

## EDUCATION AS A MEANS OF EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

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#### Abstract

The main driver of women's empowerment, prosperity, progress, and welfare is believed to be education. Women face discrimination from conception to death. Women continue to face oppression and injustice in all realms of life, and they must be given more control in all facets of their lives. Women must swim against the current that demands more strength in order to combat socially built gender inequalities. Such power results from the process of empowerment, which in turn results from education. The role of education as a motivator for women's emancipation in the Pinjore block of Panchkula district in Haryana is examined in this paper. The study uses 100 women as its sample, with an equal number of educated and uneducated women. It is based on primary data. The outcome demonstrates how education affects women's ability to make decisions in the home and also boosts their mobility in public spaces. Using Chi-square tests, the results were found to be significant.

#### Keywords

Women empowerment, education, decision-making, mobility, Haryana

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## **Introduction**

Women's empowerment is a global problem, and both formal and unofficial movements around the world place a strong emphasis on the political rights of women. Women can be a game-changer in the development of the country. The literature points out that only when women are treated and educated similarly to men can a country advance (Sharma et al. 2018; Azim 2005). Unfortunately, they were denied equal opportunities; the hegemonic male ideology caused them a great deal of suffering. Despite their great contribution to society, women have a lesser status in society and are still considered a burden. Their cycle of deprivation begins at an early age and takes many different forms. Even as young children, girls are often discriminated against and deprived of access to nutrition, education, and many other basic rights. According to the Census Report 2011 of India, almost 50% of our country's population is female. The same report records the country's literacy rate is 74.04 percent, with 82.14 percent of men and 65.46 percent of women. A difference of over 15 percent in literacy rates highlights that one of the most pressing concerns for women's rights in India is education. It is widely acknowledged that education is the only way to promote a "culture of equality," but when these rays of knowledge are focused or retained solely for one segment of the population, they foster tyranny and dominance. A proper educational process not only strengthens society by enhancing knowledge, competence, dignity, and awareness of one's responsibility to uphold constitutional rights and obligations, but it also fosters an inner spirit that can tolerate oppression, humiliation, and injustice. Education hence can enable people to become independent, making it an effective strategy for eliminating inequality. Women, therefore, especially need this because they experience discrimination in numerous areas. This can lead to significant social development. Due to its positive externalities and spillover effects, education constantly desires the best for everyone and benefits not only the learner directly but also the environment indirectly (Thomas et al. 2001; Tilak 2008). As the old proverb says "Educating a girl educates a family, society, and ultimately the nation." The core of basic education is what determines everyone's social standing and promotes sustainable development (Sule and Barakade 2012).

## **Education status of women in India and Haryana**

Over the period of time, therefore, both the government and civil society in India have placed a lot of emphasis on women's education. According to the 1986 National Policy on Education, "Education will be used as an agent of fundamental transformation in the status of women." There will be a thoughtful advantage in favor of women in order to counteract the accumulated distortions of the past. The

constitutional directive to provide free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14 years has remained unfulfilled till now. Education professionals acknowledge that the poor advancement of females' education is a major factor in this failure. Literacy and educational levels are increasing for Indian women still there is gap between male and female literacy rates which can be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1: Literacy Rate in India and Haryana**

Census Year	India			Haryana		
	Male	Female	Male-Female literacy gap	Male	Female	Male-Female literacy gap
1971	45.96	21.79	24.17	38.90	10.32	28.58
1981	56.38	29.76	26.62	51.86	20.04	31.82
1991	64.13	39.29	24.84	69.1	40.47	28.63
2001	75.26	53.67	21.59	78.49	55.73	22.76
2011	82.14	65.46	16.68	84.05	65.94	18.11

*Source: Census, India*

The observation demonstrates unequivocally that the gender gap has persisted against women from 1971 to 2011 in both the country and the state. The male-female literacy gap in India and Haryana was listed as 23.99 percent and 28.58 percent in 1971, and it was listed as 16.68 and 18.11 percent in 2011; nonetheless, the pieces of evidence demonstrate that compared to males, female literacy has remained less advanced (Table 1).

According to Azam and Kingdon (2011), the gender gap in schooling is due to learning expenditure, which normally favors boys and is more common in rural areas than in cities. Their overall growth and development are considered secondary compared to the male children in the household. Without adequate education, girls are often forced into early marriage and may become victims of abuse and trafficking. Unless this scenario changes, there will be little or no progress in society.

While developing policies to consider female development with a view to reducing inequality between males and females and bringing them on par, the notion of women's empowerment is gaining significance around the world. The year 2001 was designated as "Women's Empowerment Year." The "notion of power" is at the center of the empowerment concept. A multifaceted societal process called

empowerment aids individuals in taking charge of their own life. Women can realize their entire identity and strength in every area of life through the active, multifaceted process of empowerment. Women's empowerment is crucial to achieving sustainable development. The key to empowerment and the most important aspect in the overall growth of people and a country is education.

