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A STUDY ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT WITH REFERENCE TO STRUCTURAL, CULTURAL BARRIERS AND EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Women empowerment is key factor in achieving gender equality and long-term social progress. This research investigates women empowerment by focusing on structural barriers, cultural barriers, and the role of education. The study is based on primary data collected from 100 respondents through a structured questionnaire. The collected information was analysed using frequency analysis, mean, and standard deviation. The results indicate that education play a vital role in improving women's confidence, knowledge, decision making ability, and overall empowerment. At the same time, structural inequalities and cultural practices continue to restrict women's access to education, employment, leadership, and equal opportunities. The study concludes that improving educational access, creating awareness, and implementing effective policies are essential for eliminating these barriers and promoting inclusive women empowerment.

Keywords: Women empowerment, structural barriers, cultural barriers, education, gender equality, women's rights, economic empowerment, social development, sustainable development.

INTRODUCTION

Women empowerment has become an essential component of social and economic development across the world. It refers to enabling women to enjoy equal rights, access resource, participate in decision making, and exercise freedom in matters related to education, employment, health, finance, and social life. Empowered women contribute significantly to the welfare of their families, communities, and the nation by participating actively in development activities.

The present research examines women empowerment with particular emphasis on structural barriers, cultural barriers, and education. It explores respondents opinions regarding the obstacles that limit women's progress and evaluates the contribution of education in enhancing confidence, awareness, leadership, and decision making abilities. The study relies on primary data collected from 100 respondents using a structured questionnaire. The collected information has been

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analysed through frequency analysis, mean, and standard deviation to understand the influence of these factors on women empowerment. The findings are expected to support policymakers, educational institution, and society in developing effective measures to promotes gender equality and women's empowerment.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature provides an overview of previous studies related to women empowerment and highlights important findings.

Fatima and Athar (2025) examined the challenges experienced by women lecturers and observed that patriarchal social norms create significant difficulties in balancing professional and personal responsibilities. The study reported that married women face greater structural challenges than unmarried women.

Kumari, Gupta, and Sahu (2025) studied women empowerment within the existing sociocultural environment and concluded that education remains the strongest foundation for empowerment. The authors recommended strengthening self-help groups and NGOs to improve women's economic and social development.

Samita (2025) focused on educational barriers faced by women and identified economic, cultural, and institutional obstacles as major factors limiting educational opportunities. The study suggested coordinated efforts by governments, NGOs, and educational institutions to achieve educational equality.

Sarika Manhas (2025) analysed structural and cultural obstacles affecting women's economic empowerment. The research emphasized the need to eliminate discriminatory practices, strengthen educational opportunities, improve financial inclusion, and promote women entrepreneurship.

Dr. Ashok Govindrao Shahane (2024) highlighted the relationship between education and women empowerment and concluded that education enhances confidence, leadership qualities, social mobility, and the ability to challenge discriminatory social practices.

Jisha T.P. and Sumathy (2024) examined the role of self-help groups in women empowerment and found that active participation improves women's decision-making skills, economic status, leadership qualities, and social participation.

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RESEARCH GAP

Earlier research had discussed about women empowerment in areas such as education, employment, entrepreneurship, leadership, and gender equality. Many studies have examined the challenges faced by women in accessing educational opportunities, employment opportunities, financial resources, and leadership positions. Researchers have also highlighted education as a major factor in strengthening women's social and economic status.

However, most previous studies have analysed structural barriers, cultural barriers, and educational factors separately. Only a few studies have investigated the combined effect of these dimensions on women empowerment using primary data and descriptive statistical methods. In addition, limited research has focused on respondents' awareness of women's rights, leadership opportunities, and government initiatives across different demographic groups.

To address this gap, the present study examines the combined influence of structural barriers, cultural barriers, and education on women empowerment. It also evaluates respondents' awareness of women's rights and empowerment opportunities using Frequency Analysis, Mean, and Standard Deviation. This integrated approach offers a broader understanding of the factors affecting women empowerment and provides practical recommendations for promoting inclusive development with help of government policies.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To examine women empowerment in relation to structural barriers, cultural barriers, and educational factors.
- To identify major structural barriers, including legal, institutional, and economic constraints that affect women empowerment.
- To assess how structural and cultural barriers restrict women's access to education.
- To study the level of awareness among women regarding overcoming structural and cultural barriers for empowerment and leadership roles.
- To analyse the role of education in improving women's confidence, decision-making ability, and social participation.
- To provide suitable suggestions for promoting women empowerment through education, awareness, and supportive public policies.

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RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- The research is based on both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary information was collected from 100 respondents representing different age groups, educational qualifications, occupations, and income levels through a structured G-Form questionnaire.
- Secondary information was gathered from research journals, published articles and authentic online sources related to women empowerment, education, gender equality, and structural and cultural barriers. These sources helped establish the theoretical background of the study.
- The questionnaire contained two sections. The first section collected demographic information such as age, gender, educational qualification, occupation, and monthly income. The second section consisted of 5 sets of statements measuring perceptions of women empowerment, structural barriers, cultural barriers, educational opportunities, and awareness of rights using a five-point Likert Scale.

