



Empowering Women through Education: Challenges and the Way Out

Vineeta Rathaur

Assistant Professor (HomeScience)
S.S. PG college, Shahjahanpur &
(Research scholar)
MJPRU, Bareilly
My contact: 09415529373
vineetarathaur8786@gmail.com

Dr. Anupma Mehrotra

Associate Professor,
(Home Science)
D.A.K. PG college
Moradabad

Ashish Rathaur

Student of MBA Shobhit
Univ. Meerut

Abstract

Empowerment actually is a process that addresses all sources and structures of power. An important means of women's empowerment is economic independence through information, knowledge and necessary skills. Education is the tool that can help break the pattern of gender discrimination and bring drastic change for women in developing countries. Women empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social, educational, gender or economic strength of individuals and communities of women. There are several challenges that are plaguing the issues of women's right in India. Targeting these issues will directly benefit the empowerment of women in India as Poverty, Health and Safety, Professional Inequality, Morality and Inequality, Household Inequality etc. The Government programmes for women development began as early as 1954 in India but the actual participation began only in 1974. Thus, we find that Empowerment actually is a process that addresses all sources and structures of power. and Education is the tool that can help break the pattern of gender discrimination and bring drastic change for women in developing countries.

Key words: Challenges, Empowerment, Education, Way Out, Women.

Introduction

***"If you educate a man, you educate a person
but if you educate a woman, you educate a
nation"***

Stressing on the need for empowering women through women's education, the authors say that education enables a women to become strong physically by giving her knowledge about good physical health, which would ultimately benefit her mental health. The value of women's education has received global recognition over the past two decades with the mounting awareness in the drive towards women's equality. Education is the weapon which strengthen the personality and makes one confident. Education helps in the mental development of women and a mentally satisfied and contented woman is an asset to a family, society and nation and she can use her efficiency and potential in the right manner. Women can maintain a proper balance

between physical health and mental health with good education.

Empowerment actually is a process that addresses all sources and structures of power. An important means of women's empowerment is economic independence through information, knowledge and necessary skills. The UNESCO's World Conference on Higher Education (1998) and the World Education Forum (2000) made a commitment to the attainment of many goals for women's education and empowerment. Education is the tool that can help break the pattern of gender discrimination and bring drastic change for women in developing countries. 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

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educational status social status and age. Policies on Women's empowerment exist at the national, state and local levels in many sectors, including health, education, economic opportunities, gender based violence and political participation. However there are significant gap between policy advancements and actual practice at the community level. Empowerment of women is essentially the process of upliftment of economic, social and political status of women, the traditionally underprivileged ones, in the society. It is the process of guarding them against all forms of violence. Women empowerment involves the building up of a society, a political environment, wherein women can breathe without the fear of oppression, exploitation, apprehension, discrimination and the general feeling of persecution which goes with being a woman in a traditionally male dominated structure.

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.

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.

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.

Challenges

There are several constraints that check the process of women empowerment in India. Social norms and family structure in developing countries like India, manifests and perpetuate the subordinate status of women. One of the norms is the continuing preference for a son over the birth of a girl child which in present in almost all societies and communities. The society is more biased in favor of male child in respect of education, nutrition and other opportunities. The root cause of this type of attitude lies in the belief that male child inherits the clan in India with an exception of Meghalaya. Women often internalize the traditional concept of their role as natural thus inflicting an injustice upon them. Poverty is the reality of life for the vast majority women in India. It is the another factor that poses challenge in realizing women's empowerment. There are several challenges that are plaguing the issues of women's right in India. Targeting these issues will directly benefit the empowerment of women in India

- **Poverty:** Poverty is considered the greatest threat to peace in the world, and eradication of poverty should be a national goal as important as the eradication of illiteracy. Due to this, women are exploited as domestic helps.
- **Health and Safety:** The health and safety concerns of women are paramount for the wellbeing of a country and is an important factor in gauging the empowerment of women in a country. However there are alarming concerns where maternal healthcare is concerned.
- **Professional Inequality:** This inequality is practiced in employment and promotions. Women face countless handicaps in male customized and dominated environs in Government Offices and Private enterprises.
- **Morality and Inequality:** Due to gender bias in health and nutrition there is unusually high morality rate in women



reducing their population further especially in Asia, Africa and china.

- **Household Inequality:** Household relations show gender bias in infinitesimally small but significant manners all across the globe, more so, in India e.g. sharing burden of housework, childcare and menial works by so called division of work.

Need of Women Empowerment

- Decision Making Power
- Freedom of Movement
- Access to Education
- Access to Employment
- Exposure to Media
- Domestic Violence

Ways to Empower Women

- Changes in women's mobility and social interaction.
- Changes in women's labour patterns.
- Changes in women's access to and control over resources.
- Changes in women's control over Decision making.
- Providing education.
- Self employment and Self help group.
- Providing minimum needs like Nutrition, Health, Sanitation, Housing.
- Other than this society should change the mentality towards the word women.
- Encouraging women to develop in their fields they are good at and make a career.

Government Schemes For Women Empowerment

The Government programmes for women development began as early as 1954 in India but the actual participation began only in 1974. At present, the Government of India has over 34 schemes for women operated by different department and ministries. Some of these are as follows;

- Rastriya Mahila Kosh (RMK) 1992-1993

- Mahila Samridhi Yojana (MSY) October,1993.
- Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY) 1995.
- Mahila Samakhya being implemented in about 9000 villages.
- Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women(STEP).
- National Mission for Empowerment of Women.
- Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) (1975),
- Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescence Girls (RGSEAG) (2010).
- Dhanalakahmi (2008).
- Prime Minister's Rojgar Yojana (PMRY).
- Women's Development Corporation Scheme (WDCS).
- Working Women's Forum.
- Indira Mahila Kendra.
- Mahila Samiti Yojana.
- Indira Priyadarahini Yojana.
- SIDBI's Mahila Udyam Nidhi Mahila Vikas Nidhi.
- NGO's Credit Schemes.

The efforts of government and its different agencies are ably supplemented by nongovernmental organizations that are playing an equally important role in facilitating women empowerment. Despite concerted efforts of governments and NGOs there are certain gaps. Of course we have come a long way in empowering women yet the future journey is difficult and demanding.

Conclusion

Thus, we find that Empowerment actually is a process that addresses all sources and structures of power. An important means of women's empowerment is economic independence through information, knowledge and necessary skills and Education is the tool that can help break the pattern of gender discrimination and bring drastic change for women in developing countries. Women empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual,

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political, social, educational, gender or economic strength of individuals and communities of women. 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. 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. Education is the weapon which strengthen the personality and makes one confident. Education helps in the mental development of women and a mentally satisfied and contented woman is an asset to a family, society and nation and she can use her efficiency and potential in the right manner. Women can maintain a proper balance between physical health and mental health with good education.

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