



## Women Empowerment: A Literature Review

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### Abstract

Most females are not involved in economic and political decision-making, equitable involvement in the formal economy is constrained, less salary, and have unequal distribution of assets and property. Moreover, for a huge portion of women, the day when she gives birth becomes the most dangerous days of her lives. Inequalities are seen in all the nook and corners of the world which differ from country to country and region to region. The impediments and imbalance that women and girls experience frequently arise as they do not have control over their own lives and futures and are mainly due to gender inequalities in power relations. Women empowerment, this can only be achieved if from the very basic we nurture our children without any gender bias during their developmental stage by providing appropriate training, education, awareness, building self-confidence to women and girls, also providing them free reign to expand their choices, strengthen their voices and transforming power to claim their true right in the society, community and in their own lives.

**Keywords:** Women Empowerment; Community; Society

### Introduction

During last many years, though the world has seen more equalities in gender but still huge differences exist in terms of education, training, employment and livelihood of men and women as many hurdles are present in the path of women's growth. It has been seen 15 million girls below 18 years are married globally. During their lives, almost one third women undergo physical and/or sexual violence. In certain countries, girls are not completing secondary education compared to boys. Most females are not involved in economic and political decision-making, equitable involvement in the formal economy is constrained, less salary, and have unequal distribution of assets and property. Moreover, for a huge portion of women, the day when she gives birth becomes the most dangerous days of her lives. Inequalities are seen in all the nook and corners of the world which differ from country to country and region to region. The impediments and imbalance that women and girls experience frequently arise as they do not have control over their own lives and futures and are mainly due to gender inequalities in power relations.

### Empowerment

Empowerment is a very powerful word which means independence and power to do whatever one wants or to regulate life according to their own will. Empowerment is a process that provides power to people, which they can utilize in making important decisions pertaining to their own lives, in society and in community.



**Figure 1**

Empowerment of women means women gaining more authority and charge over their own life. This refers to the idea of women continuing to be at a disadvantage to men in various economic, sociocultural, and political areas. As a result, women’s empowerment can be considered as a significant step toward achieving gender equality, which is defined as “individuals’ rights, duties, and opportunities will not be determined by whether they are born male or female.” An empowered woman, according to the UN Population Fund, has a sense of self-worth. She has the ability to make her own decisions and has access to opportunities and resources that provide her with a variety of possibilities. Legislative, educational, political, and economic systems all help to institutionalise gender role expectations. Before gender equality can be achieved and maintained, women must be “empowered” in order to close the “gender gap” and provide a level playing field for men and women.

According to Gates Foundation, empowerment consists of three factors like choice, voice and power. When a woman has an expansion of choice, she gains access to a world of possibilities which she might not have ever considered before like what she will do, when and to whom she would marry and so on. Secondly, when a woman has strengthening of her voice, she can participate in and can lend voice in both public and private discussions and decisions pertaining to her lives. Finally, when she has transformation of power to herself, she becomes independent for taking life decisions. This power can be within herself, or from the others. This can be manifested as in the pyramid.

Hence, empowerment is the mixture of choice, voice and power. It is the feeling of having worth and purpose in the life.

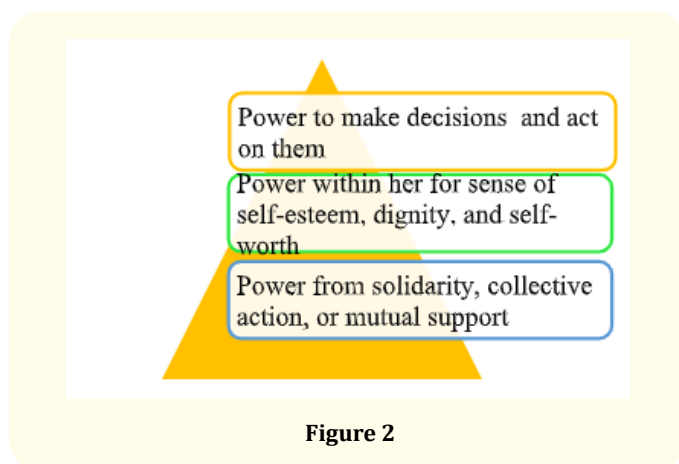


Figure 2

## Components of women empowerment

### Education

The basic foundation for Women Empowerment is changing of mentality of people and this can only be achieved through proper knowledge which can be gained through education to girls and women. Providing education to women means making them efficient enough so that they can independently earn their bread and thus live their life as they wish. For this very purpose, the government has come forward with many Yojanas like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Yojana, Sukanya Samrudhi Yojana, Mahila Shashakti Kendra and others. These programs assist in addressing societal issues pertaining to women such as the dowry system and child marriage. These simple actions will make women feel more powerful and increase their social status.

On the other hand, educating boys and men especially from the young age to respect women and to understand their worth can make the society a better place to live. And this upbringing has to come from the individual unit of the society i.e., from one’s family. For example, when a mother prepares a good lunch, if the elder in the home appreciates her while having food and praises her, the children in the family accepts the same and they automatically start seeing all the other women with those respectful eyes. But, on the contrary, if the elder does not say anything or sometimes criticize her then the children will learn the same behaviour and will find fault with all the work done by the women. These simple and small gestures, which can be taught in the family, can build a healthy society.

### Gender equality

Gender equality is the concept that all people – men and women – are free to advance their individual strengths and form decisions without being constrained by gender stereotypes and any bias. It means that the both men and women’s demeanor, desires and wants are weighed, appreciated and approved uniformly. This doesn’t imply that both gender must become equal but it does imply that their liberties, freedom, obligations, duties and circumstances will not be contingent if they are male or female at birth.

