



Cover Page



WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH EDUCATION FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH

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Abstract

"If you educate a woman, you educate a family," Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru famously stated. Mother India becomes more powerful when women do. The nation's economy will grow as more women, who make up nearly half of the population, gain authority. The ability to adapt to difficulties, to challenge their established roles, and to transform their life is what makes education a significant step in the empowerment of women. Despite the fact that more people have access to education, there is still gender inequality in India, and much more work has to be done to support women's education there. Women have a tone of untapped potential that has never been used. Equity in education will guarantee enabling and entrepreneurial growth because education is both an input and an output of human development. According to the 2011 Census on Literacy Rates, 65.46% of women nowadays are literate, compared to almost 80% of men. Education can accomplish a lot for women's rights, dignity, and security, even beyond literacy. The key to opening the door to development's independence is education. Eileen Malone Beach considers wealth, health care, and education to be a happy trifecta because of their interdependence. This essay examines how education affects women's empowerment as well as the obstacles and adjustments we must make along the way. To achieve the intended outcomes, we demand a renewed focus on relevant, superior, and comprehensive education.

Keywords: Education, Empowerment, Women.

Introduction:

Worldwide, women make up about half of the population. But, because they were denied equal opportunity in many places of the world, the hegemonic male ideology caused them a great deal of suffering. Yet, the emergence of feminism has significantly improved the status of women globally in recent years. One of the most important concerns of these campaigns for women's rights has been access to education. India's government and civil society have focused a lot of attention on women's education since well-educated women can contribute significantly to the country's growth. For the residents of any country, education is seen as a fundamental right and a basic demand. It can enable individuals to become independent, making it an effective strategy for eliminating inequality.

Since it gives women the confidence to take on difficulties, question their old roles, and transform their lives, education is viewed as a crucial step towards the empowerment of women. Women's education is the most effective instrument for changing their status in society. The majority of women in our nation are still uneducated, outdated, frail, and exploited. Moreover, education helps to lessen inequality and raises the status of students within their families. Women have access to empowerment and capacity development as a means of obtaining useful knowledge and skills for bettering their lives. Only if women contribute to the best of their talent and aptitude, which is only achievable when they are educated and empowered, will India become a developed country.

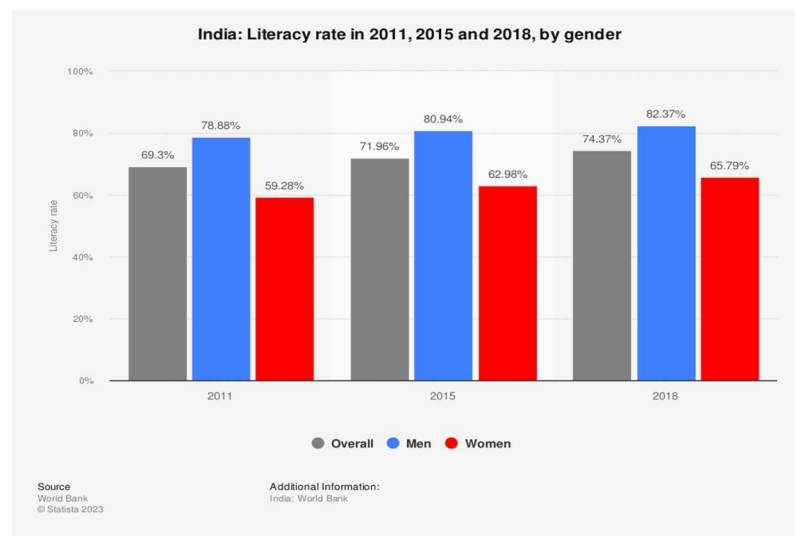


Cover Page



Women's Status in Education

The constitutional requirement that all children receive free, obligatory education until the age of 14 has not yet been met. Education professionals acknowledge that the poor advancement of females' education is a major factor in this failure. Although Indian women's literacy and educational levels are rising, there is still a gender difference in literacy rates, as seen in the graph below.



The proportion of educated people rose to 74.37% in 2021, with males making up 82.37% and females 65.79%, respectively. The national average for female literacy was 65.46%, while the average for male literacy was 82.14%. Bihar had the lowest average literacy rate in India, at less than 50%, while Kerala had the highest average literacy rate among Indian states, at 90.02 percent.

