

EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN THROUGH EDUCATION AND ITS IMPACT: AN EVALUATION OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW

Dr. Neena Rani*

ABSTRACT

Education is the foundation of empowerment. It plays a critical role in Women's social development and Economic Empowerment. With strong educational backgrounds, women can develop the ability to achieve their goals and create financial freedom for both themselves and their families. Education empowers girls and enhances employment opportunities, improves their ability to make decisions and perform better in their social and family lives. Education only possess the unique power to act as a catalyst to achieve and expand our goals and this can be accomplished only if it is equitable in nature. It benefits women by rendering better health conditions, improved participation in decision making process, economic, political and social involvement.

In this paper, an attempt is made to review the literatures on the socio and economic status of women acquired through education. An aggregate of 33 articles and reports from various journals, related contents from 14 books have been reviewed for the study. Somewrite – ups published in distinguished newspapers were also considered for analysing the importance attached to the topic. After reviewing the related literature, I have also classified the approach used in these studies into Exploratory, Descriptive, Comparative, Explanatory, and Empirical as well correlational analysis. Based on this certain issues that can be given attention for future research in this area: Influence of socioeconomic background on education among women with special reference to demographic and status characteristics, If Education has helped to increase confidence, communication, capabilities and learning skills among women in order to overcome gender disparity, Education has improved family relations and decision making process and able

* **Assistant Professor, Dept. of Arts & Humanities- SMU DDE, Bangalore**

to attain social security, Poor localities of residents and inequalities of social class is the main reasons, Customary gender norms and values are added reasons.

Key words: Empowerment, Marginalised, Gender Disparity, Literature review, Research Methodology

Introduction

Education is neither specific to a particular field of study nor is it limited to a few years. Primary education is a formal activity which is based on certain rules and procedures. Education not only imparts the values and skills required for a person but also encourages in developing the individuality, building of self and ability to contribute to the society. It helps enrich the individual's life or it brings out the inherent potential of a person. The term Education is derived from Greek word 'educare' which means "bringing out the best in you".

A person's educational qualification or lack of it makes their status high or low respectively. Educational qualification helps in getting them a proper job which helps an individual earn a good income and build up their financial status.

Education is a powerful tool that can help improve the lives of people. Education is one of the basic human right that helps in overcoming discrimination based on gender, caste, region as well as economic status and helps to become more self – confident. Hence it is the foundation for 'Empowerment'.

Empowerment in simple terms means 'the giving or delegation of power or authority'¹

Empowerment of women is necessary because women continue to occupy a disadvantaged position in all fields of activity.

According to Pillai (1995), "Empowerment is an active, multi – dimensional process which enables women to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres of life. Power is not a commodity to be transacted; nor can it be given away as aims. "Power has to be acquired and once acquired, it needs to be exercised, sustained and preserved"².

Education empowers girls to achieve more in their social, career, economic and family lives and to overcome inequality by improving the lives of the marginalized women in society. Women who are educated develop greater awareness of their rights, and greater confidence and freedom to make decisions that affect their lives and helps to overcome discrimination.

Gender discrimination is widely prevalent in a society like India- women are subject to domination, verbal abuse, sexual harassment, wife beating, dowry related violence, pornography, prostitution etc. The most sad and negative situation in Indian Society is to consider daughter's as a burden. Parent's first preference is to having a male child. Woman is always considered as marginal and weaker section of our society. She is unable to take concrete decisions on matters mainly due to lack of education. Right to education will provide her with the knowledge of how to lead a more independent life and the main cause of male domination is her economic dependence on men. The status of women who are economically and socially deprived is even low because about 75% of Dalits live below poverty line and are socially deprived due to the social status they belong to.

Deprived means "Lacking adequate food, shelter, education, etc."

Spread of female education has a greater sociological importance. As a result of encouraging female education, women become more confident in fighting for their due place in society further it also helps to seek employment outside the family.

Statement of the Problem

There is a gap in the availability of empirical data in the studies conducted and to justify the lower social and economic status prevailing among the deprived Hindu community comprising of Scheduled castes, Scheduled tribes and Other Backward castes (as classified by the 55th quinquennial round conducted between July 1999 to June 2000 by the consumer expenditure surveys from the National Sample Survey - NSS).

