

Role of Economy in Women Empowerment -A Study on Indian Context.

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Abstract: *Women empowerment and economic development of a country is interrelated. Economic development of women will also lower down the inequality between men and women prevailing in our country. Indian women throughout this developing process engage themselves exclusively in the economically productive work and earn incomes for them and their family. Both governmental and non-governmental agencies should consider development of economy of our country as an accelerator for women empowerment which in turn going to put forward more developmental opportunities for our country's economy. Over the past twenty years, some non-governmental organizations, such as the Self-Employed Women's Association in India, have been productive in improving women's economic status. Many more such groups are needed in order to have much visible changes.*

Keywords: *Women's empowerment, Economic development, Governmental policies and programmes, Women's contribution, Issues in empowerment.*

Date of Submission: 05-01-2021

Date of Acceptance: 20-01-2021

I. INTRODUCTION:

Woman empowerment enforces that social rights, political rights, economic stability, strength and all other rights should be equally entertained by both the genders. Swami Vivekananda once said that “There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of the woman is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on only one wing.” Our government has organized various welfare schemes both at state & central level for the empowerment of the women. All such policies and programs focus on complete development of women that is social, economic and educational empowerment. India has adopted the philosophy of “faster, sustainable and more inclusive growth” in this process.

Over the past two decades our country has witnessed decent growth rate in every aspect of women growth. But with this new growth trajectory, the economy is facing a lot more challenges for developing a more visible growth and for creating approachable employment opportunities in the country. However, the recent scenario suggests that there is an increasing concern about poverty and the status of employment for women in every sector of the economy.

Women majorly face two major challenges; one is their status of employment that is paid or unpaid, and the other is the barriers that posing hindrance to the entry and exit into the work force. Hence, various policies of the government should focus on lowering the incidence of poverty and improving the standards of living through skill development and by providing better opportunities. Special attention should be given to the excluded section especially scheduled caste (SC), scheduled tribe (ST) and other backward class (OBC) populations, and women of the society.

Therefore, better employment opportunities will not only include the poor, especially women and other disadvantaged groups, in the economic growth and policies, plans and programme which benefits them to stand economically strong. Various surveys in India has revealed that our country has the lowest female labor force participation (FLFP) rates, which indicates that a large proportion of women still undergoes through unpaid work at home, in the household or in the family business. Furthermore, the FLFP rate has declined in the last few years in our country. Hence, this problem is very critical for women who has lost their jobs and changed their work status from paid work to unpaid work because of their domestic duties, personal responsibilities or family business.

Women in India's Economic Growth:

Between years 1994 to 2012 about 133 million Indians came out of poverty. This is an achievement that India and the world should be proud of. It would have been considered a more appreciable success if a greater number of women could contribute to the work force.

A survey after those years showed that only 27 percent of adult Indian women had a job, or were actively looking for one, in comparison to the 79 percent of men. In fact, almost 20 million women had dropped out of the workforce due to either domestic duties or due to various exploitation they face there. Since then, India has undergone rapid urbanization but has not yet encouraged more women to join the labor force. Rural jobs have been declining and not enough rural women have been able to make to the work field.

India ranks 120 among 131 countries in female labor force participation rates with a very high gender-based violence rate. Any country will face a phase of instability if half of the population is not fully participating in the economy. At 17% of GDP, the economic contribution of Indian women is less than half the global average. India can uplift its growth by 1.5 percentage points to 9 percent per year if around 50% of women could contribute in the country's economic arena.

Valuing girls and women is important factor in making societies more developed and prosperous. Women's economic empowerment is closely linked with poverty reduction as women then will also tend to invest more of their earnings in their family and children and community as a whole.

Our state governments have made a lot more efforts in order to empower poor rural women through various self-help groups and some non-governmental organization. These organizations have supported about 45 million poor women from both rural and urban areas but more specifically backward areas to access skills, markets and business development services. Some of them have even become successful entrepreneurs and has now been pictured as an inspiration for others. As a result, such successful and well settled women experience greater food security, better access to finance, and higher incomes that benefit their families and communities.