India is the largest democracy in the world, home to billions of people, about half of whom are women. So how does India's progress impact women's education? Families suffer as a result of females' lack of education. The health of children and other members of the family is improved by educated moms. Their awareness of health risks shields their family from disease. The child mortality rate is significantly greater in households with uneducated moms than it is in homes with educated mothers. Indian culture is beginning to place a high priority on educating girls, saying that doing so is essential. All of us want to remove gender differences in education.

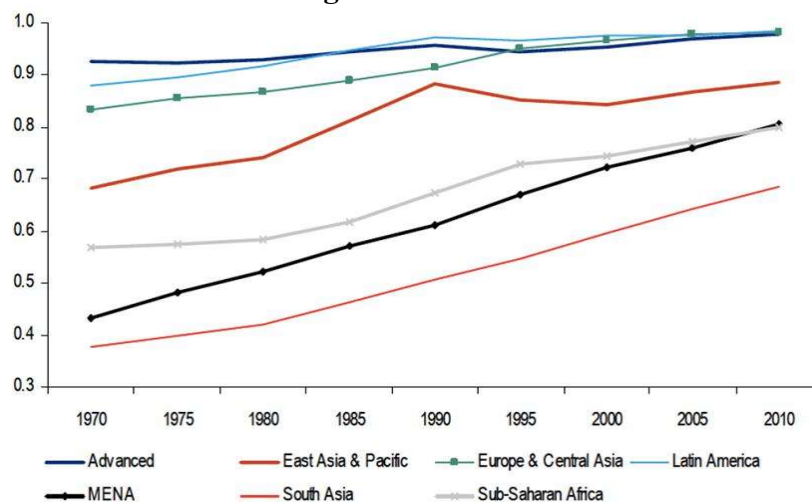
The inhumane subjugation of women and the atrocities committed against them in the guise of custom and religion were denounced by Adi Shankaracharya, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, Swami Vivekanand, Mahatma Gandhi, and Jawaharlal Nehru. Margaret Cousins put a lot of effort towards improving the position of women in order to raise social awareness and expand their legal and constitutional rights. Sarojini Naidu, Mutthulakshmi Reddy, Kamla Devi Chattopadhyaya, Durga Bai Deskmukh, and Annie Besant are a few additional well-known advocates for women's rights.



Women's Educational Barriers

In Indian homes, particularly in rural regions, girl children sometimes take on the role of a second mother by helping out with domestic chores including fetching water, gathering firewood, cleaning, and cooking while also being discouraged from attending school. The second social evil is the bonded labor system, a depressing occurrence that prevents girls from attending school in disadvantaged families who work as farm laborer's and washermen.

Figure: Ratio of female to male schooling around the world



The dowry system and other societal customs are the primary factors in girl child abuse and prejudice. Many families, especially those who are poor and downtrodden, believe that in order to give their daughters with a larger dowry, they must amass more goods and possessions. One of the main things that prevents women from getting an education is the decreased enrollment of girls in schools. More than half of Indian females are non-starters. Each tenth girl in the 6 to 11 age range is still not enrolled in school, according to the year.

Particularly in rural, tribal, and slum communities, the incidence and prevalence of dropouts among females appear to be fairly high. The trainees' low academic performance made it difficult for them to keep up with the material and simply made it tough for them to focus on the practical's second factor was that some of the students were hired before the course was through. The third factor was inadequate instruction by the teachers and low socioeconomic status of the students. In India, girls experience dropout and stagnation at rates that are over two times higher than those of boys.

The educational atmosphere for girls in India is not very engaging and motivating. Most teaching techniques are archaic, restrictive, and boring. There are numerous schools with inadequate basic amenities like drinking water, restrooms, and latrines, poor infrastructure, and no qualified instructors, particularly female teachers, which any parent would prefer for the protection of their girl children.



Cover Page



Almost 50 million children are employed in India, the country with the highest rate of child labor in the world, manufacturing carpets, beedi crafts, glass bangles, construction, etc. Most of their industries favour girls because of their high productivity and low caste. Children, especially girls, are often viewed as economic assets in poor households since they provide income for survival and protect the family from financial difficulties brought on by the death or incapacity of parents.

