

SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH BY EMPOWERING WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to learn about women's roles, perceptions, and empowerment in relation to sustainable economic growth. In addition to being a basic human right, women's empowerment promotes long-term, sustainable economic growth and development. The world's continued pursuit of prosperity and advancement has led to a growing realization that attaining sustainable development goals requires women's full economic participation. Women have historically experienced discriminatory and institutional impediments that have impeded their ability to participate in the economy and grow in their careers. Nonetheless, the enormous potential that women possess to propel innovation, social change, and economic progress is becoming increasingly recognized. For this study, descriptive research has been used. For the study, the researcher used a simple random procedure and chose a sample size of 100 women. The primary data used in this study were gathered by the researcher using a structured, closed-ended questionnaire and survey methodology. Tables were utilized in the study to classify the data that was collected, as well as to analyze the data by percentage and frequency. While the majority of respondents think that women's empowerment has a good effect on sustainable economic growth, a sizeable percentage also expressed doubt or disagreement, demonstrating the range of opinions on this matter. This study recommended implementing focused awareness and education initiatives to dispel myths and emphasize the real advantages of empowerment. This could facilitate communication and increase support for programs that advance women's empowerment and gender equality.

KEYWORDS: Empower, Women, Sustainable Economic Growth.

Introduction

Empowering women is not only a basic human right, but it also promotes long-term, steady economic growth and progress. A growing number of people are realizing that attaining sustainable development goals requires women's full economic engagement as the globe strives for progress and prosperity. Systemic discrimination and restrictions have historically prevented women from fully participating in the economy and limited their possibilities for success. Nonetheless, there is a rising recognition of the enormous potential that women possess to propel innovation, social change, and economic progress. Both society and economies benefit greatly from investments in women's empowerment. Equal access to school, work, and entrepreneurial opportunities for women results in higher productivity levels, faster GDP growth, and more resistance to shocks to the economy. Furthermore, empowering women benefits future generations and promotes intergenerational upward

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mobility since they often allocate a larger percentage of their income to their families' health, education, and well-being. Globally, there has been a movement in recent years to acknowledge and utilize women's economic potential. Promoting gender equality and women's empowerment is the subject of increased policy and initiative implementation by governments, corporations, and civil society organizations. In order to establish an environment where women may fully participate and succeed in the economy, efforts are being made to promote equal pay, abolish gender-based discrimination in the workplace, and give women entrepreneurs access to funding, training, and mentorship.

Notwithstanding the advancements achieved, notable obstacles continue to exist, such as enduring disparities between genders in terms of labor force participation, uneven accessibility to resources and prospects, and deeply ingrained gender norms and stereotypes. In order to solve these issues, a coordinated effort and multifaceted strategy that promotes inclusive economic growth plans while addressing the underlying causes of gender disparity are needed.

Objective of the Study

- To know the perception and role of women and their empowerment towards sustainable economic growth.

Research Methodology

Research Design

Descriptive research has adopted to carry out this study.

Sample Size

Researcher has selected 100 women's as a sample size, and simple random technique has employed for the study.

Method of Data Collection

This study is based on primary data, researcher collected data from the respondents by structured close ended questionnaire with the help of survey technique.

Tools for Analysis

The study employed tables for classification of the collected data, percentage and frequencies used for the analysis of collected data.

Empowering Women for Sustainable Economic Growth

Table 1: Demographic Information

	Options	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18-34	31	31
	35-54	42	42
	55 or older	27	27
	Total	100	100%
Education Level	SSLC	21	21
	PUC	29	29
	Bachelor's degree	33	33
	Master's degree	17	17
	Total	100	100%
Geographic Location	Urban	26	26
	Suburban	41	41
	Rural	33	33
	Total	100	100%

Source: Field Survey

Majority of respondents fall within the 35-54 age range, followed by those aged 18-34. The older demographic (55 or older) represents a slightly smaller portion of respondents. A significant portion of respondents hold a Bachelor's degree, followed by those with PUC qualifications. A smaller proportion has SSLC or Master's degrees. This indicates a relatively educated sample population, which may influence their perspectives and responses on issues related to women's empowerment and economic growth. The suburban area has the highest representation among respondents, followed closely by rural areas. Urban areas have a comparatively smaller but still substantial representation.

Table 2: How aware are you of the importance of women's empowerment for economic growth?

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Very aware	39	39
Somewhat aware	17	17
Not very aware	23	23
Not aware at all	21	21
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Survey

The majority of respondents, 39%, indicated that they are "very aware" of the significance of women's empowerment for economic growth. This indicates a strong recognition among a substantial portion of the sample regarding the role of women in driving economic development. Additionally, 17% of respondents stated that they are "somewhat aware" of this importance, indicating a moderate level of understanding among this group. However, a notable proportion of respondents, 23%, indicated that they are "not very aware" of the importance of women's empowerment for economic growth. This indicates a gap in awareness among a significant portion of the sample, which may require targeted education or awareness campaigns to address. Furthermore, 21% of respondents reported that they are "not aware at all" of this importance, indicating a lack of knowledge or understanding among this group regarding the relationship between women's empowerment and economic growth.

