

The Importance of Education in Improving the Status of Women in India

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Abstract

Education serves as a fundamental cornerstone in the process of nation-building since it facilitates the advancement and development of a nation. In a nation characterized by diverse racial demographics, males and females experienced significant advancements in their socio-economic progress due to their exposure to schooling. Through the collective efforts of both genders, with a particular emphasis on the contributions of women, a nation paves the way toward achieving prosperity. The fundamental requirement for achieving success lies in the empowerment of women. Once again, it may be argued that education is a potent tool for empowerment since it engenders a heightened state of awareness that ultimately fosters empowerment. Therefore, education assumes a crucial and unavoidable position to facilitate the progress of women's liberation and advancement. According to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, teaching a masculine man leads to their education. The statement posits that providing education to a woman effectively educates an entire family. Educated and empowered women demonstrate a propensity for success across various societal, professional, and familial domains. Women empowerment encompasses enhancing women's social, economic, and educational agency. The term "gender equality" pertains to a societal setting characterized by the absence of gender bias and equitable rights for individuals within the community, society, and professional environments. Education is crucial in enhancing women's consciousness of their entitlements, inherent worth, and prospects. It allows individuals to engage in more profound decision-making processes about political engagement and life choices. Consequently, the promotion of gender parity within an organization or institution can facilitate educational advancements through the augmentation of self-confidence, self-efficacy, and decision-making capabilities.

Keywords: *Women's Empowerment, Economic Empowerment, Education, Gender Parity, Women's Education.*

Introduction

According to Prof. A P J Abdul Kalam, as reported in The Times of India, individuals who exhibit responsible citizenship, with a particular emphasis on women, play a crucial role in the progress of a nation. This is attributed to their unique perspectives, lifestyles, and value systems, which contribute to the establishment of solid familial units, cohesive societies, and, eventually, the advancement of the nation as a whole. Consequently, it is imperative to remember that women possess inherent power and strength and contribute to many cultural contexts. The woman assumes the responsibility of nurturing the forthcoming cohort of society, influencing the development of

children's traits, and fulfilling a significant role as a valuable labor force within familial and national contexts. Women have a crucial role as a valuable human resource in any nation. The advancement of women in various domains and roles globally needs to catch up to that of men. Education has a pivotal role in developing and cultivating these fundamental elements. When women with a formal education possess knowledge of their rights, they are easiest to address any given matter. Subsequently, the woman would be able to achieve achievement in several domains of her life. Education plays a crucial role in empowering women and facilitating their transition into active and contributing members of society. The Government of India (GOI) reported that the literacy rate among males is 84%, while the literacy rate among females is below 70%. Based on the latest labor force surveys conducted by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), the percentage of female workers in the country, categorized by employment status, was 29.6% in 2013-14 and 25.8% in 2015-16.

Consequently, education assumes a pivotal and inescapable role in facilitating the trajectory towards women's autonomy and empowerment. The attainment of education and empowerment among women is associated with their ability to attain success in various domains, including society, business, and familial relationships. Women's empowerment pertains to the augmentation of women's social, economic, and educational influence. Education is crucial in enhancing women's consciousness regarding their entitlements, inherent worth, and potential opportunities. It allows individuals to make more substantial decisions about political engagement and life choices. Therefore, promoting gender parity within an organization or institution might potentially contribute to the advancement of education by enhancing self-confidence, self-efficacy, and decision-making abilities.

Review of related literature:

This research examines the importance of education in women's empowerment in India. The following review has been made. Sundaram, Sekar, and Shubbraj (2014) realized in their work 'Women Empowerment: Role of Education' that Such power comes from the process of empowering women, and empowerment comes from education. The primary goal of the research was to increase female awareness of various forms of empowerment and to evaluate the influence of academic achievement on women's overall strength.

Shetty (2015) presented their article 'Role of Education Women Empowerment and Development: Issue and Impact' - Emancipation of women is a process that allows for and contributes to

economic autonomy and engagement in politics and social growth for women. Ways to overcome impediments to women's empowerment via education were also suggested.

Engida (2021) investigated 'The Three-Dimensional Role of Education for Women Empowerment.' The study's principal goals were to learn that education is one of the most successful means of helping women to fully engage in the growth process with awareness, skills, and self-confidence.

The article "Reflections on A Survey of Women: The Importance of Knowledge in The Empowerment of Women in A District of West Bengal, India" was recently published. According to Mukhopadhyay (2008), paying a dowry is seen as a form of social discrimination against well-educated and financially independent women. (Source: Sodhganga@INFLIBNET)

Rahimain, Mirzamani, and Zehtabi (2010) investigated the impact model of women's empowerment; the study explores whether women's empowerment is crucial in relieving global poverty and preserving human rights. This notion is accompanied by independence, self-determination, and power, all essential for women worldwide.