One of the biggest projects of our country that is The Skill India Mission not only provides women relevant skills but it also ensures that training programs are sensitive enough to understand and consider their needs through helping them to provide safe transport, flexible schedules and childcare support.

But only these few projects alone are insufficient to bring any evident change. Various researches show that even women who have completed their skills programs and have received proper trainings and get jobs tend to drop out in response to family pressures and for domestic duties. And so, the changing social norms around marriage, work and household duties will have to be part of such big projects.

Programmes should be arranged in various areas who will make young girls interested in subjects like science and mathematics, and convince them that they are just as capable as boys to excel in these subjects as well and that they too can build on careers in engineering, scientific research, IT, etc. families must also raise our sons to respect girls and women, and should train their daughter that there is zero-tolerance for gender-based violence.

In our country where still son-preference goes around with development, we need families to see their girls as capable as boys for future professionals. Household responsibilities can be divided equally between men and women. It is a peak time to reconsider and reform outdated rules, regulations and policies that act as barrier to women entering or staying in the labor market. To remove structural barriers for women to access employment economic stability creation of better jobs, providing support for child and elder care, and ensuring mobility to and from work is in need to look out.

Employers in the work place are needed to accept the diversity in the workplace by hiring women and paying them the same wages as men for similar jobs. Women need safe transportation and zero tolerance of sexual harassment in the office.

Government and public should work together in order to accelerate the progress in such things. Gender-focused planning should be incorporated into everything that we do. Quite a change is being witnessed since the time efforts have been intensified as many girls were now helping family members with education and other expenses like a son used to do for his family.

The government is making many promising efforts such as government's program for skills development, subsidized loans for businesses led by women, and recent legislation doubling maternity leave, and requiring childcare facilities in companies that employ more than 50 people. If implemented well according to the plans, these policies can actually remove some of the hurdles women usually face and hence can help in a significant boost to India's economy.

At the end, it's the Indian women who will have to play a key role in framing a space for themselves in India's work force.

Objectives:

1. To understand interdependency of economic growth of country with the empowerment of women.
2. To visualize the contribution of women in the growth of economy of country.

3. To study major issues faced by women to empower themselves and hence overall economic backwardness of country.

4. To suggest various possible measure for government at all level to enhance economic growth of country by increasing women's participation.

Relation Between Economy Development and Women Empowerment:

The economic development of a country eradicates many problems from the society which act as an accelerator for women backwardness. Economic development eradicates the barriers faced by women in poor household's face, thus increasing the resources available to poor families through economic development will make women less vulnerable to the reasons responsible for their backwardness.

When poverty is reduced, it improves the condition of women and make them more available to focus on their development. Poverty reduction also leads to reduction of gender inequality. Economic development of a country enhances the available opportunities for women to work, be independent financially and finally contribute to overall economy. The gender gap in every field in our country such as education, political participation, and employment opportunities will get visibly reduced due to economic growth and hence will contribute in women's empowerment. Even after country being stepping forward toward development, fewer opportunities in the labor market for women is contributing factor for their unequal treatment in the household. This makes economic development of a country a great helping fact in improving condition of women.

As women will get empowered, will become independent and financially stable, they will contribute a lot in overall economy of our country. They are equally capable to run a business, earn for themselves and their family, and indulge themselves and excel in every field which will in turn make our country more stable and developed especially economically. Hence, we can conclude that women empowerment and economic development are correlated and interdependent on each other.

