

The Role of Women Empowerment for Achieving Sustainable Development Goals in India

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ABSTRACT

Women play a crucial role in ensuring the success and productivity of sustainable development efforts. It is essential to have their active participation in decision-making and policy development in order to create and maintain this pathway. It is crucial for the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to motivate more women to assume these positions. It is crucial to act immediately for the long-term sustainability of our planet. Empowering women is essential to unleashing the potential of a group that has been traditionally sidelined in decision-making and progress. This research utilized secondary data for analysis. Numerous literary works and online sources were utilized to conduct a thorough examination of the role of women in sustainable development. Research papers, newspapers, articles, websites, case studies, and reports were utilized. The aim of this paper is to examine how empowering women contributes to reaching sustainable development objectives and analyze the various initiatives implemented by the Government to improve the status of women. Finding of the study shows that women empowerment play significant role for achieving sustainable SDGs Goals.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Education, Sustainable Development, Social Growth, Gender Equality.

Introduction

Women empowerment involves different key aspects that are essential for promoting gender equality and societal advancement. Education is first and foremost crucial in empowering women. Quality education provides women with the knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to actively engage in economic, social, and political spheres.

Secondly, economic empowerment holds a crucial significance. Granting women equal economic opportunities, such as access to jobs, starting businesses, and financial assets, increases their independence and ability to make decisions. Thirdly, it is crucial to question traditional gender roles and expectations. Dismantling social barriers that restrict women's responsibilities and abilities fosters a society of fairness and admiration.

In addition, it is essential to guarantee legal and political empowerment. Enforcing laws and policies to safeguard women's rights such as ensuring healthcare access, reproductive rights, and legal representation, is essential for empowering them. Furthermore, it is crucial to create supportive environment and networks to promote the progress of women. Establishing opportunities for mentorship, networking, and collaboration allows women to exchange experience, assist one another and collectively enhance their voices.

As a result, empowering women necessitates a comprehensive strategy that includes addressing education, economic opportunities, societal norms, legal frameworks, and support systems. By tackling these important factors, communities, can unlock women's complete abilities resulting in increased quality, wealth, and welfare for everyone.

The Concept of Women Empowerment

"Empower women, empower humanity" This slogan reflects the concepts that empowering women results in overall societal advantages, which in turn contributes to greater social and economic advancement.

Women's empowerment involves boosting women's self-esteem, their capacity to make decisions, and their entitlement to impact societal transformation for themselves and others.

Empowering women involves ensuring they have equal rights in the family, society, school, college, and country, similar to men. It is important for them to have the ability to make their own autonomous choices for their personal growth. Empowerment of women can manifest in various ways such as through education, economics, politics, and society.

According to UNDP (United Nations Development Program) there are five components to empowering women

- Self-esteem of women.
- Their right to possess and make decisions.
- Their entitlement to possess the authority over their own lives, both inside and outside of the household.
- And their capacity to impact the course of societal change in order to establish a fairer social and economic system, both at the national and global levels.

A holistic approach involves offering education, health services, job opportunities, and legal assistance. It acknowledges the significance of gender equality, dismantling stereotypes, and questioning discrimination practices and norms.

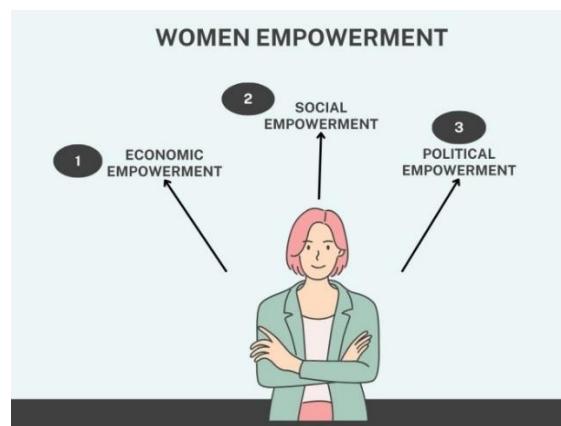
The Concept of Sustainable Development

The concept of sustainable development was first introduced by the world commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in 1987, outlining methods for its attainment. In them our common future report, also known as the Brundtland Report, the most famous explanation of sustainable development was provided.

