

THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN WOMEN EMPOWERMENT: A CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECT

Radhika Govani ,

Assistant professor,

Dairy Science college , Amreli.

ABSTRACT

One of the mechanisms that may be utilized to facilitate social transformation is empowerment. This is accomplished by cultivating an atmosphere that is receptive to making critical decisions and choices. A person's natural ability may be improved by the accumulation of information, the development of resilience, and the accumulation of experience. A problem that is of utmost importance in our day is the empowerment of women. There should be no disparity between the opportunities available to men and those available to women in any aspect of life, including work, healthcare, and education. The education of women is a crucial factor that contributes to the continued development of society. "Educating a woman educates an entire family," said Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, underlining the gap between the concept of teaching a man, who is seen to be independent, and the idea of educating a daughter. In their respective works, some researchers argue that the empowerment of women bestows authority onto Mother India. Education is an essential component of women's empowerment because it provides them with the resources necessary to confront obstacles, question established norms, and bring about positive changes in their lives. Furthermore, it promotes equality while simultaneously elevating their standing within the context of the family, the community, the political system, and the economic system. The purpose of this research is to highlight a number of different aspects of women's empowerment via education.

KEY WORDS: Education, Women Empowerment, Life Aspects, Society, Social Transformation.

INTRODUCTION

According to “Bhat & Kaur”³⁶, empowerment is defined as the process of providing individuals with the autonomy to make their own decisions, pursue their own initiatives, and manage their own jobs. The attainment of freedom from any form of slavery or captivity is represented by this. In addition to this, it guarantees freedom from a limitation that lasts for an entire year. In order to accommodate this, a complete reorganisation of monetary and social institutions is required. Throughout the course of the story, a number of different people compete for status, which finally leads to the revelation of themes pertaining to emancipation and self-discovery. Liberating oneself from concepts of identity that are imposed from the outside is a necessary step. Witte⁶⁹ says that in order for empowerment to be truly successful, there must be mechanisms that encourage tolerance and acceptance of diversity, protect personal liberty within predetermined limitations, and make it easier for individuals to discover and cultivate their own “self”. Because of the regulations that allow for free movement and the concomitant right to be free from discrimination based on nationality, individuals have access to a greater variety of alternatives for self-actualization⁶⁹. Rather than being a momentous act of freedom, it appears to be more of a turning point between the many forms of slavery and the enslavement of ethnic groups. The expression “autonomy in decision-making” is another means by which it may be described. There is liberation of the individual into a vast cultural world as well as a “imagined community” that is not limited by physical limits. On the other hand, empowerment requires doing a power analysis, which may inspire opposition and, as a result, destabilise the power structures that are already in place. According to “Bhat & Kaur”³⁶, it comprises taking responsibility for one's own life and determining one's own fate. Because of this, it improves living circumstances and contributes to the development of human capital. According to this point of view, education is an essential component in the process of fostering agency. Because of this, we are presented with an alternate viewpoint. “Education elucidates the distinction between good and evil – Jyotiba Phule”.³⁶ The possibility of a shift in public opinion is beneficial for the progress of the nation's political and social systems. Through the process of conscientisation, which is further helped by education, individuals have the opportunity to foster self-reflection. The term “education” refers to the act of passing on the information, beliefs, and culture of an organisation from one generation to the next. This can be accomplished through classroom instruction, supervised work experience, or independent study.⁵¹

