

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND GENDER EQUITY (A STUDY OF EDUCATED MUSLIM WOMEN IN BHOPAL)

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DOI: 10.46609/IJSSER.2021.v06i10.010 URL: <https://doi.org/10.46609/IJSSER.2021.v06i10.010>

ABSTRACT

Empowerment literally denotes to 'to invest with power'. Power is defined as the ability to influence the behaviour of others with or without restraint. Women empowerment is understood as a very narrow term in today's world. As mentioned above women empowerment means to authorize as it is very necessary to make the bright future of the family, society and country. Women empowerment and gender justice put social transformation at the centre of the agenda of human development and progress. In general sense, it refers to empowering women to be self-dependent by providing them access to all the freedoms and opportunities, which they were denied in the past only because of their being women. In a specific sense, women empowerment refers to enhancing their position in the power structure of the society. There are many formulating strategies and initiating processes in order to bring women into mainstream of development. Many programmes such as International Women's day, Mother's Day etc are bringing awareness in the society about the true value of women in development of the nation. All over the world and particularly in South and East Asia and Africa the gender problem has assumed importance where women are ill-treated by their family members and outsiders. Here we study how women particularly educated Muslim women in Bhopal can publicize their perceptions freely by breaking this vicious circle to achieve justice and equality in all walks of life.

Keywords: Women empowerment, gender equality, society.

Introduction

Women empowerment refers to creation of an environment to increase and improve the social, economic, political and legal strength of women to ensure their equality in society. The most significant and longest social movement continuing is movement for emancipation of women. Though the primary goal for women empowerment is to improve the quality of life of women

but it has also deep ramifications in social, economic and political scenario of body polity. The media through its reach to people at large has been instrumental though not to the extent desired in supporting the movement for women emancipation by focusing neglect and marginalization of the position of the women in society. While the poverty rate has declined in many developing countries, much of that improvement has been concentrated in China but women have not benefitted from the rising economic tide. From a global perspective, women own only 1 per cent of property, earn 10 per cent of all income and yet they produce half of the world's food. Any poverty agenda must focus on women because they are 70 per cent of the world's poor. Women comprise two-thirds of the global illiterate population and all women face additional hurdles to their economic and social well-being, including the pay gap and the fact that women are much more likely to hold vulnerable jobs.

Objective

The main objective of the study is to find the global perspective on women empowerment and gender inequality.

Area of study

Located in the heart of Madhya Pradesh, the historical city of Bhopal is deservedly the capital of the state. Besides the excellent location of Bhopal, the city is blessed with beautiful landscapes, busy profitable canters, peaceful residential areas and historical monuments. The geographical location of the Bhopal City lies within North Latitude 23°16' and East Longitude 77°36'. The location of Bhopal falls in the north-western portion of Madhya Pradesh. If seen in the Map of India, Bhopal occupies the central most region of the country. The city of Bhopal shares its border with two large and picturesque lakes. Like few other big cities of the country, Bhopal is also divided into two parts - the old city and the new one. The Old Bhopal is situated in the northern part of the city, while the southern part is called as the New Bhopal. The two lakes of the Bhopal City are referred as the Upper and the Lower Lakes (Source: Report by UDD, Government of MP and BMC, 2012) [4]

Methodology

The approach followed in most social science researches, present study is based on the both primary as well as secondary source of the data collection. On the, "Global perspective on women empowerment and gender inequality.(A study of educated Muslim women in Bhopal)". For in-depth study five college of the Bhopal city was selected. Educated Muslim women of graduate/under graduate level from different Colleges of Bhopal City of Madhya Pradesh), were

selected randomly for the study. Interview method used for data collection consisting of structured questions keeping in view the objectives of the study. Social background information was collected through an interview schedule which includes information about age, education, family type of the respondents. Other section of the tool dealt with the questions to obtain information regarding the perspective on global perspective on women empowerment and gender inequality.

Universe & Selection of Sample

The selected district is constituted of numerous educational institutions with almost a bulk student, out of which we have selected only three colleges for present study. From each college only 10 respondents were selected for the collection of research data in relation to the demographic composition of the Bhopal city. In this way, 30 respondents were selected in total from the concerned universe. Before interviewing the respondents of the urban areas, a thorough study was conducted in the area to collect the necessary information regarding the urban dwellers and women in the district. After that with the help of random sampling, 10 respondents from each college are selected for the collection of research data. There are many research designs to carry out the research or fieldwork on a particular type of research problem such as experimental research design, descriptive research design and exploratory research design. As far as our research is concerned, exploratory research, design has been used in the present work. The data available to us revealed that our problem can be studied further for more research work as it has been suggested by exploratory research design.

