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A review of NGOs' contributions to educating and empowering women in India

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Abstract

The urgent need of the hour is female empowerment. The improvement of women's economic, social, and political standing in India enables sustainable rural and urban growth. To change the idle culture into a self-sustaining society, women must be empowered in these areas. The supply of proper educational resources, political support, an efficient legal system, and the creation of jobs for women are all ways to empower women. By providing basic education, vocational training, training for self-employment, legal aid, protection for women, and self-awareness programmes, NGOs and self-help groups (SHG) play a crucial role in the empowerment of women. They are therefore primarily focused on improving the status of women in society. The current study examines how women's statuses are improved and women's empowerment is attained in the Indian context with the help of NGOs. The study covers the benefits of entrepreneurship for rural women as well as the empowerment of rural women through NGOs. In order to position rural women as equal participants in entrepreneurship and economic growth, this article aims to investigate certain policies that ought to be implemented. Both primary and secondary data were used to inform the current investigation. Utilizing basic statistical techniques like averages and percentages, the data was examined. The report from which conclusions and inferences were drawn was prepared using the studied data.

Keywords: Women empowerment, self-help groups, economic development

Introduction

The development of any nation's other half cannot be disregarded because the development strategy considers all citizens. The findings of the numerous researches have demonstrated that by taking women's growth into consideration, human development progress may be made quickly. Middle Eastern and South Asian nations show little development despite seeing rapid national economic growth. The primary reason is that these nations lag significantly behind in terms of development metrics for women. Like other developing nations, India is also having issues with its development. Despite being in a strong economic position, India lags behind in terms of social factors that contribute to human development. Most Asian nations, including India, have patriarchal social systems, low levels of female literacy, low rates of female labour force involvement, outdated traditional rituals and values, low levels of female status, and a slow rate of modernization. These societal evils are the main causes of the slowdown in human growth. According to several Human Development Reports, a country's overall performance on indices of human development correlates positively with its ranking on indicators of development linked to women. The top five nations also rank at the same position in the index of gender-related development. This study aims to investigate the development issue in connection to the development of women in light of the aforementioned discourse. NGOs must play a crucial role in educating women because it is the first step in empowering them. Therefore, the multidisciplinary approach is embraced in this study, which covers NGOs' endeavors' in this area as well as women's empowerment programmes and education.

Women education and empowerment

Most Western women's circumstances have been deemed to have improved, and they now participate more actively in a variety of social and economic development initiatives. The causes are obvious, such as modern education, the beneficial effects of economic prosperity, government support, women-focused initiatives run by NGOs and governments, modern technological advancements that give women the chance to participate in the workforce on an equal footing with men, the emergence of gender literature and scholars, etc.

As a result, the western world has created a systematic study of topics pertaining to women. However, developing nations, particularly those in the Muslim world, lag far behind in terms of the advancement of women. Women were maintained in the underclass for a variety of reasons, including a lack of modern education, a traditional social structure, male dominance, poverty, technical sluggishness, etc. In developing nations with patriarchal social systems, women are only permitted to assume roles that are predetermined by traditional culture and conventions. In particular, Moghadam and Papnek made note of the fact that women's status remains a harsh reality in emerging nations. The cultural notions of the feminine and masculine, as well as the ideology of gender, have led to the continued underrepresentation of women in the workforce and the assumption that they are primarily responsible for socialization and reproduction (both biologically and culturally). Men and women allocate labor and receive compensation in various ways, but they also consume, use, and receive goods and services in very different ways. Gender asymmetry is an unavoidable reality. Women are marginalized by law and custom in many civilizations around the world, making them members of social groups that are weak and at a disadvantage. According to Papnek, gender differences—those markers of difference among categories of people that control the distribution of power, authority, and resources—are one of the major "fault lines" of society.

Women are marginalized in developing nations, and neither society nor the law has given them the respect they deserve when it comes to their rights to development. Because they are socially and economically invisible, women suffer. The impression that women are irrelevant to the wage and market economy or that they lack control over their financial resources and earnings is the root cause of economic invisibility. The general status of second class citizens, traditionally afforded to women, leads to social invisibility. It is hardly unexpected that development initiatives that do not consider the participation and ambitions of women struggle to accomplish their goals. However, increased awareness of women's education and empowerment on a global scale has had a powerful and uplifting effect on women's lives. It is commonly known that women are treated unfairly from conception to death. The fact that this circumstance exists demonstrates the nation's socioeconomic development process. Women won't be empowered unless the government takes the measures to educate them and supports them with the cooperation of the populace.

