
Women Empowerment and Skill Development in India

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ABSTRACT

Though Women are the most vital part of the progress of any society but after sixty nine years of the independence, Indian women are still struggling against social evils in the male dominating society. According to the report of census-2011, it is revealed that population ratio in India is 943 females per 1000 of males. This ratio states that women are not ignorable part in India. Traditionally, Indian women have been playing the role of second class citizen in every stages of society. But the real fact that women are inseparable part of any society. Without the women empowerment through capacity building, a country's progress will be stop. Capacity building means development of knowledge, skill or other capabilities. It is conceptual approach to social or personal development. The capacity building which encompasses the country's human, scientific, technological, organizational, institutional and resource capacity; can't reach it's goal without the women, who deliver multiple role effortlessly every single day. And by empowering women we can also attain the aim of skill development which enriches the performance of the women working as well as improves the quality of work. According to Census report (2011), percentage of total workers in India is 39.1 and male percentage is 51.7 whereas female percentage is 25.6. By realizing these importance Govt. of India also emphasis upon the women empowerment and skill development in the 12th five years plan. By inspiring this Govt.'s step relating women empowerment, Researchers have reviewed more reliable relevant literature and have selected their objectives to identify percentage of the gender inequality and the ration of skill development of Indian women. Document analysis methodology has used for this study. This study will be helpful for analyzing and evaluating the percentage of the gender inequality and the ration of skill development of Indian women.

Key Words: Women Empowerment, Capacity Building, Skill Development.

INTRODUCTION:

Women empowerment is a burning issue all over the world. Women are an integral part of today's society. The term 'empowerment' came from the word 'power'. According to the International Encyclopedia (1999), meaning of 'power' is having the capacity and direct one's life towards economical, political, social goals or status. It's refers to strengthening the educational, social, political, economical powers of women. According to Indian constitution, women have equal rights with men. Ministry of Labour and Employment, Ministers for Human Resource Development, 12th Five Years Plan has taken number of initiative in the field of skill development.

“Gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenges of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance.” Kofi Annan

OBJECTIVES:

Following are the objectives of the present study-

- To study the gender inequality in India.
- To study the work participation rate and gender gap of India.
- To study the gender gap in work participation in West Bengal.
- To study the relationship between skill development and women empowerment.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

Considering the above objectives the following research questions were framed-

- What is the present scenario of gender inequality in India?
- What is the present scenario of work participation rate and gender gap in India?
- What is the present scenario of work participation rate in West Bengal?
- What is the relationship between skill development and women empowerment?

METHODOLOGY:

The approach in the present study was qualitative in nature. This work has been conducted in the following in the following ways-

- Collection of data from primary and secondary sources
- Detailed study of the reliable and valid sources
- Making generalization from the sources

Sources used:

1. Primary source:
 - Census report
 - 11th and 12th five years plans
2. Secondary sources:
 - Journals
 - Books

Gender inequality in India:

Gender inequality in India is one of most vital issue. The term “Gender inequality” means educational, political, economical, health inequalities between men and women. According to the data of United National Development Programme’s latest Human Development Report 2015 India ranks 130 out of 155 countries where as the two neighboring countries, Bangladesh and Pakistan rank 111 and 121 respectively, though these two countries have a lower Human Development Index than India. It is a bitter truth that among South Asian countries India ranks higher than only Afghanistan which is at 152. In political field only 12.2 percent of Parliamentary seats are held by women in India. The rate of maternal mortality is 190 deaths per 1000 live birth.

Educational Participation:

Education leads to change the social values, perceptions, social justice, thinking, increase earning and all this are very much important for women empowerment. In the study of relationship between gender gap in literacy in India for various years found negative relation.

Literacy rates (1971-2011) :

Year	Persons	Males	Female	Gap in Literacy
1971	34.45	45.96	21.97	23.99
1981	43.6	56.4	29.8	26.6
1991	52.2	64.1	39.3	24.8
2001	64.8	75.3	53.7	21.6
2011	74.0	82.1	65.5	16.6

Source: Census report

Note: 1981 Literacy rates exclude Assam where census could not be conducted. The 1991 census Literacy rates exclude J&K where Census could not be conducted due to political disturbance.

