

Education and Political Participation of Women: A Case Study of the Ghaziabad City of Western U.P.

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Abstract

Women have subordinated status in the society; the cause behind women's subordination is gender and gender relations in society. Women face inequality and vulnerability in all sectors viz. economic, social, education, health, care, nutrition, legal and especially in politics. As women are oppressed in all spheres of life, they need to be empowered in all areas. UNDP states women's equal participation in political life plays a pivotal role in the process of women empowerment. There can never exist a true democracy unless there is true participation of women. Without the active participation of women, the goal of gender equality cannot be achieved. In this direction, women have been given opportunity to lead through the reservation imparted in 73rd and 74th amendments. Let us hope that these amendments in the constitution will usher in a new era of women's participation in social, economic and political spheres of life. But in spite of all that, their active and qualitative participation in political bodies is lag behind. In this direction, education can be a potent tool in improving the status and condition of women in society, because it enables to women to gain knowledge, help them to get status, self-image and self-confidence. Education is important to everyone, but it is especially significant for girls and women, because the educational achievements of women can have effects within the family, outside the family and across generations. It influences cognitive, economic, political, psychological and physical dimensions of empowerment of women. Thus the prime objective of this article is to analyze the role of education in gaining the control over political dimension of women's empowerment.

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Introduction

The constitution of India has guaranteed the right of equality to all its citizens irrespective of their sex, caste, creed and religion. Although women are enfranchised members of the political realm, actually they have remained second-class citizens in terms of political participation and political power. Especially at a higher level, they are nowhere equal to men. However, realizing the needs of women empowerment since independence, especially emphasis was laid on the practical needs of women. Women have been given opportunity to lead through the reservation imparted in 73rd and 74th amendments. Let us hope that these amendments in the constitution will usher in a new era of women's participation in social, economic and political spheres of life. But in spite of all that, their active and qualitative participation in political bodies is lag behind. In this direction, education can be a potent tool in improving the status and condition of women in society, because it enables to women to gain knowledge, help them to get status, self-image and self-confidence. Education is important to everyone, but it is especially significant for girls and women, because the educational achievements of women can have effects within the family and across generations.

Women, Education and Empowerment

We trace the meanings of 'women's empowerment through an exploration of several definitions, as articulated by feminists- scholars, women's organizations and multilateral institutions.

Antrobus (1989) states that "empowerment is a process that enables a powerless woman to develop autonomy, self-control and confidence and, with a group of women and men, a sense of collective influence over oppressive social conditions. **J.S. Apte 1995**, states that 'power' is the keyword of the term 'Empowerment' which means 'control over material assets, intellectual resources and ideology. The material assets over which control can be established of any type- physical, human, financial, such as land, water, forests, people's bodies and agencies, labor, money and access to many. Knowledge, information, ideas can be included in intellectual resources. Control over ideology, signifies the ability to generate, capacity to propagate, capacity to sustain and institutionalize specific sets of beliefs, principles, values, attitudes actions and behaviors. **Jaya Kothani Pillai (1995)** "empowerment is an active, multidimensional process which enables women to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres of life. All over the world, the movement for improving women's status has always emphasized education as the most significant tool for social change and the development of society and nation. "When the demand for women's education started in the 18th century, it was more in the light of women's

right, for access to knowledge and not as a national economic asset. Then attitude change for the first time, the UNESCO conference in 1962 underlined the importance of the access of girls and women to technical and vocational education for economic and social development.” (Jaya Kothani Pillai, Women, and Empowerment, pg. 77)

“Education is one of the most important means of empowering women with the knowledge skills and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process.”

—ICPD Programme of Action, para 4.2

Empowerment through education is ideally seen as a continuous holistic process with cognitive, economic, psychological, political, and physical dimensions in order to achieve the goal of gender equality.

