

## **The Role of Education to Women Empowerment in India: An Historical Perspective**

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### **Abstract**

Education is the key factor for women empowerment, prosperity, development and welfare. Discrimination of women from womb to tomb is well known. There is continued inequality and vulnerability of women in all sectors and women oppressed in all spheres of life, they need to be empowered in all walk of life. In order to fight against the socially constructed gender biases, women have to swim against the system that requires more strength. Such strength comes from the process of empowerment and empowerment will come from the education. And rural development will come from women empowerment. This paper aim to rate the awareness among the women about different empowerment and identifying the impact of education in women overall empowerment in Madurai district. Totally 455 women respondents between 20-50 age group were selected for the study. Findings of the study shows that educational qualification play significant role in women empowerment and it concludes that if women's empowerment is to be effected, it can be carried out only through the medium of education. Hence, it is of foremost importance to raise the level of education amongst women.

### **Introduction**

There are always a number of components in the society which are underprivileged of their basic rights in every society, state and nation, but these components lack in the awareness of their rights. If we enlist such components from the society, then women would top this list. In fact, women are the most important factor of every society. Even though everybody is aware of this fact, yet nobody is ready to accept this fact. As a result, the importance which used to be given to women is declining in today's society. As a significance of this growing tendency of underestimating women such as to make them occupy a secondary position in society and to deny them of their basic rights, the need for empowering women was felt. Today we enjoy the benefits of being citizens of a free nation, but we really need to think whether each of the citizens of our country is really free or enjoying freedom, in the true sense of the term. If we consider our country, each Indian citizen is given certain basic rights. The Structure of our nation doesn't discriminate between men and

women, but our society has destitute women of certain basic rights, which were bestowed upon them by our Constitution. Due to such current situation, it was needed to make women free from all the fetters and to empower them as well. This is nothing but empowerment of women.

Women's empowerment is not limited only for the Indian society. If we deliberate the global aspect in this regard, we see that women are being given equal treatment in enveloped nations. In fact, if we take a recollection of history, we come to know that women have always been given secondary position in society, but the difference between men and women created by the Nature is but natural. It is education through which we realize this fact. When American women realized this, they opposed this unfairness which was meted out to them by way of a huge movement, through which they asked for equal rights. For eliminating this injustice, the UNO (United Nations' Organization) framed an agreement which is called 'The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women' (CEDAW), which further led to the formation of Women's Commission.

### **Literature Review**

The term empowerment has been overused, misused, and co-opted (Stromquist, 2002; Stackiand Monkman, 2003). It is commonly deployed as a synonym for enabling, participating, and speaking out. The notion that education leads to women's empowerment has gained popularity, although we still have much to learn about how education actually empowers women (Stromquist, 2002; DaCosta, 2008; Murphy- Graham, 2008). Nevertheless, in the past 10 years, the goal of women's empowerment (often linked with women's education) has received serious attention, as well as funding by donors and international agencies (Unterhalter, 2007; Mosedale, 2005; Malhotra et al., 2002; Papart et al., 2002; Oxaal and Baden, 1997). Despite its widespread use and occasional abuse, there is some agreement (e.g. Kabeer, 1999; Malhotra et al., 2002; Mosedale, 2005) that empowerment: At the core of the word empowerment is "power". Therefore in conceptualizing empowerment I draw on previous scholarship on the theme, as well as feminist scholarship that views power as capacity (Karlberg, 2005). Hartstock (1983), commenting on the feminist Theory of power, describe show "women's stress on power not as domination but as capacity, on power as a capacity of the community as a whole, suggests that women's experience of connection and relation have more consequences for understandings of power and may hold resources for a more laboratory understanding." The idea of power as capacity is at the core of the conceptualization of empowerment in this article, where I view women's empowerment as a process through which

women come to recognize their worth, their “power within” (Kabeer, 1994), and begin to participate on equal terms with men in efforts to dismantle patriarchy and promote social and economic development. Women’s empowerment is not an end in and of itself, but a pivotal step towards establishing gender equality. In part, gender equality is manifest through a just and equitable sharing of responsibilities by men and women. Gender equality is not synonymous with gender parity, and does not mean that men and women are the same or need to split work exactly in half. Rather, it characterizes social conditions and relationships in which a vision of mutuality and co-operation shapes interactions and enables men and women to reach their full potential (hooks, 2000).

Education is considered the most important tool for empowering women in society. It is not only limited to developing the personality of an individual but also plays an important role in economic, social and cultural development. The UNESCO put its effort to achieve equal opportunity of education regardless of age, gender, race or any other difference in social and economic status.

A number of studies have revealed that uneducated women have high-level morality, low potential for earning, poor dietary status and little independence in the household. The lack of education also has a drastic effect on the health and well-being of the kids. In India, the infant mortality rate was negatively related to the mother’s educational level. In addition, the absence of education can bring a negative change in the country’s development.

