



Women Empowerment: A Key To Sustainable Development

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“You can tell the condition of nation by looking at the status of its women”- Jawaharlal Nehru

Abstract-

Women's empowerment is an act of giving women equal rights and opportunities to participate in society. In today's world women are still not given enough power and respect. There are many reasons for this, including illiteracy, poverty, social customs, child marriage. Women continue to be among the world's most vulnerable groups, as access to resources and power remains highly skewed towards men. According to UNICEF 89 million girls in the world are married before 18 years of age. According to census 2011 in India child sex ratio is 918 girls for every 1000 boys. Out of seventeen sustainable development goals of 2030 fifth is gender equality, this is basic human right and is very essential to achieve peace, prosperity and sustainable development. Gender equality is a key factor for sustainable economic growth, social development and environmental sustainability, only 6 years are left to attain those goals. For achieving this goal India is also following holistic approach, Government of India implemented schemes such as Beti Bachao Beti Pado, Working Women Hostel, Nari Shakti Puruskar, NIRBHAYA, In recent Budget Lakhpati Didi yojana, In M.P. Ladli Behna Yojna etc. This research paper is an

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attempt to analyze role of women's empowerment in sustainable development and to highlight some challenges faced by women, and to provide some suggestion to avoid those challenges.

Key Words-Women Empowerment, Sustainable development, Gender Equality

INTRODUCTION- In this 21st century many women are still deprived of their basic rights such as freedom of speech, freedom of choice, right to education and others. Abuse, domestic violence, victims of rape and discrimination against women are very common in most of the countries. The issues with women's rights are still being ignored and remain as social epidemic. The UN sustainable development goals are a universal demand to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure peace and prosperity for all. Gender equality is a crucial facilitator in achieving all other sustainable development objectives.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE-

- (Zarrilli, Piovani, & Schuster, 2023)-The study focused on digitalization from gender and development and digital divides between developed and developing countries. They also focused on the potential opportunities that digitalization provides to women especially in the developing world and on the obstacle, they face to benefit from it. Digital divides remain between countries at different levels of development, and established gender gaps risk being impaired by new gender digital gaps. Authors concluded that if such divides are not addressed, the potential that digitalization holds for human and economic development will not benefit everybody equally, with the risk of leaving behind countries and people that are already at the margin of globalization and international trade.
- (Batool & Afzal, 2021) -Authors tried to quantify the impact of women's empowerment on SDG achievement in Pakistan's central Punjab. Primary data was collected from 257 female participants. And effect of Cumulative Women's Empowerment Index (CWEMI) was studied using the ordinary Least Squares (OLS) technique. They concluded that the whole community must acknowledge women's potential and their contribution to the growth process empowering and developing women are necessary components for the potential development of society as a whole, so that sustainable progress can be assured in 2030.
- (Lohani & Aburaida, 2017) – According to the authors full participation of women is essential to achieve sustainable development. Women empowerment means women gaining more power and control over their own lives. Sustainable development is a development which meets the need of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. According to them gender disparity is among the most pervasive form of inequality in the world and without serious steps to tackle it, sustainable development cannot be achieved. Three interrelated pillars of sustainable development are economic development, social development and environmental protection.

- (Khan & Mazhar, 2017)- According to the authors women's empowerment and sustainable development both are inter- linked. Three core elements of sustainable development are economic growth, social inclusion and environment protection. It is an ethical and moral exigent to link women empowerment and sustainable development.

OBJECTIVE OF STUDY- Following are the objectives of this research study-

1. To highlight some challenges faced by women
2. To analyze role of women's empowerment in sustainable development
3. To provide some suggestions to avoid those challenges.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY- Following research is analytical in nature and is based on secondary data collected from various research articles and reports.

CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN-Some of the challenges which women face are discussed below-

- **Illiteracy-**Illiteracy is a major cause for it. Many women and girl in the developing countries are denied opportunities for education. Lack of education limits family income, Indian female literacy rate is 65.46 percent lower than the world average of 79.7 percent. Many parents still consider girl education is a waste of money and time.
- **Social Customs-** Male dominated attitude is a major challenge today. Traditional Joint family system limit the role of women primarily to domestic sphere. Dowry system is practiced widely in India and other south Asian countries. It directly or indirectly dominates women and it leads to abuse and violence.
- **Poverty-**Due to poverty many girls' child's remains illiterate and high unemployment rate among women is mainly because of perception of women, culture, and tradition.
- **Child Marriage-**Getting married before attaining full mental and physical maturity is child marriage. In rural area 70% of girls are married before they are 18.and nearly 56% of married girls bear children before they are 19.

ROLE OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT- Women plays a vital role in sustainable development of nation. Environment and Economic growth are not possible without empowering women.

Women and Environment-Women are user and manager of natural resources like water, fuel, food and this is because of their major participation in household works. Educated women are in position to make contribution in family planning and population control.

Women and Economic Growth- When women work economy grow. The participation of women in trade, health and education has a huge impact on economic growth.

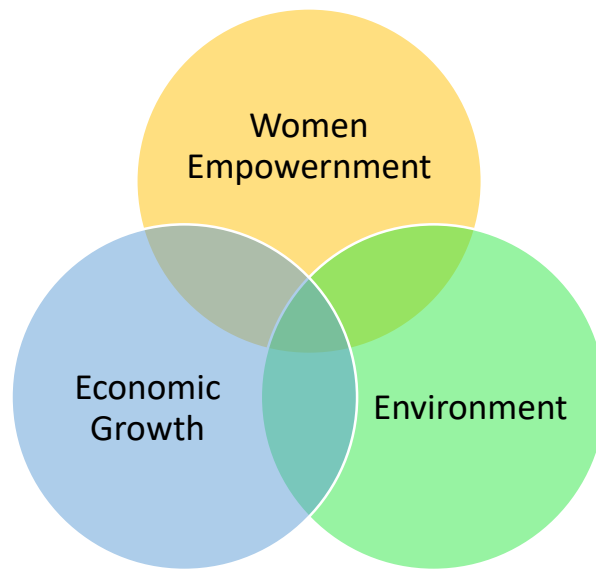


Figure A

Women empowerment is necessary for economic growth and better Environment. Recognizing women, realizing their potentials are the need of an hour.

MAJOR SCHEMES RELATED TO WOMEN EMPOWERMENT LAUNCHED BY

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA-The Government of India and State government are taking steps to empower, educate and uplift the girl child and women. Major schemes are discussed below-

Central and State Government policies and schemes that are targeted at improving the lives of girl child in India are mentioned below-

1. **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme**- Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP), a comprehensive programme is being implemented to address the declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR) and related issues of empowerment of women over a life-cycle continuum.
2. **Mudra Yojna**- In year 2015 Government of India launched Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojna to provide financial support to aspiring entrepreneurs including women to start their own business.
3. **Working Women Hostel**- for ensuring safe accommodation for women working away from their place of residence.
4. **Lakhpati Didi**-In the recent Union budget of 2024 Lakhpati didi yojna has been introduced through which women are provided with skill-based training and cable of being self-reliant.
5. **Ladli Laxmi Yojana** - State government of Madhya Pradesh sponsored schemes to provide financial assistance for girl child.

SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION-Lastly from the above discussion it is clear that Women plays a key role in sustainable development in any country. And to promote it following suggestions are provided below-

- **Raising Awareness** – Raising awareness about gender equality and role of women in sustainable development can help to reduce the disparity between man and women.
- **Providing equal opportunity in education**-Education is the big frontier for women. Education system should encourage girls to be active participants, leaders and decision- makers. Higher education barriers for girls must be identified and eliminated.
- **Action plan for women lead development**-Governments must further enact and enforce laws promoting women's equal participation in all areas of public and private life.
- **Invest in policy for girls**-More investment in policy related to girls and women is required to promote them.
- **More and better data**- Due to lack of statistical data the actual position of women in each and every field is not known and addressed properly.
- **Accountability**- Many times commitments are made in the schemes but not are not met. Accountability must be set for the officials and strict action must be taken in case of negligence and default.

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