"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, along with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), was established by global leaders in 2015, serving as a sustainable roadmap that ensure no one is left behind. Each of the 17 goals includes the importance of achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. We can only achieve justice, inclusion, and sustainable economies for all, as well as protect the environment for future generations, by guaranteeing the rights of women and girls in all areas of development. The UN Women's reports for 2018, titled "Implementing commitment: Achieving gender equality in the 2030 Agenda." It includes data, narratives, videos, and publication that demonstrate the importance of gender equality in all the Sustainable Development Goals, and how these goals impact the actual experiences of women and girls worldwide.

The SDGs comprise 17 goals and 169 targets designed to improve human welfare through coordinated development efforts, with a focus on inclusivity by 2030. They pertain to social, economic, and environmental spheres.



The Concept of Sustainability

Sustainability is a common term used to describe sustainable development. The idea of sustainability consists of three key elements: economic, environmental, and social aspects. Sustainability involves achieving a proper equilibrium and recognizing the lasting advantages of economic growth that preserves the environment and the community. While recycling, energy efficiency, and eco-friendliness and initiatives. Social Sustainability is about building communities that are equitable, varied, united, and provide a high standard of living, taking into account the needs of residents. It also guarantees that the quality of life for future generations is at least equal to our own. In order to safeguard the community, it is essential that we look after our home, planet Earth. Responsible interaction with the planet to preserve its natural resources and climate is known as environmental sustainability. Certainly, in order to find the correct equilibrium, economic sustainability must be included in the decision-making process. A long-term strategy is needed, weighing the benefits against other sustainability factors.

Historically, Sustainability has been seen as a business concern that involves engaging in activities that benefits the community in order to reduce the environmental impact of the business. Over the past ten years, it has become clear that people need to aim for sustainability too, altering their behaviors and leveraging their purchasing influencing to support businesses that prioritize sustainability in their plans. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were established in 2012 during the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro. In total, there are 17 goals which outline a shared strategy for all countries that have chosen to adhere to them. The SDGs, integrated into the 2030 Agenda, focus on Sustainable development, with an emphasis on environmental and ethical practices that lead peace and prosperity. They cover all the problems our world has encountered for a long time, ranging from social justice to environmental preservation. These goals serve as a reference point for evaluating performance and as a foundation for objectives that can support a mission and values. They can be implemented on a national, communal, or personal scale. Here is a list of the 17 goals:

- No poverty
- Zero hunger
- Good health and well-being
- Quality education
- Gender equality
- Clean water and sanitation
- Affordable and clean energy
- Decent work and economic growth
- Industry, innovation and infrastructure
- Reduced inequalities
- Sustainable cities and communities
- Responsible consumption and production
- Climate action
- Life below water
- Life on land
- Peace, justice, strong institutions
- Partnerships for the goals



Research Question

- What is the relation between women empowerment and sustainable development?
- What is the role of women empowerment for sustainable development?
- What are the highlights and outcomes of the fourth SDGs India Index?
- Does women empowerment help for economic and social growth?

Objective

The current research aims to investigate women empowerment within India. Here are the following objectives of the research:

- To study the importance of women empowerment in the present scenario in India.
- To examine the role of women empowerment for sustainable development goals.
- To explain the highlights and outcomes of the fourth SDG India Index edition.
- To analyze the various initiatives implemented by the Government to improve the status of women.

