



Women Empowerment for a Stronger Nation

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Abstract

“A wise woman wishes to be no one’s enemy; a wise woman refuses to be anyone’s victim.”

Maya Angelou

Women empowerment is a critical driver for the socio-economic and political development of any nation. This research paper explores the multifaceted dimensions of women empowerment, emphasizing its role in fostering a stronger and more inclusive society. The study delves into various aspects of empowerment, including education, economic participation, political representation, and social rights, highlighting their interconnectedness and collective impact on national progress. Drawing on empirical data and theoretical frameworks, the paper underscores the importance of gender equality in achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs). It also examines the challenges women face in different cultural and socio-economic contexts, proposing actionable strategies to overcome these barriers. The findings suggest that empowering women not only enhances their individual well-being but also contributes to broader societal benefits, such as reduced poverty, improved health outcomes, and increased economic growth. By advocating for comprehensive policies and grassroots initiatives, this paper calls for a concerted effort to advance women empowerment as a cornerstone for building a resilient and prosperous nation.

Keywords: women empowerment, gender equality, education, economic growth, nation, poverty, socio-economic, political representation

Introduction

“Women don’t need to find a voice, they have a voice, and they need to feel empowered to use it.” (Meghan Markle)

Women's empowerment (or female empowerment) can be expressed in myriads of ways. It can be defined as “Women's empowerment is the way or a social action in which women elaborate and recreate what it is to be in a circumstance that they previously were denied” (Kabeer). It envelopes accepting women's perspectives, providing power to become free from the control



of others, developing confidence in their own capacities, making an effort to seek them and improving their social, political, and economic status in the society through education, self-knowledge, awareness, and literacy. Empowering women is a subject with a very broad scope. “Without a doubt government and non- government organizations have done a lot to improve women’s education, health, nutrition and safety, and will continue to work tirelessly in this area. Women empowerment is a pivotal element in the quest for national development and global progress” (Rajan 2). It encompasses the process of increasing women's access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making power, providing capacity to decide their own decisions, and their entitlement to impact social change for themselves and others. “Empower Women focuses, instead, on a very different and crucial point – that true societal change begins with the individual” (Rajan 2). It enables women to lead fulfilling lives and contribute meaningfully to society. A woman has many facets, and she plays many roles in life, each one special and unique. In the text, Empower Women: An Awakening, Rajan describes the significant role of women in the development of a society:

Women play a key role in upholding our culture. Through the ages, women have told their children stories which they heard from their mothers; mythology and folklore exist today mainly because women have upheld the oral tradition. From the folk songs we sing to the traditional dances we perform, from the clothes we wear and the food we eat to the rituals we perform at festivals and holidays – women play a key role in passing down our rich heritage from one generation to the next. It is through these traditions that women perpetuate the values that hold family and society together. (5)

Despite significant advancements in gender equality, women across the world continue to encounter numerous forms of systemic barriers that hinder their full participation in social, economic, and political spheres. The objective of this paper is to investigate the various magnitudes of women empowerment and its implications for the development of a stronger nation. By considering the interactions taking place between education, economic participation, political representation, and social rights, this research seeks to provide an extensive comprehension of how empowering women can drive national progress. “The fastest way to change society is to mobilize the women of the world” (Charles Malik, former President, United Nations General Assembly).



Education as a Catalyst for Empowerment

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has been formed to help countries ensure that their education systems are “fit for purpose” in the 21st century. This means guaranteeing that learners—of all ages and throughout life – are empowered with the knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and behaviours needed to take individual and collective action towards achieving this common future. (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization & Giannini, 2024, p. 6)

Education is widely recognized as a fundamental tool for empowering women and breaking the cycle of poverty. It is clearly stated in the Foreword of *From access to empowerment UNESCO strategy for gender equality in and through education*,

It is only through education that people of all ages can acquire the knowledge and skills to adapt to the changes that are affecting all of our societies – demographic, climatic and technological, to name but a few. Girls’ and women’s education has the power to save lives, stimulating multiplier effects that reduce poverty, maternal and infant mortality, and early marriage. (2)

There are plenty of evidences reflect that when women get access to education, their thinking skills grow. This boost makes it easier for them to question things, reflect on their lives, and take action to change their situation. Education also opens doors to new knowledge, information, and ideas that help them along the way. Educated women also appear less likely to suffer from domestic violence. However, some research points out that education’s impact really depends on where and how it happens, and what kinds of relationships and expectations surround it. There are certain domains that are surrounded with profound gender inequality, and in those places, women deal with numerous forms of barriers, for instance restrictions on their movement, limited opportunities to work outside the four walls of household. In such kind of an environment, education does not have much impact. If a society only values women as wives and mothers, then schooling is mostly about making girls better at those roles or helping them marry well. These are legitimate aspirations, given the realities of the society but it doesn’t give girls or women the tools to question their place in the world or challenge the limits set for them. Educated women are more likely to participate in the labour force, earn higher



incomes, and invest in their families' well-being. Moreover, education equips women with the knowledge and skills needed to challenge societal norms and advocate for their rights.

For instance, in the text, *I Am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban*, Malala Yousafzai's advocacy for girls' education highlights the transformative power of education in empowering women and challenging oppressive regimes. Yousafzai and Lamb writes "If the men cannot win the battle, O my country/ Then the women will come forth and win you an honour" (2013, p. 146).

Even with all these benefits, there are millions of girls across the world still don't get the opportunity at a good education. A number of debilitating factors occurs on their way, for instance, social pressures, political resolutions, cultural attitudes, financial issues, and dysfunctional systems. In order to change this, we need to work with realistic, and effective approaches—like scholarships, lessons that actually consider what girls go through, and campaigns so that the conservative societies should come to know why girls' education is crucial.