The Objective of this study is to:

- To analyse the role of education in empowering women of the backward castes and classes.

- To analyse how improvement in the educational status of women has in turn improved women's status.
- To analyse the assistance rendered by education to increase confidence, communication, capabilities and learning skills among women in order to overcome gender disparity.
- To analyse how discrimination and inequalities of affects the ability to perform among women.

Research Methodology:

This research paper is basically descriptive and analytical in nature. In this paper attempt has been made to analyse the significance of empowerment in order to achieve better social and economic status and overcome discrimination. The data used in this paper is purely from secondary sources.

Literature Review

The topic on education and empowerment of women is a much debated one and many articles published and researched on it. The problem still continuous to persist.

(Rahman and Rao, 2004) rightly said - A study of the determinants of female autonomy in India finds that a better-educated woman has greater bargaining power, as measured by physical mobility and say in household resource allocation, through the channel of increased information.³ Some of the articles, reports and news published have voiced an overall and general view with regard to interpretations how education affect the status of women.

Report of the education commission, Government of India Ministry of education (1966) as quoted by Dr S.S. Mathur observed thus "One of the important social objectives of education is to equalise opportunity enabling the backward or under – privileged classes and individuals to use education as a lever for the improvement of their condition.

According to Kuppuswamy B. (1984:pp.85) says - The problem of education in most of the states is chiefly the problem of the backward classes, for it is they who are extremely backward

in education even when special scholarships and other facilities are provided, the children of these classes do not study.

Dr Jayaram. N, (1990) quotes with reference to the technologically advanced countries normally the status gradation is defined by the occupational and educational levels. Briefly, in view of the close relationship between education and occupation and to the extent that occupation is important if not the only avenue for the income and social status. Education acquires significance as a determinant of social placement and social stratification.

R.V. Badi and N.V. Badi (2002: pp.203) says – One of the biggest challenges of the Post-independence era was to reduce poverty. The causes of poverty, unemployment can be reduced by improving educational level of masses and those of women in particular. If more and more women are educated they in – turn can solve problems like child labour, over – population and participate in decision making process at home and in society otherwise we cannot claim to be progressive.

Das Veena (2004:pp.346) is of the opinion that ‘There are sharp disparities of literacy rates between different sections of the population. The gender gap is particularly striking. Important differences in literacy achievements also exist between rural and urban area as well as between different regions and communities when these contrasts are considered together, the chances of being social group, form close to 100% for urban males in Kerala to less than 5 percent for scheduled caste women in rural Rajasthan’.

According to R.V. Badi and N.V. Badi (2004 pp.219) mentions Women’s empowerment is not just the responsibility for government but that of parents. It is the parents who do not inculcate pride, give adequate education to girls (compared to boys) and hence we are not able to show steady progress in women’s empowerment.

Chanana Karuna (2004: pp.12) states that Indian society is characterized by divisions of caste, class, religion, region and sex. They suffer from severe social and civil disabilities. In order to eliminate these disadvantages, education was viewed in the Indian constitution as an instrument

of social change, individual mobility and social equality for all social groups through social justice and of integration and mainstreaming.

Gaag Vander Nikki (2005:pp.92 – 100) mentions, To close the gender gap in education by 2005 and to increase women's literacy rate and universal basic education by 2015 are unlikely to be met in many countries. Illiteracy may even increase during the early years of this century, War and AIDS are all affecting children's and girl's education.

Dr. Bhuyan Dasarathi (2005, pp. 3 - 4) is of the view that women must become literate, as education is beneficial for them and their families. The family web is woven around the women. She has to be up to the mark and educated so that she could fend for herself and her family during the hour of crisis. The status of women would improve only if they educate them self and grab every opportunity to become stronger and more powerful than before.

Freire Paulo (2006: pp.33 – 34) mentions when an illiterate peasant gains the educational experience he or she comes to a new awareness of self, has a new sense of dignity and is stirred by a new hope.

Rao Shankar .C.N. (2006: pp. 614), say's primary education is a big boon for women. It has elevated their status and made them to play a responsible role at home. They have realized the importance of family planning and development and thereby reducing population growth.