Review of related literature

Numerous research papers, works of literature, and official documents on various facets of NGOs have been published since the foundation of Local Self Governments in India. The researches listed below are a few but are extremely pertinent to the topic at hand.

In-depth research on gender discrimination in education and the workplace was conducted by Talwar Sabanna in 2007^[1]. According to the survey, new emerging jobs require higher and professional education, but women do not have the same access to higher education as males have. Higher income groups and metropolitan locations are in better shape than lower income groups and rural places. In 2000, Frank Elbers conducted research on the second edition of

the resource manual for the human rights education group. Annotated bibliography, which provides a summary of human rights training programming, directions to human rights education groups around the world are also included. Ungel (2000)^[5] did a study on what is now a sizable body of knowledge on the levels that support improvements in girls' education and support the advancement of gender equality in education. Shireen Jejeebhoy (2001)^[6] reviews the substantial research on the relationship between women's education and fertility in developing countries that has surfaced over the previous 20 years. She then moves beyond the purview of provision studies to address a key issue, namely how does education progress empower women in other spheres of life, such as enhancing their exposure to information, decision-making, resource management, and self-assurance in interacting with their families and the outside world? In addition, many NGOs' efforts to empower women through capacity building are examined in the edited book by K Murthy (2001) in India. In India, numerous NGOs are trying to develop women in tribal, rural, and slum communities. This book included chapters on organizing women against exploitation, the active participation of women in NGOs and the function of NGOs in Self Help Groups, microenterprises, and education of children, especially of girl children. The course material and the needs of social work educators, researchers, and executive officers to lead and collaborate with nonprofit organizations for the advancement of women were thoroughly covered by BT Bawani (1999). In this book, SN Pawar, JE Ambekar and D Shrikant discuss the political education of NGOs as well as topics like ideology, human rights, citizen involvement, and the empowerment of good governance via practical experiences. Case studies of nonprofit organizations that are active in different parts of the nation have an impact on how NGOs operate and the advancement of women. L Mukhopadhyay (2004)^[9] investigated how to adapt the multidisciplinary approach that is crucial for understanding the nature, function, and dynamics of the NGO environment. In this book, viewpoints from development economics, social work, sociology, history, and public administration are presented. Additionally, it describes the function of NGOs in India's rural-urban development, with a focus on women's advancement and nation-building. There is no doubt that the empowerment of women contributes significantly to the development of a country.

In order for us to attain our development objectives in the twenty-first century, Arun A. Goel (2004) has not only drawn our attention to the current framework for women's development but also examines it. It goes on to clarify that much work needs to be done to advance and empower women. Minisha (2021)^[11] Examine how women can be empowered through entrepreneurship and venture creation, which is possible with the right education and information. Women become more confident as a result of motivation and strong leadership, and they strive to accomplish their objectives. They can achieve empowerment by proper knowledge of government policies, networking with clients, affiliations with NGOs, and self-help groups (SHGs). The results of this study suggest to policymakers and scholars that it is crucial to concentrate on and enhance current policies rather than introducing new ones. NGOs or SHGs must concentrate on generating an immediate source of income through entrepreneurial endeavors'.

Objectives of the study

For the proposed study, the following goals have been established:

- To study the impact of the educational programmes on the target group for development and empowerment.
- To determine the barriers to innovative educational programme implementation and rebuild innovative educational programmes.

Research Methodology

The present study was designed to undertake the study on the role of non-government Organizations (NGOs) in educating and empowering women in India. The methodology of the study comprises area of the study, sampling size and method of sampling, data collection, and method of data analysis. Both primary and secondary data were used to inform the current investigation. The initial collection of primary data is done. In order to specifically address the research problem, the researcher created the data. Primary data for this study was gathered through a standardized questionnaire, personal observations, attendance at meetings, and data collection from the officials. 100 female participants were randomly chosen for the study in order to obtain their opinions, and participants who were chosen at random had structured questionnaire interviews. Secondary information was gathered via the internet, registries, records, journals, articles, periodicals, and the organization's annual reports. Utilizing basic statistical techniques like averages and percentages, the data was examined. The report from which conclusions and inferences were drawn was prepared using the studied data.