Education is viewed as a crucial step in the empowerment of women since it gives them the confidence to take on difficulties, question their traditional roles, and transform their lives. According to UNESCO's latest report, education gives women more influence. Girls and young women who have received an education are more likely to be aware of their rights and to feel empowered to assert them. Education helps individuals comprehend democracy, encourages the tolerance and trust that support it, and inspires people to get involved in their nations' political life. If all children had equal access to school, productivity improvements would spur economic growth. Education equality also enhances career chances. A nation with educational equality would have a per capita income that was 23% higher after 40 years. Education is a component of the answer to environmental issues. Women's education helps prevent child marriage. The basic hygiene issue and deadliest childhood ailments related to it can be avoided with education for women of the household.

India, as a country, dreams of becoming a superpower. To become a superpower, every element of our society/nation should contribute to the nation-building process. But women who are the main factor of this society are not educated then we cannot expect them to become a superpower. Therefore, this paper will highlight the importance of women's education, which would in turn give motivation to the process of women's empowerment. The paper is divided into six sections. Section I is an introduction followed by a review of the literature. Section III includes the objective of the paper. Section IV puts light on the data and methodology and explains the demographic profile of respondents. The next section will include results followed by a conclusion.

### **Brief Review of the Literature**

The term "empowerment" has been overused, misused, and co-opted (Stromquist, 2002; Stack and Monkman, 2003). It is frequently used as a synonym for encouraging, taking part in, and speaking out. The notion that education leads to women's empowerment has gained popularity, although we still have much to learn about how education actually empowers women (Stromquist, 2002; DaCosta, 2008; Murphy-Graham, 2008). Nevertheless, in the past 10 years, the goal of women's

empowerment (often linked with women's education) has received serious attention, as well as funding from donors and international agencies (Unterhalter, 2007; Mosedale, 2005; Malhotra et al., 2002; Papart et al., 2002; Oxaal and Baden, 1997). There is a number of uncountable national as well as international literature regarding women's empowerment and education. In the present study, a brief review of the literature is pointed out.

Paranjape (1989) revealed in his study entitled "Women's Education status in Women and Development" that there is a link between the empowerment of women and their educational and economic status. Given that women are not yet empowered; there is a need to empower them socially, economically, and politically through education, capacity-building, skill development, and improving awareness regarding various issues.

Mira Seth (2001) depicted from her study entitled "Women and Development, the Indian Experience" and concluded that the future of the girl child gets further endangered if her mother is uneducated, for an educated mother will always educate her daughter but an uneducated mother may not.

Lakshmi Narayana and Rajesh (2002) pointed out in their study entitled "Curbing social Evils through Empowerment of women" that one of the strategies for the empowerment of women in education build a positive self-image and boosts self-confidence among them and develops their ability to think critically.

Padmanabhan (2002) conducted a study on "Literacy: Gateway to Women Empowerment" and found that the women's movements are the outcomes of their awareness to seek security and protect their rights. Literacy is the only source of their empowerment and even learning to put signatures is considered to be a source of empowerment because it enhances their self-image and their self-confidence. He concluded that women's self-help groups are women's organizations aimed at creating awareness among women. The members of SHG are bold enough to open accounts in the banks, and approach officials in government departments.

Ramanujam and Thenmozhi (2006) stated that as education is a major source of power, women should be given proper education, since it enables them to grow as individuals by giving them exposure to peers, teachers, and the general public. It is being increasingly felt that the empowerment of women will enable a greater degree of self-confidence, a sense of independence, and the capability to resist discrimination imposed by the male-dominated society. A study conducted by Surekha Rao (2007) revealed that the socioeconomic and demographic background of women is needed to be developed in order to improve their family standards. To improve family standards, more enrolments of girls in schools must be ensured. This will improve

their educational background. Efforts should be made by the municipalities and NGOs to control school dropouts among girls.

Matheswaran (2008) explored in his study “Women Empowerment for Sustainable Development through Self-help Group Movement in Tamilnadu” that self-help groups through education play an important role to change the quality of life of women. Education for women is necessary for an understanding and control over the social, economic, and political forces and also to improve their quality of life. Education helps women to know themselves and their children and understand society as a whole. Based on his discussion, he concluded that education particularly distance education is an enabling factor for women’s empowerment and sustainable development.

From the above review of literature, it is found that education plays an important role in empowering women. There are two reasons behind selecting the topic “Education as A Means of Empowerment of Women” for the present study. Firstly, there has been no found comparative study in the review of the literature regarding the measurement of the empowerment between educated and uneducated women. Secondly, no literature has been found on education and women empowerment in the study area. The present paper fulfills this research gap.

#### **OBJECTIVES**

- To compare the decision-making power of educated women Vis a Vis uneducated women.
- To analyze the role of education in empowering women.