The collected data were analysed using SPSS. The statistical tools used to analysed Frequency

Analysis, Mean, and Standard Deviation. These techniques helped identify patterns, interpret respondents' opinions, and evaluate the influence of various factors on women empowerment in now days.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The collected information was analysed using Frequency Analysis, Mean, and Standard Deviation. Frequency Analysis was applied to examine the demographic profile of respondents, while descriptive statistics were used to understand respondents' opinions regarding women empowerment, structural barriers, cultural barriers, educational opportunities, and awareness of rights.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

FEATURES	FACTORS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
AGE	Below 18 yrs	8	8
	18 – 25 yrs	75	75
	25 – 35 yrs	13	13
	35 – 45 yrs	3	3

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	Above 45 yrs	1	1
GENDER	Male	16	16
	Female	83	83
	Prefer not to say	1	1
EDUCATION QUALIFICATION	School level	11	11
	Diploma	5	5
	Undergraduate	39	39
	Postgraduate	41	41
	Professional qualification	4	4
OCCUPATION	Student	63	63
	Working professional	23	23
	Self-employed	7	7
	Homemaker	4	4
	Unemployed	3	3
MONTHLY INCOME	No income	49	49
	Below Rs.10,000	11	11
	Rs.10,001-Rs.25,000	17	17
	Rs.25,001-Rs.50,000	11	11

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	Rs.50,001- Rs.1,00,000	3	3
	Above Rs.1,00,000	2	2
	Prefer not to say	7	7

Interpretation

The table presents the demographic majority profile of the respondents. The majority of the respondents (75 %) belong to the 18 – 25 years age group, 83% are female, 41% are postgraduates, 63% are students, and 49% have no personal income. These findings indicates that the study is mainly represented by young, educated female students, whose responses provide valuable insights into women empowerment with reference to structural barriers, cultural barriers, and education.

OBJECTIVE 1

Women Empowerment and Its Barriers

In this sectional descriptive analysis indicates that educational opportunities recorded the highest mean value (4.38), suggesting that education is considered the most important factor in empowering women. Respondents also agreed that they possess the ability to make independent personal and professional decisions, with a mean score of 4.28.

At the same time, respondents agreed that structural barriers (Mean = 3.93) and cultural traditions (Mean = 4.05) continue to hinder women's empowerment in now days. These findings indicate that despite significant progress, structural inequalities and traditional social practices remain important obstacles to achieving gender equality.

OBJECTIVE 2

Structural Barriers Affecting Women Empowerment

The respondents believed that institutional practices, economic inequality, and limited leadership opportunities continue to restrict women's advancement. The highest mean value (4.16) was

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recorded for the statement that eliminating structural barriers would substantially improve women empowerment.

Respondents also agreed that institutional policies influence women's opportunities (Mean = 3.94), economic inequality creates significant challenges (Mean = 3.99), and structural barriers reduce women's representation in leadership positions (Mean = 3.95). These findings highlight the importance of stronger institutional support, equal employment opportunities, and effective implementation of gender-sensitive policies.

OBJECTIVE 3

Educational and Cultural Barriers

The analysis further revealed that respondents strongly agreed that cultural beliefs discourage women from pursuing higher education, with the highest mean score of 4.08.

Family expectations and traditional practices (Mean = 4.05) were also identified as major barriers to educational advancement. Limited awareness regarding career opportunities (Mean = 4.06) and discrimination within educational institutions (Mean = 3.88) continue to affect women's educational progress.

These findings suggest that cultural influences continue to shape women's educational career and opportunities despite improvements in educational access.

OBJECTIVE 4

Awareness of Rights and Opportunities

This last sectional findings indicate that respondents possess a satisfactory level of awareness regarding women's legal rights and empowerment opportunities. The highest mean score (4.11) demonstrates that awareness of rights contributes significantly to women's confidence and empowerment.

Respondents also recognized the importance of legal knowledge, leadership opportunities, and government initiatives in promoting women empowerment. However, awareness regarding government welfare schemes was comparatively lower, indicating the need for additional awareness programmes in the society.

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FINDINGS

The major findings of the study are as follows:

- Most respondents (75%) belong to the 18–25 years age category.
- Female respondents constitute 83% of the total sample.
- Around 41% of respondents are postgraduates, followed by 39% undergraduates.
- Students represent the largest occupational group (63%), followed by working professionals (23%).
- Nearly half of the respondents (49%) reported having no monthly income because most were students.
- Educational opportunities recorded the highest mean score (4.38), indicating that respondents consider education the strongest contributor to women empowerment.
- Respondents expressed confidence in making personal and professional decisions independently, reflected by a mean value of 4.28.
- Awareness of women's rights and empowerment opportunities positively influences confidence and empowerment, with a mean score of 4.11.

SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Government agencies and educational institutions should conduct regular awareness programmes on women's rights, gender equality, and welfare schemes.
- Equal educational opportunities should be ensured for girls and women without discrimination.
- Policies should be strengthened to eliminate workplace discrimination, wage inequality, and institutional barriers.
- Families should encourage women to pursue higher education, professional careers, and participation in household decision-making.
- Financial support, scholarships, entrepreneurship training, and skill development programmes should be expanded to strengthen women's economic independence.
- Public awareness campaigns should address gender stereotypes and cultural practices that restrict women's opportunities.
- Organizations should implement gender-inclusive workplace policies, equal pay, flexible work arrangements, and leadership development initiatives.

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- Women should be encouraged to participate actively in entrepreneurship, governance, politics, community service, and leadership to achieve inclusive development.

CONCLUSION

Women empowerment is an essential requirement for achieving social justice, economic prosperity, and sustainable national development. This study examined women empowerment with reference to structural barriers, cultural barriers, and education by analysing the responses of 100 participants through descriptive statistical methods.

The findings confirm that education is the most influential factor in promoting women empowerment, as it improves knowledge, confidence, leadership abilities, employability, decision-making capacity, and awareness of legal rights. Nevertheless, structural barriers such as institutional discrimination, unequal employment opportunities, financial limitations, and inadequate policy implementation continue to hinder women's progress.

Therefore, strengthening educational opportunities, enforcing gender-sensitive policies, creating equal opportunities, and eliminating structural and cultural barriers are essential for empowering women. Promoting women empowerment is not only a matter of equality but also a strategic investment in building an inclusive, progressive, and sustainable society.

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