



## Women empowerment: A critical review

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### Abstract

The present study titled women empowerment- a critical review was conducted with objectives to collect the literature review on women empowerment, to find out the problems and prospectus of women empowerment. To suggest the recommendation on women empowerment. In order to collect information about the concerned topic both primary and secondary data were used, and the main findings of the study concludes by an observation that access to Education, Employment and Change in Social Structure are only the enabling factors to Women Empowerment.

**Keywords:** women empowerment, political, social, economical, educational

### 1. Introduction

Empowerment implies a state of mind and attitude of a person. It is a process through which people or communities increase their control or mastery of their own lives and the decision that affect their day- to- day life. Awareness is a necessary part of empowerment. Awareness of rights is required for a person to develop his capacity of self-control, Self-strength and self-reliance and to build freedom of choice and power. Empowerment is about change, choice and power and ability to make choices that affect their lives.

The World Bank defines empowerment as *“the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. Central to this process is action which both build individual and collective assets and improve the efficiency and fairness of the organization and institutional context which govern the use of these assets”*

Economist Bina Agarwal defines empowerment as a process that enhances the ability of disadvantaged and powerless individuals or groups to challenge and change in their favour, existing power relationship that places them in subordinate economic, social and political position. Empowerment can manifest itself in acts of individual’s resistance as well as in group mobilization. Empowerment is multi- dimensional and refers to the expansion of freedom of choice and action in all spheres- economic, political, social/cultural, personal and familiar to change the one’s life, basic needs, access to resources, conscientisation to attain gender equality participation in decision making alongside men and control, which refers to the ultimate level of equality and empowerment.

### 2. Empowerment leads to

- Recognizing women contribution and development knowledge.

- Helping women to fight against their own fears, feeling of inadequacy and inferiority.
- Enhancing their self-respect and self-dignity
- Women controlling their own bodies
- Women becoming economically independent and self-reliant
- Women controlling resources like land and prosperity
- Reducing women’s burden of work especially within the house
- Creating and strengthening women’s groups and organization
- Promoting equalities of nutrition, varying gentleness etc

### 3. Present Status of women empowerment in J&K

Women constitute around 47% of the total population of the state. The development of women, no doubt, has been a part of the development planning process right from inception of five year plans but the shift in approach from welfare to development towards women took place in a focused manner only from 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> five year plans. The 8<sup>th</sup> five year plan promised to ensure that benefits of development do not bypass women. The 9<sup>th</sup> five year plan changed the strategy for women from development to empowerment and emphasis on preparation of separate women component plan (WCP) by identifying specific schemes/ projects having direct bearing on welfare and development of women. The 10<sup>th</sup> five year plan further strengthened the implementation of women component plan (WCP). Moreover, the women and child development department in the ministry of social justice and empowerment has also enjoined upon the states to monitor closely the flow of benefits of various schemes for the empowerment of women on regular basis. These initiatives have helped in improving the status of women in various spheres to a great extent, but the imbalance still exist which needs to be addressed on a sustained and continuous basis.

The 11<sup>th</sup> plan had taken numerous steps forward regarding

women development and empowerment but, the targets set out could only be partially achieved. In the 12<sup>th</sup> plan, the government's priority would be to consolidate the existing initiative and intervention relating to women, build upon the achievement and also move beyond to respond to new challenges. In order to ascertain the development of women in the state of J&K it will necessary to refer to different variables of development process and the factors having a bearing on such developmental process.

#### 4. Objectives

1. To collect literature review on women empowerment.
2. To find out the problems and prospectus of women empowerment
3. To suggest the recommendations on women empowerment

#### 5. Review of literature

Malhotra, Schuler and Boender's (2002) [9] have measured women empowerment in two dimensions: economic participation and decision-making (measured by the percentage of female administrators and managers, and professional and technical employees), and political participation and decision-making (measured by the percentage of seats in parliament held by women). Furthermore, several studies suggest that women may be empowered in one area of life and not others (Hashemi, Schuler, & Riley, 1996; Kabeer, 1999; Kishor, 2000; Malhotra & Mather, 1997) [5].

Kabeer (1998, 1999, 2001) [5] viewed that empowerment refers to the processes by which those who have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such ability. The fundamentals of empowerment have been defined as an agency (the ability to define one's goals and act upon them), awareness of gendered power structures, self-esteem and self-confidence.