#### **Data and Methodology**

The study has incorporated secondary data in order to lay the foundation of the study. However, the study in itself is based on the Primary data. Primary data have been collected from a field survey in the Pinjore block of the Panchkula district because no study has been undertaken in this district as well as data collection was convenient.

The study has a sample size of 100 women. Among them, 50 were educated and the rest 50 women were uneducated Here educated women means, women who can read and write clearly, and uneducated women are those who were not able to read and write.

A pre-structured questionnaire/interview schedule was designed and used for collecting data from the respondents in the study area.

The results were analyzed with a simple statistical technique like percentage and also Chi-square test has been used to see the significance level.

**Table 2: Demographic profile of the respondents**

Demographic Characteristics	Detail	Frequency	Percent
Age (Yrs.)	20-29	28	28
	30-39	46	46
	40 & above	26	26
Literacy status	Educated	50	50
	Uneducated	50	50
Marital Status	Married	65	65
	Unmarried	29	29
	Widow	06	06
Employment Type	Housewife	43	43
	Working/Employed	57	57
Monthly Income (Rs.)	Below 20000	36	36
	20001-40000	49	49
	40001-60000	15	15

*Source: Field survey*

### **Demographic profile of the respondents**

Before proceeding to the results, it is important to understand the basic profile of respondents. The women respondents were in the age bracket of 20-60. Table 2 indicates that the maximum number of respondents was between the ages of 30-39 years. The majority of respondents i.e. 65 percent were married. It was also observed that 57% of females were employed. In the case of monthly income, the maximum number of respondents was between the ranges of Rs.20001-40000.

### **Result**

The result is discussed in terms of the decision-making power of women in households. It also includes differences in the mobility of women to public places in reference to their literacy level. Both factors have an impact on women's empowerment in terms of acceptability and exposure in society.

Decision-making in the household is one of the main indicators of women's empowerment. When a woman is involved in household decision-making then she is certainly more empowered because normally male member of a family takes household decisions. Table 3 indicates that in the case of educated women 26 percent of women were able to take the household decision themselves. On the other hand, only 12 percent of uneducated women could take household decisions themselves. The result was found to be significant at a 5 percent significance level.

**Table 3: Distribution of respondents according to Household Decisions in selling and buying**

Decision/ Indicator	Educated Women n (%)	Uneducated Women n (%)
Self	13 (26)	06 (12)
Husband	17 (34)	21 (42)
Jointly with Husband	17 (34)	17 (34)
Others	03 (06)	06 (12)
Total	50 (100)	50 (100)
Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) = 9.149, Significance value at 5% with 3 degrees of freedom (d.f.) is 7.815		

*Source: Field survey*

*Mobility* denotes the free movement by women without being restricted. It is measured in terms of women being traveled to different places alone. The result shows that the mobility of a woman increases with literacy.

**Table 4: Social and Mobility related indicators**

Indicators		Educated Women n (%)	Uneducated Women n (%)
Visit the city or town freely & alone	Yes	37 (74)	26 (52)
	No	13 (26)	24 (48)
Visit the Bank, school of their children, market, healthcare facility, etc. freely & alone	Yes	34 (68)	23 (46)
	No	16 (32)	27 (54)
Aware of social exploitation	Yes	38 (76)	21 (42)
	No	12 (24)	29 (58)
Aware of health & hygiene	Yes	35 (70)	25 (50)
	No	15 (30)	25 (50)
Aware of family planning	Yes	38 (76)	19 (38)
	No	12 (24)	31 (62)
Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) = 27.13, 13.98, 21.81, 19.46, 26.0. The significant value at 1% with 1 degree of freedom (d.f.) is 6.635			

*Source: Field survey*



Table 4 shows that educated women have comparatively more freedom to visit public places without looking for permission from their families. In the case of awareness against social exploitation, while 76 percent of educated women raise their voices against social exploitation such as drug addiction, injustice, and domestic violence, in contrast only 42 percent of uneducated women can do so. Awareness regarding health and hygiene is found in 70 percent of educated women Vis-a Vis 50 percent of uneducated women. While 76 percent of educated women were aware of family planning, only 38 percent of uneducated women knew about it. The difference is significant as per the chi-square test.

### **Conclusion**

The paper is on the role of education in empowering women. With the help of these indicators, women's empowerment has been measured for educated and uneducated women. From the above results and discussion, it is observed that education is one of the main indicators of empowerment. It is one of the most powerful tools to change the status of women in the family as well as in society. Inequalities between men and women reduce through education. When a woman is educated, her ability is developed and her outlook is also expanded. She is respected by all. She can understand her rights and duties well. When a woman is involved in household decision-making then she is definitely more empowered because a generally male member of the family takes household decisions. It is observed that educated women are more empowered as compared to uneducated ones. The Chi-square test shows that there is a significant difference between educated and uneducated women regarding empowerment. Thus, it can be concluded that education plays an important role in empowering women. However, education alone cannot improve the status of women, unless the women themselves grow conscious of their own dignity and genuine needs.

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