

Women Empowerment in India: Dimension and Determinants

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Introduction

Empowerment is a “social action process that promotes participation of people, organizations, and communities in gaining control over their lives in their community and larger societies”. Empowerment is about positive changing and redistributing the balance of power in a given society, power being defined as control over resources and ideology. The resources may be categorized into physical, human, intellectual, financial, and self, including self-esteem, confidence, and creativity. Ideology refers to beliefs, values, attitudes, and ways of thinking and perceiving situations. So, empowerment is a process of awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation, to greater decision-making power and control, and to transformative action.

Empowerment Means-

- Having control, or gaining further control.
- Having a say and being listened to.
- Being able to define and create from a women’s perspective.

- Being able to influence social choices and decisions affecting the whole society (not just areas of society accepted as women’s place).
- Being recognized and respected as equal citizens and human beings with a contribution to make.



Women Empowerment

Women empowerment is an active, multi-dimensional process which enables women to realize their potential and powers in all spheres of life. The process should materialize only when there is a conducive environment for the enlightenment which is to be ensured first. Empowerment is enlightenment and there is no development without enlightenment; it is the quality of life measured not in terms of rising money

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incomes or longer life spans alone, rather by the autonomy and security enjoyed by women everywhere.

Empowerment as a concept was introduced at the International Women's Conference in 1985 at Nairobi. The conference defined empowerment as a redistribution of social power and control of resources in favour of women.

The different parameters of empowerment are:

- Enhance self-esteem and self-confidence in women.
- Build a positive image of women by recognizing their contributions to the society and economy.
- Develop in them an ability to think critically.
- Foster decision making and action through collective process
- Enable them to make informal choices in areas like education, employment and health.
- Ensure equal participation in the development process
- Provide information, knowledge and skill for economic independence.
- Enhance access to legal literacy and information related to their rights and entitlements in the society with a view to enhance their participation on an equal footing in all areas.

Women's empowerment is the process of empowering women. Empowerment raises the status of women through education, awareness, literacy, and training. Women's empowerment equips and allows women to take life-determining decisions. They may get the opportunity to redefine gender roles, which in turn provide them more freedom to pursue desired goals.

Thus, women empowerment is the stage which can be acquired through providing encouraging factors like opportunities, resources, skills and the process of empowerment is facilitated by specific strategies designed by various agencies for the purpose. All the initiatives should result in the overall development of the women which convert them to be the 'contributors/participants' in the nation building process rather than mere beneficiaries of certain welfare schemes/programmes.

Reason to origin of women empowerment

It is a fact that women have been suffering in every age and country from their protectors i.e., fathers, brothers, uncles, neighbors and others in childhood; boyfriends and lovers in youth; husbands and in-laws in married life; while from sons and others in old age. Man has inflicted an unspeakable injury upon woman by subjugating her in different phases in their lives and through the ages.

Thus “This question of woman’s rights was a world question, and as old as the human race. In all ages, woman has regarded by man as inferior, and had robbed of the rights, with which God had endowed her, in common with every human being”.

Their suffering knew no bounds based on culture, race, region or religion. They have been victims of abuse, molestation, violence, rape, poverty, malnutrition, ill treatment – in a word all sorts of deprivation. But until recently, scholarly attention was not focused enough on subjects related to empowerment of women.

In the multi-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-racial and multi-religious Indian sub-continent, women face one or other kinds of problem here and there. Only the dimension differs from state to state, society to society, and place to place. Even in the 21st century women are beaten, considered witches; they are getting stoned for committing sexual activities; honor killing is in practice in many parts of India; and with petty excuses they are tortured and raped while the main perpetrators move freely without any punishment.

In a word, they are bound in chains of societal taboos and face lots of peculiar difficulties throughout their life.

Waves of Feminist Movement

There are four waves of feminist movement. The first wave occurred in the 19th

and early 20th century movement for women’s right to vote. The second wave in 1960s and 1970s, moved for equal legal and social rights. The third wave began in the 1990s, refers to a continuation and reaction to second-wave.

The fourth wave that began in 2012 and continues till now, talks about women empowerment. The fourth wave seeks greater gender equality by focusing on gendered norms and marginalization of women in society.

Traditionally, women are considered marginalized group especially women of colors and transgender women. Fourth-wave feminist’s advocate for greater representation of these groups in politics and business, and argue that society will be more equitable if policies and practices incorporated the perspectives of all people.

Fourth-wave of feminism argues for equal pay for equal work and the equal opportunities sought for girls and women and to overcome gender norms, for example expressing emotions and feelings freely, expressing themselves physically as they wish, and to be engaged parents to their children) and seek justice against assault and harassment is prominent.