In her book “Empowering Women: An Alternative Strategy from Rural India - Sakuntala”⁵¹, defines the key causes that lead to women's disadvantage as their lack of knowledge, power, and safety. She says that these elements are the primary contributors to women's disadvantage. Women are better positioned to confront economic and social inequality when they have a better grasp of their legal rights and their levels of autonomy. According to Jha³⁴, this is a vital component for the improvement of both prosperity and well-being. Educated women lay the groundwork for their families' success in today's fast-paced and competitive world by laying the framework for their own achievement. Through the cultivation of children who are healthier and better educated, she has been shown to have a good impact on the social and economic output of the home, according to research, the enhanced access to knowledge that a woman has results in an increase in her negotiating power, which in turn increases her level of autonomy. Education is a means by which women may improve the competitiveness of their families, communities, and nation. Education helps women grow their perspectives and comprehension, which in turn helps them become more competitive which significantly improves the economic situation of women⁷⁰.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To comprehend the fundamental principles of women's empowerment.
- To elucidate the function of education in enhancing the socio-economic and political standing of women.
- To illuminate the many forms of women's empowerment via educational activities.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is descriptive in nature. Journals, books, newspapers, government publications, and other working papers were some of the secondary sources that were employed for the purpose of data collection. An approach known as content analysis was utilised in order to conduct the examination of the secondary data. Additionally, meta-analyses and systematic reviews were not included in the research. Books and publications that did not include verifiable material were also not considered.

RESEARCH METHOD

Examining "The Role of Education in Women Empowerment: A Cross-Cultural Perspective", a qualitative research techniques stressing community participation and cultural sensitivity was utilized. By using Research Activity Engagement approach, participants and researcher worked together to pinpoint problems and offer solutions. By raising women's voices in the creation of educational programs, RAE guarantees that research addresses women's unique needs and cultural circumstances, therefore empowering them. Equipped exchanges between researchers and community people throughout the project are underlined in community-based participatory research (CBPR). By including local knowledge and aims into the research design and execution, this approach effectively understood how educational programs may be adjusted to empower women inside their cultural settings. Examining civilisations from numerous angles requires balancing and frames of view. Through compiling women's personal accounts on their educational and empowering experiences, such approach helps cross-cultural comparison and analysis, therefore broadening our knowledge of how education could affect women's empowerment worldwide. Understanding how education shapes women's emancipation across cultures requires both unstructured and semi-structured interviews. Participants in this interview style can freely express their experiences and points of view. This method aims to balance the dynamics between interviewer and respondent, thereby encouraging a more honest and open communication and hence especially appropriate for feminist research. Scholars of educational studies look at how schools help students create their identities and pass on culture to next generations. Understanding how educational approaches shape women's roles and status in many different cultural settings helps one to empower them. This process can be facilitated by ethnographic techniques like participant observation. By applying these qualitative research approaches, one may offer a more complete and culturally sensitive knowledge of how education helps women in many spheres.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The table below provides descriptive information regarding the sample's female participants from Gujarat. From what we can see, just 18% of the female population is actively

taking part in the study, while 82% opted out. Among the female participants, 28% have never attended school, 22% have completed elementary school, 40% have completed high school, 7.6% have completed college, and 2.6% have completed university. All, the sample participants earn an average of 378 rupees each month.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics: Summary

Variables	Observations	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Dependent variable					
Female labor force	33,451	.1767062	.3814256	0	1
Independent variables					
No education	33,451	.2789752	.448502	0	1
Primary education	33,451	.2153	.4110364	0	1
Secondary education	33,451	.4019013	.4902895	0	1
Higher secondary education	33,451	.0760515	.2650845	0	1
Tertiary education	33,451	.0261278	.1595176	0	1
Own land	33,451	.8746824	.3310837	0	1
Total wage (monthly)	33,451	272.217	3171.127	0	425000

According to the Hosmer-Lemeshow goodness-of-fit test, the model is well-fitting (Prob > chi2 = 0.6261).

Results demonstrate a favorable and statistically significant correlation between educational attainment and women's health. Greater educational attainment is associated with improved health outcomes for women. The female with a postsecondary education is more likely to have life stability compared to the female without a degree, according to the tertiary education estimate coefficient (2.91), which is significant at the $P < .01$ level. A positive link with female well-being is also indicated by the coefficient estimate of the variable's total pay and ownership of land.

