

CONCEPTUAL NOTE ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

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ABSTRACT

The present paper classifies the status of women empowerment in terms of economic empowerment social empowerment and political empowerment. The economic and social empowerment cannot be differentiated in separate terms as they are overlapped each other in certain areas. The social empowerment fastened the lead to economic empowerment by way of social literacy. The knowledge about the rights and privileges and about the political system made them more enthusiastic and optimistic.

KEYWORDS: *Empowerment, Economic Empowerment, Social Empowerment, Political Empowerment, Resources, Inclusive Growth*

INTRODUCTION

“Empowerment is the process of enhancing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes.” -World Bank

Empowerment is a process of increasing the capacities suitable to the current circumstances in order to achieve the desired level of outcome in par with the development perspectives. Women empowerment is a key component in the development scenario of the present day world. In the 21st century, majority of illiterate poor women are homemakers and illiteracy and poverty creates a vicious circle that they can unable to escape. Because of illiteracy and the prevailing social orthodoxy, they are incapable to find work outside. Thus illiteracy and poverty make women hard to earn their livelihood.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Suguna (2006) in the study related to empowerment of rural women through self-help groups acknowledged the role of self-help groups in promoting group harmony, generating individual and social awareness and thereby divulging social and economic empowerment through its functioning in a democratic manner. Manjusha (2010) ,tried to analyze the magnitude of women empowerment achieved through Kudumbashree .A significant improvement in the areas of political empowerment and skill enhancement is made possible through the participation in Kudumbashree. Chakravarthy and Kumar(2013) commented that the SHGs give undue importance to income generation and unable to transform it into the overall empowerment of women through the increased participation in decision making, access to health facilities and increased provision of infrastructural facilities. Aggarwal (2014) asserted the importance of education in empowering

women. Higher education helps to augment energy and creativity to meet the complex challenges of their lives and reduces inequality. Sheltar and Sheshgiri (2015) highlight the issues and challenges of women empowerment by observing that women in India are relatively in a lower status than men through the prevalence of unequal gender norms in the society. Increased access to education, employment, and change in social structure are the only supporting factors for the attainment of women empowerment. Nayak and Mahanta attempt to analyze the degree of women empowerment on the basis of various indicators like access to education, employment, household decision making power, financial autonomy, freedom of movement, exposure to media, political participation, an experience of domestic violence etc. The government policies are not able to contribute much for the upliftment of the marginalized group because of the narrow-minded and orthodox behavior of the educated women. So the awareness campaign is necessitated.

PARADIGM SHIFT FROM DEVELOPMENT TO EMPOWERMENT

Women are an essential requirement for development of the country. However, for a very long time, the women are deprived of poverty and oppression. Later women have decided to ensure their participation to equip themselves with rightful positions in development matters. The women aroused up to demand their rights in many instances. The involvement of women in development has been reckoned by many as a great paradigm shift whose impact cannot be easily withered.

NEED FOR EMPOWERMENT

The evils of gender discrimination and caste discrimination made the women community including the financially stable society a passive corpse. The upliftment of the marginalized women community is inevitable for achieving the strategy of inclusive growth. The participatory nature of the interventionist strategy necessitates the need for women empowerment

DIMENSIONS OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment is an intangible, multidimensional and culturally defined concept (World Bank 2018). Any attempt to improve the status of women should start with empowerment. Women empowerment is one in which people find the space of their own and began to re-examine their lives critically and collectively. It enables them to look at old problems in a new way, analyze their situation and environment recognizing their strength and potentials. It also augments the quality of resources for pursuing the process of economic development. This paper proposes to assess the dimensions of women empowerment in three distinct phases viz. economic empowerment, social empowerment, and political empowerment.

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

The economic dimension of women empowerment increases the potential to assist the development of the nation. It also increases women's access to resources and opportunities. Women's economic participation and increased income generation help them to increase their dignity and command over their income. This in turn, created a direct impact on poverty reduction and gender equality. This created a positive impact in their consumption expenditure. In the micro level, the economic empowerment of women increases their control over the income generated by them. The relative increase in their contribution towards family income apparently increased their control over the household resources. Due to the control over their household resources, made them to be a part of the decision making partner in their families. These

factors will run parallel with the amassment of wealth and assets as of the male counterparts. The pathetic plight of the illiterate women vanished due to the gradual development of empowerment and made them competent to act like the male counterpart to do or abstain from doing anything as per their will. This was happened due to the community empowerment through the coordination of the empowered families by way of financial stability. This made the downtrodden women achieve financial empowerment, through the provision of assistance from the financial institutions without the help of any other persons, especially their male counter partners.

Women participation in economic affairs is now became an inevitable feature in the present scenario as they achieved more and more financial empowerment equally without any gender discrimination. This made them to wipe out the caste and creed discrimination against them in the society. This encouraged the women community to participate in economic policies and strategies without any apprehension.

SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT

Both economic empowerment and social empowerment are not in watertight compartment as each of them are overlapped in many areas. The economic empowerment alone will not capable the women community to flourish in the society. The key thing which has to be done is to empower the women community socially. Literacy is one among the main factors of social empowerment. By educating the illiterate women community can solve the main melancholy in social empowerment. Eradicating illiteracy within the women community directly or indirectly will give a spark for uninterrupted communication without embarrassment.

The emergence of new generation social media also sprouted the communication skill in women community. The formation of social groups from the empowered families helps each individual to share their ideas each other. The regular meeting of the social groups reduced the psychological distance between the members of the group, which helped to reduce the information asymmetry. The complexity of financial assistance and its formalities were communicated inside the group and among the groups. Thus in turn, reduces the transaction cost of economic assistance.

POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT

The socially empowered groups grabbed information and ideas from different groups and they realized themselves about their rights and privileges. The enhancement of literary rate enriched their political awareness and become a rational part of the political fraternity. The knowledge of political system gave them pride and courage to understand the voting pattern and the number of casting votes. This lead to enhancement of civic consciousness within the group and among the society. This political empowerment helped the women community to know their freedom and to excel their submerged leadership qualities and talents. They started to participate in domestic debates and discussions regarding the quality of common services and also they offered their candidature for elections.

Eventually, the women community started involving in policy formulation and raise their voice for protecting the interest of the marginal women community. They themselves facilitate and organize meetings and discussions regarding the current political plot. The political empowerment of women gave much elegance to the political system as they can elicit the problems faced by the women community.

CONCLUSIONS

As discussed above, the empowerment of the women community, particularly illiterate and financially backward are essential for the growth of developing countries. The task of empowerment, especially the marginalized women is much difficult as they follow their own illegitimate custom and practices. They have to give stringent awareness about their rights and privileges with the help of NGOs and other governmental organizations. As such the economic, social and political empowerment of the women community will gradually motivate them in all sense.

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