



Gender inequalities and women empowerment in economic life: A multidimensional concept

Dr. Veena Upaghyay

¹ Assistant Professor-Department of Economics, Karamat Hussain Girl's PG College Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India

Corresponding Author: **Dr. Veena Upaghyay**

Article Info

ISSN (online): 2582-7138

Volume: 03

Issue: 01

January-February 2022

Received: 01-01-2022;

Accepted: 17-01-2022

Page No: 381-384

Abstract

Women empowerment means holistic personality development of women which develops their logical, scientific and analytical abilities and enables them to participate in building a value based society. Women empowerment women's decision making roles, their economic Emphasizes their legal rights to self-reliance, and equal treatment, inheritance and protection against all forms of discrimination. Empowerment is a process of creating awareness about one's rights and responsibilities and social, economic, political and educational opportunities. Women empowerment is a way to break free from ideological dependence and the rules of life made by men. It creates an environment where women can use their full inner strength.

Keywords: Women's autonomy in economic life

Introduction

Women empowerment is a multidimensional concept which has been defined in various forms by experts. Women empowerment involves the creation of a social, political and economic environment in which women can breathe without the fear of harassment, exploitation, apprehension or discrimination. Empowerment in the initial stage means freedom and equality of women but in broader sense it is defined as fruitful participation of women in all walks of life. Empowerment is a way of breaking free from ideological dependence and the rules of life made by men. It creates an environment where women can use their full inner strength.

Gender inequalities in economic life become a cause of chronic poverty not only of women but of all members of the household. Perhaps the best way of empowerment is to include women in the mainstream of development. Women empowerment will be real and effective only when they are endowed with income and wealth so that they can stand on their own feet and make their mark in the society.

Concept of women empowerment

According to Batliwala (1994) ^[5] women empowerment is a new phrase in the terminology of gender literature. Women empowerment refers to raising their position in the power structure of the society. Empowerment is the process by which the powerless gain more control over the circumstances of their lives. This includes both control over resources and ideology.

Haque *et al* (2011) Analyzed women's empowerment in the context of economic decision making, domestic decision making and physical movement in Bangladesh. The level of autonomy of women in economic matters and family decision making declines positively with low levels of literacy. The husband's education is also necessary to understand the freedom of the wife's mobility and economic empowerment.

According to the Government of Uttar Pradesh (2011), women empowerment means holistic personality development of women which develops their logical, scientific and analytical abilities and enables them to participate in building a value based society. Rawland (1995) is of the view that empowerment of women can be achieved through a process of development of autonomy, autonomy and accountability. As more and more women become empowered, their personal and political choices will require changes in men's lives and in the public sphere.

Mishra (2006) believes that women's empowerment is conducive to the acquisition of liberation, self-esteem, self-confidence and self-worth. It has many dimensions which are interlinked such as social, economic, political and capacity development.

Betel (1999) concluded that the term empowerment is a multidimensional concept that deals with civil, political and social rights. It is directly linked to knowledge of human rights, economic sector, capacity building and skills based on caste.

Jayakarani *et al* (2012) ^[10] emphasize that empowerment has become a mainstream concept in international development.

Nair (2012) opines that empowerment is a process of creating awareness about one's rights and responsibilities and social, economic, political and educational opportunities. The extent of women's empowerment in the natural hierarchy is largely determined by three factors—their economic, social and political identity, their ability, and their age. These factors are interconnected and cannot be looked at in isolation.

Kishor (2000) concludes that empowerment literally means investing with power. In the context of women's empowerment, the term refers to women's increasing control over their lives, bodies and environment. Women's empowerment emphasizes women's decision-making roles, their economic self-reliance, and their legal rights to equal treatment, inheritance, and protection against all forms of discrimination.

Jejeebhoy (2000) defines empowerment as the process by which the powerless gain control over the circumstances of their lives. This means not only greater external control, but also an increased internal capacity to overcome barriers to access to resources.

According to Moser & Moser (2010), women's empowerment needs to be along six distinct dimensions: economic, social, political, familial, inter-personal, legal and psychological, to be measured at different levels from home to social aggregation. needed. Community.

The United Nations (1995) maintains that investing in women's abilities and empowering them to exercise their choices is not only valuable in itself, but is also a surefire way to contribute to economic growth and overall development.

Saunders (2002) believed that the rise of feminist activism in the 1970s and 1980s was accompanied by a massive reflective activity of feminist scholars. This led to the rise of various theoretical perspectives.

Measurement of Women Empowerment

The traditional view was that empowerment could not be measured directly. It can be measured using only education, employment, health, knowledge. Archley (1995) and Kishor (2000) are of the view that these proxy variables are also used to ascertain the relationship between gender and economic demographic changes. Although education and employment are increasingly viewed as "enabling factors" in recent years, the selection of a representative index is important to measure women's empowerment.