According to the Census 1981, overall literacy rate is 43.6%. Male literacy rate is 56.4% and female literacy rate is 29.8%. This data is showing us 26.6% literacy gap. Literacy rate of India in 1991 is 52.2%. The male literacy rate is 64.1% and female literacy rate is 39.3%. Male literacy rate is 24.8% higher than female literacy rate. In 2001, total literacy rate is 64.8% and male literacy rate is 75.3% and female literacy rate is 53.7%. gender disparity in the literacy is 21.6%. 15th Census in 2011, overall literacy rate in India was 74.04%. Male and female literacy rate respectively 82.1% and 65.5%. Gap of literacy rate is 16.6%.

Political Participation:

The term ‘Political Participation’ has a very wide meaning. It is related to decision making process, political activities, political consciousness, voting decision. The sex ratio of voters has improved from 715 female voters for every 1000 male voters in 1960s to 883 female voters in 2000s.

Number of Women MPs and their percentage:

Sl. No.	Year	Number of women MPs	Percentage of women MPs
1	1971	28	5.41%
2	1977	19	3.51%
3	1980	28	5.29%
4	1984	43	7.95%
5	1989	29	5.48%
6	1991	39	7.30%
7	1996	40	7.37%
8	1998	43	7.92%
9	1999	49	9.02%
10	2004	45	8.29%
11	2009	59	10.87%
12	2014	66	12.15%

Source: Election Commission of India

Where as in the First Lok Sabha the percentage of women MPs was 4.50% in second Lok Sabha of 1957 the percentage was decreased by 0.05% although the number of women MPs in those two Lok Sabha were same i.e 22 MPs. In 1962s third Loksabha the number of female MPs increased to 31 and it became 6.28%. But after that in the fourth, fifth, and sixth Lok Sabha the number of female MPs gradually decreased to 29, 28 and 19 MPs respectively. In these three Lok Sabhas of 1967, 1971 and 1977 the percentages of female MPs were 5.58%, 5.41% and 3.51% respectively. It is also noticeable that in the sixth Lok Sabha of 1977 the number of female MPs was lowest till now. In seventh and eighth Lok Sabha of 1980 and 1984, the number of female MPs were increased to 28 and 43 and as a percentage of 5.29% and 7.95% respectively. In ninth Lok Sabha of 1989 the number again decreased to 29 and the percentage became 5.48%. In the next four Lok Sabhas of 1991, 1996, 1998 and 1999 i.e tenth, eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth Lok Sabhas the number of female MPs were increased to 39, 40, 43 and 49 respectively; and the percentages were 7.30%, 7.37%, 7.92% and 9.02% respectively. In the fourteenth Lok Sabha of 2004 the number and the percentage were 45 and 8.29%. In the fifteenth Lok Sabha of 2009 and the last Lok Sabha i.e. sixteenth Lok Sabha of 2014 the number of female MPs are increased to 59 and 66 MPs respectively; and these two Lok Sabhas the percentages of female MPs are 10.87% and 12.15% respectively.

Status of National and State Political Parties and the representation given by them to women candidates(1971-2009):

Year	Women candidates fielded and share (%)			
	NP(%)	SP(%)	IN(%)	TOTAL
1971	NA	NA	NA	NA
1977	41 (3.86)	5 (3.22)	24 (1.96)	70(2.87)
1980	77 (4.99)	5(1.90)	61(2.15)	143(3.08)
1984	63 (5.06)	5(1.80)	94(2.47)	162(3.04)

1989	87 (6.31)	29(2.71)	82(2.20)	198(3.21)
1991	119 (6.53)	53(3.97)	154(2.79)	326(2.72)
1996	125 (6.87)	50(3.33)	424(3.98)	599(4.29)
1998	107 (7.16)	90(6.70)	77(4.02)	274(5.76)
1999	104 (8.00)	102(7.26)	78(4.01)	284(6.11)
2004	110 (8.14)	128(7.53)	117(4.90)	355(6.53)
2009	134 (8.25)	215(8.21)	207(5.40)	556(6.88)

