

# Review on the Societal Perception of Women's Empowerment

Rashmi Singh<sup>1</sup>, Bangera Devika Ramesh Pushpa<sup>2</sup>, Chandelia Muskan<sup>3</sup>  
Asst. Professor<sup>1</sup> and SYBMS<sup>2,3</sup>

Uttar Bhartiya Sangh's Mahendra Pratap Sharda Prasad Singh College of Commerce & Science, Mumbai, Maharashtra

**Abstract:** *Throughout the Vedic age and after, women have been subjected to a multitude of injustices, including gender discrimination and limited personal autonomy. The society's commentary toward women was exceedingly severe, improper, and insinuated that females possess inferior abilities and physical strength compared to males. Nevertheless, the dynamic social, legal, and economic landscape grants women the entitlement to education, freedom of movement, and various other rights that ensure gender equality. In the present day, women are progressively attaining equitable rights and leveraging them to demonstrate their capabilities or enhance their reputation. Advancements in various fields, including the financial industry and leadership, enhance the effectiveness of women. This study investigates the evolving social conduct of women and their contributions to the advancement of different industries.*

**Keywords:** Empowerment of women, performance of women, gender, societal opinion

## I. INTRODUCTION

The progress of a nation is contingent upon the advancement of women. Government and non-government organizations prioritize education, employment, and entrepreneurship as crucial factors for the progress of women's social status. Historically, women faced societal expectations and prejudice in order to persevere. In underdeveloped nations or regions, a society that is predominantly controlled by men enforces restrictive societal norms on women, and their impression of women as feeble and incapable tarnishes their reputation. Nevertheless, the changing societal expectations compel women to showcase their appearance and capabilities. Currently, education serves as the most effective means for individuals to progress and address these challenges. Employment prospects represent a means to reach the highest level of achievement and attain success. Education empowers women by fostering self-confidence, broadening their choices, enabling their involvement in decision-making processes, and granting them more access to and authority over resources. Education of women is essential for fostering economic growth and development by establishing a competitive and beneficial milieu. Historically, women encountered workplace discrimination characterized by inadequate remuneration and restricted job opportunities. Nevertheless, their present level of schooling empowers them to create a fresh societal identity that is significantly distinct from their previous one. These circumstances diminish the woman's drive to adopt a professional persona. Moreover, there are cultural barriers that hinder girls from achieving a higher level of education.

Women's empowerment is the process of bringing about societal changes that increase awareness of their development. Several factors that impact the development of women:

- a) A low literacy rate and a high degree of education.
- b) Optimal health conditions
- c) Minimum age requirement for marriage.
- d) Women's involvement in the corporate sector.
- g) Financial and non-financial support for self-employment.
- f) Increased political leverage.
- g) Details pertaining to their entitlements.
- h) Women's autonomy, self-esteem, and honour.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Erika Zoeller Véras (2015) has undertaken study on the topics of female entrepreneurship, women's enterprise development, and the potential for generating shared value. The expansion of businesses can have a substantial impact on the empowerment of women and the achievement of gender equality. It also plays a vital role in the implementation of gender strategies. Hence, it is imperative to grasp these themes as a whole. However, there is a lack of research on the integration of the concepts. Although women are making notable progress in entrepreneurship, they face limited access to money, skills, and legal safeguards in comparison to males. Therefore, the framework was established. Furthermore, their access to economic opportunities is restricted.

The text is a bullet point labeled "D." Kumuda (2014) has examined the notion that India's diversity and abundant heritage possess a detrimental aspect. While women have been revered as deities, the practice of "sati" has also existed. In this unfortunate tradition, oppressed women have tragically met their demise. Although the problem has been getting worse, specific variables like the high expense of school and instances of sexual harassment are generally daunting. A multitude of women have triumphed over challenges, and we may expect to witness several further instances in the future. Providing education to women would have a positive impact on the community. Through the celebration of this women's empowerment festival, our nation may actualize its objective. The aspiration to regain its previous magnificence. To regain the prestigious status of the "golden peacock."

