

## Women Empowerment - The Present Scenario

---

**M. Julius Ceasar**

Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce  
St. Joseph's College, Tiruchirappalli

### **Abstract**

Women empowerment is the most discussed topic in the world and women are the essential and integral part of society and without women concept of society is not possible. Women empowerment is the way or a social action that is developed in the society on realizing the status of women in which women elaborate and recreate what it is to be in a circumstance that they previously were denied in family, society and other places that are common. Empowerment can be defined in many ways however, when talking about women's empowerment; the concept of empowerment means accepting and allowing women who are away from the decision-making process and participation in the socio economic and cultural activities in all spheres of life. This puts a strong emphasis on the participation of women in political structures and formal decision-making and, in the economic sphere, on the ability to obtain an income that enables participation in economic decision-making. Empowerment is the process that creates power in individuals over their own lives, society, and in their communities. This paper attempts to bring out women empowerment initiatives at the global level.

**Key words:** empowerment, decision making status of women.

### **Introduction**

Women is a companion of man created by God with an assurance of making the world more effective in companion with each other in all through the generations. Women are considered to be delicate members of society but in reality, it is the opposite particularly in the present scenario of transformation and change that is taking place worldwide. Women empowerment is the most discussed topic in the world and women are the essential and integral part of society and without women concept of society is not possible. Every religion pours importance on the women's rights, besides religious, there are many other factors that has the potential to influence the empowerment of the women in society such as economic, political, and social spheres. It is the fact that treatment to the women is not up to the mark in various corners due to the patriarchal system of the society. According to scholars, women do not have the right to freedom and liberty in many areas because of the patriarchal bargain in the society. The Society is considered to be the conservative that does not give freedom and rights to its female population.

It is crucial to know that this claim is not properly false and it is not properly right because of the class difference in the society. Many women's right activists and liberals in the region have struggled a lot in recent decades so that they can attain

a space for women in the patriarchal and kinship society. It cannot be ignored that women are treated as commodities and showpieces that should be stationed in the homes (C & S, 2019). Women's empowerment is not easy to attain in the patriarchal society but it cannot be impossible. Women are treated as commodities in the society and the majority of the males have a mindset that women are of no use other than giving care services. Women hold the status of the first school of morality and ethics for any kid. Moreover, the mobility of women is also restricted because of the social constraints and family pressures. They are not allowed to travel long distances and avail of the facilities of the health, education, and employment (Sharoni, 1997). Today, women in many countries face the same atrocities and domestic violence, according to the women rights activists that it makes no difference who rule the country i.e., it may be authoritarian and democratic, the rights of the women are snubbed by the patriarchal mindset. Most alarming thing is that it is difficult to kill the mindset because it takes centuries to shape the mindset of the society and it is impossible to diminish it overnight. Women are considered to be fragile and weak so that their share is always snatched by the hostile men of society (REDDY, 2012).

### **Women empowerment**

Women empowerment is the way or a social action that is developed in the society on realizing the status of women in which women elaborate and recreate what it is to be in a circumstance that they previously were denied in family, society and other places that are common. Empowerment can be defined in many ways however, when talking about women's empowerment, the concept of empowerment means accepting and allowing women who are away from the decision-making process and participation in the socio economic and cultural activities in all spheres of life. This puts a strong emphasis on the participation of women in political structures and formal decision-making and, in the economic sphere, on the ability to obtain an income that enables participation in economic decision-making. Empowerment is the process that creates power in individuals over their own lives, society, and in their communities. The society feels that People are empowered when they are able to access the opportunities available to them without any setbacks and restrictions in education, profession and lifestyle. Feeling entitled to make your own decisions creates a sense of empowerment. Empowerment includes the action of raising the status of women through education, raising awareness, literacy, and training to face the challenging situations easily and comfortably. Thus the empowerment of Women in the society and family is all about equipping and allowing women to make life-determining decisions through the different problems in society and in family on par with their counterparts.

There are several principles defining women's empowerment such as, for one to be empowered, they must come from a position of disempowerment and a situation of oppression. Furthermore, one must acquire empowerment themselves rather than have it given to them by an external party. Studies have found that

empowerment definitions necessitate people have the capability to make important decisions in their lives while also being able to act on them.