August 11th 2008, Pg. – 3 in Deccan Herald reports "Education must for country's Growth". Education is the only way to secure the country's growth as this will ensure quality and quantity towards fulfilling India's requirement in the coming years said S. Gopal Krishnan CEO and MD of Infosys, he added that we have a young population, but they do not have access to education.

We might create chaos out of it. "Education is the only answer". In software and IT services alone, we have the opportunity to create good employment. But the downside is that there is shortage of people only education, both formal and vocational can address these problems.

A survey conducted by Bose Jaideep in Times of India on August 15th 2008, Pg. – 2, titled "The Process of Teach India", reports Education is India's greatest strength and its greatest weakness.

There are millions of children in fields, on the roads, in factories everywhere but in school you have it in your power to change that all they need is a little bit of your time.

Education is modern India's greatest leveller. It is the tide that lifts every boat we are all prisoners of birth, but education has the power to snap the meanest bonds of economic and social enslavement. It is the route out of the caste ghetto, the path out of the slum, the road to the high table.

Suguna. M, (8th December 2011) states Gender discrimination still persists in India and lot more needs to be done in the field of women's education in India. Despite the importance of women education unfortunately only 39% of women are literate among 64% of the man.

R. Suresha and Mylarappa B. C. (27 October 2012) mentions, Gender justice gets a boost when women have access to education, which, by enhancing women's knowledge and employment capacity, increases their sense of autonomy and self-worth. The study indicates clearly that poverty and female illiteracy are very closely linked.

Nambissan.B.Geetha, (2014) in her study after reviewing the sociological research on school education in India from 2000 – 2010 and including books and articles published during this period emphasized the fact that there is an urgent need for sociological study of education, to understand the complexity of this sphere of society and social reality in India. She explores the changing relationship between caste, gender and educational expansion at the primary and secondary levels of schooling.

A world Bank Policy Paper on “Enhancing Women's Participation in Economic Development” – under the sub – heading - Promoting education highlights that - Education offers favourable private returns to the individual and has a long term and sustainable effect on women's productivity and thus on the growth of the sector they work in.

It is observed that, the views are retrieved based on the topic discussed and the related content from various literature addresses issues on how education is the need of the hour to uplift the

status of women especially belonging to the disadvantaged group. The various studies mentioned is as per chronological order and it includes enduring gender gap in education, differences in literacy achievements also exist between rural and urban area as well as between different regions and communities, problem of low status faced by the backward classes and children belonging to this strata of society are also backward in grasping knowledge, presence of poverty and unemployment. Education is the only answer to these problems. It is an instrument of social change, individual mobility and social equality for all social groups through social justice and of integration and mainstreaming.

Generally the focus of the literature seems to be either on the need for education or on the gender gap witnessed in different regions and communities due to which discrimination prevails in women attaining education.

This session on literature review, presents some of the relevant studies dealing with - Education and the methodology employed in their study.

Society cannot develop if the development of its women remains retarded or static. Jyoti Rao Phule was a symbol of the revolution of social equality which was born out of the impact of western education and the great idea of equality brought by it to India. Jyoti Rao set himself to the task of seeking educational reforms. He was convinced that both women and the sudras from the Hindu community should avail themselves of modern education.

Constitution of India entrusts every citizen with the duty to “renounce any practice derogatory of the dignity of women”.

The Government of Independent India has been working on lots of educational development plan for women. The University Grants Commission has stressed as early as in 1948 the essential need for the education of women. The central education department, the NCERT, National Council of Educational Research and Training, The NAEP – National Adult Education Programme and other institution have evinced greater interest in providing educational facilities for women.

An analysis is also made on the approach adopted by various authors and their contribution to the future areas of research. These reviews also add value to this topic.