Five Year Plans and Women Empowerment

The Ninth Plan (1997-02) made two significant changes in the conceptual strategy of planning for women development. First, the

plan attempted what it called empowerment of women. Second, it directed both the Centre and the states to adopt the special strategy of Women's Component Plan (WCP) through which not less than 30 per cent of funds/benefits is expected to flow to women from all general development sectors. The Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-07) continued the strategy and it is for the first time, in the Eleventh Plan (2007-12) women were recognized not just as equal citizens but as agents of economic and social growth.

The two important events in the systematic transformation of women in the post-independence period are,

- 1) The Ninth Plan recommendation of the expeditious adoption of the National Policy for Empowering Women.
- 2) Democratic decentralization through the 73rd and 74th amendments to the constitution. Through the provision of reservation, women could occupy nearly one-third of the total seats in the elected bodies. All these are positive signs of development producing expected results to some extent. However, women do not find a prominent slot in the cognitive space of overall development. They have come forward mainly in those areas where they do not pose a challenge to male dominance. Consequently, the system

continues for all practical purpose, to be man centric rather than women-centric.

After the declaration of Women's Year and Women's Decade in 1975 and the Nairobi Conference in 1985, media have started laying much emphasis upon women's problems like gender discrimination, their role and importance, health and education and the like. Several legal and policy efforts over the years have definitely improved the status of women in India.

Dimensions of Women Empowerment

According to Rowland, empowerment to be within three dimensions:

Personal: Developing a sense of self and individual confidence and capacity, and undoing the defects of internalized oppression.

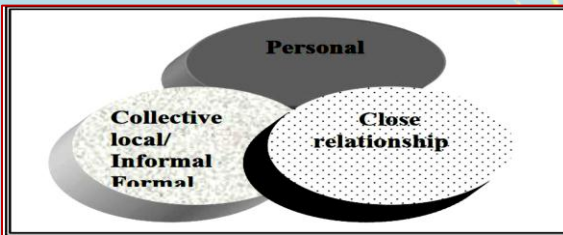
- Locus of control
- Self confidence
- Self-esteem
- Self-efficacy

Rational: Developing the ability to negotiate and influence the nature of a relationship and decisions made within it.

- Domestic violence
- Bargaining power
- Freedom of mobility
- Social network size
- Social capital
- Collective action involvement

Collective: This includes involvement in political structures, but might also cover collective action based on co-operation rather than competition.

- Percentage of female microfinance borrowers
- Percentage of female borrowers with school-aged children in school.
- Percentage female leadership in MFIs
- Percentage female staff promotion and attrition
- Average loan balance for female borrowers



Indicators/Determinants of Women Empowerment

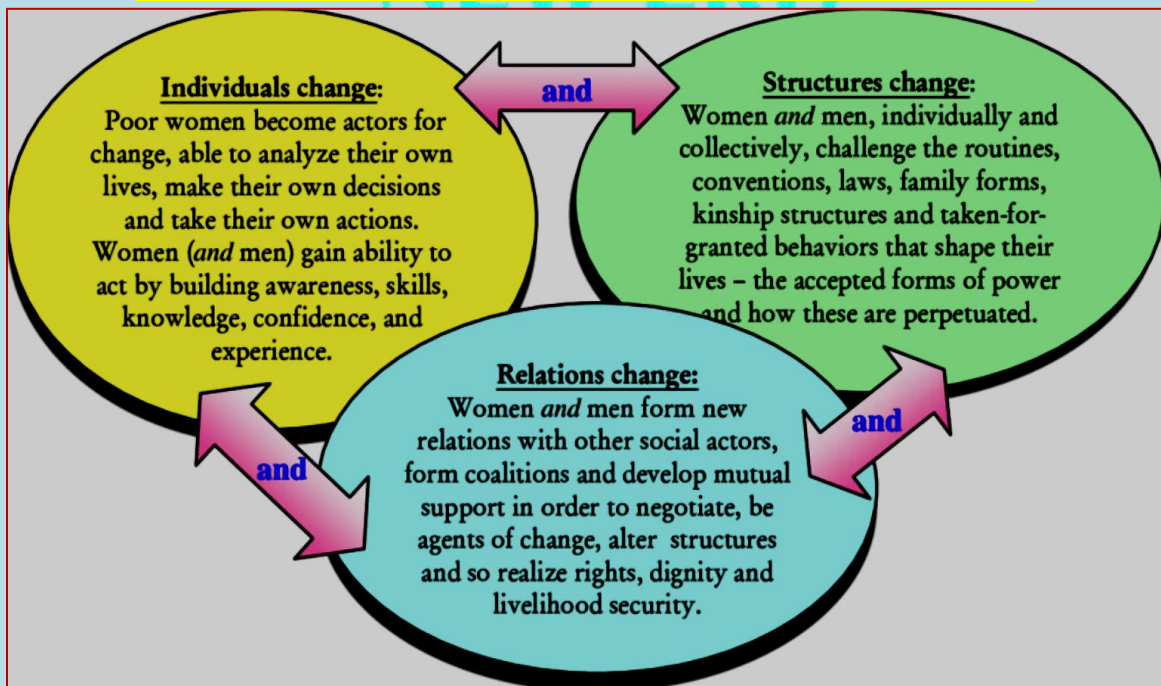
Syed Hashemi (1996) developed eight empowerment indicators where to be empowered-

