

Women Empowerment in India: An Analysis with Current Scenario

Dr. Supreet Kaur

*Professor in Education
Centre for Distance and Online Education
Panjab University, Chandigarh
Email: supreet10000@gmail.com*

Dr. Kamini

*Assistant Professor in Education
Sai College of Education
Jadla (SBS Nagar)
Email: kaminiahujal@gmail.com*

Abstract

This paper aims to examine the state of women's empowerment in India and to highlight its problems and difficulties. One of the most pressing issues of the 21st century is now the empowerment of women. However, in actuality, women's emancipation remains a fantasy. We see in daily life how different societal ills target women as victims. Women's empowerment is a crucial tool for increasing women's access to resources and capacity to make wise life decisions. Women's empowerment is fundamentally the process of improving the position of historically underprivileged women in society on the economic, social, and political fronts. It entails protecting kids from all sorts of assault. The study only used secondary sources for its data. Despite several government initiatives, the survey shows that women in India still have a comparatively low level of influence and prestige compared to males. It has been shown that women continue to accept gender standards that are not equal in society. The study's conclusion is that women's empowerment is only made possible through access to education, employment, and social structure change.

Keywords: *Economic, social, governance, and women's empowerment*

I. Introduction

In order to empower women, one must first increase their spiritual, political, social, educational, gender, and economic strength. In India, a number of factors, such as physical location (urban vs. rural), educational attainment, social standing (caste and class), and age, have a significant impact on how empowered women are. At the federal, state, and municipal (Panchayat) levels, policies promoting women's empowerment are in place in a variety of fields, including health, education, economic opportunity, gender-based violence, and political engagement. However, there is a large gap between policy developments and real community practise.

The globe is fervently progressing in the twenty-first century and embracing the role that women play in advancing global society and the global economy. The most crucial factor in socioeconomic progress is the participation of women in decision-making, which must be strengthened. India is a developing nation, and because it is a nation where men predominate, its economic situation is also quite poor. About 50% of the population of the country are women, and the majority of them are still economically reliant and unemployed. For the family, society, and nation to have a bright future, women must be empowered. In order to empower women, one must promote their economic independence, high self-esteem, courage in the face of adversity, and active involvement in a variety of social and political development initiatives. Only when women have an education will women's empowerment become more important.

Women's empowerment is fundamentally the process of improving the position of historically underprivileged women in society on the economic, social, and political fronts. It entails protecting kids from all sorts of assault. Building a societal and political climate where women may live free from oppression, exploitation, trepidation, discrimination, and the overall sense of persecution that comes with being a woman in a historically male-dominated institution is a key component of women empowerment. Nearly half of the world's population is made up of women, however India has a disproportionately low female population compared to its male population. There are certain regions where they are not regarded equally to males in terms of their social position. Women in Western nations enjoy the same rights and status as males in all spheres of life. However, discrimination and limitations based on gender continue to exist in India. She was sometimes worried as a Goddess and other times just as a slave due to the contradictory circumstance.

Women's empowerment, prosperity, progress, and welfare all heavily depend on education. In every community and nation, education has been acknowledged as a crucial force for social transformation and progress. Giving women the information, skills, and self-confidence they need to fully participate in the development process is only possible via education. Everyone should get an education, but women and girls especially need it

to survive and be empowered. The eradication of several societal ills, such as the dowry issue and unemployment issues, is aided by the education of women.

Additionally, social harmony is simple to develop. Future generations will lack education if women don't receive an education. Napoleon, a Greek warrior, famously remarked, "Give me a few educated moms, and I shall give you a heroic race," for this reason. In order to eradicate unfair practises and gender discrimination against women, the Indian government has recently adopted a number of constitutional and legal protections. In order to protect women from all forms of crimes against them, there is a list of safety legislation for women in India. Human rights include women's rights. Health, education, political engagement, financial security, and the absence of violence are just a few of the numerous topics they discuss. The complete and equal enjoyment of all kinds of discrimination by women is a vital requirement for the realisation of human rights, international peace and security, and sustainable development. Various NGOs play a significant role in the empowerment of women. The government offers several programmes and plans for women's empowerment. India's overall growth is greatly influenced by the empowerment of women. Therefore, women's empowerment is a crucial instrument for the country in the 21st century if it is to completely flourish.