Pankaj Kumar (2014) has assessed that women's empowerment is crucial for enhancing women's access to resources and their capacity to make intentional life choices. Nevertheless, Indian society has acquired a reputation for being perilous for women. The elevated incidence of crimes against women serves as evidence of the pervasive compulsion inside our society, highlighting our culture's state of subjugation. Undoubtedly, safety is an outdated concept in modern-day Asia. In Asia, women are traditionally undervalued while men are often socially idealized. According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report, Asia ranked 114th out of 134 international regions in terms of gender disparity in the economy, government policies, health, and education. India rated 127th in terms of comparable economic prospects and 122nd in terms of women's engagement in the workforce. Women in both rural and urban areas experience a notably lower employment rate compared to men, especially in metropolitan areas. In addition to education, the female literacy rate, which stands at only 50%, continues to be lower than the male literacy rate, which is 75%.

Manav Aggarwal (2014) asserts that women's education is the most potent tool for attaining influence in society. It helps to decrease inequality and acts as a way to improve their position within the family. Training is essential for everyone, but women's training has been overlooked in this male-dominated society for a long time. Empowering women is crucial for improving the human condition, as it entails guaranteeing equal status, opportunities, and rights for women, including social, economic, and legal rights. This also involves providing them with access to health insurance and protection against gender-based violence. This study examines the significance of education in promoting women's empowerment and assesses the current status of women's education in Asia. It illustrates the paramount significance of education in the lives of all women.

According to Eswaraiah (2014), women's empowerment has garnered attention from various entities such as government and non-government agencies, social scientists, social activists, academics, and researchers globally, especially in developing countries like Asia. To mitigate the hardships faced by Indian women, the government regularly devises and executes various projects and programs. The self-help class program is a method that primarily emphasizes the personal growth of individuals, as well as the effectiveness of groups and the forefront of society progress. This study empirically investigates the empowerment of women through self-help organizations in the disaster-prone Ananthapuramu region of Andhra Pradesh. The study's findings suggest that Self-Help Groups (SHGs) have had a positive influence on the empowerment of women, namely in terms of their social status, economic empowerment, and decision-making authority in various family concerns.

India has the second-largest population on Earth, as stated by Rupali Sharma in 2014. Approximately 49 percent of the entire population consists of women. However, when we evaluate the present condition of Indian women in comparison to women in other countries, it becomes evident that the situation is highly unsatisfactory. Indian women had various impediments to achieving success, such as low levels of literacy, domestic abuse, absence of motivation and assistance,

among other challenges. India is a male-dominated society. For the country's harmonious growth, it is essential that men and women work together closely and in cooperation. Higher education will be crucial in empowering women.

As to Manisha Raj's research in 2014, indigenous Indian women constitute around 50% of the Indian populace and have a significant role in both direct and indirect contributions to the country's economic indicators. Throughout history, the majority of their monetary donations have not been documented, and they have disregarded their humble providers. It is imperative to acknowledge the contribution of women in the economic growth and to implement measures to include rural women without education in the development process, alongside both urban women without education and those with education. Traditionally, it is acknowledged that women are more engaged in small-scale business operations as internet marketers. However, there has been a recent change, and they are now moving towards industries such as IT/ITES, apparel/accessories, and food & beverages. Historically, women were predominantly employed in the agricultural sector, but they are currently making significant progress in the service industry. The government has implemented several initiatives to augment the position and status of women, known as sachems.

Stephanie Cornwall's article from 2014 utilizes the results of a multi-country study program called 'Pathways of Women's Empowerment' to examine the ways in which women's lives might be positively transformed in different situations. The publication also offers recommendations for policies and practices. The text begins by providing an overview of women's empowerment in development, specifically discussing key themes that have shaped feminist thinking in relation to empowerment and well-being.

According to Jos Vaessen's research in 2014, microfinance activities have expanded worldwide over the past three generations, providing tailored financial services to tens of thousands of underprivileged households. Microfinance is most effective when implemented as an area of intervention rather than as a specialized technique. In its early stages, microfinance primarily encompassed microcredit for funding operational expenses and small purchases. However, it has now evolved to encompass savings/deposits, a limited range of micro-insurance and payment services (such as micro-leasing), and a slightly wider array of credit products for larger investments. This study specifically examines microcredit initiatives, which are the predominant form of microfinance projects on a global scale. Microcredit initiatives have had a significant impact on the lives of clients and others in various ways. The primary outcomes frequently mentioned as a result of credit at the individual, business, and family level encompass the management of cash flow, the ability to smooth out expenses, and the reduction of poverty. Additionally, credit facilitates business expansion and the creation of employment opportunities. It also contributes to educational pursuits and empowers women. Although microcredit schemes vary in their structure, they commonly focus on empowering marginalized women and sometimes include group-based lending. The relationship between microcredit and women's empowerment has been extensively studied within the framework of this microcredit program. Most of these research have been carried out in the framework of microcredit class programs in South Asian countries. Microcredit has been suggested as a means to promote improvements in women's personal attitudes, such as increased self-reliance, as well as changes in power dynamics within the household, such as gaining control over resources, and improvements in social status. Women's authority over home expenditures is a crucial element of empowerment. The main premise is that by extending credit to marginalized women, their direct control over household expenditures will enhance, leading to long-term impacts on women's status and the overall welfare of women and other household members. The extent to which microcredit targeted towards women affects their authority in making decisions regarding family expenditures is a frequently analyzed aspect in the field of microcredit. This allows us to investigate the factors that determine the impact of microcredit on women's power over household spending.