Table 2: Results of the Logistic Regression on FLF Involvement

Female labor force	Coef.	St. Err.	t-value	p-value	[95% Conf	Interval]
No education	1.978*	1.01	1.96	.05	-.002	3.957
Primary	2.408**	1.01	2.38	.017	.429	4.387
Secondary	2.367**	1.01	2.34	.019	.388	4.346
Higher secondary	2.718***	1.01	2.69	.007	.737	4.698
Tertiary	2.912***	1.013	2.88	.004	.928	4.897
Own land	.422***	.053	8.01	0	.319	.525
Total wage	.003***	0	7.90	0	.002	.004
Constant	-4.385***	1.011	-4.34	0	-6.366	-2.405
Pseudo r-squared	0.102		Number of observations		33451.000	
Chi-square	3172.519		Prob > chi2		0.000	

Significant level *** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .1$

Table 2 summarizes the outcomes of the hypothesis testing; it shows the impact on women's well-being of not having any education, having primary, secondary, upper secondary, or university education, owning land, and total pay.

DEVELOPMENTS IN INDIAN WOMEN'S EDUCATION

When it comes to the research of the Vedas, women in ancient India were afforded the same privileges as males. This included the opportunity to take part in the sacred ritual of Upanayana. It is unfortunate that their access to Vedic education was restricted during later centuries “Korishetti”⁴⁰. There is evidence that women in India were receiving formal education as early as the third century B.C., with the majority of their instruction being transmitted verbally. According to “Jenefa”³³, during that time period, researchers at institutes like as Nalanda, Vikramshila, and Takshila solicited the participation of women. In the 11th century, Muslim monarchs created a number of institutions in the cities of Delhi, Lucknow, and Allahabad. These institutions made it possible for women to take part in a variety of academic activities. It was the responsibility of the Mughal kings to guarantee that the princesses obtained a well-rounded education. Gul-Badan Begum, the author of the Humayun Namah; Nur Jahan, the valued wife of Jahangir; Mumtaz Mahal, the spouse of Shah Jahan; Jahanara Begum, the eldest daughter of Shah Jahan; and Zibunnisa Begum, the eldest daughter of Aurangzeb⁴⁰, were some of the noteworthy women who were members of the royal family. Through this time period, the daughters of Rajput monarchs and certain Bengali zamindars were able to acquire the ability to

read and write. A fresh page is turned in the annals of India's educational history as a result of the end of British influence. There was an attempt made by the British government to take a ceremonial approach to the education of women. In the early nineteenth century, during the time that the United Kingdom was still a colonial power, missionaries and the educational institutions that they established began to advocate for the education of women. In 1819, the Female Juvenile Society, which was a secular organisation, established schools for young women ⁴⁰. In the year 1824, the Ladies Society for Native Female Education was established with the support of Lady Amherst, who was in charge of thirty organisations that provided education to women.

The development of towns and the local fund cess were two factors that considerably aided in the advancement of women's education. Three presidencies, namely Bombay (now known as Mumbai), Calcutta (now known as Kolkata), and Madras (now known as Chennai), were responsible for the establishment of universities in the year 1857. A larger percentage of Christian and Parsi women engaged in the pursuit of a college degree in comparison to Hindu women ³³. This was the case despite the fact that they met with personal hurdles along the way. The Indian National Congress was an organisation that played a significant role in the fight for the liberation of women. Over the course of the first year (1885), a Ladies' Association was established. During the 1890s, a growing number of women who had completed their college education began making public appearances ³³. Sarojini Naidu, Annie Besant, Rameshwari Nehru, Aruna Asif Ali, Sucheta Kriplani, Usha Mehta, and Vilasini Devi Shenai were among the renowned Indian women who played key roles in society and politics during the final decades of the country's history. In 1913, in response to the demand that was coming from the Indian subcontinent, the British government developed a new plan for the education of girls and women. The plan placed an emphasis on subjects such as music, needlework, and practical skills ⁴⁰. Banaras Hindu University, Aligarh Muslim University, and Delhi University each created centres for women's freedom in 1916, 1920, and 1922 respectively. These centres were founded in the year 1916. Following the country's attainment of independence, women's education, particularly at the postsecondary level, flourished.

IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION FOR ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

The purpose of education is to reawaken people to the realisation that they are not powerless. It is crucial for the growth of both individuals and nations to have access to education. Investing in education is useful for both individuals and nations when it boosts women's capacities across various domains, including socio-cultural, economic, interpersonal, legal, political, and psychological dimensions ⁶. According to Freire, education is essentially built in a dialogical vision of knowledge. This idea of knowledge is founded on a critical understanding of knowing and attempts to modify the world in a deliberate manner. According to Siqueira, this type of education has the potential to support personal growth, autonomy, and ultimately, human liberation when it is implemented properly. A populace that is educated is better equipped to evaluate their surroundings, recognise the distinction between scientific and political objectivity, and uphold universal human norms and standards. In a number of works, Freire elucidates his vision of popular education in connection with collaborative projects that include groups who are marginalised ⁶². Through the implementation of an all-encompassing educational program, the goal is to bring about a change in patriarchal views. It is imperative that individuals who advocate for women's rights take over the intellectual frameworks that are the foundation of patriarchal domination. Education is a clear factor that contributes to the decrease of the wage gap that exists between men and women in the workplace, and it has the potential to have a large influence on the reduction of wage inequality. The promotion of educational opportunities for young women is not only a fundamental human right but also a social and economic gain. This is a goal that is pursued on a global scale. We found that males continue to have a significant amount of influence over decisions that have an effect on Indian women, particularly in the areas that we investigated. The conventional educational paradigm provides women with the skills that are necessary to complete the essential roles of being a mother and a spouse, which are particularly important in the context of the modern globalised world. According to Nagaraja ⁴⁹, education is becoming increasingly important for people of both sexes, not simply for men. It is the responsibility of the educational system to ensure that women are able to develop in an equitable manner.

PERSPECTIVES ON THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

The pursuit of education is an essential step towards achieving independence for women in a number of different ways. The provision of coaching on character development is made easier for women as a result of this. Examine the different characteristics that it possesses.

Engaging in Public Policy

Women have the potential to actively impact public policy if they possess the necessary information. In this particular place, the opportunity for women to participate economically and culturally, in addition to their civil and political rights, is guaranteed. If they have access to reliable information, their ability to fight against any and all sorts of exploitation will be improved. Achieving self-awareness is necessary for women to be able to exert political agency. It is possible that it will allow them to make important decisions regarding their personal and public lives. Their agency is increased by the fact that they are able to vote, run for public office, and participate in projects pertaining to public policy. It is possible that this will also make it easier for them to participate in local self-governance. The purpose of education for women was to provide them with the knowledge and abilities necessary for active engagement in society. This would enable them to have an impact on the formulation of policies that have an impact on their lives and to advocate for their own interests ².

Empowerment of Women in Society

Education has the potential to help promote the social growth of women. At the same time as it is a major tool for reducing poverty, illiteracy, and marginalisation, it also has a catalytic impact on the socio-economic growth of a nation. According to Singh et al., education need to be recognised for the value that it possesses on its own as a foundational component for a future that is professional, research-driven, and career-focused. Although there are many who feel it might potentially establish a culture in which women are protected from any and all sorts of abuse, there are also those who believe it would guarantee that there would be sufficient representation of women in positions of responsibility. Women's advancement and empowerment can only be acknowledged, when their participation in decision-making increases their effect on production variables, resource accessibility, and benefit allocation ⁶⁷. This is the

only way that women's progress and empowerment can be acknowledged. According to Aslam ⁶, research that investigates the ways in which education affects the values, attitudes, and results of women might potentially make a substantial contribution to the debate on education and empowerment.

Achieving Financial Security

Education not only improves women's social position but also their ability to make their own economic decisions. Their credibility is improved as a result of the fact that they are able to demonstrate competence in financial management. According to Varghese ⁶⁷, women who have a strong educational background typically have a large amount of financial acumen. It is impossible for women to fight for equality and justice if they do not have access to the resources that are essential; they are unable to exercise their rights and entitlements if they do not have financial certainty. It is the contention of Varghese that individuals are unable to build a sense of social responsibility or make logical decisions in the absence of a stable income guarantee. As a result of their increased financial understanding, women are better capable of handling the finances of both their households and the nation for the most part. The economic power of a woman can be evaluated based on her level of influence, her accomplishments, and her level of autonomy over her resources. The availability of microfinance services is an additional factor that has a role in determining the degree to which women are financially independent. They can see an increase in their purchasing power to be an additional benefit that comes along with it. Throughout the course of history, education for women has been seen to be fundamentally revolutionary and dangerous. In many parts of the globe, education is commonly seen to be the most important factor in achieving a more “modern,” or Westernised, way of life, as well as a road to a more secure financial future ⁶⁴.