NP: National Parties, SP: State Parties, IN: Independents, NA: Not available

From this tabulation a clear conception will be formed regarding the participation of women candidates by various political parties in the general election of India. The general election of 1971 was without a female candidate. In the next election of 1977, the representation of female candidate by National parties, State level parties and independent women candidates were 41 out of 1060, 5 out of 155 and 24 out of 1224 total candidates respectively. The total representation of the women candidates by all parties was 2.87% of total candidates in 1977. There is a gradual increase of women of both male and female candidates from time to time but the increase of women candidates is not satisfactory. Though in 2009 the participation of female candidates reaches its prime, the women representatives by National Parties increase to 8.25%. In the case of state level parties and Independent women candidates, the picture is not different. The percentage of women representation by state level parties increased from 3.22% in 1977 to 8.21% in 2009. The percentage of independent women increased by 3.44%. As a result, the whole representation of women candidates in general election of India increased to 6.88%.

Workforce participation rate and Gender gap in India:

The workforce participation rate is a measure of the activity portion of an economy's labor force. Workforce participation means the number of people who are either employed or are actively looking for work. Workforce participation rate means the section of working people in the age group of 16-64 in the economy currently employed or seeking employment.

National Skill Development Mission launched in the Eleventh Plan has brought about a paradigm shift in handling skill development programmes. In this plan has clearly defined core principles and put in place a Coordinated Action Plan for Skill Development. According to Labour Bureau 2013-14, women workforce participation rate (WPR) rate is 31.8% and male workforce participation rate is 73.2%. Women participation rate is just less than half of male participation rate. The 11th Five Years Plan has recognized India's massive needs to skill development of formal and informal workers in the next ten years.

Work participation rate by sex in India (1971-2011)

Year	Total/Rural/Urban	Persons	Male	Female
1971	Total	33.08	52.61	12.11
	Rural	34.03	53.62	13.42
	Urban	29.34	48.82	6.68
1981	Total	36.70	52.62	19.67
	Rural	38.79	53.77	23.06
	Urban	29.99	49.06	8.31
1991	Total	37.50	51.61	22.27
	Rural	40.09	52.58	26.79
	Urban	30.16	48.92	9.19
2001	Total	39.10	51.68	25.63
	Rural	41.75	52.11	30.79
	Urban	32.25	50.60	11.88
2011	Total	39.8	53.3	25.5
	Rural	41.8	53.0	30.0
	Urban	35.3	53.8	15.4

Source: Office of the Registrar General, India.

From the year 1971 to 2011 the percentage of total workforce increased by 6%. But if we look deeply we find we find that in 1971 the percentage of female workforce was 12.11% and in 2011 it became 25.5% i.e. it increase to double. The male and female workforces in 1971 were 52.61% and 12.11% respectively and therefore the gender gap of workforce was 40.5%. But in 2011 the gender gap in workforce decreases to 27.8 percent.

Percentage of female main workers to total female population under broad categories-1981-2011

Census year	Percentage to total female population				
	Female main workers	Cultivators	Agricultural Laborers	Household Industry	Other workers
1981	13.99	4.65	6.46	0.64	2.24
1991	15.39	5.51	7.05	0.55	2.82
2001	14.68	5.11	4.51	0.95	4.11
2011	25.5	24.0	41.1	5.7	29.2

Source: Office of the Registrar General, India.

The table clearly indicates that the percentage of female workers reaches its acme in 2011 census year. There is also a gradual rise of female workforce expect the year 2001.

As per Census report 2011, the workforce participation rate for male 53.26% and 25.51% females. Rural sector has a better female workforce participation rate of 30.02% compared with 53.03% for males whereas in urban sector female workforce participation rate is almost half of the rural sector. (Source: National Sample Survey, 68th Round)

Gender gap in work participation rate in West Bengal:

The gender differentials in participation rates in the workforce are estimated through male female ratio of workforce participation rates.