Literature Review

Padmaja Tamuli and Dr. Kaushik Mishra (2023) stated in their study in recent years, discussions on women empowerment have taken place worldwide are high in terms of economic development and social welfare. The chances of achieving the SDGs by 2030 are very good. One of the main things for India one obstacle it faces is gender inequality. Research indicates that regardless of their location. In India, every child encounters gender discrimination from a young age. Whether it's in their homes or not community- whether it be in textbooks, animated movies, mainstream movies, or television shows. In the group of caregivers, every female and male child has experienced discrimination. The research revealed that women in India have limited independence both in personal and public spheres financial and personal aspects. Women's education and primary health indicators are displaying improvement. In the last decade, there has been notable advancement that policy makers must take into account when it comes to education. Women cannot be empowered solely by health indicators. Economic and political independence are also important, it is essential for women to recognize their complete capabilities.

Archana Shahi (2023) has found the representation of rural women remained consistent as the main female characters in both movies faced similar challenges in their lives. They have to face various aspects of patriarchal society, societal problems, corruption with variations in both the crime and the person accused. However, the women's destiny remains unchanged, the heartbreak journey with eyes filled with tears. The gentle, compassionate being encounters oppression constantly on her journey. These movies serve as advocates for social consciousness. Following the debut of Mother India, people became increasingly conscious of their entitlements. Initiatives to narrow the divide between the wealthy and the less fortunate were also implemented by the government. People began turning to banks for loans instead of borrowing money from Mahajan. In the same way, Jai Bhim raised social consciousness leading the marginalized group to speak out with greater force. Both movies illustrate that rural women possess the values of traditional Indian culture. They combat corruption, societal vices, and uphold justice. They refuse to give up in the face of any challenges that life presents. Rural women have confidence in carrying weapons to overcome negative forces.

Neelmani Jaysawal and Sudeshna Saha (2023) has explained that the empowerment of women is an essential aspect of development discussions. Empowering women is essential for driving positive change and transforming a society marked by inequality. Despite the fact that our country is independent, women are still not liberated from their limitations. The hardships experienced by our women are much greater compared to those in developed countries. Gender equity means achieving full equality in every area of society, regardless of gender. To achieve full equality between genders in society, it is crucial to eradicate any forms of control, mistreatment, and bias towards women by men. The only way to accomplish any development activity is by working together and actively involving both males and females. Empowerment of women involves the mediation of social conditions through their nurturing of emancipative beliefs, influenced by factors like the knowledge economy's strength. In order to promote economic growth, it is imperatives for women and women bring benefits not only to individual women and women's groups, but also to families and the community as a whole through joint efforts for development. Hence educating women is a powerful tool for empowering them.

Meenakshi Sharma and Arun Rana (2022) has found that women play an important role in training and socializing their offspring, teaching them to reconsider duty to use and protect natural resources. Further steps need to be taken to Empower women to strengthen their voice in the natural flow and

capitalize on opportunities disruptions in the sustainable economy. Larger scale construction endeavors and developing personalized designs for women's essential are needed. Bringing together women to drive practical change events, whether in the family, local community, or society at large, must be liberated from socio-cultural constraints and rigid traditions that prevent women from getting involved.

Ms. Mahish Fatma (2022) This research indicates progress towards achieving gender equality in birth ratio and education, along with advancements in political involvement, sanitation, and hygiene. Nevertheless, there is a decline in economic involvement and access to opportunities, along with issues related to health and domestic abuse. The data indicates that women's situation deteriorated during the lockdown. Therefore, it is necessary to reassess the policies and procedures with a greater emphasis on hands-on work. Greater focus should be placed on enhancing skills, providing fair economic opportunities, and improving healthcare to empower women.

Fatema ali Kareem alzubaidi (2021) stated in their study Women's involvement in education has a positive effect on their role in society. Promoting sustainable development involves boosting women's competitiveness, empowerment, economic independence/ growth, maintaining a clean environment, and ensuring their effective participation in governance. Therefore, the overall progress of sustainability development has improved due to the growing involvement of women in SET fields.