Table 1 Profile of Respondents

Selected College	Family Income		Qualification		Age Group		
	Low	Middle	UG	PG	20 yrs	21-30 yrs	>30yrs
Excellence College	7	3	7	3	4	3	3
Hamidia College	6	4	8	2	7	2	1
Carrier College	9	1	6	4	6	4	0

	22	8	21	9	17	9	4
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Note: (UG= Under Graduate; PG= Post Graduate;)

From each college, we have taken 10 respondents making a total sample size of 30 respondents, out of which all 22 respondents belong to low income group family while as 8 are in middle income group family. 21 respondents are pursuing under graduate courses and 9 are in post graduate level course. As far as age is concerned, 17 respondents fall in below 20 years of age group, 9 respondents lie between 21-30 years of age group.

Analysis

Table 2

1. Do you think that social scenario has changed as far as women empowerment is concerned?

Option	Response	Percentage
Yes	24	80.00
No	5	17.00
Can't Say	1	3.00
Total	30	100.00

Out of the total of 30 respondents, 80% respondents confirmed that women empowerment has picked up momentum and has improved and a very nominal 17% of the sample said they don't think so. The results clearly demonstrated that in the present times women empowerment is of utmost importance.

Table 3

2. Do you agree that Government is proactive in women empowerment campaigns and schemes?

Option	Response	Percentage
Yes	19	63.00
No	8	27.00
Can't say	3	10.00
Total	30	100.00

The above tabled data made it very clear that government has undoubtedly taken steps through various campaigns and schemes for women empowerment. Almost quarter of the respondents still feel that government is not doing enough for the issue raised. While as 10% of respondents are not clear about the question raised in the above table.

Table 4

3. Have you ever met gender inequality issues at domestic level while pursuing education?

Option	Response	Percentage	
Yes	12	40.00	
No	16	53.00	
Don't Remember	2	7.00	
Total	30	100.00	

A major finding of the research study was regarding the purpose behind. More than half of the respondents, i.e.53% of them say that they have not faced any gender inequality issue at home level while pursuing education while as 40% of the respondents feel that they have encountered with issues related to gender inequality mostly while pursuing higher education and other social related activities. Only 7% of respondents were undecided about the topic discussed above.

Table 5

4. Did female drop out ratio increased or decreased?.

Option	Response	percentage
Increased	7	23
Decreased	23	77
Total	30	100

A major objective of the study was to find out the opinion of Bhopal educated women regarding the female participation and volume in education and socio economic developments. The outcomes revealed a major fact that more than 3/4th of the entire sample of population which consisted of educated Muslim women were of the opinion that women participation has

increased whether it is education or socio-economic development. This positive response clearly indicated that scenario has changed drastically as figures kept on rising but still a lot is to be done. Only 23% of respondents still believe that women drop out ratio has increased and due to social compulsions female participation has not improved a lot.

Table 6

5. Women Issue which attracts the attention of the respondents to the most.

Issue	Response	Percentage
Rape and Sexual	1	3
Molestation	2	7.00
Gender Bias	12	40.00
Dowry	5	17.00
Domestic Violence	10	33.00
Total	30	100

One of the foremost objective of the study was to know the opinion of educated Muslim women regarding do they feel that women issues and atrocities and does it really motivate the masses to come forward and fight for gender justice. Most of the respondents, i.e. 40% and 33.33 of the sample were of the opinion that issues related to gender bias and domestic violence. 10% of the respondents were mostly influenced by issues of rape and sexual molestation. 17% of the respondents revealed that cases of dowry attracted their attention to the most. The results made it clear that presently gender bias and domestic violence has become the strongest issues to be addressed where women can talk about their personal worries and pain. Cases related to these issues have been successful to the greatest extent in agitating the Daughters of the nation and convincing them to come on the streets to demonstrate their unity in fighting for gender justice and equality.

Conclusion

The present research made it clear women empowerment and gender inequality are the issue where special attention is to be needed. Cases of women atrocities and violence are just not noticed but where the masses, especially women get a chance to express their strong opinion on various issues, thus giving escalation to various forms of protests and demonstrations both on Mass media platform as well as on the streets which finally results in compelling the society, which is most of the time indifferent and partial to change their attitude and approach in the direction of restoration of women equality and Social justice. On the other hand, government is

looking proactive in woman empowerment and gender inequity issues by framing certain policies which are turning things around in favour of female folk. The study through certain cases as well as by conducting a survey on Bhopal. Educated women revealed that women greatly feel that issues (where women have been the victims of all kinds of atrocities like gender discrimination, social barriers, negative stereotype etc) should be taken into account by all sector of society. As long as this segment of the population makes no effort of self-empowerment, it will be a long and arduous task and process for the outsiders to empower them.

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