II. Literature Review

Women's Empowerment in India: Rational and Present State, by Panda (2017) discovered that while women's empowerment may not be essential for our country, it is essential for the long-term growth of a country. So let's start empowering women right away for our future security. It is necessary to alter Indian society's mentality about women. The man ought to believe that justice and equality are becoming more prevalent in the globe. Therefore, empowering women will result in prosperity for the next generation.

In her work titled "A Study on Issues and Challenges of Women Empowerment in India," Shettar (2015) argued that women's empowerment could only be accomplished if their economic and social standing was raised. This could only be accomplished by implementing clear social and economic policies with the goal of promoting the overall development of women and educating them about their capacity to be resilient human beings. A significant percentage of the population has seen some relief as a result of globalisation, liberalisation, and other socioeconomic influences. Women's empowerment in India still needs a lot of work in a number of areas, nevertheless.

In her article titled "The Role of Education towards Women Empowerment in India" published in 2016, by Khatri, focuses on how education and literacy affect women's empowerment. She also makes improvements to the changes that should be taken into account for women's empowerment and economic development.

Women's Empowerment in India: A Changing Scenario was published by Suresh and Sivakumar, in 2017 noticed that empowering women primarily involves raising the economic, social, and political position of women, who have historically been impoverished in society. It entails protecting kids from all sorts of assault.

Suguna (2011) contrasts the education of women in India today and in the past. The author emphasised that there has been excellent development in the enrollment of girls in general. To be empowered is to be given legitimate authority or power to do action. It is the process of obtaining some female activities.

According to Jyothsna (2016), the health of women who participate in SHGs has unquestionably improved. It is evident that the health of the women in the group discusses issues relating to their own health as well as the health of their children and other members, and they also inform them about the numerous government benefits designed especially for them.

Does Female Empowerment Promote Economic Development? Mandal, K. C. This research is an empirical investigation that contends that giving mom's money helps their kids. For this study, a variety of non-cooperative family bargaining models were created in order to better understand the kind of frictions that may lead to the observed empirical connection.

Women's Empowerment and Economic Development, Sharma (2013) National Bureau of Economic Research Cambridge study contends that equality between men and women may require ongoing policy commitment to equality for its own sake since the interrelationships between empowerment and development are likely too frail to be self-sustaining.

Duflo (2011). The Impact of Domestic Violence and Women's Empowerment on Child Nutrition and Growth in a Tribal and Rural Community in South India. The association between women's empowerment and domestic abuse, maternal nutrition, and the nutritional status and growth over six months in children aged 6 to 24 months in a rural and tribal community are all topics covered in this study article. This rural Karnataka longitudinal observational research was conducted. India covered rural and tribal topics.

The focus of Kadam (2012) study on the impact of SHG on women's involvement and ability to exercise control over decisions in both family and group activities was on women.

Forms of Women Empowerment

Women's total liberation from the socioeconomic chains of dependence and privations is referred to as "women empowerment." To equalize the value of both genders in our society, women's empowerment must advance quickly. Every woman must be informed of her own rights in order to truly achieve empowerment. Women's empowerment comes in a variety of forms. Following figure illustrates it –