Priyanka and Dr. Tejvir Singh Tomar(2020) stated in their study Women in India are discovered to lack empowerment and are considered to have lower status compared to men. In order to address the common problems, the government has made numerous efforts to empower women on a national scale in India through the implementation of different programs and initiatives. This paper explores the possibilities of women in different sectors and the efforts made by the Government of India.

Dr. Surendra Kumar Sharma (2017) This study determines that gender barriers persist predominantly in rural areas. The research field encompasses a greater number of rural areas. Because of present socio-economic limitations in rural areas, women's capabilities have not been maximized and they are being further marginalized in the social system. Many educated women believe they are capable of achieving more than men. However, the inherent belief that women can handle a lesser workload compared to men remains.

The Model and Data

This Research paper is descriptive and analytical in nature .In this paper an attempt has been taken to analyse the role of women empowerment for achieving sustainable goals. The study's data was gathered from secondary sources such as official reports, records, articles, and relevant published materials. The study has spanned across the entire county of India.

Result and Discussion

- **Objective 1:** To study importance of women empowerment in present scenario in India.

Women Empowerment in India: Present and Future

India has made great progress in promoting women's rights, but obstacles still exist. Women make up almost half of the population in the country, yet they are underrepresented in the workforce, politics, and leadership positions. Even with better educational access, there are still many obstacles, particularly in remote and underserved areas. Gender norms, inadequate infrastructure, and economic conditions frequently restrict women's ability to obtain education and career prospects. Despite progress in female literacy rates, they still fall short of those of men. In rural areas, girls' education progress is impeded by traditional practices and a lack of resources, presenting specific challenges. It is essential to tackle these inequalities in order to promote women's empowerment in India. By tackling existing issues and implementing new initiatives, there is potential for a positive future for women's empowerment in India, but it will need ongoing effort and cooperation. Moving ahead, it is crucial to prioritize developing inclusive policies, offering equal opportunities, and guaranteeing that all women, regardless of their background or location, benefit from progress. Sustained emphasis on education and upskilling will pay a key role in achieving gender equality and social inclusion. By removing obstacles to education and offering focused assistance for women's skill enhancement.

- **Objective 2:** To examine the role of women empowerment for sustainable development goals.

Role of Women Empowerment on Sustainable Development

- **The Role of Education in Women's Empowerment**

In India, education plays a crucial role in empowering women and is a key factor in achieving gender equality. It unlocks opportunities, encourages self-improvement, and sparks feelings of self-value

and autonomy in women. Education in India serves as a transformative force by breaking down traditional barriers that limit women's role, paving the way for a more equitable society where both men and women have equal access to opportunities, particularly in the business sector. By means of education, women acquire the information and abilities necessary to assert their rights, pursue professions, and give back to their communities. It also has a vital role in transforming societal views and standards, advocating for gender equality, and advancing sustainable development. Studying the effects of education on the empowerment of women in India reveals that supporting women's education is essential for both personal growth and broader societal advancement, leading to a fairer and more inclusive world.

- **The Role of Gender Equality In Women Empowerment**

Gender equality is not only a basic human right, but also crucial for creating peaceful societies, with full human potential and sustainable development. Moreover, it has been shown that empowering women spurs productivity and economic growth. A nation needs to value every gender equally to progress at the right place. A society attains better development in all aspects when both genders are entitled to similar opportunities. Equal rights in decision making, health, politics, infrastructure, profession etc will surely advance our society to a new level.

- **The Role Of Climate Change In Women Empowerment**

UN Environment reports that 80% of those forced to relocate due to climate change are women and girls, who are at increased risk of poverty, violence, and unintended pregnancies as they move to safer areas. Involving more women in efforts to address climate change can lead to a more fair and sustainable future for everyone. Females account for almost half of the workforce in agriculture in developing nations. If women have equal access to resources as men, they can boost their agricultural production by 20 to 30 percent. Women tend to recycle more, reduce waste, purchase organic food and environmentally-friendly products, and conserve water and energy at home. Women have the power to initiate change in various sectors through influencing behavior and consumer attitudes.

