

Women's Empowerment in India: A Survey

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ABSTRACT: *The purpose of this study is to examine the state of women's empowerment in India employing different metrics based on secondary data. Despite the government's efforts, women in India remain generally disempowered and have a lesser status than males, according to the research. In terms of education and employment, there is a gender divide. Women's decision-making authority in the home and freedom of mobility differ significantly depending on their age, education, and job position. It has been shown that women continue to accept uneven gender standards in society. For one reason or another, more than half of women think that wife abuse is acceptable. Women have less control over how their money is spent. With age, education, and where you live, you have more control over your monetary earnings. Women are also less exposed to the media than males. Domestic abuse is more common among rural women than among metropolitan women. In terms of political involvement, there is also a significant gender divide. The research continues by stating that access to education and work are merely enabling elements for empowerment; nevertheless, progress toward the objective is mainly dependent on people's attitudes toward gender equality.*

KEYWORDS: *Development, Empowerment, Rights, Social issues, Violence, Women*

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's world, empowerment has become one of the most often used words to describe women's growth and development. Empowerment is one of the primary goals of women's organizations, non-governmental development agencies, activists, politicians, governments, and international organizations. Women gain knowledge and comprehension of programs, plans, measures, strategies, policies, and regulations as a result of empowerment[1]. It is seen as a project that most people go through, which ultimately results in changes and transformations. Empowerment is defined as a method of changing power distribution in individual relationships as well as in societal institutions. Another definition is the process of acquiring, providing, assigning, or giving access to control over such means and resources. As a result of the above, the term is more relevant to oppressed classes, underprivileged people, illiterate people, indigenous peoples, and women who are fighting for their rights in society[2].

Women's agencies, budget allocation to girls and projects, an increase in the number of ladies' leaders at the village, district, provincial, and national levels, women's involvement in the design, method, development, and alertness of technology, and participation in the judicial system are some of the measures that have been devised to promote empowerment at the community or organizational levels[3]. On a national level, they include attention to social and political rights, girls' inclusion in the popular nationwide development plan, women's networks and courses, the degree to which women are publicly recognized and expressed, and the extent to which women's concerns may be addressed to the media[4].

According to Martha Nussbaum, the intuitive notion underlying the capacity is twofold. First, there are some tasks that are especially essential to human existence. Second, there is something that can be done in a genuinely human, not just animal, manner. She develops a cross-cultural list of skills as an essential component of genuinely human functioning. They are as follows:

- Life-being able to live to the end of a normal human life: not dying prematurely or before one's life has been reduced to the point where it is no longer worth living.
- Physical well-being — the ability to enjoy excellent health, including reproductive health, sufficient nutrition, and adequate housing.
- Physical Integrity - The ability to travel freely from one location to another, to be safe from physical attack, including sexual assault and domestic abuse; to have chances for sex pleasure and reproductive choice.

1.1. Women's Education

Many factors contribute to women's empowerment, including the formation of women's groups, the availability of aid structures for women, the availability of women's unique records and other pertinent information, the availability of a budget, feminist management, networking, high-quality media coverage, a positive coverage climate, and the promotion of training and talent development, to name a few. Workplace stress, isolation of women from each other and from the community, low education or loss of literacy skills, traditional viewpoints that limit women's participation in various activities and events, a lack of funds, the prevalence of conflicts, disputes, wars, internal strife, and militarization are all factors that limit women's empowerment.

Thus according Paragraph 14 of the Indian Constitution, all people, including women, are comparable in the legal sense and are entitled to equal protection under the law within India's territorial jurisdiction. It means that under comparable situations, all people, regardless of gender, should be treated equally. The state should not create any distinctions between individuals, and the law should be applied equally to everyone. Article 15 of the Indian constitution forbids the government from discriminating against any person, including women, on the basis of race, caste, gender, ethnicity, religion, place of birth, and socio-economic history. It says that all residents are entitled to the same rights in terms of access to stores, hotels, restaurants, banks, infrastructure, and public spaces, among other things. However, the nation has the authority to establish specific arrangements for females and children, as well as scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and other underprivileged groups.

According to Article 16 of the Indian Constitution, "all citizens, including girls, shall have equality of opportunity in matters of public employment, regardless of their gender, races, castes, ethnicity, faiths, or socioeconomic origins." There are certain exceptions, for example, Parliament may prescribe via legislation that a home in the state is required for a specific job. Certain positions for backward training, as well as for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, may be ordered by the state, and appointments in connection with religious businesses can be reserved for members of that faith. According to Article 17 of the Indian Constitution, the device of untouchability has been abolished, and the Systematic Disenfranchisement Act of 1955 has been passed by the parliament. This Act was modified in 1976 by the Untouchability Change Act, which made the legislation more severe in order to eliminate untouchability from society. According to Article 19 of the Indian Constitution, every citizen, including women, has the right to freedom of speech and expression, the right to gather peacefully and without arms, the right to form unions or associations, the right to freely move throughout the United States, the right to reside or settle in any part of the United States, and the right to pursue any profession or carry on any lawful trade or enterprise.

