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Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in Higher Education in India

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Abstract

Each and every phenomenon of development cannot be equalized with one another this is the law of nature. Therefore, rate and states of development varies from region to region, sector to sector, society to society. But if the national economy to prosper, its constituent regions must be brought some sorts of harmony. To reduce the disparities, the Government of India has taken many steps since independence. Balanced regional development has been one of the major objectives of India's planning. But even after several plan-period gender disparities in development process have remained the same. It is important to note that wide disparities in the development process would not only hurdle the progress the regions, but also have adverse effect upon the progress of the state level.

Keyword : Women Empowerment, Higher Education, Gender Equality.

Introduction:

Gender inequality has been a social issue in India for centuries. In many parts of India, the birth of a girl child is not welcomed I a known fact. It is a known fact too, that discrimination starts from even before the girl child is born and sometimes she is killed as a fetus, and if she manages to see the light of day, she is killed as an infant, which makes up the highly skewed child sex ratio where for every 1000 boys in India, there are only 930 girls. In such a scenario, it is but obvious that for myriad reasons, many girls across the country are forced to drop out of school.

Education plays an important role in every society and country. It is the major part of social and economic development. Any country's social and economic developments depend on the qualitative development and growth of education. It is important to note that nation's progress is based on quality of population rather than on quantity. In the new millennium, the prosperity and quality of all nations will be determined by their ability to solve the problems that face them, their families, their communities and their country. However, with regard to the development of literacy and education, India's achievement is far away from satisfaction.

Most of the states in India are facing these regional diversities. The existence and persistence of spatial variations in the level of development is one of the basic structural characteristics of a developing country like India. If the adequate measures are not taken for the spread of education the education chasm of economic disabilities, regional imbalance and social injustice will widen farther, resulting in building up of disintegrative tendencies. Most of the northern states have remained socially, economic and educational backward than southern states.

Gender equality has been a human right. Women are entitled to live with dignity and freedom from want and from fear. It is also a precondition for advancing development and reducing poverty:

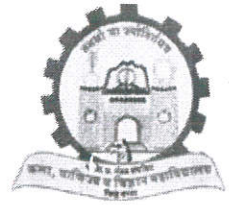


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Empowered women contribute to the health and productivity of whole families and communities, and they improve prospects for the next generation. Still, despite solid evidence demonstrating the centrality of women's empowerment to realizing human rights, reducing poverty, promoting development and addressing the world's most urgent challenges, gender equality remains an unfulfilled promise. Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. Unfortunately, at the present time, 1 in 5 women and girls between the ages of 15-49 have reported experiencing physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner within a 12-month period and 49 countries currently have no laws protecting them from domestic violence. Progress is occurring regarding harmful practices such as child marriage and Female Genital Mutilation which has declined by 30% in the past decade, but there is still much work to be done to completely eliminate such practices.

Importance of the study

Each and every phenomenon of development cannot be equalized with one another this is the law of nature. Therefore, rate and states of development varies from region to region, sector to sector, society to society. But if the national economy to prosper, its constituent regions must be brought some sorts of harmony. To reduce the disparities, the Government of India has taken many steps since independence. Balanced regional development has been one of the major objectives of India's planning. But even after several plan-period gender disparities in development process have remained the same. It is important to note that wide disparities in the development process would not only hurdle the progress the regions, but also have adverse effect upon the progress of the state level.

Objectives of the Research Paper:

- 1) To know about gender equality.
- 2) To studies the primary causes of gender discrimination.
- 3) To examine the Sex disparities in literacy rate.
- 4) To study various scheme for reduce gender discrimination by Government.

What is meant by gender equality?

Overall economic welfare and women's welfare are associated. Higher welfare leads to better status for women and vice versa. There is no reason to expect that we would find a one-way causality between women's relative status and development in either direction. Amartya Sen argues for understanding development as freedom. He suggests that GDP in itself is not the ultimate goal but rather the freedoms associated with it: freedom to exchange goods and labor, freedom to make choices and influence one's life, freedom to live longer, freedom to choose to get education. We can easily understand that slavery, restrictions on owning property, saving or borrowing, or making labor contracts would qualify as disincentives to growth, while freedom to exercise these activities would be associated with economic growth.