Women's education is crucial for their empowerment.

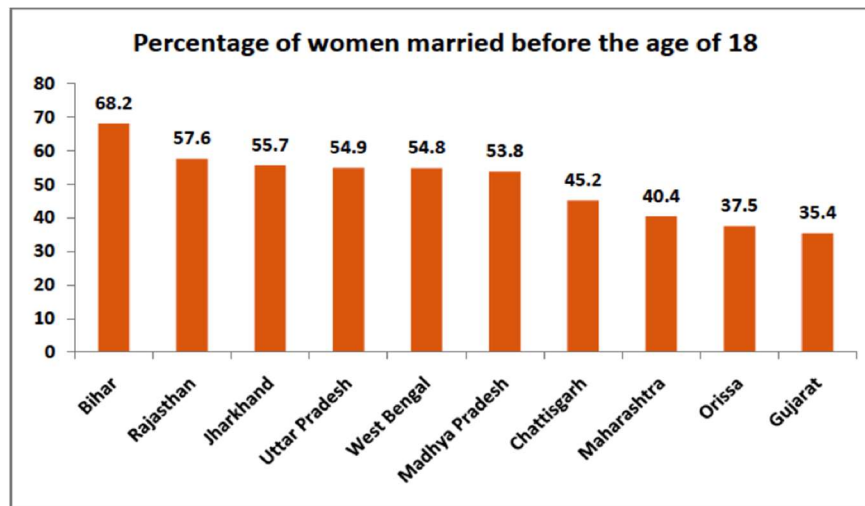
Women's empowerment is a relatively new idea. The year 2001 was designated as "**WOMEN EMPOWERMENT YEAR**," the first year of the new millennium. Women who are educated have better families, which in turn create an ideal community and a developed country. A progressive nation is one in which all citizens, regardless of gender, religion, caste, faith, or race, have complete economic, social, cultural, and political independence.

Recent UNESCO data demonstrate how education changes development:

- During a 40-year period, if all children had equal access to schooling, per capita income would rise by 23%.
- Child marriages and child mortality might decrease by a sixth, and maternal fatalities could decrease by two-thirds, if all women had access to elementary education.

According to UNESCO's latest research,

- **Education gives women more power.** Young women and girls who have received an education are more likely to be aware of their rights and to be confident in asserting them.
- **Education encourages tolerance:** Education aids in the understanding of democracy, encourages the tolerance and confidence that support it, and inspires individuals to take part in the political life of their nations.
- **Employment prospects and economic growth are improved by education equality:** The economy would expand more quickly if all youngsters had equal access to schooling. In a nation with educational equality over 40 years, per capita income would increase by 23%.
- **Education is a component of the answer to environmental issues:** More educated people are more likely to recycle household garbage and manage water and energy resources more wisely.
- **Educating women helps prevent child marriage because:** More access to education for women will help reduce the likelihood of child marriage.



- **Mothers are saved by education:** Many women still lose their lives in various nations as a result of problems during pregnancy and delivery. Education can stop these fatalities.
- **Although knowledge is necessary, certain pediatric illnesses can be avoided:** If moms are educated to utilize them, simple measures like malaria nets and clean water can stop some of the deadliest childhood illnesses.
- **Children's lives are saved through education:** Women who have more education are better able to spot early symptoms of sickness, get advice, and take action. Child mortality would decrease by a sixth if all women in developing nations finished their elementary education.

The following ways that women's education promotes women's empowerment:

- Women's education has the power to alter social norms and family dynamics. Also, it aids in ending harmful customs like early marriage, dowry, and Sati-Pratha. By providing woman with a variety of career opportunities, education helps to alleviate economic distress by enabling her to coexist in the workforce with men and support her family. Education encourages collaboration rather than fostering a woman's individualism. Her education gives her the chance to select the vocation that is ideal for her.
- Every woman has her own aspirations, which may be high or low, but education aids in maintaining a balanced aspiration by enabling her to identify her areas of interest, aptitude, and potential. This information further enables her to select the ideal line of employment.
- By giving each personality trait its appropriate consideration, education promotes the balanced development of personalities.
- Women's education also has a big part to play in educating women how to communicate effectively and express their feelings in order to settle conflicts and deal with challenges of any kind.
- A woman who has received an education is a role model for her children, her family, society, and the country as a whole because she understands how to maintain harmonious relationships within her family and with other people.
- Knowledge of sports, exercise, health-related topics, and excellent physical health offers women the power to become physically strong; this will undoubtedly improve their mental health.
- Education aids in population management and the improvement of the sex ratio.