According to Article 21 of the Indian Constitution, "no individual or woman shall be deprived of his or her lifestyles or non-public liberty except in accordance with the process established by law." This right to exist includes the right to live with dignity, the right to suffer, and many other things. Domestic violence against girls is also a violation of Article 21 of the Indian constitution, since it undermines the self-respect and dignity of the victims. According to Article 21A of the Indian Constitution, "the state must provide loose and compulsory training to all children aged six to fourteen years in such a manner as the state may establish by legislation." To provide relief to the women accused - According to Article 20 of the Indian Constitution, no person, including women, will be convicted of any crime unless there is a breach of the law, and no person will be tried and punished for the same crime more than once.

If a person is not accused of any crime, he or she will be compelled to testify against himself or herself. To stop the illegal trafficking of girls and lady babies. Article 23 of India's constitution prohibits human trafficking and forced labor. In response to this report, Parliament passed the Suppression of Immoral Trafficking in Women and Girls Act, 1956, which has since been renamed the Immoral Trafficking Act 1956, with the intent of penalizing acts that result in human trafficking. To limit child work, particularly among women's infants, in accordance with Article 24 of the Indian Constitution, which states: "Employment of children under the age of fourteen years in a manufacturing facility or mine, or in any other dangerous occupation is illegitimate." All men and women, including ladies, are equally entitled to freedom of judgment of right and evil, as well as the right to profess, practice, and promote religion, according to Article 25 of the Indian Constitution.

Decision-Making Authority Women's decision-making authority in the home is one of the most significant markers of women's empowerment. Only 37% of presently married women engage in making choices about their health care, major home purchases, purchases for everyday household necessities, and visiting their family members and relatives, either alone or jointly with their spouse.

1.2.The Case of India

In India, the concept of gender equality is codified in the Constitution, with mentions in the Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties, and Directive Principles. The Constitution not only guarantees women's equality, but also allows states to take affirmative discrimination measures in their favor. The position of Indian women has been affected by their history in the past. There is evidence that women in the Vedic era held the highest positions in society (Seth, 2001). They were entitled to an education and were free to stay single and dedicate their lives to the pursuit of knowledge and self-realization. All of the labor and sacrifices were shared equally by married women and their husbands. They were educated in a variety of fields, including astrology, geography, veterinary medicine, and even martial arts. There have been examples of women participating in wars and battles. They were well-liked both within and outside the house. The magnificent position of women gradually eroded as a result of various socio-political developments, particularly throughout the Middle Ages.

During the colonial period, Indian women's demands for equality began to gain traction. Known social reformers and national leaders such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Annie Besant, Sorojini Naidu, and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar worked tirelessly to raise women's knowledge of their position and were successful in eliminating societal ills such as sati pratha, child marriage, and polygamy. They also promoted remarriage for widows and women's education.

The reformers were effective in establishing a foundation for women's growth and equality. Indian civilization evolved from a traditional to a contemporary state throughout time. As a result, women grew more liberal and aware of different lifestyle options. They are now opposing the patriarchal system on a small scale since they are capable of overcoming the conventional boundaries set by society.

1.3. Acceptance of a Gender Role That Isn't Equal

Women's protests against uneven gender roles, such as son favoritism, wife abuse, and so on, are another indication of women's empowerment. According to the statistics in Table 5, 54% of Indian women think that wife beating is acceptable for any of the reasons listed. Similarly, 35% of women think it is acceptable to ignore their homes or children. Women's age and home structure have little effect on their willingness to beat their wives, but education has a significant impact. Even among the most educated women, at least one out of every three agrees with one or more reasons for wife abuse. Those in rural regions are more accepting of wife beating than women in metropolitan ones. Never married women had lower levels of agreement than married women.

1.4. Women's Empowerment Barriers

The progress of women's empowerment in India is hampered by a number of obstacles. In developing nations like India, social norms and family structures reflect and sustain women's subordination. One of these conventions is the continued preference for the birth of a boy over the birth of a female child, which can be found in virtually every society and community. The grip of this desire has increased rather than diminished, and the decreasing sex ratio is the most visible proof of this. In terms of education, nutrition, and other possibilities, society is more skewed in favor of male children. The idea that a male kid inherits the clan throughout India, with the exception of Meghalaya, is the underlying reason of this mentality. Women often accept the conventional idea of their position as natural, causing them to suffer injustice. For the overwhelming majority of women in India, poverty is a fact of life. It is another element that makes achieving women's empowerment difficult. Girls are the primary sufferers in impoverished families; they are hungry and denied access to higher education and other opportunities. However, if they are financially self-sufficient or have more control over their resources, they have more autonomy in the home and in the public realm and are no longer poor.