Economic Participation and Financial Independence

"To awaken the people, it is the women who must be awakened. Once she is on the move, the family moves, the village moves, the nation moves." (Jawaharlal Nehru).

Economic empowerment gives women the chance to stand on their own feet financially and play a real part in growing the economy. When women join the workforce, they don't just help themselves—they boost productivity and spark new ideas across the board. According to the World Bank, "women play an important role in moving Saudi Arabia closer to its "Vision 2030." This ambitious plan to modernize the Saudi Arabian economy by diversifying it beyond oil and gas, promoting private sector growth, and supporting entrepreneurship also includes the goal of increasing women's labor force participation from 22 percent to 30 percent" (2020, p. 11). World Bank further states that "Three other South Asian economies—India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka—have enacted reforms as well. The Indian state of Maharashtra eliminated restrictions on women's ability to work in jobs deemed dangerous. Pakistan and Sri Lanka both increased the period of paid maternity leave to exceed 14 weeks" (2020, p. 12-13). "Microfinance initiatives, such as the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, have demonstrated the potential of financial inclusion in empowering women and alleviating poverty" (Yunus,



2003, p. 67). When women get access to vocational training, they can start new businesses or expand their existing ones. This gives them greater financial independence and boosts the local economy. Policymakers need to focus on eliminating gender disparities at the workplace and promoting equal opportunities for women in all sectors.

Political Representation and Leadership

Typical indicators for evaluating progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment often focus on one basic measurement—how many women have a seat in the national parliament. This is where we find out if there has been any true advancement for women by getting involved in politics, with participation and representation in decision-making processes.

As women represent at least 50% of our population and therefore should have 50% of the seats in parliament. If this were to occur it would be the most significant change ever for women's empowerment, and undoubtedly it would have the greatest impact on women's lives. It would provide access to opportunity for many women who are currently experiencing poverty and begin to eliminate barriers that have impeded them from accessing education and employment.

The fact of the matter is that through many centuries, women of all backgrounds have faced barriers to entering the political arena and accessing equal representation (due to, for example, discrimination, lack of support and deep-rooted gender structures). While there are a number of proposed strategies for achieving women's empowerment, achieving parity between women and men in parliament and achieving true equal representation is the least likely of all of the proposed strategies to be accomplished in the near future.

The empowerment of women through political means is vital to having their concerns addressed by representation in policy-making decisions. Through political participation and involvement in leadership roles; Women will be in a better position to work toward achieving equal rights for themselves and to address female issues such as domestic violence and women's health.

Between 1995 and 2025, the global representation of women in parliament increased from 11.3% to 27.2%, an improvement of 15.9 percentage points. While progress accelerated between 2000 and 2015, it has slowed in recent years. However, this trend has not been



uniform. The Americas region has made the most striking progress over this period, followed by Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa. In contrast, the Pacific, Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and Asia regions have recorded slower progress, with some five-year intervals in which women's representation either remained stagnant or suffered a setback. (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2025, p. 2)

In India, which has seen women's turnout increase from 46.6% in 1962 to 65.8% in 2024 (when it marginally exceeded that of men), women were central to several poll promises made by major political parties. ("Lok Sabha election manifestos")

Increasing women's political representation requires concerted efforts to remove barriers to their participation, such as cultural biases, lack of financial resources, and limited access to networks and mentorship. The use of electoral gender quotas challenges our ideas and theories about the relationship between women's political representation and their socio-economic position, since quotas may lead to unprecedented historical leaps in women's representation without simultaneous changes in women's socio-economic position. ("Women, Quotas and Politics," 2006, p. 4) By empowering women to take on leadership roles, societies can benefit from diverse perspectives.

Social Rights and Gender Equality

Social empowerment means giving women access to the same rights and opportunities (such as basic social services), to their own health care and safety. Thus, gender equality is not just a nice theme, but a core human right and the basis of genuine, lasting progress. True change occurs when women have the power to exercise irreproachable in their bodies, make competent decisions about their health, and live without fear of violence and/or discrimination. Even with all the promises made by governments and organizations; women experience challenges on a daily basis; these include: gender-based violence, inadequate health care services, and entrenched social norms that perpetuate inequality. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) states about how to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

It refers to eliminate all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere. Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation. It also ensure women's full



and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life. (United Nations, n.d., p. 22)

Addressing these issues requires comprehensive strategies, including legal reforms, public awareness campaigns, and community-based interventions, to promote gender equality and protect women's rights.

Challenges and Barriers to Women Empowerment

=Women's empowerment is known to create positive change; however, it will take time to achieve true gender equality. There are still many barriers in place—traditional cultural perceptions about women, systemic biases around the world and the fact that there are still substantial disparities between men and women in the area of economics. There are still many regions around the globe where older beliefs surrounding women's roles have kept women in the “second-class citizen” category. Women from marginalized communities such as ethnic minorities, refugees, and persons with disabilities face multiple forms of discrimination and exclusion. Changing these realities is not about finding quick or easy solutions but will require hard work, dedication and persistence to ensure that we uncover the root causes associated with inequality so that we can ensure that everyone is included in the process of making positive change.

Conclusion

Empowering women lays the groundwork for a stronger and more inclusive society. When women get equal access to education, economic opportunities, political seats, and social rights, everyone wins. You see real progress—not just for women, but for families, communities, and the entire country. Despite the challenges and barriers that women encounter, concerted efforts to promote gender equality can lead to transformative outcomes that benefit individuals, communities, and nations as a whole. As the world strives to achieve a fair and sustainable future, so for this advancing women empowerment must remain a top priority to ensure a sustainable and equitable future for all.

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