Background of the study

Women's educational attainment in India remains significantly lower than their male counterparts. Consequently, their awareness of their rights, dignity, and potential must be improved. The need for awareness regarding their rights, dignity, and opportunities prevents them from attaining empowerment. Education is crucial in fostering awareness among women regarding the imperative nature of empowerment. Consequently, the present study examines the impact of education on women's empowerment in India. A notable aspect of the study involves examining the impact of education on enhancing women's comprehension of their rights, dignity, and prospects. Women who have received a formal education are the primary catalysts for experiencing marital happiness.

Objectives

The following goals have been established to gain a better knowledge of the significance of education in improving the status of women in India:

1. To study the present status of women's empowerment through education.
2. To study the literacy rate and employment rate of women in India.
3. Find out the impact of education on Indian women's socio-economic empowerment.
4. To study the necessity and significance of Women's Education.
5. Find out the Steps to enhance women's education status.

Research methodology

The researcher utilized secondary data in their study. The secondary data utilized in this study was sourced from various scholarly journals, articles, census data surveys, official Government of India (GOI) publications, reputable dictionaries, and reliable websites. The researcher utilized the methodology of percentage analysis.

Strengthening Women Through Education

Promoting women's empowerment is widely recognized as a pivotal factor in fostering the growth and prosperity of a nation. The concept of empowerment is intrinsically linked to the notion of power. When used by women, it signifies the acknowledgment and facilitation of their ability to exercise authority, enabling their active involvement in decision-making. Promoting women's empowerment is contingent upon attaining education and active economic participation. The significance of women's education resides in its inherent status as a fundamental human right and its substantial impact on developing a wide range of competencies. The concept of women's empowerment often encompasses five key components: 1) The topic of inquiry pertains to the self-esteem levels among women. 2) The entitlement to exert autonomy over one's existence. 3) The individuals' entitlement to exercise authority over their residence. 4) Their entitlement to exercise authority outside the confines of the domestic sphere. As mentioned earlier, the peach component facilitates women's empowerment. Women can attain the five elements mentioned above through the pursuit of education.

Education has an important role to play in facilitating the progress of women's empowerment in all countries. Consequently, women's higher education attainment is crucial for the country's overall economic and social progress. Education is crucial to raising awareness among girls and women of their rights and dignity, equipping them with the knowledge and confidence necessary to claim and defend their rights. Additionally, women's empowerment through education has the potential to contribute to reducing infant mortality rates and reducing population growth. Gaining knowledge is an essential catalyst for women's emancipation, as it empowers them to exercise agency, challenge societal expectations, and live more expansive and empowered lives.

Promoting women's empowerment is pivotal for the socio-economic prosperity of society, and the government is actively striving to incorporate women into the core of national development. Women can exercise autonomy in decision-making due to their possession of information.

Education possesses the capacity to liberate women's intellectual concepts. The development of

women's libertarian thought can be facilitated through educational interventions. Consequently, women who have received a formal education will experience a state of emancipation. Education cuts through all hurdles (social, political, religious, linguistic, and geographical). Individuals possess the capacity to exercise agency in several aspects of their lives, owing to the influence of education. This includes but is not limited to lifestyle choices, occupational pursuits, selection of life partners, sexual orientation, dietary preferences, and other related domains.

As mentioned earlier, the discourse indicates that the significance of education in women's empowerment cannot be exaggerated. Education and the empowerment of women are intrinsically linked.

Necessity and significance of female's education

Consensus among global researchers exists about the significance of an improved education system in promoting the advancement of women's rights. This viewpoint is reinforced by the International Encyclopedia of Women (1999), which emphasizes the pivotal importance of education, particularly within the Indian context. In order to effectively empower women, it is imperative for any project to prioritize the provision of women's education, given the crucial role that women's employment plays in enhancing their societal status. According to the study conducted by Dominic and Jothi in 2012, Investing in the education of a young Indian woman can provide significant and wide-ranging impacts on both the economy and society of the country. The potential contributions of educated Indian women could significantly positively impact the Indian economy and culture.

The Indian government has prioritized the goal of achieving universal education. However, it is essential to highlight that the country currently has the lowest female literacy rate in Asia. India is presently seeing a decelerated pace of advancement due to the inability to attain the aspired level of achievement.

The subsequent illustrations highlight the importance of education for women.

