

Gender Equality: Women Empowerment

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ABSTRACT:

Gender equality is a human right that entitles all individuals, regardless of gender, to live with freedom and dignity. Gender equality is also a prerequisite for global development and poverty reduction. Empowered women contribute immeasurably to the improvement of the health conditions, educational standing, and production of entire families and communities, so enhancing the prospects for the future generation. In addition, the Millennium Development Goal emphasizes gender equality and women's empowerment. Gender equality and women's empowerment are now universally acknowledged as important pillars for achieving development outcomes. Bearing in mind the status of women's empowerment and its determinants in India, this paper attempts to show some of the important factors of inequalities that exist in our country in order to get a sense of how empowered women are.

KEYWORDS: *gender equality, empowerment, women participation,*

I. INTRODUCTION

Only when women and men have the same opportunities, rights, and responsibilities in all sectors of life will gender equality be accomplished. This entails sharing authority and influence equally, as well as having equal opportunity in the economic and social arenas. Equal access to education and professional opportunities will help women to accomplish their personal goals. Gender equality necessitates the emancipation of women, with an emphasis on detecting and redressing power disparities and granting women greater agency over their own lives. When women are empowered, the entire family benefits, so benefiting society as a whole, and these benefits frequently have a ripple impact on subsequent generations.

According to the 2011 Census, India's population has reached 1210 million, up from 301 million in 1951, with females comprising 48.5% of the population. India's population represented 17.5% of the total global population and ranked second. The sex ratio was 930 in 1971, and according to the 2011 Census, it has increased to 940. In addition, the female literacy rate increased from 18.3% in 1961 to 74% in 2011 and the male-female literacy gap decreased from 26.6% in 1981 to 16.7% in 2011. Women's empowerment in India is strongly reliant on a variety of factors, including their geographical location (rural/urban), level of education, social standing (caste and class), and age. There are national, state, and local policies on women's empowerment in numerous sectors, including health, education, economic opportunity, gender-based violence, and political engagement. The scope and coverage of the introduced programs, which include efforts for the Women's economic and social empowerment and the promotion of gender equality has been expanding. Currently, the following programmes in India aim to empower women and promote gender equality:

- Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) (1975)
- Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (RGSEAG) (2010)
- The Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Scheme for Children of Working Mothers.
- Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) (2009-10)
- Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP)
- Dhanalakshmi (2008)
- Short Stay Homes
- Swadhar
- Ujjawala (2007)
- Scheme for Gender Budgeting (XI Plan)
- National Mission for Empowerment of Women
- Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (1993)

Notwithstanding the successful implementation of the plans and programs, there remain significant gaps between policy successes and actual community practice. According to the Global Gender Gap Index (2016), India is not doing enough for its women. In 2012, the country ranked 105 out of 135 countries; in 2016, it ranked 87 out of 144 countries.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PRESENT STUDY

This research study aims to accomplish the following:

1. Determine the degree of equality between girls and boys in primary, secondary, and postsecondary education.
2. To learn about Gender Equality and Women's Economic Participation and Opportunity Share.
3. Determine the Gender Equality and Women's Access to Resources.
4. To investigate Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in the Political Field.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For the purposes of this study, secondary sources were used to obtain data. It is compiled from Journals, Magazines, and numerous other publications, including the reports and documents of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, the Government of India National family health survey report, etc.

III. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

- Gender Equality in primary, secondary education, tertiary education
Education is the most essential factor in achieving gender equality and empowering women. Gender parity in education is achieved by the enrolment of females in elementary school, their survival, and their progression to higher education levels. From 2010-2011 to 2014-2015, significant progress has been made towards gender equality in education, as indicated by several crucial metrics.
- Gender Parity Index (GPI)
The Gender Parity Index (GPI) is the ratio of female students to male students in the basic, secondary, and postsecondary levels of education. Hence, the GPI (based on GER), which is unaffected by the demographic structure of the relevant age group, presents a picture of gender equality in schooling. From 2010-11 to 2014-15, tremendous progress towards gender equality in education was made, as seen in the table below.

GENDER PARITY INDEX

YEAR	PRIMARY EDUCATION	SECONDARY EDUCATION	HIGHER EDUCATION
2010-11	1.01	0.88	0.86
2011-12	1.01	0.93	0.88
2012-13	1.02	0.96	0.89
2013-14	1.03	1.0	0.92
2014-15	1.03	1.01	0.92

Government of India Ministry of Human Resource Development website

As seen in the table above, enrolment in basic school is more favourable for females now that the GPI has surpassed 1. In the recent past, rapid progress towards gender equality has also been noted at the secondary and higher education levels.

Throughout the study period from 2010-2011 to 2014-2015, a noteworthy improvement was identified at all levels of education, as measured by the ratio of females to boys enrolled in school. During the study period, 8 to 10% growth is recorded in upper primary, secondary, and higher education.

GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY AND PARTICIPATION

Women's labor force participation is viewed as an indicator of diminishing discrimination and rising female empowerment. It is believed that the feminization of the labor force also indicates an increase in women's chances and social standing. Share of Women in Employment measures the extent to which labour markets are open to women in industry and service sectors, which impacts not only equal employment opportunity for women but also economic efficiency via exibility in the labour market and reflects economic factors in the social empowerment of women.

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MOBILITY AND DETERMINATION

In addition to educational and economic empowerment, changes in women's mobility and social contact, as well as their participation in decision-making, are required. According to figures from the NSS 68th Round (2011-2012), the proportion of female-headed households in rural areas was and urban areas were 11.5 percent

and 12.4 percent, respectively. A very tiny fraction of Indian women has the freedom to make household decisions, see their family and relatives, and go outside the home. However, in most Indian tribes, women do not have the choice to choose their number of children. Likewise, a woman is not free to spend her spouse's income and even her own income according to her preferences and needs.

GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ELDS

To make social and political institutions more representative, it is necessary for women to have a larger role in the social and political realm. It serves as a tool for women's empowerment and promotes gender-sensitive decision making. In terms of political representation, women are underrepresented in India's Lok Sabha (Lower House), Rajya Sabha (Upper House), and State Legislatures. At the 2014 General Election, a total of 62 women were elected, representing only 11.4% of the Lok Sabha, while only 11.9% of the Rajya Sabha's current representatives are women. Similarly, women's representation in state legislatures and councils is quite low. As of 1st August 2014, the average share of women in state assembly and state councils was 8% and 4%, respectively. The participation of women in the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) has increased to 46.7% as of 1st March 2013 as a result of the reservation of one-third of seats for women in all tiers of the PRIs. As of 1st April 2014, there were just 2 women judges out of 30 judges in the Supreme Court, 58 women judges out of 609 judges in the various High Courts, with the highest percentage (25%) in the Delhi High Court, and no women judges in 6 High Courts (Women and Men in India, 2014).

GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN ACCESS TO RESOURCES

Access to resources is essential for women's economic freedom, as their freedom of movement is tied to their economic independence and also infuses them with power and increases their agency. As a measure of economic independence, the National Family Health Survey-3 has identified five relevant variables: knowing of loan program, obtaining a loan, having a bank account, higher educational attainment, and working outside the home.

ISSUES TO BE TACKLED FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND GENDER EQUALITY

In India, women are discriminated against and disenfranchised at every level of society, including social involvement, economic opportunity and participation, political participation, access to education and access to resources, etc. The majority of Indian women are poor, uneducated, and inadequately trained. They frequently find themselves in the everyday battle of maintaining a poorly equipped family and are unable to escape the oppressive and retrogressive socioeconomic conditions. Despite the fact that many things are occurring and a substantial amount of resources are being expended in the name of women's empowerment in India, the actual situation stays unchanged and, in many cases, worsens. Systemic issues with deep roots remain to be resolved. For women's empowerment and gender equality in India, the following are significant challenges that must be addressed.

- Reducing gender disparities in access to school and educational attainment are crucial steps toward achieving gender equality and minimizing women's disempowerment. Education, especially higher education for women, is a crucial enabler of demographic change, family welfare, and improved health and nutrition for women and their families. Specific measures should be implemented to construct a gender-sensitive educational system, increase the enrolment and retention rates of females, and enhance the quality of education in order to promote women's lifelong learning and occupational/vocational/technical skill development.
- The prevalence of child marriage in our society must be eliminated. This is due to the fact that a young age at marriage is a sign of the poor status of women in society and limits women's access to education.
- A woman must be physically fit to be able to face the obstacles of equality. Women must have access to inexpensive, comprehensive, and high-quality health care.
- The training programs for women in agriculture and other linked occupations should be increased for the benefit of women employed in the agricultural industry.
- Work, especially in the formal sector and for pay, can empower women by enabling financial independence. As a means of enhancing their standing in society, women should be compensated fairly and given equal employment opportunities.
- Violence against women must disappear from society. In addition to strict laws and regulations, the only way to combat violence against women is through a change in attitude inside the family, the society, and among female members of the society. Programs for gender sensitization and gender training are also essential.
- Political participation of women has been regarded as a crucial indicator of women's empowerment. In India, women's representation in the legislature is quite low. Thus, the appropriate steps must be made to enhance the number of women in the Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, State Assemblies, and State Councils.

- However, women's empowerment cannot occur until women decide to empower themselves collectively. Women should unite as a unifying force and begin grassroots self-empowerment initiatives.

IV. CONCLUSION

While women comprise about half of India's population, significant economic development is impossible without their participation and empowerment. For inclusive economic growth, women's empowerment is of the utmost importance. It is essential for attaining sustained economic growth in our nation and beyond. A significant proportion of women still lack sufficient autonomy over their own life's value decisions. The data also demonstrated that it is necessary to include cultural and social influences, which play a significant role in determining women's autonomy and empowerment, in addition to economic resources and material affluence.

In addition to the government, civil society organizations and all other stakeholders must step up and participate in the women's empowerment process. This is an urgent matter.