Objectives

In the above background the study has focused on the following questions:

- 1. To analyze the education level of women?**
- 2. To analyze the political dimensions of empowerment of women?**
- 3. To analyze the relationship between educations and the political dimensions of empowerment of women?**

Area of Study

For the purpose of the present study, an urban area Ghaziabad city of western U.P. nearby Capital Delhi has been selected as a specified focused area of study. It is an ancient city located on Grand Trunk Road 19 km east of New Delhi. As its boundary is adjacent to Delhi, it acts as the main entrance of U.P., and that is why it is also called Gateway of U.P. Ghaziabad is a growing industrial city, it becomes the industrial hub of UP as well as an educational hub of NCR.

As of the 2011 Indian census, Ghaziabad had a population of 1,636,068, males constitute 869,257 and females 766,811. Ghaziabad has an average literacy rate of 100.54%. The male literacy rate is 93.31% and the female literacy rate is 108.67%. The sex ratio of the city is 882.

Methodology

At the first stage, 18 cases would be identified for analysis of different social categories on the basis of caste, class and education. At the second stage, in the present research work, a total number of 200 respondents have been selected through purposive and stratified random sampling. Stratified sampling is a mixture of both random sampling and purposive sampling. Under this method, the whole population is first divided into number of strata then a certain number of the sample is taken from each stratum on a random basis. *The universe is defined by only the Hindu*

population. Because if we took the Muslim population then it becomes more difficult and more complicated to measure the variations occurring due to this difference. Thereby the study has been limited to Hindu Women.

In the present study interview schedule, quasi- participant observation, interviews have been used. Information related to Ghaziabad city was collected from a secondary source like Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteers and Internet. Empirical data were collected with the help of specific research techniques of observation, interview, and personal- records if any. Quasi-participation observation and case-study methods were also used for collecting first-hand data.

In the present study, two major methods were adapted to process and analyze the data methodically, quantitative and qualitative. Simple statistical techniques like association and co-relation have been used to indicate the extent of the relationship between the respondents' education and different dimensions of empowerment of women.

Education and Political Dimension of Empowerment of Women

The constitution of India has guaranteed the right of equality to all its citizens irrespective of their sex, caste, creed and religion. Although women are enfranchised members of the political realm, actually they have remained second-class citizens in terms of political participation and political power. Especially at a higher level, they are nowhere equal to men. However, realizing the needs of women empowerment since independence, especially emphasis was laid on the practical needs of women. Women have been given opportunity to lead through the reservation imparted in 73rd and 74th amendments. Let us hope that these amendments in the constitution will usher in a new era of women's participation in social, economic and political spheres of life. According to Stromquist "Political Dimension of empowerment of women refers to that women have the capability to analyze, organize and mobilize for social change." Citizen active participation in political affairs in a democracy is crucial and necessary because it assures the legitimacy of the system and also strengthens the democratic system. "It is a technique for setting goals, choosing priorities and deciding what resources to commit to goal attainment" (Nie & Verba). International Encyclopedia of social science refers to political participation as "those voluntary activities by which members of a society share in the selection of rulers and directly or indirectly in the formation of public policy.' It excludes from the scope of political participation such involuntary activities as paying taxes, serving in the armed forces and performing the duty". So on the basis of these definitions, it can be said that political participation includes activities like voting, campaigning in elections, influencing other person to vote in a particular way, attending public meetings, distributing party

literature, joining an organization or party, contributing money to the party, contesting elections and holding public or party office, etc.