Education provision is widely recognized as an inherent human right, and this entitlement applies to both men and women. Every female individual, irrespective of their socio-economic or sociocultural background, marital or reproductive circumstances, or age, is entitled to an equitable chance to pursue their formal education. A high-quality education is a fundamental necessity rather than a mere entitlement.

There is a strong emphasis on the promotion of societal parity. Prejudice and inequality are often understood to stem from local or community-based sources when analyzing them as issues of significance. For example, a male child may develop a sense of superiority over females when he observes his sister remaining at home while he attends school. Nevertheless, this educational approach instructs individuals of all genders on how to promote the principles of democracy and equality.

Access to education is crucial as it facilitates the acquisition of essential skills for employment and self-sufficiency while fostering personal growth, empowerment, and increased self-assurance. Women who have attained educational qualifications and possess the means to support themselves financially are not dependent on their families or other individuals. This practice fosters independent thinking among children and facilitates their ability to acknowledge their intrinsic value and unique qualities.

Indian Women's Status Basis on The Literacy Rate and Employment Rate

The interconnection between women's empowerment and education is undeniable. Furthermore, these two phenomena are intricately linked. In a society that upholds principles of non-discrimination, there must be no differentiation or bias based on gender. Both individuals can derive pleasure from wealth and benefit from their interactions within society. The issue of gender equality stands as a paramount concern in contemporary society. The attainment of gender equality in a nation is most effectively facilitated by providing education to women. The need for sufficient education is a significant barrier to women's economic, social, political, and cultural advancement within a given culture. Promoting women's empowerment is crucial for the future progression of education. The statement above highlights the need for a comprehensive education for women, as it can impart knowledge and skills to all those within her familial sphere. To foster a moral society, the task of instructing other family members must be entrusted to a woman with a sound education. The active participation of women in the building of society and the sustained development of education can be facilitated through the empowerment achieved by utilizing quality education. Educated women can confidently express their opinions and discern the societal implications of specific actions or ideas. Consequently, acquiring reading skills among women is crucial in fostering their empowerment within the nation.

According to the Indian constitution, it is mandated that all children below the age of 14 get an Education that is both free and obligatory. In contrast, the current literacy levels among women

are significantly lower than men's. Women's educational attainment has been increasing, yet a gender disparity in literacy rates persists, as evidenced by the data in the table. According to the Indian census data,

Table 1: The Literacy Rate of male and female In India 1951-2011

Census Year	Total (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
1951	19.34	28.17	9.87
1961	28.31	41.41	16.39
1971	35.44	46.98	22.96
1981	44.52	57.39	29.78
1991	53.22	65.16	39.25
2001	65.83	76.27	54.69
2011	74.04	83.15	65.45

Source: Office of The Registrar General and Census Commissioner, Government of India, census table, 1951-2011

Table 2: Female Employment Rate

Name of state / all India	YEAR (%)		
	2012-13	2013-14	2015-16
WEST BENGAL	20.6	17.2	20.5
ALL INDIA	25.0	29.6	25.8

Source: The Press Information Bureau, Government of India, 2021-22

The primary cause of this period of unemployment can be attributed to the level of literacy and education, which enable individuals to be productive and valuable members of society. According to the Census data, female representation in the labor force in 2011 accounted for 25.51 percent, while male representation accounted for 53.26 percent. In contrast to the urban sector, which exhibits a male labor participation rate of 53.03%, the rural sector demonstrates a comparatively higher level of female workforce engagement, with a rate of 30.02%. Himachal Pradesh exhibits the most elevated proportion of female workforce engagement in rural regions, at 47.4 percent, whereas Tamil Nadu demonstrates the lowest rate at 21.8 percent. The level of male workforce engagement in both rural and urban locations exhibits a similar pattern. However, a notable disparity is observed in female employment involvement. According to the NSS 68th Round (2011-12), rural India has a higher proportion of employees, approximately 40%, engaged in

formal salaried and self-employment, in contrast to urban India, where self-employment constitutes over 50% of the workforce.

Female Literacy: Factors that Affect it

The issue of women's education has been a topic of significant discussion and contemplation in international discourse for a prolonged duration. Education is often advocated as a crucial tool for governance and attainment. This specific item exhibits an intrinsic characteristic that makes it resistant to theft. To augment the education of the younger cohort, many educational institutions, encompassing institutes, universities, colleges, and schools, have been built. Nevertheless, it is essential to acknowledge that women comprise about two-thirds of the worldwide illiterate populace, totaling more than 796 million persons. The issue at hand is the priority of an individual's education about its effects on their family rather than its wider ramifications for the nation.