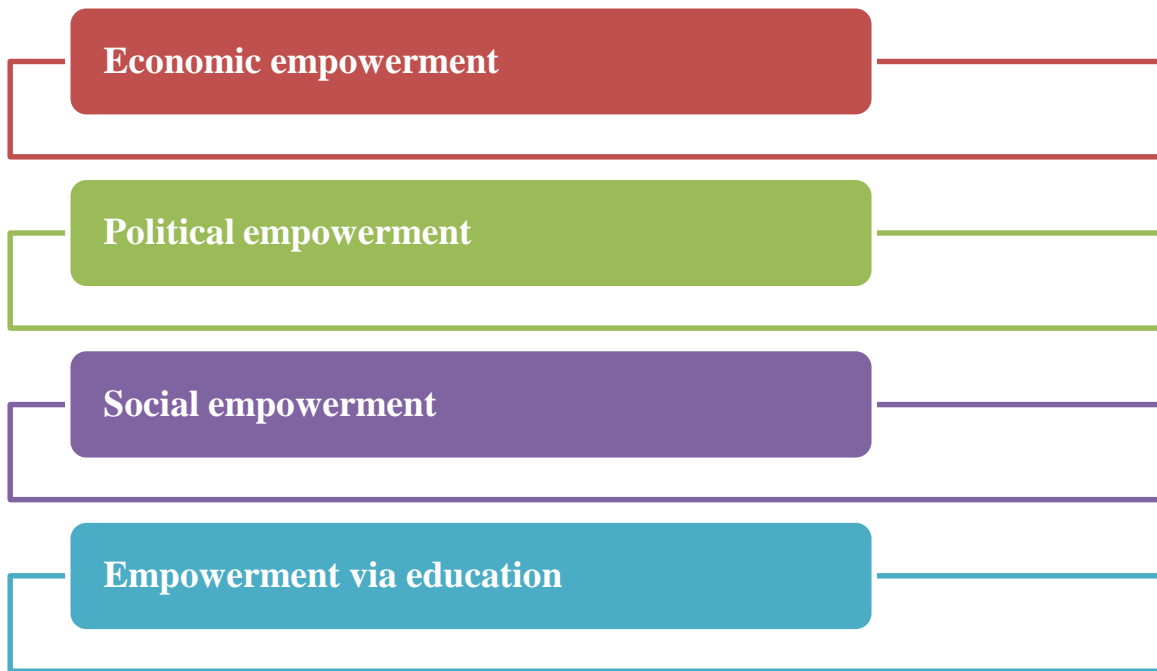


Fig 1: Forms of women empowerment

The illustration of different form of women empowerment is as follows -

Economic empowerment - Economic empowerment promotes women's access to financial services, jobs, real estate, other productive assets, skill development opportunities, and market knowledge. Sustainable development is a requirement for the economic empowerment of women.

Political empowerment - is the process of creating structures that allow women to participate equally in all facets of the political system and public life in each community and society. It also involves giving women the tools to express their needs and concerns and ensuring that women participate fully and equally in all areas of decision-making. A proposed bill in India, the Constitution (108th Amendment) Bill, would reserve 33% of all seats in the Lok Sabha, the country's Lower House of Parliament, and state legislative assemblies for women. The Rajya Sabha, the Parliament's Upper House, approved this Bill in March 2010. Before being presented to the Indian president for his assent, it must be approved by the Lok Sabha and at least half of the state legislative assemblies. Reform efforts in India both before and after independence have aided women in gaining some influence in politics. They were among the first to engage in political activism.

Empowerment via education - One of the most effective ways to equip women with the information, abilities, and confidence they need to fully engage in the development process is via education. Women's empowerment, prosperity, progress, and welfare all heavily depend on education. The general growth of India is greatly impacted by the education of women. The independence and empowerment of women may be greatly aided through education. Due of its ability to help women adapt to problems, challenge their conventional roles, and transform their lives, education is seen as a significant step toward female empowerment.

Social empowerment - is the process of altering how various individuals, groups of people, cultures, and social activities share power in interpersonal interactions. The term "social empowerment" refers to the supportive factor that improves women's social ties and positions within social institutions. Social discrimination based on disability, race, ethnicity, religion, or gender is addressed via social empowerment.

Empowering women in terms of their health and safety is another crucial aspect. Providing for women's health and safety is the first step in empowering them. Women's health issues are crucial to the welfare of a nation and have a significant role in determining how empowered women are in that nation.