Gender inequality is a problem that affects all customs, locations, and communities, albeit in different ways.

It is an illusion to believe that this is just a third world issue. There occurs discrimination of work, sometimes verbal and

physical abuse of women in the work place. According to United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) Women, Poverty, Economics, 70% of world’s poor are women and girls, they account for 67% of world’s working hours, out of which they earn only

10% of world’s income and own 1% of the world’s property. Reasons why gender equality is important to each of the 8 MDGs (Millennium Development Goals).

MDGs and the importance of gender equality (Adapted from Grown., et al. 2005: 31)	
Goal 1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	Equal access for women to basic transport and energy infrastructure can lead to increased economic activity by women. Investment in women’s health and nutritional status reduces chronic hunger and malnourishment, which increases productivity and wellbeing.
Goal 2. Achieve universal primary education	Educated girls and women have greater control over their fertility and participate more in public life. A mother’s education is a strong, consistent determinant of her children’s school enrolment and attainment and their health and nutrition outcomes.
Goal 3. Promote gender equality and empower women	This central goal dedicated to gender equality and women’s empowerment depends on the achievement of all other goals for its success.
Goal 4. Reduce child mortality	A mother’s education, income, and empowerment have a significant impact on lowering child mortality.
Goal 5. Improve maternal health	A mother’s education, income, and empowerment have a significant impact on lowering maternal mortality.
Goal 6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases	Greater economic independence for women, increased ability to negotiate safe sex, and more awareness of how to challenge traditional norms in sexual relations are essential for preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS and other epidemics.
Goal 7. Ensure environmental sustainability	Gender-equitable property and resource ownership policies enable women (often as primary users of these resources) to manage them in a more sustainable manner. Women’s existing knowledge of natural resources is essential for sustainable climate responses.
Goal 8. Develop a global partnership for development	Greater gender equality in the political sphere may lead to higher investments in development co-operation.

Table 1

The overall objective of gender equality to have a community where both the gender have equal role, duties, rights and responsibilities in each and every aspects of life. When both genders are able to partake equally in the distribution of power, and have equal prospects for economic freedom via employment, equitable access to education and the chance to pursue own goals and potentials, divide household and childcare responsibilities and are totally free from compulsion, bullying and violence against

women both internal and external of their living environment, equality occurs.

**Role of government**

The Indian government has taken significant steps to eliminate gender inequality in all aspects of life. The following table represents different schemes and its objectives or goals for development of women and their empowerment.

Schemes/Programmes	Goals/Objectives
Beti Bacho Beti Padho (BBBP)	To educate people against gender bias and improve efficacy of welfare services for girls
Mahila Shakti Kendra (MSK)	To empower rural women through community participation and to create an environment in which they realize their full potential.
Working Women Hostel (WWH)	To ensure the safety and security for working women

Scheme for Adolescent Girls	To empower girls in the age group 11-18 and to improve their social status through nutrition, life skills, home skills and vocational training
Mahila Police Volunteers (MPV)	To envisage engagement of Mahila Police Volunteers in States/UTs who act as a link between police and community and facilitates women in distress.
Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK)	To provides micro-credit at concessional terms to poor women for various livelihood and income generating activities.
The National Crèche Scheme	To ensure that women take up gainful employment through providing a safe, secure and stimulating environment to the children
Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandna Yojna	To provide maternity benefit to pregnant and lactating mothers
Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana	To provide housing under the name of the woman
Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)	To enable a large number of Indian youth including women to take up industry-relevant skill training in securing a better livelihood.
Deen Dayal Upadhyay National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM)	To create opportunities for women in skill development, leading to market-based employment.
Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana	To empower women and protect their health by providing LPG cylinder free of cost.
Sukanya Samriddhi Yojna(SSY)	To empower girls economically by opening their bank accounts.
Skill Upgradation & Mahila Coir Yojna	To train women in coir industry.
Prime Minister’s Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP)	To generate self-employment opportunities through establishment of micro-enterprises in the non-farm sector
Stand-Up India and Mahila e-Haat, Entrepreneurship and Skill Development Programme (ESSDP).	To promote female entrepreneurship
Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY)	To provide access to institutional finance to micro/small business

**Table 2**

**Educational attainment**

In the school education system, various measures and efforts have been implemented like National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 and flagship programme like Samagra Shiksha and later Right to Education Act (RTE). Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs) were started in Educationally Backward Blocks (EBBs). Sensitization of gender is done through in-service training, building girl’s restroom, the building of female teachers’ living quarters and revision of curriculum.

**Political participation**

The government has set aside 33 percent of seats in Panchayati Raj Institutions for women in order to integrate women into the forefront of political leadership at the local level. The Ministry of Panchayati Raj conducts capacity building for Panchayat Stakeholders, including Elected Women Representatives (EWRs), with the goal of empowering women to engage successfully in politics.

**Gender budget**

Since 2005, budget for women, has been a component of India’s Union Budget, which includes financial allocation for women’s programmes and services. The government is fostering gender parity/equality in areas of government as part of this endeavour.

**Conclusion**

From international level to grass-root level, from government organization to non-government organization everyone is fighting hard to reduce the gender gap and to bring women empowerment in the world. However, this can only be achieved if from the very basic we nurture our children without any gender bias during their developmental stage by providing appropriate training, education, awareness, building self-confidence to women and girls, also providing them free reign to expand their choices, strengthen their voices and transforming power to claim their true right in the society, community and in their own lives [1-15].

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