Cover Page



- Education motivates women, particularly rural women, to participate in programmes like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Operation Black-Board, and Total Literacy Programmes, among others. Constitutional Provisions, Special Laws and National Policies in Support of Women Empowerment

The Indian Constitution, which not only granted women equality but also gave the State more authority, acknowledged the value of women as a valuable human resource. The Constitution often mentions the socioeconomic advancement of women and their involvement in decision-making in a number of its articles. Which are:

- ❖ Article 14 guarantees equal opportunities and rights for men and women in the political, economic, and social arenas.
- ❖ Article 15(1) forbids discrimination against any person on the basis of their caste, race, religion, or other characteristics.
- ❖ Article 16: All people should have equal access to possibilities for public posts.
- ❖ Article 39(d): Fair pay for equal labour for men and women.
- ❖ Article 42: The state shall provide for the first and humane conditions of employment and maternity leave.

Also, the government has passed particular legislation to advance the position of women and protect their rights. Which are:

- ❖ *The Hindu Succession Act, 1956 which provides for women the right to parental property.*
- ❖ *The Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961, which forbids the taking of dowries and thereby protects women from exploitation.*
- ❖ *Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 which provides payment of remuneration equal with men for work of equal value.*
- ❖ *The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971 which legalizes abortion conceding the right of a woman to go for abortion on the ground of physical and mental health.*
- ❖ *The Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1983, which aims to eradicate several kinds of offences committed against women.*
- ❖ *The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act of 1986 forbids the vulgar portrayal of women in the media, including movies, television, and newspapers.*
- ❖ *The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act of 2005 aims to more effectively safeguard the rights of women who experience abuse of any sort inside the family and who are protected by the Constitution.*

The National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, 2001 seeks to advance, develop, and amplify women's voices. According to the policy, "Equal access to education would be provided for women and girls. Special steps will be taken to end discrimination, universalize education, end illiteracy, create gender-sensitive educational systems, increase girls' enrollment and retention rates, and improve the quality of education to support women's development of technical or vocational skills as well as lifelong learning. One area of attention would be closing the gender gap in secondary and higher education. We will focus especially on girls and women, particularly those with curly hair and those from weaker groups like the SC/ST/OBC/Minorities, in order to meet the specific time goals outlined in current regulations.



Cover Page



Conclusion

To sum up the current situation, it can be claimed that women in the fast-paced, high-tech society that is wracked by population growth, wars, turmoil, and corruption may shape the youth's personalities in the right ways, given that the women are themselves in positions of authority.

Education and female emancipation are positively correlated. Another crucial point in this regard is the fact that, in these societies, the issue of women's empowerment has been confronted with some significant difficulties, which are results of some specific evil norms and attitudes, such as child labor, child marriage, illiteracy, superstition, partial parental attitudes, female feticides, etc. In such circumstances, women's empowerment is urgently required. The atmosphere must be set up to allow women to engage in educational programmes and profit from them if women are to be empowered. For the sake of empowering women across the world, educational and other measures for their empowerment should be put into practice.

Man cannot alone end the ills of poverty, unemployment, and inequality. Women must participate actively and equally. Women will not be able to comprehend their rights and their significance without education. The goal of women's empowerment is to improve their standard of living by working towards higher levels of literacy and education, better health care for themselves and their children, equal ownership of productive resources, increased participation in economic and commercial sectors, awareness of their rights, and increased independence, self-confidence, and self-respect.

The Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao programme, recently introduced by the Indian government, aims to empower girls by fostering their financial and social independence. It also raises awareness of welfare programmes for women and increases their effectiveness in delivery. To bring about the required changes, such programmes need be applied nationwide. It should never be forgotten that both men and women must take the initiative to pursue lifelong learning. Indeed, that is empowerment. The moment has come to change the emphasis from "women for development" to "women in development," with the help of men via group involvement and management. That will definitely affect equality for the better. We must have the confidence to reject marginalization even as we are drawn to modernization and globalization.

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Cover Page



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