- **The Role of Health in Women Empowerment**

Programs aimed at empowering women in terms of health aim to equip women with the essential information and tools needed to manage their health, make educated choices, and live wholesome lifestyles. A woman's well-being is crucial as she fulfills various responsibilities at both home and in the community. Women need regular checkups and specific tests based on their age, overall health, and family medical history.

- **The Role Of Economic Development In Women Empowerment**

Women's economic empowerment involves enabling women to have equal involvement in and advantage from quality employment and social security; reach markets and have authority over their resources, time, livelihoods, and bodies; and enhanced influence, capability, and significant involvement in economic decision-making across all levels from the household to global organization. Advocating for women's economic justice and rights in the economy and narrowing gender disparities in the workforce are crucial for reaching the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

- **The Role of Spiritual Empowerment in Women Empowerment**

It involves liberation from superstitions, false beliefs, customs, traditions, and harmful habits that protect the rights of women. The way our lives are ultimately meant to unfold as the manifestation persists, your schedule will become busier, yet the key to any form of control lies in your inner strength in the afterlife. You must have a higher divine seat to support the lower seats you own existence. Breaking free from superstitions, false beliefs, rituals, routines, and detrimental action that defend women's rights necessitates moral liberation.

Objective 3: To explain the highlights and outcomes of the fourth SDG India Index edition.

Highlights and Outcomes of Fourth SDG India Index Edition

India's composite score increased from 57 in 2018 to 66 in 2022-21 and then to 71 in 2023-24, showing notable advancements in achieving the SDGs during that period. Significant progress has been seen in target 1 (eradicating poverty), 8 (promoting decent work and economic growth), and 13 (taking action on climate change). These now fall under the 'Front Runner' category (with scores ranging from 65-69). Among them, Goal 13 (Climate Action) has displayed the greatest progress, with its score jumping from 54 to 67. The score for Goal 1 (No Poverty) has increased significantly from 60 to 72, showing a

close progression. The advancement highlights the impact of specific initiatives and programs by the Union and State Government in enhancing the well-being of the population.

Since 2018, India has made significant advancements in various important SDGs. Substantial advancement has been achieved in Goals 1,3,6,7,9, and 11.

The government's dedication to enhancing food security, health, education, access to electricity, housing, sanitation, clean cooking fuel, and energy has played a crucial role in these enhancements.



Source: <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2032857>

Objective 4: To analyze the various initiatives implemented by the Government to improve the status of women.

Initiatives Implemented by the Government to Improve the Status of Women

The Ministry of Women and Child Development is executing different Schemes/Programs to include women in all sectors across the country to enhance their empowerment. The specifics are as follows:

Numbers	Women Empowerment Scheme	Lauach Year	Objectives
1	Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Yojana (BBBP)	22 January 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring survival & protection of the girl child. Ensuring education and participation of the girl child. Prevent gender based sex selective elimination. To encourage sustainable living practices. To assist in the holistic growth of impoverished children in rural villages. To decrease malnutrition by providing nutritional supplements.
2	Working Women Hostel Scheme	1972-1973	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Working Women Hostel Scheme, carried out by the Government, aims to offers secure and conveniently situated housing for working women, including a day care center for their children when available, in urban, semi urban, or rural areas with job opportunities for women.