Women’s education is a multi-faceted factor that can be held responsible for the low rate of education among women in India. The factors like social, demographic, political and economic are the backbone of low or high literacy rate. The low acceptance of girls in schools is one of the main reasons, which hurdles in the way of women’s liberation in India. According to reliable sources, 50% of all girls have never been to school. Whereas, two out of ten girls of the age 6 to 11 years have not yet enrolled in schools.

The role of women in the education system can play a big part in society. The factors like cultural, social, political and technological changes in the world have revolutionized the education and social life of women. If schools for female raise human capital, economic growth and productivity as that of male schooling, the women’s disadvantage in education is economically wasteful. Studies have shown that the rate of economic growth from women’s education matches with those from men’s education.

Women empowerment is a pivotal part of any society, state or country. It is a woman who plays a dominant role in the basic life of a child. Women are an important section of our society. Education as a means of empowerment of women can bring about a positive attitudinal change. It is, therefore, crucial for the socioeconomic and political progress of India. The Constitution of India empowers the state to adopt affirmative measures for promoting ways and means to empower women. Education significantly makes difference in the lives of women.

### **Hypothesis of The Study**

1. There is no significant difference exist between educational qualifications with regards to different types of empowerments.
2. Different level of empowerments doesn't play significant role in predicting over all empowerment.

### **Methodology:**

Researcher used convenient sampling method for data collection and well-structured questionnaire was used data collection tool. Using survey method researcher collects the questionnaires with help of well-trained research associates. Respondents were asked to select the options based on their opinions in 5 point Likert scale (1-Strongly disagree to 5-Strongly agree). The research instrument includes questions related with different type of empowerment like personal empowerment, educational empowerment, economic empowerment, social empowerment, psychological empowerment, technical empowerment, political empowerment and demographic characteristics like age, educational qualification, family income, employment type and marital status.

### **Educational Equality**

Another area in which women's equality has shown a major improvement as a result of adult literacy programs is the area of enrolment of boys and girls in schools. As a result of higher participation of women in literacy campaigns, the gender gap in literacy levels is gradually getting reduced. Even more significant is the fact that disparity in enrolment of boys and girls in neo-literate households is much lowered compared to the non-literate householders. The world has achieved equality in primary education between girls and boys. But few countries have achieved that target at all levels of education. The political participation of women keeps increasing. In January 2014, in 46 countries more than 30% of members of parliament in at least one chamber

were women. In many countries, gender in equality persists and women continue to face discrimination in access to education, work and economic assets, and participation in government. Women and girls face barriers and disadvantages in every sector in which we work.

Around the world 62 million girls are not in school. Globally, 1 in 3 women will experience gender-based violence in her lifetime. In the developing world, 1 in 7 girls is married before her 15th birthday, with some child brides as young as 8 or 9. Each year more than 287,000 women, 99 percent of them in developing countries, die from pregnancy and childbirth-related complications. While women make up more than 40 percent of the agriculture labour force only 3 to 20 percent are landholders. In Africa, women owned enterprises make up as little as 10 percent of all businesses. In South Asia, that number is only 3 percent. And despite representing half the global population, women compromise less than 20 percent of the world's legislators. Putting women and girls on equal footing with men and boys have the power to transform every sector in which we work. The gender equality and women's empowerment isn't a part of development but at the core of development. To get rid of this we have to make some educational awareness programmes on gender equality and women empowerment for cementing our commitment to supporting women and girls.

### **Conclusion**

Present study suggests that General awareness programme should be taken among the women of rural area to sensitizes them about the modern development of science and technology so that they could give up superstitious believes and attitudes. Women of rural areas should be trained up in different vocational courses like handloom and textile, poultry farms, fish farming, piggery, dairy farm, food and nutrition, fashion and designing, beauty parlour etc. Women reservation policy should strictly be maintained in all aspects like appointment in govt. and semi govt. offices, admission in to the educational institutions, participating in the politics etc.

This study concludes that mostly gender barriers still continue particularly on rural area. Research area covers more number of rural areas. Due to current socio economic constrains in rural area, the potential of women has not been fully utilized and further pushed back into the social hierarchy. Most of the educated women feel that, they can able to achieve more than men. But inbuilt idea that women are capable of doing less work than men and less Efficient than men. The lack of education becomes the obstacles in getting empowerment. Taking an overview of all the above aspects, we come to know that the transformation is very much needed, accepting at the same

time that its pace may be less than the desired pace. For giving this process a momentum, education is indispensable. Hence, if women's empowerment is to be effected, it can be carried out only through the medium of education. Hence, it is of foremost importance to raise the level of education amongst women.

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