Percentage of Employment in Services in Rural Areas:

Periods	Male	Female
1977-78	12.17	13.97
1983	16.48	8.17
1987-88	16.2	8.8
1993-94	20.5	9.3
1999-2000	19.4	9.4
2004-05	21.8	16.3

Source: West Bengal Development Report, Planning Commission, Govt. of India

Percentage of Employment in Services in Urban Areas:

Periods	Male	Female
1977-78	55.49	61.79
1983	56.64	54.85
1987-88	54.8	53.9
1993-94	55.7	58.5
1999-2000	62.1	66.7
2004-05	62.1	68.6

Source: West Bengal Development Report, Planning Commission, Govt. of India

The above two tables present the percentage of employment in service sector in rural and urban areas. Although the rural economy of West Bengal basically based on agriculture a considerable number of people works in the service sector. In the period of 1977-78 the percentage of female employed workers was 1.8% more than the male. But after that female percentage began to fall than the male percentage. In the period of 2004-05 the male and female employed increased to 21.8% and 16.3% respectively.

But in urban areas the picture is totally opposite. A large amount of people are engaged in service sector. From the period of 1977-78 to 2004-2005 male employed workers increased from 55.49% to 62.1% and the female employed workers increased from 61.79% to 68.6%. Except the period of 1983 and 1987-88, female employed percentage were more than the male employed.

According to the census 2011, West Bengal ranks 26th in the participation rate of female workers among the states and union territories. Himachal Pradesh is at the top of the list with 44.8% of female work participation rate. In case of West Bengal total female work participation rate is only 18.1%. Among that the rural percentage is 18.4 and the urban percentage is 15.4%.

The following table displays the distribution of female workers of West Bengal with categories as per 2011 census.

Distribution of female main workers by states and categories as per 2011 census:

State	Rural/Urban	Total female main workers	Categories of main workers			
			Cultivations	Agricultural Laborers	Household Industry	Others Workers
West Bengal	Rural	5871301	584261	2671217	959286	1656537
	Urban	2169007	32386	64811	390155	1681655
	Total	8040308	616647	2736028	1349441	3338192

Women and men employment status:

Women are more involved than men in family, marriage and child bearing and rearing. There has been a steady rise in the number of working women in India over the last few decades. In the contemporary world, women no longer lag behind in terms of career.

Percentage of women and men age 15-49 employed in the past 12 months :

Gender	Urban	Rural
Male	84.0	88.7
Female	29.3	49.4

Source: NFHS-3, India

This table shows, work participation rate is higher in rural area than in urban areas. Female work participation rate in rural is higher than urban areas. But this rate is near about half of male participation rate.

Percentage of married women and married men age 15-49 employed in the past 12 months

	Married	Never married
Men	98.8	66
Women	52	50.5

Source: NFHS-3, India

The table clearly indicates the employment difference of men and women of 15-49 years of age. In the case of married persons, 98.8 percent men are employed and the married women employed percent is 52. The difference is 46.8 percent which is too high. But in the case of unmarried persons men and women employment percentages are 66% and 50.5% respectively. Here the difference of men and women is only 15.5%.

Skill development and women empowerment:

Skill development is not merely to prepare women for jobs but also to improve the performance of women worker by enhancing the quality of work in which they are engaged. Employment of women in organized sector is less than 8% in India. Maternal death in India is one of the highest in the world and 87% of all pregnant women in India are anemic. Educated women in India plays a vital role in over all development of the country. It helps to improve half of the human resources and quality of life.

National Policy on Skill Development:

National policy on skill development has been formed by the Ministry of Labour and Employment. The main aim is to create a workforce enrichment with improved skills, knowledge and international recognition for employment and increase productivity of workforce in organized and unorganized sectors, mainly for women, youth and disable persons.