Women empowerment has become a significant topic of discussion in development and economics. It can also point to the approaches regarding other trivialized genders in a particular political or social context. Women's economic empowerment refers to the ability for women to enjoy their right to control and benefit from the resources, assets, income and their own time, as well as the ability to manage risk and improve their economic status and well-being. Entire nations, businesses, communities and groups can benefit from the implementation of programs and policies that adopt the notion of women empowerment. Empowerment of women is necessity for the development of a society, since it enhances both the quality and the quantity of human resources available for development. Empowerment is one of the main procedural concerns when addressing human rights and development. Women empowerment and achieving gender equality is essential for our society to ensure the sustainable development of the country. Many world leaders and scholars have argued that sustainable development is impossible without gender equality and women empowerment. Sustainable development accepts environmental protection, social and economic development, and without women empowerment, women wouldn't feel equally important to the process of development as men. Therefore, scholars agree that women empowerment plays a huge role in development and is one of the significant contributions of development. Without the equal inclusion of women in development, women would not be able to benefit or contribute to the development of the country.

### **Economic empowerment**

Economic empowerment increases women's agency, access to formal government programs, mobility outside the home, economic independence, and purchasing power. Policy makers are suggested to support job training to aid in entrance in the formal markets. One recommendation is to provide more formal education opportunities for women that would allow for higher bargaining power in the home. They would have more access to higher wages outside the home; and as a result, make it easier for women to get a job in the market.

Strengthening women's access to property inheritance and land rights is another method used to economically empower women. This would allow them better means of asset accumulation, capital, and bargaining power needed to address gender inequalities. Often, women in developing countries are legally restricted from their land on the sole basis of gender. Having a right to their land gives women a sort of bargaining power that they would not normally have; in turn, they gain more opportunities for economic independence and formal financial institutions. Many scholars suggest that when we discuss women's empowerment, discussing the different barriers that underprivileged women face, which makes it more difficult for them to obtain empowerment in society.

Another popular methodology for women's economic empowerment also includes microcredit. Microfinance institutions that aim to empower women in their community by giving them access to loans that have low interest rates without the requirement of collateral. More specifically, the microfinance institutions aim give microcredit to women who want to be entrepreneurs. The success and efficiency of microcredit and microloans is controversial and constantly debated as it has not been successful to the expected level. Some critiques claim that microcredit alone doesn't guarantee women have control over the way the loan is used. Microfinance institutions don't address cultural barriers that allow men to still control household finances; as a result, microcredit may simply be transferred to the husband. Microcredit doesn't relieve women of household obligations, and even if women have credit, they don't have the time to be as active in the market as men.

### **Political empowerment**

Political empowerment supports creating policies that would best support gender equality and agency for women in both the public and private spheres. Popular methods that have been suggested are to create affirmative action policies that have a quota for the number of women in policy making and parliament positions. As of 2017, the global average of women whom hold lower and single house parliament positions is 23.6 percent. Further recommendations have been to increase women's rights to vote, voice opinions, and the ability to run for office with a fair chance of being elected. Because women are typically associated with child care and domestic responsibilities in the home, they have less time dedicated to entering the labour market and running their business. However, participation is not limited to the realm of politics. It can include participation in the household, in schools, and the ability to make choices for oneself. Some theorists believe that bargaining power and agency in the household must be achieved before one can move onto broader political participation.

### **Socio cultural Empowerment**

The growing access of the web in the late 20th century has allowed women to empower themselves by using various tools on the Internet. With the introduction of the World Wide Web, women have begun to use social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter for online activism. Through online activism, women are able to empower themselves by organizing campaigns and voicing their opinions for equality rights without feeling oppressed by members of society. For example, on May 29, 2013, an online campaign started by 100 female advocates forced the leading social networking website, Facebook, to take down various pages that spread hatred about women.

In recent years, blogging has also become a powerful tool for the educational empowerment of women. According to a study done by the University of California, Los Angeles, medical patients who read and write about their disease are often in a much happier mood and more knowledgeable than those who do

not. By reading others' experiences, patients can better educate themselves and apply strategies that their fellow bloggers suggest.

With the easy accessibility and affordability of e-learning (electronic learning), women can now study from the comfort of their homes. By empowering themselves educationally through new technologies like e-learning, women are also learning new skills that will come in handy in today's advancing globalized world.

The UN came out with a set of goals called the Sustainable Development Goals, or SDGs, to help make the world a better place. Of the 17, the fourth goal works to allow access to education for all people alike. A large effort has been made to include women in schools to better their education. Similarly, the fifth goal focuses on empowering women and girls to achieve gender equality through equal access to various types of opportunities (health care, education, work, etc.).