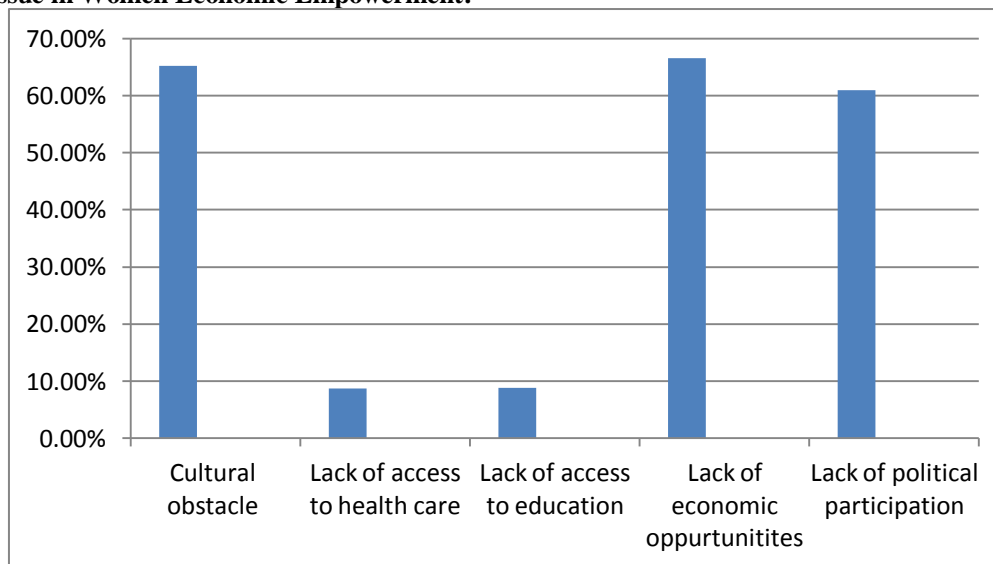
Women's Contribution to the Economy:

The economic development and women empowerment are dependent on each other. Economic development can directly lead to the empowerment of women. Women contribute a lot to the Indian economy in many ways. After considering her importance in the social field, government has worked a lot on promoting economic development of women in India which in turn will enhance economy of country as a whole. In spite of having a large percent of women in the work field unfortunately the National data collection agencies reveal the fact that there is a serious under-estimation of women's contribution as workers. However, in urban India the number of women in the workforce is more than in rural areas due to more awareness about rights.

In rural India, in agriculture about 89.5% of the total female labours are working. Women's average contribution in overall productivity is estimated at 55% to 66%. of the total labour contribution and about 94% of total employment in dairy production in India. Women also occupy about 51% of the total employed workers in small-scale industries.

Most women in India work and contribute a lot to the economy in direct or indirect way, but most of their work is not considered and appreciated.

Major Issue in Women Economic Empowerment:



DATA SOURCE: The global gender gap report 2018

1. Cultural Obstacle:

As the above graph shows that cultural obstacle is one of the important factors for women backwardness. Culturally Indian women face a lot more hurdles to cross in order to empower themselves. Various old traditions are still followed in many backward regions of country. One of them is child marriage. Child marriage has been traditionally practiced in India and continue till today. Although child marriage was banned in 1860, it is still prevailing in our society. This hampers their overall growth from very young age. Son preference is another old age belief still prevailing in our society due to which female infanticide and feticide is exclusively followed in our country. Birth of a girl child is considered to be a curse and burden on family so with the help of technology the sex of the unborn baby is determined and if it is a girl child then it is aborted on the spot even mother don't agree with it.

2. Lack of Access to Healthcare:

Even after government had focused on women health but most of these facilities are not reachable to them. Either due to lack of awareness and mobility restriction they are unable to access those healthcare facilities. It's very important for women to be healthy in order to achieve over development. In India due to some old traditions such as women is the one who will eat last in the whole family. They eat whatever is left over. And also, the food intake does not contain the required nutritional value for maintaining a healthy body. Such malnourished women cannot give birth to a healthy baby.

3. Lack of Access to Education:

From the past few decades, it is believed that women need to just look after the households and that their education is of no use. This kind of thought process still persists in many villages and backward area of India even today. But the scenario in urban areas has changed a lot. There women are going for higher education but majority of Indian women are from villages and they lack education. The people of villages force their girl child for marriage not for acquiring education.

4.Lack of Economic Opportunities:

Women who belong to poor households faces a lot more issue in comparison to female from middle- and upper-class family. They have unequal share of the work and responsibility of cooking, feeding and taking care of whole family and hence are involved only in these unpaid household work throughout their life. It profusely limits poor women's choice and access income-earning opportunities.

They sacrifice their own health and lack in nutrition and hence the gender gaps in nutrition, education and health are more often seen in poorer family.