- Gaag Vander Nikki (2005:pp.92 – 100) focused on exploratory method in the analysis by highlighting the statistical data of the women population who are literate and illiterate.
 - Das Veena (2004:pp.346) focused on comparative method in the analysis by comparing the statics of literacy rate before and after Independence.
 - Rao Shankar.C.N. (2004:pp.616) focused on exploratory method in his analysis by stressing on the effect of illiteracy if the situation persist for long.
 - According to Kuppuswamy B. (1984:pp.85) focused on Descriptive method in his analysis by relating low caste status to educational inequality.
 - Rao Vijayeswari G. (2005: pp. 213) focused on Comparative method by highlighting the ratio of female literates in Rajasthan and Kerala and also the sex ratios among illiterates from 1911 to 1981.
 - R.V. Badi and N.V. Badi (2002: pp.203) focused on Correlational method by linking the cause and effect relationship between poverty, unemployment and education.
 - Freire Paulo (2006: pp.33 – 34) focused on exploratory method and in the analysis has explained the transformation of marginalised and women community after gaining education.
 - Dr A. Rajasekhar, (2005, pp.428) focused on Correlational method by connecting the variables such as Gender Discrimination and poverty affecting the productivity of economic assets. He also states that studies consistently show that women's education improves child survival.
 - Prakash Brahm (2005, pp.63) focused on exploratory method and in the analysis has explained the need the society to support the cause of women empowerment.
 - Dr. Bhuyan Dasarathi (2005, pp. 3 - 4) focused on exploratory method and in the analysis has highlighted on how the status of women would improve only if they educate them self and grab every opportunity to become stronger and more powerful than before.
 - Nagar. N.S (2008: pp. 73) focused on empirical method and in the analysis has taken in to consideration the data collected by the Ministry of Human Resource Development.
- From the data collected has analysed the crucial need to not only see social, economic

and gender disparities within the frame, but also provide responses that integrate all these concerns.

- Chanana Karuna (2004: pp.6, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12) focused on exploratory method and has explained the status of women in the pre and post-independence era. Analysed the socio – cultural and economic factors which acted as barriers to their ability to access higher education and the impact of various self – funded institutions to the development of women.
- Dr Jayaram. N, (1990) focused on exploratory method by projecting how ‘Education acquires significance as a determinant of social placement and social stratification’.
- Nambissan.B.Geetha, (2014) focused on comparative analysis in her study after reviewing the sociological research on school education in India from 2000 – 2010 and including books and articles published during this period emphasized the fact that there is an urgent need for sociological study of education, to understand the complexity of this sphere of society and social reality in India.
- Rani. Sandhya. G. (2010) focused on exploratory method by analysing the critical factors that are responsible for low female literacy rate in India.
- R. Suresha and Mylarappa B. C. (27 October 2012) focused on empirical method by analysing the gender disparity existing in literacy rate, performance of SC/ST students and the crucial role in the process of human development.
- Meenakshi (September 16, 2013) focused on exploratory method by analysing how the members of gender, caste, class, and ethnic identity experience structural discrimination that impact their health and access to healthcare especially women.
- Dr Jishamol. B (February 2014) focused on exploratory method by analysing the issues and factors that prevent the empowerment due to lack of education and hence deals with the causes for dropout of deprived children’s in schools, that prevents the empowerment of deprived women’s community.
- Suguna. M, (8th December 2011) focused on exploratory method and has stated Gender discrimination still persists in India and lot more needs to be done in the field of women’s education in India. This study also focuses on the literary status from 2001 – 2011 census.

- Thorat Sukhadeo, Mahamallik. M and Venkatesan. S (January 2007) focused on empirical method. The paper assessed the attainment in human development and human poverty reduction and achievement for individual indicators.
- Dr. Ingole K.S, (n.d.) focused on exploratory method and has stated that, Caste discrimination not only hinders Scheduled Castes / Scheduled Tribes children from attending school but also affects the quality of education they receive.
- Agarwal Bina (1994, pp.2, 3, 4) focused on exploratory method and has underlined that gender gap in the ownership and control of property is the single most critical contributor to the gender gap in economical well – being, social status and empowerment. The distinctions between law and practice and between ownership and control are especially critical.
- Sonowal. Kr. Mukut (January 2013, Volume III) focused on exploratory method. This study tries to find out the status of women in present society, attitude of parents and guardians towards girls education, problem associate with women empowerment in the SC and ST communities of rural society.
- Biradar R.R (2012) focused on exploratory method and has highlighted that poverty and unemployment are the major bottlenecks in attaining faster, more broad-based and inclusive growth.
- Kundu Kumar Suman and Chakraborty Ananya Chakraborty (2012) focused on empirical method to determine the fact that: Empowerment, a multidimensional process comprising political, social, cultural, economic and legal empowerment helps one to gain control of their lives by raising their awareness.
- Nidhi Sadana (2009) focused on empirical method and evidence is provided to the various indicators of discrimination and exclusion in economic and civil spheres that Dalits and their children suffer in rural areas of India.