Economic Development, fertility, and maternal mortality in modern time

Women are more likely to go missing than males during the reproductive years, with the exception of during pregnancy and the early years of childhood. Of course, this is not a direct result of prejudice; rather, it arises from

the fact that women give birth and carry children, both of which are risky activities. Maternal mortality may contribute to decreased parental investment in children in addition to having a large negative impact on the welfare of women (and not men): if parents believe that boys are more likely than girls to die as young adults, they may be less willing to invest in females. According to Jayachandran and Lleras-Muney (2009), the dramatic drop in maternal mortality in Sri Lanka (caused by good public policy) resulted in a convergence of boys' and girls' educational attainment. According to their calculations, every year of increased life expectancy causes a 0.11-year increase in the number of years that girls spend in school (compared to boys). This presents two opportunities for economic growth to perhaps enhance the relative wellbeing of women: by lowering the likelihood that they would pass away during delivery, and because economic growth is correlated with a decline in fertility.

NFHS-5 provides data for 2019–21 and examines the position of women on six key indicators, including the proportion of currently married women who typically participate in household decisions, women who worked in the previous year and received cash pay, women who own a home or land (alone or jointly with others), women who have a mobile phone that they use personally, women who have a bank or savings account that they use personally, and women aged 15–24 who use hygienic methods.

Woman in household decision's in India

Nearly 88.7% of Indian women who are now married are likely to take part in important family decisions regarding their health, make significant purchases for the home, and pay visits to family members.

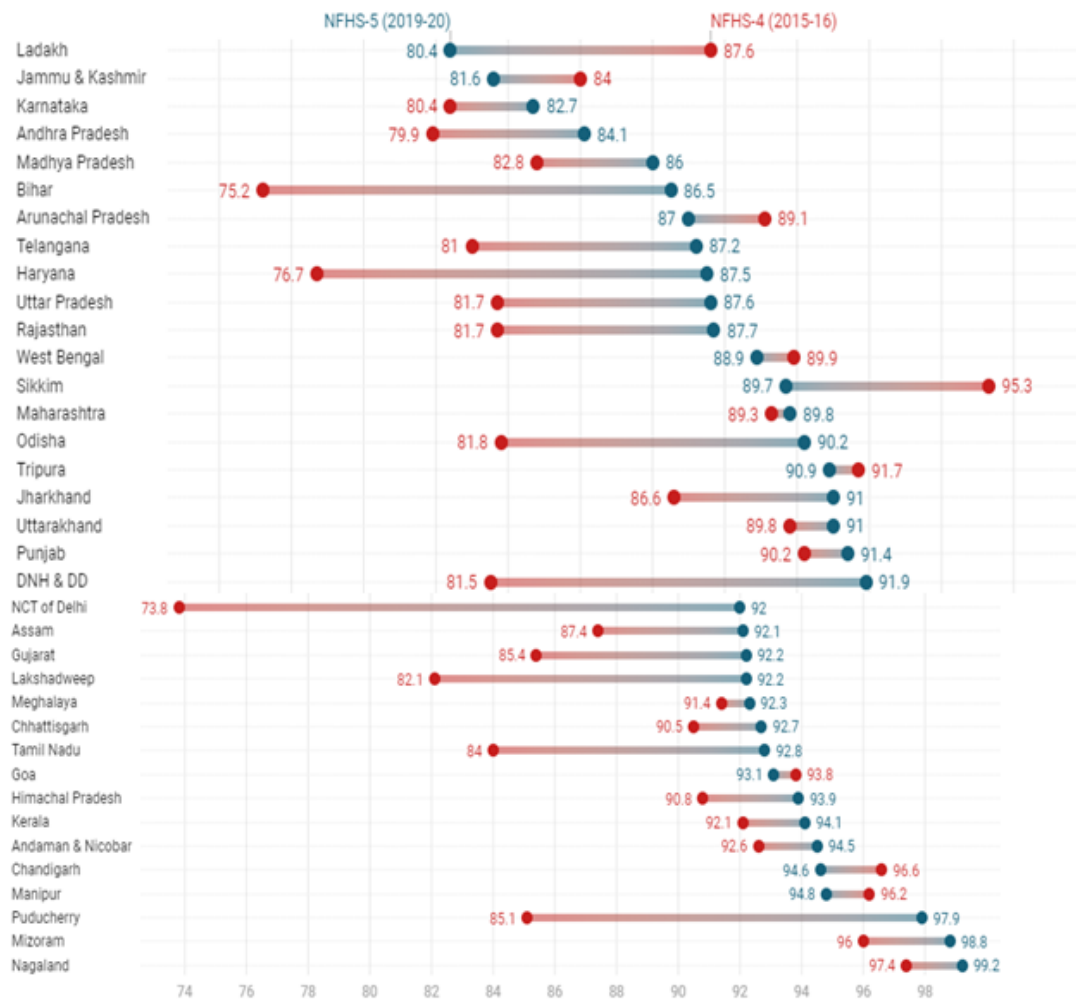


Fig 2: Woman in household decision's in India.