To measure the political dimension of empowerment of women, the researcher posed a number of questions. The facts of these variables are presented in the following:

Table: Education and Political Dimension of Empowerment of Women

SN	Indicators	Education-Level				Total
		Illiterate	Low (Up to 8)	Med. (IX-XII)	High (Grad. & above)	
1.	Do you vote?					
	A. Always	11	15	09	16	51
	B. Sometimes	06	03	18	48	75
	C. Once-a while	02	02	05	19	28
	D. Never	00	06	12	28	46
	Total	19	26	44	111	200
2.	Do you vote independently?					
	A. Yes	00	02	03	32	37
	B. No	19	18	29	51	117
	Total	19	20	32	83	154
3.	Do you talk about politics?					
	A. Always	00	00	09	30	39
	B. Sometimes	02	09	26	53	90
	C. Never	17	17	09	28	71
	Total	19	26	44	111	200
4.	Are/were you a member of any political body?					
	A. Yes	00	00	00	11	11
	B. No	19	26	44	11	89
	Total	19	26	44	111	200
5.	Participation in the activities of political bodies?					
	A. Regular	--	--	--	7	7
	B. Sometimes	--	--	--	4	4
	C. Never	--	--	--	--	--
	Total		----	----	11	11

6.	The basis for contesting the election:					
	A. Own interest	---	---	---	02	02
	B. Inspired by family members	---	---	---	09	09
	Total	00	00	00	11	11
7.	Do you want to contest any election?					
	A. Yes	00	00	01	06	07
	B. No	19	26	00	00	193
	Total	19	26	44	111	200
8.	Awareness of respondents about reservation in PRA					
	A. Yes (fully a lot)	00	00	04	19	23
	B. Little bit	01	05	17	68	91
	C. No	18	21	23	24	86
	Total	19	26	44	111	200
9.	Awareness of respondents about govt. schemes of women's development:					
	A. Yes (fully a lot)	00	00	02	29	31
	B. Little bit	02	04	19	35	60
	C. No	17	22	23	47	109
	Total	19	26	44	111	200
10.	Level of political awareness of the respondents					
	A. High	00	00	03	39	42
	B. Medium	00	00	11	41	52
	C. Low	19	26	30	31	106
	Total	19	26	44	111	200

Finding, Discussion and Conclusion

The facts of the table indicate that there is no significant relationship between the respondents' education and voting participation. Respondents with low education show more interest than the medium and highly-educated women. But education shows a positive impact on voting independence, it increased with the increasing order of education. Data also reveals that education has a positive and significant impact on other variables of political dimension like- talking habit of politics, contesting election, participation in the activities of political bodies, respondents' interest in contesting election, awareness about reservation in PRA, awareness about women's development schemes and awareness about political matters.

Thus it can be said that education is a potential tool to emancipate women in political areas however it is also a noticeable point that highly educated women are not interested in voting participation but they have a high level of political awareness that is important to accelerate the process of women's empowerment.

Thus education is positively related to each dimension of empowerment. Education enables women to gain more knowledge about the cause and condition of their subordination, helps them to get status, self-image and self-confidence. It confirms that education is the basic and first step in ensuring that women realize their full potential and become equal partners in decision-making. Women's education enhances their awareness and it will sensitize women to their rights, raise their aspirations and potential. Women have to know the importance of political participation in democracy for their involvement in decision-making. So they have to fight for the implementation of the women reservation bill so maximum number of women can participate in political bodies and could raise their issues. Because as Pillai says that "power is not a commodity that can be transferred, it has to be acquired and once acquired it has to be sustained and preserved."

Thus we can say the journey is very difficult because women are not a homogenous category and there is a difference between women on the basis of castes, class, education, and creed, etc. but this journey in itself is a goal. Education and awareness give rise to a new consciousness among women and accelerate the process of political empowerment. The good news about women is that we have a long way and not only a great deal of awareness but also action is taking place in the area of engendering women and creating A 'gender just' society and gender just democracy. The bad news is that we are still far away from reaching the goal of equality in gender issues, especially in the political field.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

The study has been limited to a small part of urban area (only 200 respondents), therefore findings can be generalized only for a small local universe. The present study has tried to measure empowerment on physical dimensions.

The study has been limited to Hindu women. Thus an extended sociological inquiry of Muslim women will give us a picture of the empowerment of Muslim women. Therefore for a better generalization, a larger study, among the Hindu and Muslim women with alternate perspectives covering a wider area and more respondents are required for deeper sociological understanding.

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