As per the review of the related literature, the various methodologies focused by these studies are analysed such as:

Empirical -Empirical Research can be defined as "research based on experimentation or observation (evidence)". Such research is conducted to test a hypothesis.⁴

Assessed and analysed the data collected regarding gender disparity existing in the literacy rate, also assessed the performance of Scheduled Caste /Scheduled Tribe students and their attainment in human development and human poverty reduction.

Descriptive -Descriptive research design is a scientific method which involves observing and describing the behaviour of a subject without influencing it in any way.⁵

Explained the topic by relating caste inequality to educational inequality.

Exploratory -merely explores the research topic with varying levels of depth. “Exploratory research tends to tackle new problems on which little or no previous research has been done”.⁶

Explored the socio – cultural and economic factors which acted as barriers to their ability to access higher education. How transformation of marginalised and women community can be attained after gaining education.

Comparative –Comparative researchers examine patterns of similarities and differences across a moderate number of cases.⁷

The studies compared the data with reference to the different states and year.

Correlational – Correlational research investigates a range of factors, including the nature of the relationship between two or more variables and the theoretical model that might be developed and tested to explain these resultant correlations.⁸

It has linked the relationship and effect between poverty, unemployment and education.

From the above observations based on the review of the related literature and as per the analyses. I have classified the various literature on the method implemented to collect data. These literatures also explains that gender gap exists with regard to literacy rate and empowerment of women as well the minority or deprived community is possible only by educating them. These literatures survey are based on articles which analysed on women empowerment and education. The literature survey also includes study conducted all over the world. The data collected by these literatures include empirical methods, exploratory method, Correlational method,

Descriptive method and Comparative method. It includes literature on how low socio – economic status affect educational attainment and vice versa.

It is clear from the analysed data that the content and the topic of discussion is clearly highlighted as the research theme in all the literature analysed in this study. These studies have analysed the ever increasing dropout rates of Dalit girls out of primary school in spite of reservations and academic aptitude. The growth of women's education in rural areas is very slow. This obviously means that still large womenfolk of our country are illiterate, backward and exploited. Moreover education is also not available to all equally. These studies has shown that there is a stronger drive for educational progress amongst socially and economically deprived communities. These studies have been helpful in formulating a strong foundation to gain an insight for analysing this topic. But these studies have not attempted to describe the status of minority women community for a specific time period and have been able to reflect only on the general view. Less attention is been paid on the socially and economically deprived women community in "Bangalore". Socially and economically deprived community as per the study includes Scheduled caste, Scheduled tribes and Other Backward caste and this is according to the 55th quinquennial round conducted between (July 1999 to June 2000) by the consumer expenditure surveys from the National Sample Survey (NSS). Very few studies have contributed to the data on the factors responsible for the gap in literacy rate among the socially and economically deprived community. It is necessary to review the work available on education and empowerment of economically and socially deprived women and identify the gap taking into consideration of the fact that:

- There is a need to overcome inequality by improving the lives of the poorest and marginalized women and girls.
- Girls and young women who are educated have greater awareness of their rights, and greater confidence and freedom to make decisions that affect their lives
- Education helps in the holistic development of women and motivates women to participate in all spheres of life.
- To analyse if the existing laws, government policies and programs on women empowerment and education are fair enough in the progress of the marginalized women.

Future areas for research

As evident from the reviewed literature, education and empowerment of women has been the topic of discussion for researchers for some time. But there are certain issues which need to be taken into consideration in order to get an insight as well unravel the problem.

It is evident that improving access to education is a priority in India, but effective means has to be paid to the nature of education available for the deprived groups and the women belonging to this category. Since the women belonging to the deprived group are most affected with the access as well as quality of education because the schools which are situated in rural and urban areas differ in their ways of performing and delivering knowledge to the pupil and this will have a serious effect on them in their future performance. Moreover the poor financial situation which they are suffering is regarded as the foremost factors impeding the opportunities to access the school as well as higher education. As education imparts better knowledge and skills it will surely improve the status of the poor by making them actively participating in the employment market and earn higher wages, which in turn will improve their social status.