Source: <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/blog/economy/what-does-nfhs-5-data-tell-us-about-state-of-women-empowerment-in-india-80920>

We discovered some hopeful statistics and observed variances at the state level. A considerable increase from the 11 states and 2 UTs in the NFHS-4 survey to at least 16 out of 28 states and 6 out of 8 Union territories having more than 90% of women engaging in household decision-making.

Top of the ranking were Nagaland (90.2%), Mizoram (98.8%), and Puducherry (97.9%). The states that performed the poorest were Ladakh (80.4%), Jammu & Kashmir (81.6%), Karnataka (82.7%), and Andhra Pradesh (84.1%).

Jammu & Kashmir, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, and Manipur have seen a case of somewhat lower involvement. Delhi, Puducherry, Bihar, and Haryana have showed a tremendous improvement of over 10 percentage points in this category.

Women from metropolitan regions have a bigger voice in home decisions, 91% to be exact. In India, more than 87% of rural women engage in family decision-making, therefore rural women are not far behind. Numerous advantages are listed for include women in household decision-making processes. Studies have shown a link between women's decision-making autonomy and higher dietary diversity, better maternal and child health outcomes, and enhanced food security.

Woman involvements in paid work

All women are employed, but few are paid. Only 25.4% of women aged 15 to 49 who worked in the past 12 months received payment in cash, according to a 2019–21 study on India.