3	The Mahila Shakti Kendra Scheme (MSK)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Mahila Shakti Kendra (MSK) Scheme was approved in November 2017 as a centrally funded initiative aimed at empowering rural women through community participation. The objective is to facilitate collaboration between various sectors and align their effort and projects for women. State Government and UT Administrations implement the plan with a cost sharing ratio of 60:40 between the Center and States, except for North East & Special category states, where the ratio is 90:10. Union Territories are allocated 100% central funding.
5	Women Helpline Scheme	1 April 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide 24/7 toll-free telecommunication service. Assist in emergency and non-emergency situations for law enforcement, medical facilities, ambulance services, legal service agencies, protection officers and support center as needed. Provide information on the support services, government programs, and projects available to women affected by violence.
6	Nari Shakti Puraskar Scheme	2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To enhance the position of women within society. To support organization dedicated to the advancement and empowerment of women in society.
7	Ujjawala Scheme	2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To prevent the trafficking of women and children for the sale of sexual services. Assisting individuals in breaking free from exploitation and moving them to a safe place for their safety. Providing rehabilitation services to survivors by fulfilling their fundamental requirement housing, nourishment, attire, healthcare coupled with therapy, legal aid, and job skills training for ongoing assistance.
8	SWADHARGREH	2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide basic necessities like housing, sustenance, attire, healthcare, and support for women in crisis situations without social or financial assistance. To offer them legal assistance and direction so that they can make progress in their reintegration into family and society. To assist them in recovering both financially and psychologically. Providing support that understands and meets the various needs of women facing difficulties.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To give them the ability to start over with self-esteem and confidence.
9	NIRBHAYA	2012 NIRBHAYA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To enhance safety and security for women across different levels. • To guarantee the stringent of women's identity and information. • Allow for immediate intervention whenever feasible.
10	MAHILA E- HAAT	7 March 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mahila E-Haat is a program designed to address the requirement of female business owners. • They are able to showcase their creativity through their services. This distinctive online platform will enhance the economic and social empowerment of women. • Providing a web-based marketing platform for women entrepreneurs to directly sell their products, serving as a catalyst. • To aid 'Make in India by utilizing an online marketing platform.
11	Mahila Police Volunteers Scheme	2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting the reporting of violence against women. • Giving guidance on the process of reporting incidents to the police. • Creating an environment supportive of women. • Offering assistance to women who have experienced violence or discrimination. • Raising the proportion of females in law enforcement.
12	One-Stop Centre Scheme	1 April 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One stop Centres (OSCs) or Sakhi Centers provide extensive assistance for women experiencing violence. • They offer assistance in 5 areas: medical, law enforcement, legal, psycho- social, and shelter services.

Conclusion

According to this study, we found that the progress of women is essential for the growth of the Indian economy. It is clear now that simply being literate is not sufficient to address this problem. Women need to have a good education in order to effectively comprehend and utilize their rights and obligations. The partnership between women and development is crucial in achieving sustainable development and ensuring human rights for everyone. Women's equality in society holds significance in various aspects such as economics, politics, social matters, culture, and the environment. Women empowerment contributes to creating a more positive environment in society and the world, enabling progress towards inclusive participation. This indicates a boost in joy for both the family and the workplaces impacted by women. The idea of empowering women has become a major focus in the 21st century, not just within countries but also globally. Within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), SDG 5 focuses on attaining gender equality and empowering women and girls. Empowering women by decreasing gender inequality grants them additional funds to allocate towards essentials like food, shelter, and education, important factors in lessening poverty and advancing sustainable development. Empowering women is crucial for ensuring sustainable development and a shared future. Reiterate the dedication to guarantee women's equal rights, access, and opportunities for participation and leadership in the successful, it is important to empower women and ensure gender equality. If women are not able to engage in society,

half of the global population is excluded. In order for societies to thrive, it is necessary to promote women's empowerment, ensure gender equality, and protect sexual and reproductive rights.

The government has introduced several initiatives to address matters related to women empowerment, playing a pivotal role in bringing about positive change and transformation within society.

India's composite score increased from 57 in 2018 to 66 in 2020-21 and then further rose to 71 in 2023-24.

According to latest SDGs Goal performance Index score increased from 57 to 2018 to 66 in 2020-2021 and the further rose to 71 in 2023-2024. It showing notable advancements in achieving the SDGs during that period. Government efforts to improve prospects for female workers involves social security initiatives, training programs, increased educational access, and changes to laws.

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