Due to poverty, families have to choose between spending their resources either on their daughter's education or marriage. They prefer saving for girls' marriage then educating them which is responsible for having large section of uneducated girls from poor families. Due to lack of money and ways to earn it they find girl child to be burden on them which leads to increasing rate of female infanticide and feticides in poor sections of society. All these are unresolved issues prevailing in poor group of our society which make empowering women more difficult and hence pose threat to overall economic growth of our country.

5. Lack of Political Participation:

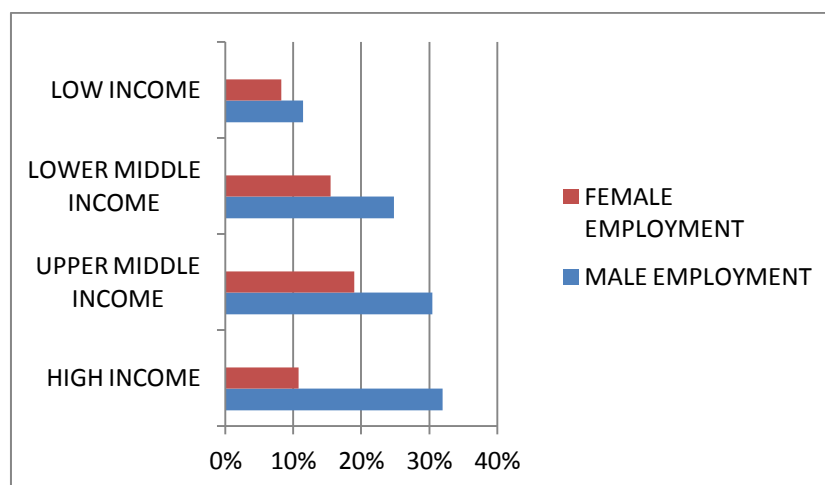
Women's active participation in politics equally like men including being a leader of a political party or being an active voter is essential to achieve equality, their overall development and to have involvement in various decision-making processes. But even after having a considerable reservation in Raj and Gram Panchayat , their participation is less due to various social, economic and cultural barrier being imposed on them by family and society.

Areas of Focus:

Increasing involvement of women and considering their effort in different sector and other business will be very effective in reducing the gap between skills that people of our country have especially women and the jobs opportunity available for them. Various training programmes and increasing literacy rate of women will help them to develop skills and better decision-making abilities. Bigger companies can also invest in the women entrepreneurs through various financial policies. Government of India should focus on enhancing women's access to the internet so that they can create a better market of connected women who can then be approachable to various business opportunities. In addition to this the private sector should also invest in women's security against violence at workplace, and take steps to ensure their safe mobility from home to office.

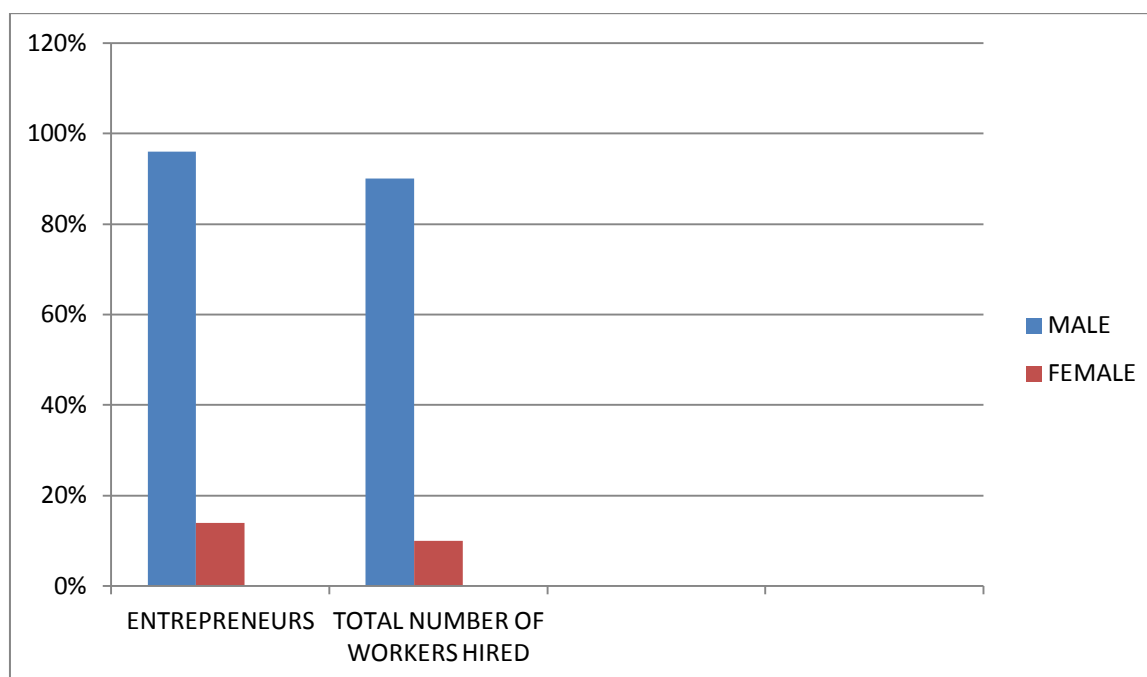
Perspective:

1. Indian government had put forward many policies regarding development of women but there is a huge gap between formulation of policies and actual implementation of it. Government should also make efforts not only on making such women welfare policies and programmes but also on its proper implementation. As the graph below can clearly show that the policies and programme of the government in the recent years for increasing their employment opportunities have not much effect on their financial independency by employment.



DATA SOURCE: women in the workplace survey 2019

2. Government has made efforts to enhance female literacy rate by various education programmes by both governmental and non-governmental agencies but only constructing schools and colleges are not sufficient to bring any changes. Government should also focus on possibility of safe mobility of girls to the school. Government should make sure to provide them proper transport facility and a safe environment in schools and colleges. Constructions should be made in the spots nearer to the locality.
3. Government should organize programmes to educate the families before educating a girl child as its more important for parents to understand the importance of their education and to become financially independent.
4. Various SHO groups are involved in helping women for their betterment in every aspect. Even they have organized groups which assist women who are in trouble in every possible way such as mentally, legally and financially. They encourage women to educate themselves, take care of their mental and physical health and involve themselves in various productive activity. But most of these are out of reach for women from backward areas so these should be made more accessible.
5. Present scenario clearly show increase in female literacy rate, female employment rate and their contribution in country's economy but the rate is very slow. Government should try to frame small group who can reach to the remote areas and can aware women about their rights and facilities being provided to them.
6. Even after having considerable reservations for women in gram and raj panchayat as well as in other political bodies their involvement is less. In my opinion along with reservations , government should also focus on increasing keen interest of women in politics and knowledge regarding it.
7. Even after growing era of women entrepreneurship in our country , a myth prevails in our society that women are not suitable to run a business. Small- and large-scale industries run by women should be given some incentives and facilities to encourage them to stabilize themselves economically which will improve economy of our country. Below graph gives idea about access of finance by women in current scenario that women of India are involved less in entrepreneurship as compare to male of country.



DATA SOURCE: Oxfam inequality report 2019

II. CONCLUSION:

In today's era Indian women are participating in different sectors but more commonly are being involved in informal sector which includes jobs such as domestic servant, small trader, artisan, or field laborer on a family farm but most of these jobs are low paying, does not require much skill and also do not provide benefits to them. The earlier dimensions which used to impose various restrictions however is changing.

Women now are freer to participate in the formal economy. More and more women have achieved positions of respect and prestige. Both formal and informal sectors are now populated with women who work on equal wages and position as men. In both urban and rural areas there is an increase in the number of unpaid women. However, women's unpaid domestic works make them more economically vulnerable and dependent on men. At last, we can conclude that even though the present situation is changing slowly but there is urgent need to look after the factor which is posing hindrances to women's involvement in country's economy and in return gets benefitted by development economy of India.

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Aayasha Parvin, et. al. "Role of Economy in Women Empowerment -A Study on Indian Context." *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention (IJHSSI)*, vol. 10(01), 2021, pp 01-06. Journal DOI- 10.35629/7722