because if women are empowered, India will become more prosperous.

CONCLUSION

Present paper is an attempt to suggest measures for the overall development of any country. In development, women play a vital role and thus women should be empowered. But women will be empowered if we will use the basic tool of imparting education to each and every female. Women education will develop decision making capacity. Education can be given to women if suitable environment is available which includes safety at every platform. By adopting these measures we hope to think of our country as a developed country in near future.

"When women are educated, their countries become stronger and more prosperous"

Michelle Obama

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