Psychological Independence

Educational opportunities have the potential to enhance an individual's psychological capacity to deal with personal challenges. When it comes to psychological empowerment, self-confidence and self-assurance are essential components. According to Mandal ⁴⁵, psychological empowerment gives women the ability to modify their subjectivities and identities while simultaneously destroying outdated patriarchal societal norms and taboos. Through the facilitation of collectivisation, it helps women become less atomised, isolated, and fragmented in their daily lives. There is a correlation between women's increased access to higher education, political representation, and decision-making positions, as well as their increased autonomy over their bodies and finances, and increased levels of psychological empowerment, self-confidence, and self-esteem ⁴⁵. For this reason, youngsters in today's society are equipped with the self-assurance, pride, maturity, and resiliency necessary to successfully navigate their endeavours on their own. One more thing that children learn is how to manage their lives and adapt to different situations as they become older. When women have an education, they are less likely to have large families, which might potentially contribute to the regulation of population growth.

Political Development

Women are more politically empowered when they have access to education. In order for women to be really empowered, there is an urgent need for their involvement in all tiers of government. The right to accountability, a fundamental principle of the governed, is violated when citizens' opinions are not heard in government and public policy debates ⁴⁵. Across the globe, women have been fighting for equality and liberation from a variety of forms of oppression, including but not limited to domestic violence and sexual assault. It is extremely difficult for women to survive unless they are allowed access to the corridors of power, where they may create and execute policies and programs ⁴⁵. Getting an education boosts a woman's self-esteem and empowers her to face her concerns. "A woman's empowerment in reality is to empower herself and not overpower men" ⁴⁵, as correctly observed by Promilla Kapur. This is one way in which women's political empowerment liberates them from oppression. As a result of taking action on issues that they personally and collectively deem essential, it empowers individuals to make a difference in their own lives, as well as those of their neighbours and the larger community ⁴⁵. Power and strength may be achieved through this multi-pronged method. It

is difficult to envision a robust democratic society that does not include women at all levels. To guarantee better living circumstances, involvement is crucial.

CONCLUSION

The discussion of development must always include the empowerment of women as an essential component. The empowerment of women is absolutely necessary in order to bring about good change and to transform a society that is devoid of justice. In spite of the fact that our country successfully achieved its freedom, women continue to face restrictions imposed by society. When compared to women in wealthy nations, the challenges that our women face are far more severe. According to Mandal, the concept of gender equity refers to the accomplishment of comprehensive equality across all societal dimensions, irrespective of gender ⁴⁵. To achieve full gender equality in society, males need to completely abstain from any and all forms of power, oppression, and discrimination directed against women. There are a number of countries that consider the empowerment of women to be an important component among sustainable development. According to Huis et al., governments and other organisations throughout the world are working to empower women by supporting sustainable development, human rights, and access to financial services. For the sake of progress, gender equality, and the full personal development of both men and women, educational institutions have a responsibility to eradicate gender stereotypes. It is absolutely necessary for men and women to work together in order to achieve success whenever they participate in developmental projects. The empowerment of women is a belief-mediated process in which their propensity to cultivate emancipator ideas acts as a mediator between the influence of objective societal conditions, such as the strength of the knowledge economy. When it comes to economic progress, collaboration between the sexes is very necessary, and women, in particular, should make the most of their potential ²¹. According to Dominic & Jothi, collective action for development is beneficial to women's empowerment since it not only benefits individual women and organisations that advocate for women, but it also benefits families and communities. Consequently, the education of women is a powerful technique of empowering women.

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