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Abstract

Women's empowerment is an important factor for the environment and development of the economy. It is required as a prerequisite condition for people centric sustainable development. The gender equality is required to enrich the development process which is apparent in different socio-economic and cultural spheres.

In this regard, this paper aims to consider the multi-layered actuality of the issue of empowerment in women, in the context of sustainable development. Sustainable development is based on three pillars: economic development, social development and environmental protection. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is known as the Global Goals are a ubiquitous call to lessen poverty and to spread prosperity. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted in 2015, personify a progressive sustainable roadmap.

Achieving gender equality and women's empowerment is integral to the 17 goals. Ensuring the rights of women across all the goals will lead to justice and inclusion of economies that work for all, and sustaining our shared environment now and for future generations. Women have been central actors in pathways to sustainability and green transformation by managing the natural resources. Women empowerment is one of the key points in the way of economic and social developments of the countries.

Key words: Women empowerment, sustainable development, gender equality

Introduction

Women's empowerment is a significant aspect of every community, state, or nation. Women, who are population creators, have benefited in economic and social development in the last three decades. Empowering women refers to the process of strengthening women who have been suffering from various inequalities and gender discrimination. Women face unacceptable levels of discrimination and abuse, which is not only wrong, but also, prevents them from playing a full part in society and decision-making. When women are living safe, fulfilled and productive lives, they can reach their full potential contributing their skills to the workforce.

In 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) made important provisions for the recognition of women's contributions that "women have a vital role in environmental management and development. They are significant to achieve sustainable development. **Sustainable development refers** to the needs of the present without compromising the needs of the future". Sustainable development states a more balanced approach to growth that progresses development across three underlying pillars: social inclusion, environmental sustainability and economic prosperity. Gender disparity is

among the most pervasive form of inequality in the world and without serious steps to tackle it, sustainable development cannot be achieved. Women's equality and empowerment is one of the 17 sustainable development goals and also integral to all dimensions of sustainable development. Achievement of Goal 5 of SDGs will lead to success of all the SDGs which cannot be possible without gender equality. Gender equality approach is a prerequisite for the fulfillment of environmental sustainability. A sustainable path of development can be achieved to ensure that women's and men's interests are both taken into account in the allocation of resources and opportunities.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the role of women for the success of SDGs.
2. To study the issues of SDGs in the context of women.
3. To study the sustainable path of development through gender equality theories.
4. To offer useful suggestions in the light of Findings.

Research Methodology

This paper is basically descriptive in nature. In this paper an attempt has been taken to analyze the empowerment of people in India. The

secondary data has used as the sources, according to the need of this study.

Women Empowerment

Women need to be empowered in the following contexts:

Individual: At the individual level, women must be made aware of the power dynamics at work in their own lives. The empowerment process is necessary for the development of pertinent sense of self, her capacities, her self-confidence, and the personal courage to do and challenge her subservience, subjugation and oppression.

Social: Women must be empowered in order to provide the ability of decision-making level of every social relationship of their family, society or institution, etc.

Economic: Women should contribute to the national income and be capable of earning and becoming self-dependent economically. They must also develop and contribute to the plans towards economic growth and their family.

Physical: Women must be empowered to better understand self-care and take control of their body. They should have an understanding of various health and nutrition aspects of themselves for the appropriate decision making. Self-defense training should be provided to physically repel any attack on their dignity.

Psychological: Empowerment process must result in an increase in women's knowledge, capacities, self-confidence, self-esteem, self-reliance and self-awareness. They need to change their attitude towards their structural sources.

Women Empowerment in India

No struggle can ever succeed without women participation side by side with men. There are two powers in the world. One is the sword; one is the pen. There is a third power, stronger than both, that of women". – Malala Yousafzai

In ancient India, women were treated as inferior when compared to men. In Indian civilization, the practice of 'sati' or a woman sacrificing herself at the funeral of a deceased husband was common.

Around 50% of the Indian population is women and is home to 933 females for every 1000 males, based on the last Census conducted by the Government of India.

In the Mahabharata, the wife of the Pandavas, Draupadi was ill-treated. This shows the

inferiority of women over men. The girl was forced to marry at such a young age.

The British era brought various changes and improvements in the West where women were treated equally and on par with men.

In 1848, Savitribai Phule became the first woman educator in India who inspired women to break the shackles laid down by the male dominance. Women empowerment has become the most important agenda for various social reformers and freedom fighters. Various social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, and Mahatma Gandhi had promoted women's education. This national uprising led to various reforms like

- the Abolition of the Sati Act 1829
- the Hindu Widow Remarriage Act, 1856
- The Child Restraint Act, 1929
- The Women's Right to Property Act, 1937

The position of women in society started getting better after independence through some acts:

- The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955
- The Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1961,
- The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961,

Those were reforms that were implemented to save women from all forms of social injustice.

Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals are a set of 17 goals which are universally applicable for environmental sustainability. They came into effect on 1 January 2016 as a replacement or improvement of Millennium Development Goals. MDGs were implemented for the progress in achieving universal education, lessening child mortality, promoting gender equality and empowering women. Environmental factors are taken into consideration in Sustainable Development Goals. The following SDGs are:

Goal 1: No poverty

Goal 2: Zero hunger

Goal 3: Good health and well-being

Goal 4: Quality Education

Goal 5: Gender Equality

Goal 6: Clean water and sanitation

Goal 7: Affordable and clean energy

Goal 8: decent work and economic growth

Goal 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

Goal 10: Reduced inequalities
Goal 11: Sustainable cities and communities
Goal 12: Responsible consumption and production
Goal 13: Climate action
Goal 14: Life below water
Goal 15: Life on land
Goal 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions
Goal 17: Partnerships for the goals.

Issue Faced by Women

- Gender inequality
- Lack of Education
- Female Infanticide
- Financial Constraints
- Family Responsibility
- Low Mobility
- Low ability to bear Risk
- Low need for achievement
- Absence of ambition for the achievement
- Social status
- Dowry
- Marriage in same caste and child marriage (still existing) Atrocities on Women (Raped, Kicked, Killed, Subdued, humiliated almost daily.)

SDGS Link with Women Empowerment

SDG 5 has nine targets and 14 indicators. Six of the targets are "outcome-oriented": lessening all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere; stopping violence and exploitation of women and girls; eliminating harmful practices such as child labour, early forced marriage and female genital mutilation; increasing value of unpaid self-care and promoting shared domestic responsibilities; ensuring participation of women in leadership and decision-making; and ensuring access to various universal reproductive rights and health. The three "means of achieving" targets are:

- fostering equal rights to economic resources, property ownership and financial services for women;
- promoting empowerment of women through technology;
- adopting, strengthening policies and enforcing legislation for gender equality.

Through the pledge to "Leave No One Behind", countries have committed to fast-track progress. SDG 5 aims to grant women and girls equal rights, opportunities to live free without inequality including workplace or any

violence. This is to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

Gender Equality and Women Empowerment

Gender equality is defined as the process of "leveling the playing field for both men and women so that all sexes" are able to develop their talents in a given geographical environment (UNICEF, 2008). Gender equality, as another form of women empowerment, means according to women, equality of opportunity and removing obstacles that hinder women from participating fully in commerce, education, politics and culture (Backhans, 2007). Studies have shown that gender equality is addressed by giving women more access to land, credit market and labor opportunities (Morrison, et al, 2007). Several studies have revealed that gender equality correlates highly with economic growth. According to Kishor (1997) there is a positive relationship between gender inequality and low per capita income. It is also argued that there is an inverse relationship between gender inequality and low government expenditure on education (Morris et al, 2007). Dollar and Gatti (1999) argue that gender inequality are more numerous in the poorer countries of Africa, Latin America and Asia. According to Rahman (2013) gender inequality is a product of the power relationships that exist between women and men in society. Rowland (1997) argues that every human society has a way of rewarding one sex with more power to the extent that the sex that has no power over the control of resources becomes the oppressed lot. According to Luke (1974) the concept of power in women empowerment helps researchers, academics and policy makers to examine the underlying social and cultural structures that define gender relations. Gender disparity is among the most pervasive forms of inequality in the world and without serious steps to tackle it, sustainable development cannot be achieved.

Suggestions

1. Awareness programmers need to be organized for creating awareness among women especially belonging to weaker sections about their rights.
2. The first and foremost priority should be given to the education of women, which is the grassroots problem.

Hence, special attention should be given to women's education

3. Strict implementation of Programme and Acts should be there to curb the mal-practices prevalent in the society.
4. Women should be allowed to work and should be provided enough safety and support to work. They should be provided with proper wages and work at par with men so that their standard of living can be elevated in the society.

Conclusion

The Empowerment of Women has become one of the prominent factors for the development of the society and to achieve this, Goal 5 should be implemented and fulfilled. It is an important concern of the 21st century not only at national level but also at the international level. Government initiatives would not be sufficient to achieve this goal. Society must take initiative to lesson the gender discrimination and women should have full opportunities of decision making and participating in political, social and economic life of the country with a sense of equality.

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