Analysis & interpretations

Analysis is done in accordance with the respondents' socioeconomic backgrounds, the evolution of Indian women's education, many facets of women's emancipation, and women's conceptions of education and emancipation.

Table 1: Respondents' percentage distribution by education level

Level	No. of Respondent	Percentage
Primary	18	18
Secondary	26	26
Higher secondary	12	12
Graduated	31	31
Post graduate	13	13
Total	100	100

The degree of education of the respondent women is shown in Table No.1 by type of education. While only 18% of the female respondents had completed their primary school, 26% had finished their secondary education. 12 percent of those surveyed have completed upper secondary education. 31 percent of all women graduated, and this percentage is for women only. 13 percent of the female responders have earned a postgraduate degree. According to the data, it appears that respondents' women have good educational backgrounds because 44 percent of them have a master degree or higher. Not one of the women is illiterate, which

is interesting. Despite their success in academic regular education, Indian women still require education that will help them become more empowered. In other words, Indian women need to have access to a quality education.

Respondent's status relating to empowerment

The topics of violence against women, access to resources for development, social awareness, involvement in social life and decision-making, control over resources and mobility, freedom from ingrained customs, and decision-making authority are all covered in this second section. The way that women react varies depending on the many facets of empowerment. This will make it easier to identify the areas of empowerment where women lag behind and those areas where they excel.

Table 2: Instances of violence in families and societies

Type of Violence	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Eve-teasing	3	3
Humiliation from husband	9	9
Wife beating	7	7
Other	19	19
Total	38	38

The knowledge and experiences of respondents on violence against women in the home or in society are shown in Table No. 2. Only 38% of women who were respondents to this question indicated that there were instances of violence in families or society. It demonstrates by itself that they are not directly responding to this question. The causes could differ based on society and a woman's familial situation. In contrast to the 3 percent of women who experienced eve teasing in society, the 9 percent of women who suffered humiliation from husbands. 7 percent of the female respondents said they had witnessed wife beatings in the community, while 19 percent of the female respondents said they had witnessed various forms of violence against women.

Table 3: Participation: Choosing to perform work

Decision by	No. of HH	Percentage
Husband	5	5
Husband & Wife	4	4
Wife	33	33
Self	18	18
Parents	40	40
Total	100	100

Women should decide for themselves whether to work or be employed, according to 33% of respondents. This response points toward the empowerment of women. 18% of women have consistently said that they made the decision about their employment. According to 40% of women, their parents must decide whether they will work or not. We draw the conclusion that, when it comes to making decisions in the workplace, 50% of women respondents are capable of doing it on their own, while the other 50% rely on their husbands or parents.

Table 4: Women's decision in getting employment

Status of Opinion/Decision	No. of Respondent	Percentage
Opinion Necessary		
No & do not Know	10	10
Yes	89	89
No Response	1	1
Opinion Expressed		
No & do not Know	32	32
Yes	67	67
No Response	1	1
Opinion Implemented		
No & do not Know	46	46
Yes	52	52
No Response	2	2
Total	100	100

The decision on employment is shown in Table No. 4. Women won't be able to become economically empowered until they have the option to choose their jobs and work according to their skills and preferences. According to 10% of women, having a female perspective on landing a job is not required. Women's opinions are needed when applying for jobs, according to 67 percent of women. Women were successful in expressing their ideas with a rate of 74%. In actuality, 52% of women claim that their viewpoint, choice, or efforts to get job were successful. This indicates that of the women surveyed, 51% were able to successfully carry out their choice to work.

Status of respondent's education

The educational status and attitudes are discussed in this section. The following information is provided: education level, learning interests, support from NGOs and institutions, and a desire to continue learning, even by attending other institutions for higher education.

Table 5: Respondents' percentage distribution by education level

Level	No. of Respondent	Percentage
Primary	18	18
Secondary	26	26
Higher secondary	12	12
Graduated	31	31
Post graduate	13	13
Total	100	100

According to the different categories of education, Table No. 5 shows the respondents' levels of education. While only 18% of the female respondents had completed their primary school, 26% had finished their secondary education. 12 percent of those surveyed have completed upper secondary education. The majority of women who responded, or 31% of all women, had finished their pre-graduate work. 13 percent of the female responders have earned a postgraduate degree.

According to the data, it appears that respondents' women have good educational backgrounds because 44 percent of them have a master degree or higher. Not one of the women is illiterate, which is interesting. Despite their success in academic regular education, Indian women still require education that will help them become more empowered. To put it another way, Indian women value a good education. If they succeed in it, they might advance to a strong socioeconomic position.