Oriana Bandiera (2014) found that women in low-income countries have lower levels of empowerment compared to women in high-income countries. The combination of elevated rates of youth unemployment, along with the occurrence of early marriage and motherhood, restricts the allocation of resources towards the development of human capital and perpetuates dependence on males. This study investigates an effort aimed at fostering the empowerment of adolescent females in Uganda, which is the second-youngest country in the world. Young ladies in this program receive comprehensive education that includes professional training as well as information on topics such as sex, relationships, and marriage. After a few years, compared to teenagers in other communities, the influence of input raises the probability of girls participating in income-generating activities by 72% (mostly due to increased involvement in self-employment) and boosts their monthly spending by 41%. The prevalence of adolescent pregnancy reduces by 26%,

while the rates of early marriage and cohabitation similarly decrease by 58%. Significantly, the percentage of women who experience non-consensual sexual assault decreases from 14% to over 50%, but the preferred ages for marriage and having children also rise. The argument posits that the combination of professional and life skills can expedite women's financial and interpersonal empowerment, without being significantly hindered by rigid social conventions.

### **The economic status of females in India**

The economic situation of women in the Indian economy has undergone a substantial improvement, resulting in a noticeable transformation of the country's landscape. Women are employed in all sectors of the Indian economy. Women's involvement in economic activities enhances national economic advancement. The rise in the number of women participating in both the organized and unorganized sectors of the economy signifies an enhancement in their economic status. Women are motivated to pursue a career when they have opportunities for job or labor involvement. Based on the 2011 census data, the percentage of women participating in the labor force in urban areas is 25.51%, while the percentage of men is 53.26%. In rural areas, the percentage of women participating in the labor force is 30.02%, compared to 53.03% for men. In rural areas, the proportion of employed women was 24.8% and the proportion of employed men was 54.3%, whereas in urban areas, the proportion of employed women was 14.7% and the proportion of employed males was 54.3%.

Various organizations have established initiatives and endeavors aimed at promoting and supporting women, such as The Bank of Punjab's "Women Entrepreneurship Financing Scheme" which provides financial assistance for women to initiate their own businesses. Day care centers, bakeries, restaurants, catering services, furniture stores, interior design firms, retail shops, fitness centers, event planning companies, vocational schools, driving schools, jewelry stores, clothing and accessory businesses, and any other feasible ventures. The following are the stipulations of the projects:

Organizations like WEAFCO, MARKFED, and MILKFED establish additional branches to facilitate their expansion. The Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK) plan aims to provide microfinance to women entrepreneurs, regardless of the factors outlined above. The RCS, Punjab, and Chandigarh will implement a program to offer microfinance of up to Rs. 25,000/- to women through PACS, based on personal guarantee. PACS will have the authorization to get refinancing by leveraging loans extended to women through CCBs. Furthermore, it established training initiatives aimed at equipping women with specialized production capabilities. The government or a semi-government entity provides subsidies for all trainings conducted at PICT and in the field.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

The society enhances women's life through many means, such as providing educational opportunities and enabling travel. Education plays a vital role in cultivating the skills required for the progress of women. Women's changing role in society transforms the economic environment and fosters a competitive atmosphere that allows them to demonstrate their abilities. The government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) prioritize the education standard as it is a vital element for all sectors of India to embrace transformation. Modern women are actively engaged in both the financial and political domains, possessing decision-making skills and occupying positions of significant power. Nevertheless, women residing in rural and semi-urban regions face discouragement in their progress as a result of the impact of society's unfavorable sentiments.

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