



WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA: INITIATIVES AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract: Women empowerment involves the building up of a better society, it is essential to uplift the women status economically, socially and politically. This paper insights the initiative taken by the Indian government for women empowerment on various level local, panchayat, state and National. Moreover, study attempt to take part in the challenges faced in the implementation of the various government schemes. Study is purely based on the secondary sources of the data. Study finds that there is gender inequality in educational and employment, suggestion made to improve the literacy rate of girl child and reservation for female in employment.

Keywords: Women empowerment, India, Government schemes, Challenges.

I. INTRODUCTION

In Indian culture women are considered as goddess. Yet women have been humiliated in the society like anything, many rules and regulation has been made for women but till today women are fighting for their fundamental right (Panda, 2018).

The concept of women empowerment has roots throughout the world in the women movement. In India it is the sixth five-year plan during mid 1980s which can be taken as landmark for women (Arulsukijothi, 2020).

Women Empowerment

According to Chandra (2008), empowerment is defined as the process of awareness, conscientization, capacity building, participation, and control on transformative action. Power related to women refereed includes family, community, market and the state. In 21st century women empowerment is the still as illusion of the reality. On the basis of daily observation women become victimized by various social evils. Women empowerment is a multidimensional process that realise individual or group of individuals identity and powers in all spheres of life (Arulsukhijothi, 2020). Efforts towards women empowerment have similar situation like India whereas the women empowerment is importantly a national agenda. 50% of world's population is constituted with women, but investigating to Indian population, female population is comparatively lower than male. In India, National policy for women empowerment was introduced in 2011(Rani, 2021).

Gender Inequality

In ancient time, Indian women enjoyed a very high position but now degenerated into objects of pleasure gradually (Khaparde, 2020). India is emerging nation and dreaming and working towards being a developed nation.

Government at state and center level has already taken steps for women empowerment, launched schemes to achieve various measure like education, financial improvement, employment and others important for security and motivation (Sarkar, 2015).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Ganesamurthy (2008) determined the major factors of women empowerment in India. The empowerment of women in a nation by economic, political and social identity. Study considered the measurement factors such as security, justice, safety, information, legal aid, maternal health, nutrition, education, access to credit, marketing and socio-economic status of women. Government has initiated different schemes to empower women in different states of India.

Chandra (2008), defined the empowerment and discussed the empowerment involves power to, power with, and power within. It was analyzed that women empowerment in India is a measure of capacity building, awareness, control, participation and decision- making power. It involved psychological empowerment, ability to assert oneself and challenging roles.

Upadhyay (2011) analytically reviewed “women’s empowerment in India an analytical overview”. Study summarized the different policies and schemes on women empowerment at the national, state and local levels, and realized that existing significant gaps between actual practice and policy advancements at the local level. Indian society depends on different variables like location, educational status, age and social status.

Sarkar (2015) described briefly on women empowerment, status of men and women, educational achievement, opportunities of higher status of living, women participation in social and domestic activities, deprivation of various scopes for women in India. Situation of women in 2015 showed that education is essential for women to raise living standard, very less women have achieved the highest positions in various fields in nation.

Priyadarshini (2016) focused on empowering each and every woman in the country to make them independent. It was described the issues that women are facing and schemes for women empowerment. Indian women are facing many obstacles in everyday life, self -help groups (SHG) resulting successful in Tamil Nadu.

Sihmar (2016), discussed the women empowerment in India. In this study researcher described the upliftment of women status in economic, social and political perspective. Women involvement to build up society without fear of oppression, apprehension, exploitation and discrimination. It was found Indian women facing many issues and challenges like lack of education and healthcare, gender-based violence, and unequal economic opportunities. Initiatives for women empowerment must be tailored to the pointed social needs in order to make it effective.

Maneka (2017), emphasized on micro-level assessment of women empowerment in India to make various schemes meaningful. Study highlighted the present status with regard to women empowerment and challenges for gender equality. In certain parts of country women empowerment is a distant dream, more micro level assessment requires to make government schemes useful. Ultimate goal of women empowerment in India is to improve women facilities and gender equality.

Panda (2018), discussed the concept of women empowerment in India and identified the reason of not successful in the past. India is male dominated country, to equalize the female in country it is necessary to change the mindset of men. To accelerate the process of women empowerment education, equal recognition in work place and financial independence are essential. Despite the various constraints since independence, successful implementation of programs is still lacking.

Mandot (2020) considered women empowerment as an instrument to expand women’s ability to make strategic life choice. It analyzed that gender norms are still prevailing unequal in the society. But provision of government schemes to provide basic facilities is enabling factors to women empowerment.

Khaparde (2020) discussed about the reflection of empowered women, those are more confident in articulating thoughts and have productive actions. These women promoting the structure of more inclusive, creative, progressive and generative in nature. It was found that Indian women treated as objects of pleasure and have lost individual identity and fundamental human rights.

