

Education is a Tool for Women Empowerment

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Abstract

Education as a means of empowerment of women, can bring about a positive attitudinal change. Education significantly makes a difference in the lives of women. Education is a key factor for empowerment. The paper talks about the status of women's education and also analyzes the factors which motivate women to start their venture and the problems faced by them when they ventured out to carve their niche in the competitive world of empowerment. Empowerment, in a broad sense, involves penning the mind, building a sense of positive self-worth, enhancing self-esteem and self-confidence, and acquiring the ability to clinch the unequal and unjust world from a position of potency. No society has ever emancipated itself - economically, politically, or socially –without a sound base of educated women. An attempt is made to understand the growth of women's empowerment through education.

Keywords: Education, Empowerment, Knowledge, Opportunity, Women.

Globalization presents new opportunities in the realm of empowering women, and now women empowerment has become the motto of many social reformers, governmental agencies, and voluntary organizations. There is a long-cherished desire among all the women to have better avenues, to lead the life in a more fruitful way. However, even now a day, the concept of women empowerment is a matter of controversy. Empowerment is a process of acquiring knowledge and awareness which enables them to move towards a life with greater dignity and self-assurance. This paper focuses on the steps that need to be taken so that the women can leverage those new opportunities presented by globalization and empower women.

The plight of un-empowered women is unimaginable. The expansion of industrialization brought increased inequalities, resulting in the loss of livelihoods, and it decreased women's access to traditional survival resources. It also brought new forms of exploitation-displacement, tourism, sex trade and retrenchment to mention a few. Women are being pushed into less productive sectors because of the increased pressure on rural resources, accelerated migration to urban areas in search of livelihood. People from the backward regions, tribal communities, disadvantaged castes and displaced communities were being pushed against the wall.

Women's health is an important component of women's empowerment. However, the accumulated research evidence shows

that the achievement levels in providing better health care and safe motherhood for women, especially for rural women, are not at expected levels. Anemia is one of the most commonly found deficiencies among the women, and it is also mentioned by several studies that they are often not too healthy when they bear the first child, and none of them are physically ready to bear a second child. World Health Organization figures also show that the lifetime risk of dying from pregnancy or child-birth-related causes is one in twenty in some developing countries, compared to one in ten thousand in some industrialized countries.

The cure for this malaise is women empowerment. The word 'Empowerment', in general, is a process by which one is authorized to think, act, and control resources in an autonomous way. Empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social, or economic strength of individuals and communities. It often involves budding confidence in the capacities of individuals, or communities.

Empowerment is an active, multi-dimensional process that encompasses several multi reinforcing components that begin with and supported by economic independence. Empowerment means becoming powerful. It can be view as a means of creating a social environment in which one can make the right decisions and choices either individually or collectively for social transformation. It strengthens the natural ability by acquiring knowledge, power, and experience. Empowerment is the process of enabling an individual to think, take action and control work in an autonomous way. Through empowerment, one can gain control over one's destiny and the circumstances of one's life.

In that perception, the empowerment of women lead to, the improvement of their status, mainly in respect of education, health, and economic opportunities are highly vital. Women need to be empowered to become strong, and get ready to take up the new challenges for building up the family, society, and nation. Women Empowerment helps women to change other women's consciousness through creating awareness. The most essential component of women's empowerment is found to be an education.

Empowerment for women includes control over resources (physical, human, intellectual, and financial) and ideology (beliefs, values, and attitudes). Empowered women not only feel better extrinsic control but also grow intrinsic capacity, self-confidence and an internal transformation of one's realization that enables them to overcome with external barriers to changing traditional ideology. Individual women have the power to think and act freely, exercises choice and fulfill their potential as full and equal members of society. Since employment plays a fundamental role in improving women's status in a society, it is of prime importance in any women empowerment program. Empowering rural women is a means to poverty alleviation.

Poverty eradication can be successfully achieved, if rural women could be organizing into groups for community participation as well as for the assertion of their rights. Plans for sustainable development relating to poverty eradication have to involve a large number of poor women. Social mobilization and building organizations for the poor are essential prerequisites for poverty alleviation. There are several strategies, which enable the overall development of rural women. The following were found more effective for development:

- Empowerment of women through the development of women and children in rural areas/ Self-Help Groups.
- Empowerment of women through education, training, and awareness.
- Empowerment through political participation.

Education is the most important mean of empowering women with acquaintance knowledge, skill and self-confidence. It also ensures equal participation in the development process for economic independence. Education is a mile stone for women empowerment; it acts as a change agent and

has a positive impact on the status of women and can bring about a positive attitudinal change. Education for empowerment is not only learning of three entities which are reading, writing, and arithmetic but includes raising awareness, critical analysis of various structures, and acquiring knowledge for empowerment at all levels. Education not only refers to formal education, even skill training, and functional literacy can also be considered as education. Education significantly makes a difference in the lives of women. Empowerment of women through education develops:

- Self-esteem and self-confidence
- Equal participation in the development process
- Knowledge and skill for economic independence
- Access to legal literacy and information relating to their rights
- Understand gender relations and equality
- Gaining the ability to generate choices
- Influences social change, create a more socially just and economic order
- Personal control in the domestic, social, and political realms.

Women's empowerment is a crucial aspect in national development. Since women constitute half of the population, there can be no progress unless the needs and interests of women are taken into consideration. Development means an improvement in the living conditions of the society, as a whole, it is logical to expect that this also means improved status for women. The effectual management and improvement of women's resources: capabilities, interests, skills, and potentialities are of paramount importance for the enlistment of human possessions. In the Indian social, cultural, and economic context, no one can attain the whole purpose of women's empowerment and emancipation within a short period.

However, women have utilized the chances given to them and made substantial progress. The government of India wanted to advance the livelihood conditions of women at different epochs. Therefore, education played a significant role in the empowerment of women. Empowerment of women leads to benefit not only to the individual woman and to women folks, but also the families and community as a whole through collective action for advancement. Empowerment of women is the empowerment of family/household, and in turn development of a nation of a country. Globalization is a powerful force changing the world we know, and there is no going back. Empowered women can leverage the opportunities generated by Globalization, bring prosperity to themselves, to their family and in fact to our whole country.

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