

Vol 5 Issue 3 Dec 2015

ISSN No : 2249-894X

*Monthly Multidisciplinary
Research Journal*

*Review Of
Research Journal*

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RNI MAHMUL/2011/38595

ISSN No.2249-894X

Review Of Research Journal is a multidisciplinary research journal, published monthly in English, Hindi & Marathi Language. All research papers submitted to the journal will be double - blind peer reviewed referred by members of the editorial Board readers will include investigator in universities, research institutes government and industry with research interest in the general subjects.

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WOMEN EMPOWERMENT: EDUCATION AS A TOOL FOR ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY IN SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

Education is essential for empowerment and development of an individual and the society as a whole. Education as a tool reduces gender gap and empowers women. In the present time the empowerment of women has been recognized as the central issue in determining the status of women. So the education as

a tool empowers women to come forward and contribute towards the development of society .It also reduces the gap between the male and female. So the present study is conducted to study about the consciousness of parents for their daughters' education and barriers which stand in the way of women education.

KEYWORDS: Education, women, empowerment.

I.INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental human right essential for the empowerment and development of an individual and the society as a whole. In the present century "women empowerment" is a burning issue. The Constitutions of almost all the democratic countries of the world including India,



guarantees equal rights to both men and women. Education is a milestone of women empowerment because it enables them to responds to the challenges, confront their traditional role and change their life. Education will empower women to come forward and contribute towards the development of the society. By educating women we can educate the whole society. The empowerment of women has been recognized as the central issue in determining the status of women. Education as the tool is used for reducing the gap between male and female. It brings improvement in the status of women within the family and also the society. So, realizing the importance of women education, the govt. and many NGO's have taken various steps to spread women education in the society.

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY:

“After independence the government considered its sacred duty to expand women education and many voluntary organizations also came forward to work for expansion of the same” (Chaube, 2012). “Gender inequality exists in North East India in terms of access to education, employment and health and political participation both at the level of state and nation” (Mahanta; Nayak,2013). “To promote gender equality and parity in education, states must target their efforts not only toward education itself, but also toward society’s cultural and institutional framework” (Ranganath; Rao; Srinivas, 2011). “For empowering the women, higher education will play a vital role” (Sharma; Afroz, 2014). “Educating a girl child is one of the most effective means to counter gender discrimination and enhance status of women; and literacy of women would surely contribute much more effectively in abolishing gender inequality. Education helps girls and women to know their rights and to gain confidence to claim them” (Butoo, 2012). “Education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women.....Women’s studies will be promoted as a part of various courses and educational institutions encouraged taking up active programmes to further women’s development” (National Policy on Education, 1986). “While the overall enrolment of girls has increased, the dropout rate of girls from marginalised and rural sections, especially from the upper primary level upwards is extremely high” (NCERT). “Provision should be made for equal access to education for women and girls” (The National Policy for Empowerment of Women, 2001). “Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory... Education shall be directed to the full development of human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms” (Universal Declaration of Human Rights).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

In view of the above, the statement of the problem of the study can be stated as under-
“Women Empowerment: Education as a tool for achieving Gender Equality in Society.”

OBJECTIVES:

- To study about the consciousness of parents for the education of their daughters.
- To study about the barriers of women education.

HYPOTHESIS:

- Parents are conscious for their daughters’ education.
- There are so many socio economic barriers which affect education of women.

Sample:

The Researcher used the random sampling method for the purpose of collecting data. The present study is confined to Nagaon District of middle Assam and along with it 40 parents were selected randomly for the study.

Tools used:

In the study, the main instrument for collecting primary data is interview and questionnaire. For the study the data were collected by personally meeting the parents and also gave them questionnaire to collect information. The questionnaire has two parts- one consists of 8 items containing yes / no which define about the consciousness of parents for the education of their daughters and second part

consists of 8 barriers of women education containing yes/no.

Design of the study:

The study follows descriptive method and the data collected were mainly of quantitative type. For analyse and interpretation of quantitative data the simple statistical method like percentage (%) was used.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data:

Data of the present study is analyzed and interpreted in relation to the objectives of study under the following tables:

Table no-1.1
To study about the consciousness of parents for the education of their daughters

Sl no	Items	Yes %	No %
1.	Equal social status	75	25
2.	Equal education	55	45
3.	Equal job opportunity	68	32
4.	Economic independence	70	30
5.	Marriage at early age	5	95
6.	Domestic burden	50	50
7.	Gender gap in enrolment of higher education	63	37
8.	Education as priority for girls	60	40

The above table shows about the responses of parents in the education of their daughters. The table reveals that out of 40 parents 75% support equal social status for both boys and girls and other 25% have given negative responses. 55% parents support equal education for both boys and girls and other 45% have given negative responses. In the matter of equal job opportunity, 68% have given positive response and 32% have given negative responses. 70% parents are in favour of economic independence of female and 30% have given negative responses. Most of parents, i.e., 38% don't support the marriage of a girl at very early stage but other 2% support the marriage at early age. 50% parents support domestic burden of girl and other 50% have given negative responses. In the matter of gender gap in enrolment in higher education, 63% have given positive response and 37% have given negative responses. 60% parents support education as a priority for girls and other 40% have given negative responses.

Table no- 1.2
To study about the barriers of women education

Sl no	Barriers	Yes %	No %
1.	Gender discrimination	75	25
2.	Patriarchal society	75	25
3.	Domestic burden	93	7
4.	Marriage	95	5
5.	Poverty	93	7
6.	Lack of awareness of parents	98	2
7.	Lack of educational opportunities	85	15
8.	Lack of employment opportunities	70	30

The above table shows the barriers of women education. Out of 40 respondents, 30 (75%) support gender discrimination, 30 (75%) support patriarchal society, 37(93%) support domestic burden, 38(95%) support marriage, 37(93%) support poverty, 39(98%) support lack of awareness of parents, 34(85%) support lack of educational opportunities, 28(70%) support lack of employment opportunities as barriers which stand in the way of female education.

MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:

- Most of parents (75%) support equal social status both for boys and girls.
- 55% parents support for providing equal education both boys and girls.
- 67.5% parents are in favour of equal job opportunity both for male and female.
- Economic dependence of women is one of the main factors of women empowerment. 70% parents are in favour of economic independence of female.
- Most of parents, i.e., 38% don't support the marriage of a girl at very early stage.
- 50% parents support domestic burden of girl and other 50% don't support it, according to them, girls should also be given equal chances for their development.
- Only 37.5% parents support gender equality in the enrolment of higher education. According to other 62.5% there exists a gender gap in the enrolment of higher education.
- 60% parents support education as a priority for girls for the development of their status and reducing the gender gap in the society.
- 75% parents support gender discrimination, 75% support patriarchal society, 93% support domestic burden, 95% support marriage, 93% support poverty, 98% support lack of awareness of parents, 85% support lack of educational opportunities, 70% support lack of employment opportunities as barriers for female education.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Women education in the present time is one of prime need for achieving gender equality in society,
- Education is a way of women empowerment in society.
- Provision should be made for elimination of gender discrimination in education.
- Awareness campaign should be organized on women education scheme of government.
- Awareness campaign programmes should be made to create consciousness among parents about the usefulness of education for their daughters.
- The government should provide educational opportunities to females for the promotion of women education.

CONCLUSION:

It can be concluded that gender equality can be achieved only through education. It removes gender gap between men and women and empowers women. Education is the only way through which women can be conscious for their rights and status in the society. Gender equality is a constituent of development. No country can be deemed developed if half of its population is severely disadvantaged in terms of basic needs, livelihood, access to knowledge, and political voice. So in the recent time emphasis is given on the education of women.

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