Arulsukijothi (2020) studied the introduction of women empowerment in sixth five-year plan for the first time in India. Women empowerment on access to knowledge, autonomy in decision-making, ability of life planning, redistribution of power and challenging patriarchal ideology and male dominance.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

There are three objectives in this to be study.

- a) To study the various government schemes for women empowerment in India.
- b) To study the awareness of concept women empowerment in India.
- c) To analyse the factors affecting the socio-economic status of women in India.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is based on the secondary sources of data purely. This paper is an attempt to analyse the initiative taken on women empowerment and challenges faced to implement the government schemes. The sources used for data are various research articles, website of *the global statistics* for literacy rate and *national sample survey organization* for labour force participation rate.

V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1. Government policies and Initiatives

5.1.1 Government schemes

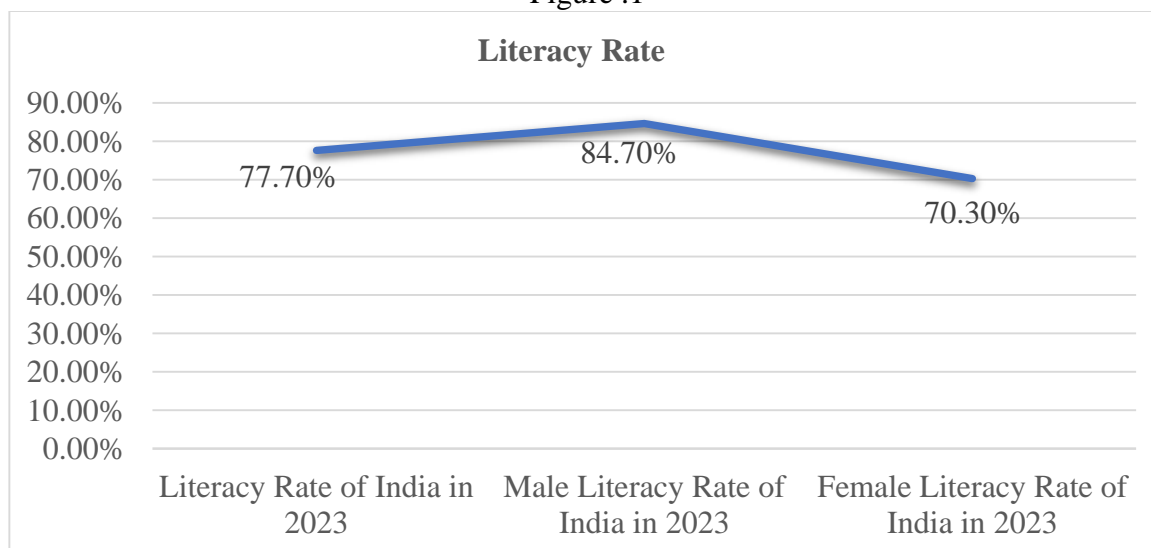
Indian government began programmes for women empowerment in 1954, but actual participation of women started in 1974. There are 34 government schemes for women empowerment in India presently operating under different ministries and departments. Some popular schemes are as following:

- Women Entrepreneur Development programme given top priority in 1997-98.
- Rastria Mahila Kosh (RMK) 1992-1993
- Mahila Samridhi Yojana (MSY) October, 1993.
- Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY) 1995.
- Mahila Samakhya being implemented in about 9000 villages.
- Swayasjdha.
- Swa Shakti Group.
- Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women(STEP).
- Swalamban.
- Crèches/ Day care centre for the children of working and ailing mother.
- Hostels for working women.
- Swadhar.
- National Mission for Empowerment of Women.
- Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) (1975)
- Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescence Girls (RGSEAG) (2010).
- The Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Scheme for Children of Working Mothers.
- Integrated Child Protection scheme (ICPS) (2009-2010).
- Dhanalakhami (2008).
- Short Stay Homes.
- Ujjawala (2007).
- Beti bachao, Beti Padhao
- Sukanya Samridhhi Yojana.

5.1.2 Education

Existing literature showed that education is one of the key components of women empowerment, education must consider as root of women empowerment worldwide.