There are also some prominent non-profits that help empower women:

- She Should Run
- Girls Not Brides
- The Malala Fund
- Women in Defense
- Women for Women International
- Every Mother Counts

### **Measurements and Assessments**

Women empowerment can be measured through the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), which shows women's participation in a given nation, both politically and economically. GEM is calculated by tracking "the share of seats in parliament held by women; of female legislators, senior officials and managers; and of female profession and technical workers; and the gender disparity in earned income, reflecting economic independence". It then ranks countries given this information. Other measures that take into account the importance of female participation and equality include: the Gender Parity Index or the Gender-related Development Index (GDI). Some critiques of GEM are that it is not concerned with factors regarding society, such as gender, religion, cultural context, legal context, and violations of women's rights. Gender empowerment measure attempts to make a consistent standardized approach to measure women's empowerment; in doing so, it has been critiqued that the GEM doesn't account for variation in historical factors, female autonomy, gender segregation, and women's right to vote.

The Gender-related Development Index (GDI) is a way in which the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) measures the inequality between genders within a country. Some critique of this measurement is that, because GDI calculations rely solely on the achievement distribution between males and

females of a population, GDI doesn't measure gender inequality; rather, it measures absolute levels on income, education and health.

A more qualitative form of assessing women's empowerment is to identify constraints to action. This allows for the identification of power relations between genders. Because this is a participatory process, it facilitates conversation on gender discrimination. Comparing constraints on women at a later time also allows for any changes or expansion to be better identified. The evaluation of the development of women's agency allows for an evaluation of actions taken. These assessments must also be based on the action taken by women, and not external groups. External groups can help facilitate women's empowerment, but cannot bestow it on them.

Recent studies also show that women face more barriers in the workplace than do men. Gender-related barriers involve sexual harassment; unfair hiring practices, career progression, and unequal pay where women are paid less than men are for performing the same job. When taking the median earnings of men and women who worked full-time, year-round, government data from 2014 showed that women made \$0.79 for every dollar a man earned. The average earnings for working mothers came out to even less—\$0.71 for every dollar a father made, according to a 2014 study conducted by the National Partnership for Women and Children. While much of the public discussion of the "wage gap" has focused around women getting equal pay for the same work as their male peers, many women struggle with what is called the "pregnancy penalty". The main problem is that it is difficult to measure, but some experts say that the possibility of having a baby can be enough for employers to push women back from their line. Therefore, women are put in a position where they need to make the decision of whether to maintain in the workforce or have children. This problem has sparked the debate over maternity leave in the United States and many other countries in the world.

Despite significant improvements in recent decades, education is not universally available and gender inequalities persist. A major concern in many countries is not only the limited numbers of girls going to school but also the limited educational pathways for those that step into the classroom. More specifically, there should be more efforts to address the lower participation and learning achievement of girls in science, technology, engineering and mathematics education.

### **Conclusion**

Women's empowerment is not easy to attain in the patriarchal society but it cannot be impossible. The society is indeed conservative but authorities have done a lot of work in favor of the women just to cope with the pace of the world's development. This is an age of information and the rise of globalization takes place, now it is not possible to snub the rights of the women because many international bodies compelled the authoritarian rules to polite their policies in

the favour of the women. The efforts and initiatives at the global level will certainly be a source of strength to women empowerment that ultimately make the world a transformed one with equality and just treatment for human being without any gender bias.

### References

1. Mosedale Sarah (2005). Assessing women's empowerment: towards a conceptual framework. *Journal of International Development*. 17 (2): 243-257. doi:10.1002/jid.1212. ISSN 1099-1328
2. Rahman Aminur (2013). Women's Empowerment: Concept and Beyond (PDF). *Global Journal of Human Social Science Sociology & Culture*. 13 (6): 9. Archived (PDF)from the original on 10 August 2017. Retrieved 11 December 2018.
3. Gupta Kamla and Yesudian P. Princy (2006). Evidence of women's empowerment in India: a study of socio-spatial disparities. *GeoJournal*, 65(4): 365-380. doi:10.1007/s10708-006-7556-z.
4. Shah, M. M. "Sustainable Development". Science Direct. *Encyclopedia of Ecology*.
5. Mehra Rekha (1997). Women, Empowerment, and Economic Development. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. 554 (1): 136–149. doi:10.1177/0002716297554001009.
6. Kabeer Naila (2011). Contextualising the Economic Pathways of Women's Empowerment: Findings from a Multi-Country Research Programme.
7. Duflo Esther (2012). Women Empowerment and Economic Development. *Journal of Economic Literature*. 50 (4): 1051–1079. doi:10.1257/jel.50.4.1051. hdl:1721.1/82663. JSTOR 23644911.