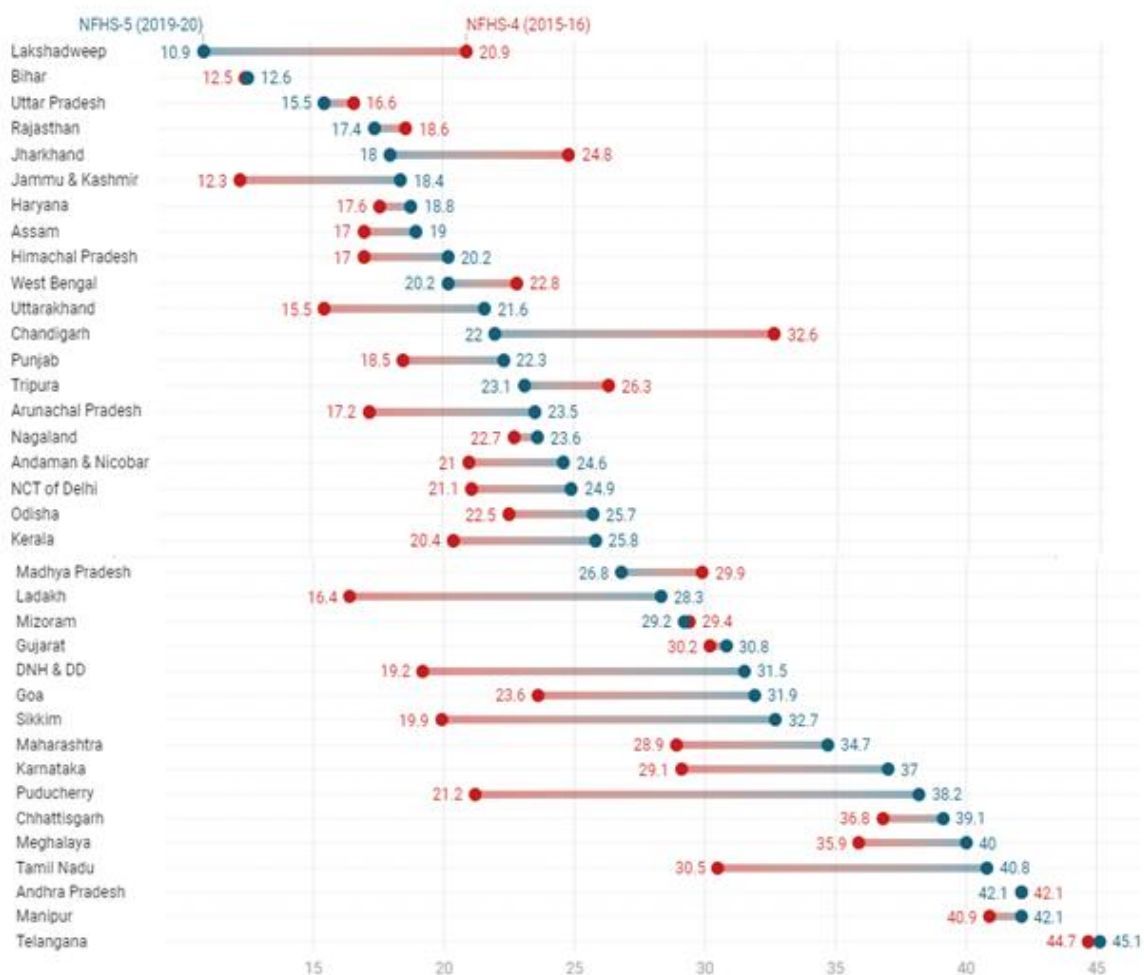


Fig 3: Woman involvements in paid work.

Source: <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/blog/economy/what-does-nfhs-5-data-tell-us-about-state-of-women-empowerment-in-india-80920>

This figure is abysmally low with almost negligible improvement from the last survey (2015-16). None of the states crossed the 50 per cent mark in this category.

There has been notable progress in the agency dimension for women, who now have an active decision-making power regarding household purchases and visiting family and relatives. There has also been a decline in physical and sexual violence against women, according to the Survey. Moreover, education levels have also improved. The percentage of educated women has gone up from 59.4 percent in 2005-06 to 72.5 percent in 2015-16.

Summary of Results

Specific Issue [#] (Women's Responses)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	India 2005-06 (%)	India 2015-16 (%)	Change (2)-(1)	Is India an Outlier for its level of wealth ⁵ in 2015?
Involved in decisions about their own health	62.3	74.5	12.2	8.2
Involved in decisions about large household purchases	52.9	73.4	20.4	9.6
Involved in decisions about visits to family and relatives	60.5	74.6	14.1	4.1
Involved in decisions about their own earnings	82.1	82.1	-0.1	-7.4
Involved in decisions about contraception	93.3	91.6	-1.7	0.1
Prefer more or equal number of daughters over sons	74.5	78.7	4.3	-4.4
Wife beating is not acceptable	50.4	54.0	3.5	-2.7
Using reversible contraception, if using any method of contraception	33.8	32.8	-1.0	-51.6
Employed ^{###}	36.3	24.0	-12.3	-26.0
Employed in non-manual sector ^{###}	18.9	28.2	9.3	-19.8
Earning more than or equal to husband	21.2	42.8	21.6	-7.4
Educated ^{###}	59.4	72.5	13.1	-6.8
Not experiencing physical or emotional violence	62.6	70.5	7.8	0.3
Not experiencing sexual violence	90.3	93.6	3.3	1.7
Median age at first child birth*	19.3	20.6	1.3	0.4
Median age at first marriage*	17.3	18.6	1.3	-0.4
Sex ratio of last birth ² (females per hundred births)	39.4	39.0	-0.4	-9.5

* year 1998-99.

¹s are reported so that positive numbers denote greater female empowerment.

² calculated for the set of all women between 15-49. All other dimensions are calculated for married women between the ages of 15-49. ³ The numbers represent the extent to which India is an outlier, positive or negative. They derive from the regression equation estimated in Annex I. All numbers represent percentage points difference from the average estimated relationship, except for the numbers in rows 10-12 which refer to number of years.

⁴ statistically significant.

⁵ based on DHS and NFHS data.