The decline in female literacy rates can be attributed to several causes acknowledged in scholarly discourse.

- Occupational discrimination
- Differences in gender
- A young girl's job as a child is to do household chores.
- Exploitation of money
- Other frequently claimed reasons for why girls drop out at such high rates in elementary and middle school include the following:
 - Excessively high
 - Less enthusiastic about academics
 - Young age at first marriage
 - There must be work on the family farm or company.
 - To perform domestic duties

The primary issues with their education are:

- Moral decay
- Lack of appropriate curricula for females' education;
- Women's lack of social awareness;
- A lack of female teachers;
- A lack of suitable physical infrastructure;

- Female instructors' reluctance to work in rural locations;
- Financial challenges;
- A transport issue;
- Wastage and stagnation issue;
- Co-educational issue;
- The indifference and lack of enthusiasm of the responsible parties of instruction

Despite the prominent individual accomplishment among Indian women and a discernible improvement in their general circumstances over the previous century, it remains a verifiable fact that women in India continue to constitute a significant proportion of the underprivileged demographic. Women do not form a homogeneous caste or class entity. Nevertheless, they possess distinctive challenges that necessitate specific attention. In 1953, the Backward Classes Commission of the Government of India officially classified Indian women as a marginalized group requiring specific attention and support. (source: Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India, National Backward Classes Commission (NCBC),1993)

Steps to enhance women's education status

The attainment of the objectives mentioned above necessitates the initial provision of women with equitable access to education of superior quality. Consequently, women will acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes, and other capacities for national development engagement. The stated aims for the improvement of women's education are as follows:

- The enhancement of women's productivity will contribute to an improvement in the living standards of their families. Women currently have the opportunity to utilize advanced technology and engage in collaborative management practices.
- The user's text does not contain any information to rewrite. Promote the elevation of women's status within society and culture.
- They are strengthening women's ability to carry out their duties effectively.
- Assist women in addressing their challenges and subjective feelings of insufficiency.
- The primary aim is to offer a holistic education to women, addressing multiple dimensions of their development, including cognitive, interpersonal, physical, emotional, spiritual, and financial components.

Programs for Women's Education and Welfare

India has made significant strides in the provision of education to its populace. According to available data, the literacy rate among Americans is 73.2 percent, with a specific breakdown indicating that 59 percent of women possess literacy skills. The Indian government has implemented several initiatives to promote and facilitate women's education.

Several welfare programs encompass the following:

- **Beti Padhao and Beti Bachao:** These well-known social initiatives for women's empowerment were launched on January 22, 2015. The program aims to end female feticide and give girls and women equal educational opportunities.
- **Training and employment support programs** equip women with the necessary resources to establish firms or secure employment across many sectors. As mentioned earlier, the course is accessible to those who identify as female and are 16 years of age or older.
- **'The 'Mahila' initiative** was introduced by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in 2016. The formal designation of the program is 'MAHILA-E-HAT'. The platform allows female entrepreneurs and business proprietors to showcase and market their products.
- **2002, the Union Ministry for Women and Child Development** introduced the 'Swadhar Greh' program. The program assists women with difficulties accessing housing, sustenance, healthcare, and apparel. Consequently, women who have experienced familial abandonment or have endured the aftermath of a natural disaster are afforded the essential provisions for sustenance and well-being.
- **An In-depth and Holistic Approach the One-Stop Centre project** was initiated by the Ministry of Women and Child Development on April 1, 2015, utilizing funds from the "Nirbhaya" budget. Victims of violence have access to a range of essential resources, encompassing mental health services, legal aid, police support, housing, and sustenance, provided in both public and private domains.
- **'The Ministry of Women and Child Development'** initiated the 'Nari Shakti Prasar' initiative to acknowledge and empower women while honoring their exceptional contributions to society.

(Sources of all programs: Ministry of Women and Child Development. 22 JUL 2022, Press Information Bureau (PIB))

Conclusion

In light of the prevailing circumstances, it is evident that women are deprived of opportunities in critical domains such as nutrition, education, and employment. This study provides evidence

suggesting that there exist disparities between genders in India, with women being perceived as inferior to men. The importance of women's education cannot be overstated concerning women's empowerment. Education has the potential to offer women equal rights, dignity, and opportunities. The relationship between education and female empowerment is inherently interconnected. An additional significant factor to be considered pertains to the formidable obstacles that the pursuit of women's empowerment encounters within these societies. These challenges arise due to entrenched detrimental norms and attitudes, including the prevalence of child labor, child marriage, limited access to education, familial biases, and female feticide. Consequently, the imperative of prioritizing women's empowerment becomes evident.

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