Primary causes of gender discrimination:

The main causes of gender discrimination are religious matters, bad mentality, Most people still think of women are too weak to perform serious work and obtain top positions, rigid culture and traditions, educational level and illiteracy, a lack of enough empowerment, unequal pay for equal work if compared with men, makes women do low paid job, one of the reasons why they got involved in human trafficking and prostitution, lack of medical care.

Sex disparities in literacy rate:

It is known fact that Indian society is male-dominated. The freedom and liberty of social life are mostly enjoyed by men. Women are deprived of equal opportunities to reap benefits of education and



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literacy. Boys and girls are unequally treated. Sons are preferred to exercise social practices than girls. Girls and daughters are not only discouraged but also keep away from pursuing education. Girls have much lower access to education than boys. The reasons for this are many. It is a reflection of their position in society. General feeling about girls, in some part of the country even today is that education on girls has been thought as wasteful expenditure. She will beat her parental house till marriage, after the marriage, she will become the member of her husband's family. Therefore, investing on daughter is uneconomic. As a result most of Indian women are facing the problem of basic literacy.

Male- Female gap in literacy rate:

Census Year	Males	Females	Male-Female gap in literacy rate
1951	27.16	8.86	18.30
1961	40.4	15.35	25.05
1971	45.96	21.97	23.98
1981	56.38	29.76	26.62
1991	64.13	39.29	24.84
2001	75.26	53.67	21.59
2011	82.14	65.46	16.68

Sources: 1. Censusindia.gov.in 2. NIEPA, New Delhi, Oct.-05, 2002, India

The crude literacy rate for India by sex during 1951-2011. In this statement the rate designated as crude literacy rate has been computed with total population as base without removing the mandatory illiterate population aged 0-4 or 0-6 from the denominator. The crude literacy rate from 1951 onwards show a consistent increase both for males and females. The gap in literacy between men and women has increased from 1951-1991. However from 1991-2011 it has decreased.

Various schemes for reduce gender discrimination by Government:

1. Education that helps create attitudinal shifts towards gender bias and activities to spread awareness.
2. Continuous efforts towards breaking myths and stereotypes around gender.
3. Ensuring State accountability to implement various schemes, policies, laws, constitutional guarantees and international commitments.
4. Institutionalizing gender sensitive processes within various systems such as law and programmes.
5. Encouraging community ownership in preventing violations based on gender discrimination.

Recommendations:

1. In respect of education of girls an increase in hostel facilities for girls and women in existing educational institutions. Further, a special scheme for construction of hostels especially for girls needs to be introduced. Besides, every institution should have women study centers. Further, Day care centers should be opened in all institutions.
2. Coaching schemes for women should be transferred to IVIHRD from other Ministries.
3. Special coaching should be provided to women for successfully clearing SET or NET examination.
4. Reservation being mandatory, government should cancel the recognition/accreditation of the universities/institutions, which fail to implement the reservation policy. Institutions of higher learning may have their own autonomy but at the same time they need to provide protection under the law in relation to reservation etc. UGC should make strict rules and regulations to fill in the post of reserved category for women. Defaulting universities or affiliated colleges should not be granted financial support or any grants.



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5. Many international commitments support women's economic empowerment, including the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and a series of International Labour Organization conventions on gender equality. UN Women supports women's economic empowerment in line with these, and with the growing body of evidence that shows that gender equality significantly contributes to advancing economies and sustainable development.
6. Working with a variety of partners, our programmes promote women's ability to secure decent jobs, accumulate assets, and influence institutions and public policies determining growth and development. One critical area of focus involves advocacy to measure women's unpaid care work, and to take actions so women and men can more readily combine it with paid employment.
7. In all our economic empowerment programmes, UN Women reaches out to women most in need, often by engaging with grass-roots and civil society organizations. Particularly marginalized groups include rural women, domestic workers, some migrants and low-skilled women. Our aims are higher incomes, better access to and control over resources, and greater security, including protection from violence.
8. Efforts should be made to see that all the facilities pertaining to the education must be made available for the poor, ignorant, women and low castes as the rate of illiteracy among these people is remarkable low.
9. Government should regulate the fee structure in higher education and in order to make higher education accessible by all, should introduce schemes like fee-waiver, fee-reimbursements, scholarships, free textbooks, free hostel accommodation and other facilities at subsidized rates for women. This is necessary in view of the increasing cost of higher education due to increasing number of private higher educational institutions. Subsidized loan facilities for the fees/hostel expenditure could also be considered as an option.
10. Measures to improve the literacy level must be put on top priority.

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