Source: <https://www.firstpost.com/india/economic-survey-2017-18-emphasises-on-women-empowerment-highlights-need-to-disaggregate-data-by-gender-4328959.html>

There are 10 indications out of 17 where India must catch up to other nations. For instance, the percentage of women engaged in the labour has decreased from 36% in 2005-2006 to 24% in 2015-16. While the proportion of educated women has increased, the proportion of working women has decreased dramatically.

Another instance of how economic growth improves gender equality is India's admission into the global market, which even reversed the fortunes of boys and girls as the traditional segregation of schooling alternatives pushed males against. Munshi and Rosenzweig (2004) conducted research on Mumbai's multi-decade decision-making about language training. English is the language of teaching at universities, although parents can choose to have their children learn in Marathi or English in elementary and secondary schools. The 1990s saw India liberalise its economy, and as its service and software sectors expanded, so did the economic benefits of English instruction. There was a sharp rise in both boys' and girls' English-based schooling as a result of the new industries, such as outsourced telemarketing, which also gave historically excluded women access to the labour force. The proportion of lower-caste females receiving English instruction has practically caught up to that of upper-caste girls, but for boys, the rise was not any quicker than for other castes among the lower castes. Girls are increasingly

more likely than males to receive an English-language education among the lower castes. The explanation is that because members of low-caste homes have historically relied on the caste network to connect them with employment opportunities, the child's decision to enrol in English instruction was interpreted as an effort to escape the caste's influence. This attitude still exists to some extent, forcing guys to pursue Marathi education before moving on to less profitable careers. Girls, who historically did not engage in the job market, are not subject to this restriction. In other words, females are free from the group expectations that bind guys and do not have a tradition of depending on the caste (old-boy) network. Girls who receive an education in English will be better equipped to seize new job chances as they present themselves. Even while households may not completely understand the effects of their own decisions, a silent revolution is taking place.

III. Conclusion

Today's society acknowledges women's empowerment for global development, women as active agents for development, and women's participation in and direction of their own development. In the modern day, women's education is crucial for their empowerment. Education is a crucial tool for empowering women and girls to take part in decisions that will influence their lives and help them rise in society. Women who are empowered become autonomous decision-makers. A nation may prosper socially, politically, and economically by empowering its women. A rural woman has to be empowered from all angles in order to develop. For this, women should be given additional opportunities and benefits.

References

- [1]. Duflo, E. (2011). Women's empowerment and economic development. Cambridge: National Bureau of Economic Research.
- [2]. Jayachandran, S., & Lleras-Muney, A. (2009). Life expectancy and human capital investments: Evidence from maternal mortality declines. *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 124(1), 349-398.
- [3]. Jyothsna, K. Y. (2016). Status of women education in India. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Advance Research Trends*, 3(1), pp-139-155.
- [4]. Kadam, R. N. (2012). Empowerment of women in India- An attempt to fill the gender gap. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 2(6), 11-13.
- [5]. Khatri, R. (2016). The role of education towards women empowerment in India. *International Journal of Advance Research*, 4(11), pp-550-555.
- [6]. Mandal, K. C. (2013). Concept and types of women empowerment. *International Forum of Teaching and Studies*, 9(2), pp- 17-30.
- [7]. Munshi, K., & Rosenzweig, M. (2004). Traditional institutions meet the modern world: Caste, gender, and schooling choice in a globalizing economy. *American Economic Review*.
- [8]. Panda, D. (2017). Women empowerment in India: Rational and present state. *International Journal of Emerging Research in Management & Technology*, 6(9), pp-169-175.
- [9]. Sharma, Y. (2013). Women entrepreneur in India. *Journal of Business and Management*, 15(3), pp-9-14.
- [10]. Shettar, R. M. (2015). A study on issues and challenges of women empowerment in India. *Journal of Business and Management*, 17 (4), pp-13-19.
- [11]. Suguna, M. (2011). Education and women empowerment in India. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 1(8), pp-198-204.
- [12]. Suresh, P. (2017). Women empowerment in India- A changing scenario. *Kaav International Journal of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences*, 4(1), pp-335-348.