Sen (1993) suggested that empowerment is a qualitative as well as a subjective concept. It changes with time so the dimensions of empowerment and the importance of their concept are also changing.

Women empowerment in the Indian context

The Indian Constitution has given an important place to gender equality in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights,

Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles of State Policy. The Constitution of India empowers the state to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favor of women.

There is a provision in the Constitution of India

1. Equality before the law for all persons (Article-14)
2. Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth
3. (Article 15(u)); However, special provisions may be made by the State in favor of women and children under Article 15(3).
4. Equality of opportunity for all citizens concerned with employment or appointment to any office under the State (Article 16)
5. The policy of the State should be directed to secure the right of men and women equally to an adequate means of livelihood (Article 39(a))
6. Equal pay for equal work for both men and women (Article 39(d))
7. Provisions to be made by the State for securing just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief (Article 42)
8. To promote goodwill by every citizen of India and to renounce practices which are derogatory to the dignity of women (Article 51A(e))

Reservation of not less than one-third of the total seats for women in direct elections to local bodies, that is to say; Panchayats and Municipalities (Articles 343(d) and 343(t)). Within the framework of a democratic polity, our laws, development policies, plans and programs aim at the advancement of women in various fields. Since the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-78) there has been a marked shift from welfare to development in the attitude towards women's issues. In recent years, the empowerment of women has been recognized as a central issue in determining the status of women. The National Commission for Women was established by an Act of Parliament in 1990 to protect the rights and legal rights of women. The 73rd and 74th Amendments (1993) of the Constitution of India have made provision for reservation of seats for women in local bodies of Panchayats and Municipalities.

Over the past decade, gender equality and women's empowerment have been clearly recognized as the key not only to the health of nations, but also to social and economic development, as reported by the NFHS III. India's National Population Policy 2000 aims to empower women through health and nutrition, one of its important strategic themes.

Additionally, the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women is one of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), of which India is a signatory. Combining the two concepts of women's empowerment and gender equality into one MDG clearly recognizes that gender equality and women's empowerment are two sides of the same coin: progress towards gender equality requires women's empowerment and women's empowerment. There is a need for increased empowerment gender equality.

Thus, India has been instrumental in laying a strong foundation for women's participation in decision making at all levels.

Theoretical Concept of Economic Empowerment

UNIFEM (2005) believes that economic empowerment of women is essential for any strategy to eradicate poverty.

Women's economic empowerment is a process that has two basic dimensions: resources and opportunities. Productive resources are all the assets that women need to achieve economic growth. These range from tangible assets such as financial resources (income, savings and loans) and physical resources (land, housing, technology) to intangible assets such as skills, technical expertise and social standing. But when women are equipped with productive resources, it does not mean that they are financially empowered. They should have the opportunity to use those assets in any way they choose.

In the view of Dunlop (2011), most employed women do not have control over their earnings. A major part of his earnings is spent on the whole family apart from himself. If women have control over economic resources, their status in the family and society will automatically rise. Due to lack of economic power, women are dependent on others and do not have decision-making power.

Kabir (2001) found in his study that unless women have their own income, they have to face the wrath of their men.,

Bose *et al* (2009), Kishor and Gupta (2004), Goetz and Gupta (1996), Dixon and Muller (1993) state that mere access to employment does not empower women unless they have bargaining power, resources But there is no control and attainment of them own identity.

According to the MDG3 Convention in Copenhagen (2010), women's economic empowerment is defined as the right to ensure equal economic rights for women by reforming the national legislative and administrative structures (particularly those involving land, inheritance and property rights). Not only by laws and regulations but also in implementation of laws and regulations, which certainly emphasize on capacity and capacity building. Mainstreaming gender in macroeconomic policies and the adoption of inclusive economic development policies create productive employment and equal access to good work for all.

According to the Human Development Report (1995) the equal enjoyment of human rights by women and men is a universally accepted principle, as confirmed by the Vienna Declaration adopted by 171 states at the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights. It has many dimensions which include the same. Access to basic social services, including education and health, equal opportunities for participation in political and economic decision-making, equal rewards for equal work, and equal rights for citizens in all areas of life, such as the workplace.

Aslam (2013) ^[3] observed that the economic dimension of empowerment is important as it includes the ability to access lucrative and rewarding occupations as well as the ability to earn and control income.

According to the Department of Foreign Affairs Trade and Development, Canada (2013), economic empowerment of women means enhancing skills for economic growth and development, access to productive resources and decision-making ability.

UN Women (2012) categorically states that women's economic and human rights, their contributions and priorities have been largely ignored. They are more likely than men to be unemployed, dominate the insecure informal sector, more likely than men to be in part-time formal employment, spend more time than men in unpaid care work.