Table 6: Education: Time Spent Studying (in Years)

Duration	No. of Respondent	Percentage
>1 year	50	50
2 years	16	16
3 years	32	32
Just Joined	2	2
Total	100	100

Table No. 6 shows the number of years that women respondents spent working at the current institute. Education includes more than just schooling and higher education; it also includes craft and drawing education in addition to regular education. Therefore, education is used in this context to refer to both normal schooling and education that improves skills. A variety of educational institutions were discovered when different institutions were visited where NGOs had contributed to the promotion of women's education and empowerment. In this way, the response women were questioned. Women made up 50% of those who said they had attended the institute for a full year. Women who reported having studied there for two years made up 16% of the population. There were 3 years of education for 32% of the female students. 2 of the respondents who were women had just joined the institute. We draw the conclusion from the statistics that there hasn't been much of a shift in people's decision to change institutions. In the same institutions, women were continuing their education.

Help from Institute or NGOs for Learning

Table 7: Education: Getting support from the institution while studying

Response	No. of Respondent	Percentage
Yes	46	46
No	42	42
No Response	12	12
Total	100	100

When asked if they had received any assistance while learning, 46 percent of female respondents said that educational institutions had provided them with assistance. Women said that, aside from instruction and training, the school did not offer them any assistance in 42 percent of cases. 12 percent of female respondents said they had no opinion on the matter.

Data observation leads us to the conclusion that the 50% of women only receive training and instruction. Women need various forms of supportive assistance, such as scholarships, funding for businesses, or infrastructure facilities, in order to participate in school and other skilled trainings.

Table 8: Campaign and programs to prevent discrimination

Undertaking programmes and campaign are necessary to omit the discriminatory	No. of Respondent	Percentage
Strongly agree	46	46
Agree	41	41
Disagree	1	1
No idea/ no response	12	12
Total	100	100

The need for women's legal empowerment is shown in Table No. 8. Here, thoughts from female respondents have been gathered to help determine whether launching campaigns and programmes is necessary to end discrimination against women. In response, 46% of the female respondents said they strongly agree, and 41% said they agree with the statement. Only one person disagreed and recorded a negative response, and 12 percent of the female respondents had no opinion on the matter. The data's findings point to the actions and programmes that are required to stop discrimination against women. Therefore, under this situation, the roles of the government and NGOs are vital. The majority of women—87 percent—believe that justice has been long overdue. New programmes for the preservation of women's rights may be introduced by the government, and NGOs may organize campaigns to put them into action. It appears that women are looking forward to NGOs playing a constructive and active part in the process of empowering women.

Conclusions

Feminist philosophy and the desire to uplift other oppressed women are shared by empowered women. These empowered women will be able to fulfil their views by partnering with an NGO whose objective is directly aligned to their ideology, which provides them a great degree of satisfaction and success. The main goal of these NGOs focused on women must be to increase women's income and independence. Although numerous individuals from various social groups in India are helped to advance their social and financial standing by existing progressive affirmative action programmes. More focus should be placed on educating and empowering underprivileged and disadvantaged women in rural areas so they can get access to elite professions and the political sphere. According to the respondents' and their households' socioeconomic backgrounds, labour work is the primary source of employment, followed by government services and small businesses engaged in small-scale manufacturing or handicrafts. 15 percent of household heads said they worked for a small business, while 24 percent said they were government employees. Family heads work in the labour force with a rate of 26%, while 10% are engaged in menial tasks. The primary sources of income for households are government services, pensions, and small businesses. Despite having a solid income in the family, women's empowerment and educational standing have not reached the anticipated level. Data clearly show that there are extremely few women in the workforce. 10% of those

families had women as the head of the household. The high score of owning consumer goods may have a positive impact on women's educational and empowerment status, allowing them more free time and a little relief from traditional job, insofar as these factors are concerned. 44 percent of women utilize their free time to work on crafts, whereas just 28 percent of women watch television. Summarizing, it can be said that around 50% of the female respondents were unaware of their legal rights regarding inheritance, property, maintenance, widow remarriage, and prostitution laws. They are very aware of the customary marriage age, which is defined as being between the ages of 14 and above (69 percent of women). Women are only partially aware of all those topics, with only 24% being fully informed about reproductive rights, nutrition, women's healthcare, etc.

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