Figure .1

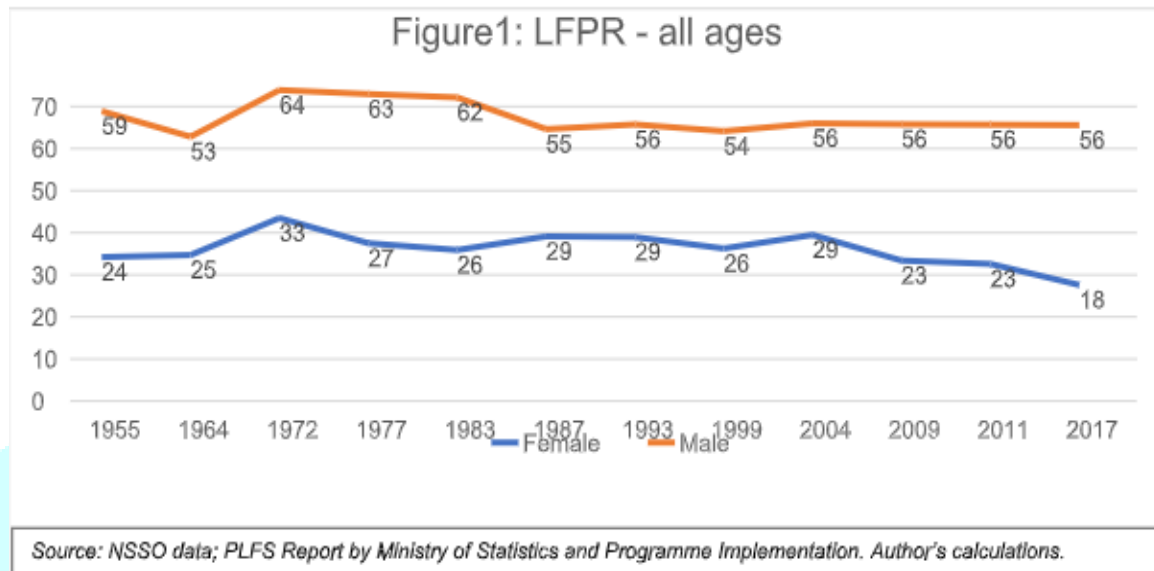


Source: The global statistics, 2023.

Above figure illustrate total literacy rate in India, x-axis shows the literacy rate of India in 2023 and y-axis shows the percentage of literacy of India in 2023. Literacy rate of India in 2023 is 77.70%, whereas male literacy rate of India in 2023 is 84.70% and female literacy rate in India is 70.30%. Government have different literacy programmes for girl child yet female literacy rate is 13.40% lesser than male literacy rate. From previous literacy rate, with the passage of time no doubt female literacy is improved but in comparison of male literacy rate it is not expected.

5.1.3 Employment

To get financial independence each female should get efforts to employ. Labour force participation rate of all ages are shown in the figure clearly from 1955 -2017. Data extracted from the website of ministry of statistics and programme implementation.



In the above figure x-axis shows year wise labour force participation rate from 1955-2017. Figure shows that in 1955 male labour participation rate was 59 and female was 24. In 2017 labour participation rate of male is 56 and female is 18. With increase of the time period it would be expected to increase but instead of increase it is decreasing. So there, gender gap in labour force participation rate.

5.2. Challenges

There are many challenges in improvement of women empowerment. Factors responsible for low literacy of women in comparison of men are lack of importance to education, shortage of classroom for students, unavailability of schools, no drinking facilities, no proper sanitation and gender inequality. Looking towards the literature on various studies has been realized that undoubtedly many programmes has been launched by the government of India but yet challenges to implement it properly. Some important challenges discuss in the study.

5.2.1 Awareness: There are various acts made for the safety and security of women in India some of these are section 376 IPC for rape, Sec. 363 to 373 IPC for kidnapping and abduction, sec. 302/304 IPC dowry death, Sec. 498-A IPC for cruelty by husband or his relatives, Sec. 354 IPC for assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty, and Sec. 509 IPC insult to the modesty of women, but increasing crime percentage shows that women in the country are not aware about their rights.

5.2.2. Implementation of government schemes: Indian government has launched various schemes for the regeneration of women empowerment in the country. We discussed the name of popular schemes in India. Schemes are implemented on national state and local levels of the society and different programmes were made to maximize the benefits of the initiative taken by government. But yet it has observed that implementation of the programmes not properly a large share of the women is not unknown to the schemes. Though this study can claim on the basis of literacy rate that yet women lying behind the men.

VI CONCLUSION

Women empowerment refers to increase in social, political, educational or economic upliftment of individuals and women communities. Various policies on women empowerment exist at local, state and national levels to improve the education, health, gender bias, economic opportunities and political participation. Study insights the challenges in the awareness and implementation of the government schemes on various levels local, state and national level. Government should focus mainly on the implementation of the literacy programme, it might be helpful in the awareness and changing of mindset of the people. Study has focus on the employment level of women and men, it has seen that labour force participation rate has gender gap in the employment that shows many women are still either household or non-working or financial dependent too. It should be necessary to understand that a financial dependent woman can never be independent to make choice, decision or other steps for the growth of herself as well as growth of society.

VII SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In this study we have discussed about the initiative taken by Indian government for the empowerment of women in country. Various challenges faced to implement these government schemes at national, state and local levels. Study suggests that implementation of the government schemes can be more effective with the awareness of the different schemes at the local, panchayat and rural area at national level. For gender discrimination government have taken many steps but still in Indian society it needs to adjust the mind set of the society to accept the equality of women. To change the mindset of society education and cooperation is needed. It must need to take initiative for change social climate so women can participate and contribute equally in the social and economic development.

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