Ridley (2013) defined the economic empowerment of women on the basis of the following aspects-

Increased income and return on labour

Access to opportunities and life opportunities - such as capacity building from education to skill training and job openings, transfer from caregiving work.

Access to the assets, services and support needed to move forward financially.

Decision making ability in various areas including domestic finance.

NCHMB. C (1999) states that economic empowerment is one of the fundamental building blocks in efforts towards holistic empowerment of women. Participation in formal economic activities on terms and conditions, which reflects the productive capacity of women, and their control over their own income, are some of the important dimensions of economic empowerment. Access to earned income significantly improves women's status within the household, gives them greater control over the distribution of such earnings and household resources, and generally increases their status and strength in society as well.

The World Bank (2007) refers to women's economic empowerment as smart economics, as it is associated with lower poverty, faster growth and better economic, health and educational outcomes for the next generation. Women's economic empowerment (or at least co-determination in resource distribution within the family) is greater when they are employers, or in wage and salaried work that is protected through legislation and services that guarantee their rights.

Thus, a woman is financially empowered when she has the ability to succeed and grow financially and has the power to make economic decisions and act.

Employment as an enabling factor in economic empowerment

UN Women (2012) which reiterates that when women have access to resources and opportunities and participate on an equal footing in economic life, they are more likely to play their role as drivers of development outcomes and achieve sustainable and inclusive growth. are in a better position to take advantage of.

Rahim & Bolden (1995) stated that jobs can teach skills and change attitudes, behaviors and aspirations.

Connell (2015) argues that social security policies such as social insurance for all, minimum standards of decent work and living wages are important elements for women's economic empowerment and sustainable economic development.

Mantra (2007) states that unequal distribution of income and control over resources between men and women, women's lack of decision-making power, unequal distribution of domestic tasks, the role of care assigned to women and girls, gender-based violence and socio-economic mobility due to constraints of legal, cultural and labor market—all act as contributing factors that cause and exacerbate women's poverty.

Research by Moghadam (2003) on the Middle East has shown that employed women have fewer children and that the income earned by women always contributes to the household budget. Kabir (2001) in his study found that self-earned women are respected and they do not have to beg for money for the purchase of essential items like clothes, medicine etc.

Both Hussain and Jaime (2011) and Khan (2006) agree that employment plays an important role among the various determinants of women's empowerment. Women who are involved in any income related activities or who contribute to

the family income are more empowered than the women who do not engage in any income related activities.

Thus, on the basis of the above literature review, it can be concluded that economic empowerment of women is a complex phenomenon which needs to be studied on its own. Women's employment has its own distinctive features and problems which make it different from male employment.

References

1. Appendini K. Economic Liberalization, Changing Livelihoods and Gender Dimensions in Rural Mexico. In FAO, IFAD and ILO Report Gender Dimensions of Agricultural and Rural Employment: Differentiated Pathways Out of Poverty Part III Rome: FAO, IFAD and ILO, 2010.
2. Aslam M. Empowering Women: Education and the Pathways of Change. Teaching and Learning: Achieving Quality for All. United Nations Educational, Scientific, Cultural Organization, 2013.
3. Asraf SW, Ahmed A. Muslim Women Education and Empowerment in Rural Aligarh (A Case Study). International Journal of Scientific and Research Publication, 2012, 2(4).
4. Basu AM, Kaushik B. Women's Economic Role and Child Survival: The Case of India. Health Transition Review. 2001; 1(1):1-20.
5. Batliwala S. The Meaning of Women's Empowerment: New Concepts form Action. In G. Sen, A. Germain and L.C.Chen (Eds.).Population Policies Reconsidered: Health, Empowerment and Rights. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994, 127-138.
6. Bose A. Empowerment of Women: How and When. Economic and Political Weekly. 2000; 35(34):3005-3007.
7. Devi MDU. Research Perspective for Understanding Women's Education. Economic and Political Weekly. 1992; 27(24/25):1279-1282.
8. Batilwala S. Taking the Power out of Empowerment: An Experimental Account Development in Project. In T Wallace and C March (Eds.) Changing Perceptions: Gender & Development. Oxford, 1997, 49-157.
9. Gandhi K. Education Challenges of the Twenty First Century. The Global Context. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt.Ltd, 1999.
10. Jayakarani A, Hennink M, Kiiti N, Pillinger M, Jayakaran R. Defining Empowerment :Perspective from International Development Organisation. Development in Practice, 2012, 22(2).
11. Jejeebhoy S, Sather ZA Women's Autonomy in India and Pakistan: The Influence of Religion and Region. Population and Development Review. 2001; 27(4):687-712.
12. Kabeer N, Mahmud S, Tasneem S. Does Paid Work Provide a Ppathway Women's Empowerment? Empricial Findings from Bangladesh. Institute of Development Studies, 2011.