According to World Bank gender equality and skill development can be achieved by:

- ✚ Educating girls
- ✚ Increasing women's labour force participation and strengthening labour policies affecting women.
- ✚ Increasing early childhood development development interventions.
- ✚ Increasing literacy rate among women
- ✚ Promoting women's political right and participation.
- ✚ Improving women's access to credit, land and other resources.

The Government of India has been making efforts for creating a healthy work environment for women. For the development of work force participation, a separate "Cell for women labour" has been set up in the Ministry. The cell has the following functions:

- Setting up of an Advisory Committee under the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976
- Formulating and coordinating of policies and programmes for the female labour force within the framework of national manpower and economic policies.
- Maintaining liaison with other government agencies to secure effective implementation of the programmes in respect of women workers.
- Monitoring the implementation of the equal Remuneration Act, 1976.
- Giving grant in aid to Non-Governmental Organization / Voluntary Organization to formulate and execute action oriented projects for women workers.

In March 2015, Central Govt. launched "Skill India" programme. It is a multi skill programme. The main goal is to create opportunities, space and scope for the development of the talents of the Indian youth. This programme aims to providing training and skill development to 500 million youth of India by 2020, covering each and every village.

A Central Govt. Scheme, "Support to Training & Employment Programme for Women" (STEP) launched in 1986-87. Main objectives of the scheme are upgrade skill of poor and

assetless women and provide employment by mobilizing them in cooperative groups, strengthening marketing linkages, access to credit and support services. Under this scheme around 250 project have been provided financial assistance.

“Sabala” is a Central Govt Scheme was approved on 16th Aug. 2010. The main objective of this scheme is to provide vocational training for girls above 16 years of age for their economical empowerment.

Eleventh Five Years Plan and skill development:

Main aims of Eleventh Five Years Plan was to raise the sex ratio for the age group 0-6 to 935 by 2011-12 and to 950 by 2016-17. This plan also ensure 33 percent of the direct and indirect beneficiaries of all Govt. scheme are women and girl child. This plan envision an increase skill development capacity 3.1 million to 15 million. India has target skill workers 500 million by 2022.

Twelfth Five years Plan and skill development:

In Twelfth Five years Plan Govt. focused upon improving the employability of graduates. Considering Indian higher education system which is organized into general and professional streams, Twelfth Plan clearly states that an “integrated curriculum with great flexibility in choice of subjects and innovative pedagogic practices are needed to improve the quality and hence employability.” The Twelfth Plan emphasizes more upon the 4Cs i.e. skills of 'Critical thinking', 'Communication', 'Collaboration' and 'Creativity'. These skills are now essential for improving the employability and empowerment. The Twelfth Plan also emphasis upon the Vocational education for skill development and employability.

In Twelfth Plan a lot of emphasis is given upon improved training and skill development which is essential for employment and women empowerment. Although National Skill Development Mission launched in the Eleventh Plan, Twelfth Plan focuses on the gaps in skill ecosystem to improve more. The tire of the Coordinated Action Plan for Skill Development and National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) has made an remarkable progress specially at the large unorganized sector. It is also ensured that State Skill Development Mission in all states would have to be fully operational and effective during the Twelfth Plan.

Recommendation of Dr. Abdul Kalam Azad:

- ✓ Education is considered as the way to empower women
- ✓ Awareness campaign , workshops and seminars can change the attitude about women
- ✓ Decision making power can change women

CONCLUSION:

Women empowerment has becoming a burning issue all over the world including India since last few decades. Many agencies of United Nations in their reports have emphasized that gender issue and skill developments are to be given utmost priority. But a large numbers of women are remain out of this circle in India. After analyzing different suggestive ways

of removing gender inequality by different organizations and social reformer , it can be generalized:

- Vocational training and industrial training are essential for skill development.
- Educational equality is the main factor of removing gender inequality and skill development.
- Economical equalities also an important factor for women empowerment.
- Social awareness can change the discrimination.
- Need more help of Govt and NGO's. (Example: Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao)
- Legal Empowerment that suggests the provision of an effective legal structure which is supportive of women's empowerment and skill development.
- Political Empowerment means a political system favouring the participation

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