- Mobility
- Economic security
- Ability to make small purchases
- Ability to make larger purchases
- Involvement in major decisions
- Relative freedom from domination by the family
- Political and legal awareness
- Participation in public protests and political campaigning

Importance Women Empowerment

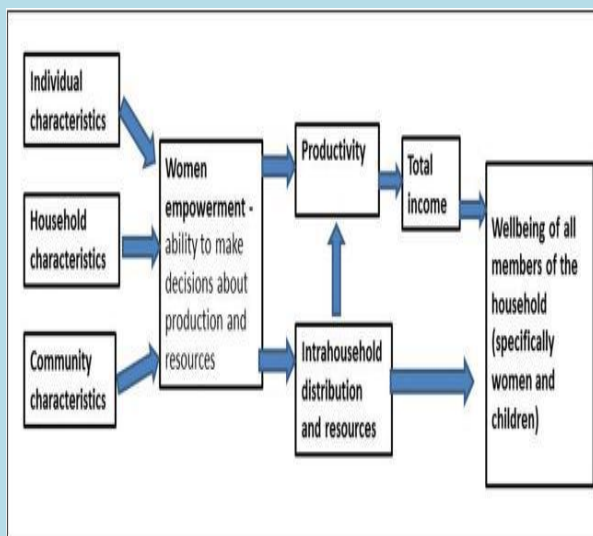
Women empowerment helps improving the standard life of women in rural and cities,

Following Diagram Explain the Positive Change of Women Empowerment:



preventing crimes against women, reducing domestic violence, bringing lots of social and economic gains, solving societal issues like poverty, unemployment and birth control, achieving comprehensive growth in every sector of society. It can help in nation building process by joining in defense forces, social service, politics, education and corporate levels. Women empowerment helps women promoting education which leads to employ a large number of populations. It is actually a social development as a whole. It provides equity and equality for women in every aspect of life. That leads to a safer and peaceful environment for all worldwide.

According to Kate Young (1993), empowerment enables women to take control of their own lives, set their own agenda, organize to help each other and make demands on the state for support and on the society itself for change’.



List of Performing NGOs issued by Ministry of Women and Child Development, Govt. Of India

State	Performing NGOs	% age of NGOs working for Women Empowerment*
Andhra Pradesh	35	68.6
Arunachal Pradesh	4	100
Assam	38	81.6
Bihar	18	100
Chandigarh	7	57.1
Chhattisgarh	7	100
Delhi	146	54.8
Goa	1	-
Gujarat	16	93.8
Haryana	17	58.8
Himachal Pradesh	8	100
Jammu and Kashmir	2	50
Jharkhand	11	90.9
Karnataka	63	74.7
Kerala	12	75
Madhya Pradesh	12	75
Maharashtra	82	90.2
Manipur	37	89.1
Meghalaya	2	-
Mizoram	1	100
Nagaland	2	100
Orissa	72	87.5
Punjab	5	60
Rajasthan	25	92
Tamil Nadu	53	87.7
Telangana	20	75
Uttar Pradesh	61	86.9
Uttarakhand	15	73.3
Tripura	1	-
West Bengal	37	73
Total	811	77.5

* The area of work included women development or/and empowerment

Conclusion:

While we may walk a few miles towards women's empowerment, the road is a long one. Empowering women is key to our tomorrow, our future. Women's empowerment is not and cannot, be separated from the empowerment of nature, empowerment of all the marginalized people and countries. Women empowerment enables women to realize their identity, potentiality and power in all spheres of their lives. It has mainly five dimensions; economic, political, social/cultural, personal and familial. Each dimension is very important because the real empowerment of women is possible only when a woman enjoys full access to economic resources, more strength and courage for entering into the power structure, more involvement through social/cultural relationships and participation, more self-motivation and confidence, and more say in the family matters. If women are empowered the nation will be benefited. The country will be free from a large burden of illiteracy, unemployment as well as curse.

As per Manu smriti-

“Where Women are Honored, Divinity Blossoms there, and Where Ever Women are Dishonored, All Action no Matter how Noble It May Remain Unfruitful.”