Chauhan & Sharma (2012) [1] made an empirical study whether empowering women politically, educationally, economically and legally has been a major objective of government of India. 11th National five Year Plan (2007-2012), for the first time in the history of Indian planning, focus has shifted from 'mere empowerment of women to recognize women as agents of sustained socio economic growth and change'. Self-help groups and cooperatives are two organizational strategies often employed by underprivileged women to generate income. Through these structures, women gain access to services such as credit and training, send representatives to bodies that affect their work, and also gain a voice in political processes. Co-operatives are particularly suited to the needs of many women who desire mutual support without the formality of bureaucratic and hierarchical structures. Women have responded to lack of organization and to their exclusion from resources and services, by organizing in less structured and formal networks. (Bullock. S, 1994, p.125). This research analyzes how participation in cooperatives allows them to exercise their choice and prioritize their needs. The paper is based on the research that includes 1098 working women from members of women cooperatives as well as women employed in unorganized sector, from four states of North West India, namely Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra. The

objective is to study and compare the degree of social empowerment of women employed in cooperatives with women employed in unorganized sector. Cooperatives have been successful in not only increasing social participation of women but also in developing their drives, initiatives leadership qualities.

Sudha (2008) [8] explained women's empowerment as the ability of women to transform economic and social development when empowered to fully participate in the decisions that affect their lives through leadership training, coaching, consulting and the provision of enabling tools for women to lead within their communities, regions and countries.

#### 6. Challenges and issues

There are several constraints that check the process of women empowerment in India. Social norms and family structure in developing countries like India, manifests and perpetuate the subordinate status of women. One of the norms is the continuing preference for a son over the birth of a girl child which is present in almost all societies and communities. The society is more biased in favor of male child in respect of education, nutrition and other opportunities. The root cause of this type of attitude lies in the belief that male child inherits the clan in India with an exception of Meghalaya. Women often internalize the traditional concept of their role as natural thus inflicting an injustice upon them. Poverty is the reality of life for the vast majority women in India. It is the factor that poses challenge in realizing women's empowerment. There are several challenges that are plaguing the issues of women's right in India. Targeting these issues will directly benefit the empowerment of women in India Education: While the country has grown from leaps and bounds since independence where education is concerned. The gap between women and men is severe. While 82.14% of adult men are educated, only 65.46% of adult women are known to be literate in India. The gender bias is in higher education, specialized professional trainings which hit women very hard in employment and attaining top leadership in any field. Poverty: Poverty is considered the greatest threat to peace in the world, and eradication of poverty should be a national goal as important as the eradication of illiteracy. Due to this, women are exploited as domestic helps. Health and Safety: The health and safety concerns of women are paramount for the wellbeing of a country and is an important factor in gauging the empowerment of women in a country. However there are alarming concerns where maternal healthcare is concerned.

#### 7. Conclusion

- Empowerment also means providing greater access to knowledge and resources, greater autonomy in decision making, greater ability to plan their lives and freedom from the shackles imposed on them by custom belief and practice.
- Women empowerment occurs within sociological, psychological, political, cultural, familiar and economic spheres and various levels such as individual, group and community.
- Empowerment of women is an on going dynamic process which enhances women's abilities to change the structures

and ideologies that keep them subordinate.

- Women empowerment is a process of creating awareness and capacity building.
- Women empowerment means women's control over material assets, intellectual resources and ideology.
- Women empowerment challenges traditional power equations and relations.
- Women empowerment abolishes all gender based discrimination in all institutions and structure of society.
- Women empowerment means participation of women in policy and decision making process at domestic and public levels.
- Women empowerment is a process of acquiring power for women in order to understand her rights and to perform her responsibilities towards oneself and others in a most effective way.
- Women empowerment gives the capacity or power to resist discrimination imposed by the male dominated society.

### 8. Recommendation

1. The first and foremost priority should be given to the education of women, which is the grassroots problem. Hence, education for women has to be paid special attention.
2. Awareness programmes need to be organized for creating awareness among women especially belonging to weaker sections about their rights.
3. Women should be allowed to work and should be provided enough safety and support to work. They should be provided with proper wages and work at par with men so that their status can be elevated in the society.
4. Strict implementation of Programmes and Acts should be there to curb the mal-practices prevalent in the society.

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