Another issue impeding the empowering process is a lack of knowledge of legal and constitutional requirements, as well as a failure to realize them. The majority of women are unaware of their legal rights. Even women who are aware of the problem lack the confidence to pursue legal action. The law that has the greatest impact on women is related to marriage and inheritance. When it comes to inheritance rights, women usually do not attempt to inherit property left by their parents if their brothers are still living. The ancient notion that land should not be given to anybody other than the patriarchal families is still in effect.

1.5. The Act contains provisions such as:

- The 1930 Child Marriage Resistance Act
- The Suppression of Immoral Trafficking in Women Act of 1987 was enacted to combat the illegal trafficking of women.

- The Indecent Exposure of Women Act has not resulted in the prohibition of the practices mentioned.

The first of these three is mostly effective in preventing child marriage. In cases of immoral trafficking and indecent exposure to women, the law came close to failing. Indecent exposure of women in all mediums of media occurs often, with little to no repercussions. Although legal rights exist to provide an enabling environment, they have not been particularly effective in achieving women's empowerment[5].

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A lot of studies on women's empowerment have been conducted both globally and in India. Some research focused on methodological problems, while others focused on empirical analysis and empowering metrics and tools. In this section, we've highlighted some of the most significant worldwide research, followed by studies performed in India.

Moser concentrated on the interrelationships between gender mainstreaming, gender policy formation, and gender planning and practices implementation. Shields offered an exploratory framework for understanding and developing the notion of empowerment both theoretically and practically, with a special emphasis on women's perceptions of empowerment in their lives[6]. Anand and Sen attempted to create a gender inequity metric. Pillarisetti and Gillivray focused mostly on GEM construction technique, composition, and determinant[7]. Bardhan and Klasen evaluated GDI and GEM, two UNDP gender-related indicators, and concluded that both measures had significant conceptual and empirical flaws. They proposed several changes to the metrics, including a revision of the GDI's earned income component. As a result of their recommendations, UNDP has changed the method for calculating the GDI from 1999, without noting that it differed from the prior year's approach[8].

While providing a critical review of both measures, Dijkstra identified their strengths and weaknesses and proposed a new measure called the Standardized Index of Gender Equality (SIGE), which attempts to encompass all possible dimensions of gender equality while avoiding the conceptual and methodological issues that plagued the GDI and GEM. SIGE, he continued, may be used as a first estimate of such an overall index. Malhotra et al. raised methodological concerns in measuring and analyzing women's empowerment in their study[9]. Dijkstra suggested that the UNDP should take the initiative in either developing a new gender equality indicator or revising the GDI and GEM. On the basis of a short examination of alternatives provided in the literature, he gave a thorough recommendation for both options. Klasen proposed several changes to the measurements to address some of the issues with GDI and GEM that had been discovered[10].

Schüler examined the usage of the two indices in academics and the press. His investigation showed that the GDI, in particular, seems to have been misapplied. The GDI was erroneously perceived as a measure of gender disparity in the majority of instances of misapplication. In his paper, Beteta argues that the GEM is an incomplete and biased index of women's empowerment because it only measures inequality among the most educated and economically advantaged women and ignores important non-economic dimensions of decision-making power at the household level as well as over women's own bodies and sexuality[11]. After finding and evaluating possible indicators in those areas that were missing from the GEM, a

new aggregated measure called Gender Empowerment Enabling Environment was proposed[12].

DISCUSSION

Empowerment is a multifaceted issue with many meanings in social, economic, cultural, and political contexts. With the empowerment of girls, they began to gain knowledge in a variety of areas, including participation in decision-making procedures; domestic work must be carried out by both males and females, not simply by girls by themselves; girls must take charge of reproductive functions and determine the size of their own family; and women must be allowed to spend time alone. While discussing women's current situation in India, different measures of women empowerment are evaluated using data from various sources. Women's household decision-making authority, financial autonomy, freedom of mobility, women's acceptance of uneven gender roles, media exposure, access to education, women's experience of domestic abuse, and other indicators are given special attention. Indicators such as the proportion of female voters and female MPs are also used to examine women's political involvement. After examining the data, it was discovered that women's home decision-making authority and freedom of mobility differ significantly depending on their age, education, and job status.

CONCLUSION

Women's rights have been recognized in the contemporary era, thanks to the effect of modernization and the adoption of new techniques. Educational institutions are enrolling girls and women from all socioeconomic groups and backgrounds. Women become emerging professionals in fields such as medicine, law, education, management, and administration. Girls from minority groups are enrolling in educational institutions in order to learn how to use their rights for the benefit of their parents and the community. Education allows a person to distinguish between acceptable and wrong behavior, learn to make smart choices, contribute to the community's well-being, and effectively exercise rights.

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