Strategy that can be implemented in the studies

It is necessary to develop an all-inclusive study in order to uplift the marginalised women community. Concerted efforts are required in particularly to elevate the weaker sections. This would help to meet the challenges of universal access to quality education and betterment of our downtrodden still existing in our society. The true success lies not only in fuelling the dreams of visionaries but also fulfilling its responsibility to give hope to the underprivileged to also attain equality along with the privileged section of the society.

The inequality has arose due to deeply embedded caste and social hierarchies that are enacted and expressed in everyday social interactions of community, school and economic life. Social and economic inequality persisting need to be carried out.

Scheduled Caste women in addition have suffered denial of education in the past because of their caste-background. Severe social barriers to meaningful participation in education continue to exist which affects their enrolment in schools. This is reflected in the lower literacy rates for

Scheduled Caste women as compared to non- Scheduled Caste /ST women (LR was 42% for Scheduled Caste women as compared to 58% for non- Scheduled Caste /ST women). The education of socially deprived girls is a serious issue as they are often doubly disadvantaged, due to both their social status and their gender. Though caste is no longer the ultimate element of organizing economic and social relations in India, but it continues to have a lasting impact on the economic, political and social life of communities and occupational and social mobility is limited.

Some specific issues that could be researched are:

- The influence of socioeconomic background on education among women with special reference to demographic and status characteristics such as age, marital status, caste, education, parental education, occupation and income.
- Assistance rendered by education to increase confidence, communication, capabilities and learning skills among women in order to overcome gender disparity.
- Improvement in the educational status of women has in turn improved family relations and decision making process and able to attain social security.
- Poor localities of residents and inequalities of social class affects the ability to perform.
- Customary gender norms and values can lead to political, legal, economic and educational inequalities that perpetuate women's lack of access to resources, control over decision making and participation in the public life, difficulty to obtain medical care or health care information and hence need to be changed.

Gender disparity is a hurdle in participation and complete utilization of human potentiality and this in turn lead to adverse economic growth. Moreover education which is a sure indicator of socio – economic raise in the status is often neglected especially among the lower class and caste in order to meet the routine demands of the people.

Conclusion

By attempting to analyse the review of various literature's, I have classified the literature based on their study and also derived the study based on the research design implemented by Kumar (1996).⁹I have classified this study on literature review into types of research based on its focus

of research. I hope this study contributes to a better understanding of the need for empowerment of marginalized women through education. As discussed, further investigation is needed for improving the status of women belonging to the so called lower strata of society. It is interesting to note that many studies have been undertaken in this field from a very longer time as is mentioned in this article for which studies have been collected from 1990 onwards till date. A remarkable contribution have been witnessed in all these studies and have been helpful in formulating a strong foundation to build future research. Moreover these previous research has clearly shown that there is a stronger drive for educational progress amongst socially and economically deprived communities. Majority of the studies that are reviewed (57%) are exploratory in nature. 3% have concentrated their studies by applying comparative research, focus on descriptive research is also 3%, Correlational analysis is 7% and focus on empirical research. From this analysis it is evident that most of the studies conducted are exploratory in nature and have explained what is observed by a currently existing theory. Therefore it is necessary that ample attention is paid towards having more empirical studies conducted on how to improve the literacy rate and empower women among the Scheduled caste, Scheduled tribes and Other Backward caste women community which is the most affected. Captivating this into consideration the following are suggested which require further consideration:

- Analyse the existing government policies and programs and its effect on women empowerment and education.
- Concentrate on methodology implemented to explore the relationships between variables taken in to consideration.
- Education plays a crucial role in enhancing awareness among women of their rights, better confidence and freedom in decision making process and thus their empowerment. Need to access this aspect is important.

An equitable education system can redress the consequence of broader socio – economic inequalities and would help them to yield complete utility of education and training received regardless of their background. The socio- economic empowerment of them could be set aside as a long term development goal in India. Empowerment would not hold any meaning unless they are confident, alert and aware of their equal status in the society. The success achieved in this

regard is helpful to bring women into the mainstream of comprehensive growth process in India and this would pave the way towards their empowerment.

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