Table 3: Do you believe that Empowering Women Contributes to Sustainable Economic Development?

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	37	37
Agree	21	21
Neutral	07	07
Disagree	19	19
Strongly disagree	16	16
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Survey

58% of respondents (37% strongly agree and 21% agree) hold positive views, believing that empowering women contributes to sustainable economic development. 7% of respondents remain neutral on the issue. However, 35% of respondents (19% disagree and 16% strongly disagree) express skepticism or disagreement with the idea that empowering women leads to sustainable economic development.

Table 4: Do Women in your Community have Equal Access to Education and Training Opportunities?

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, definitely	27	59
Somewhat	14	27
No, not at all	59	14
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Survey

A significant majority, 59%, of respondents believe that women in their community do not have equal access to education and training opportunities. 27% of respondents are confident that women in their community do have equal access to such opportunities. A smaller proportion, 14%, indicates that access for women is somewhat equitable.

Table 5: Are there Sufficient Job Opportunities Available to Women?

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	46	46
No	54	54
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Survey

A majority of respondents, 54%, believe that there are not sufficient job opportunities available to women. Conversely, 46% of respondents are of the opinion that there are sufficient job opportunities for women.

Table 6: How Accessible are Financial Resources (Loans, Grants, etc.) to Women Entrepreneurs?

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Very accessible	21	21
Somewhat accessible	13	13
Not very accessible	39	39
Not accessible at all	27	27
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Survey

A majority of respondents, 66%, perceive financial resources as not being readily accessible to women entrepreneurs. This comprises 39% who believe financial resources are "not very accessible" and 27% who perceive them as "not accessible at all." Conversely, 34% of respondents perceive financial resources to be accessible to women entrepreneurs, with 21% indicating they are "very accessible" and 13% stating they are "somewhat accessible."

Table 7: Is there Gender Parity in Leadership Roles within Organizations?

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	49	49
No	26	26
Partially	25	25
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Survey

A plurality of respondents, 49%, believes that there is gender parity in leadership roles within organizations. 25% of respondents indicate that gender parity exists only partially, suggesting that while progress has been made, disparities still exist. However, 26% of respondents believe that there is no gender parity in leadership roles within organizations.

Table 8: Are Policies in Place to Support Work-Life Balance for Women in the Workforce?

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, extensively	41	41
Yes, to some extent	23	23
No	36	36
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Survey

A majority of respondents, 64%, believe that policies are in place to support work-life balance for women, with 41% indicating that such policies exist extensively and 23% stating they exist to some extent. However, 36% of respondents believe that no policies are in place to support work-life balance for women in the workforce.

Table 9: Have you Witnessed Instances of Gender Discrimination in the Workplace?

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, frequently	43	43
Yes, occasionally	18	18
No	39	39
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Survey

A significant proportion of respondents, 61%, have witnessed gender discrimination in the workplace, with 43% reporting frequent instances and 18% reporting occasional occurrences. However, 39% of respondents state that they have not witnessed gender discrimination in the workplace.

Table 10: Are there Programs or Initiatives Supporting Female Entrepreneurs?

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	47	47
No	53	53
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Survey

A slight majority of respondents, 53%, believe that there are no programs or initiatives supporting female entrepreneurs. However, 47% of respondents indicate that there are programs or initiatives in place to support female entrepreneurs.

Table 11: Are there Specific Skills or Areas of Education where Women in your Community Lack Opportunities?

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	39	39
No	61	61
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Survey

A minority of respondents, 39%, believe that there are specific skills or areas of education where women in their community lack opportunities. The majority of respondents, 61%, do not perceive any lack of opportunities for women in their community regarding specific skills or areas of education.

Table 12: Do you think there's a Need for Vocational Training or Skill-Building Programs Tailored for Women?

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	63	63
No	37	37
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Survey

A significant majority of respondents, 63%, believe that there is a need for vocational training or skill-building programs tailored specifically for women. However, 37% of respondents do not perceive such a need.

Table 13: Are there Support Networks or Mentorship Programs Available for Women in your Community?

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	27	27
No	73	73
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Survey

With 73% of respondents indicating the absence of such programs, it highlights a lack of resources and opportunities for women to access guidance, networking, and support in their personal and professional development endeavors. This underscores the need for initiatives to establish and promote support networks and mentorship programs specifically designed to address the needs of women in the community, fostering their growth and empowerment.

Table 14: How Effective are Community-Based Organizations in Advocating for Women's Rights and Empowerment?

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Very effective	39	39
Somewhat effective	28	28
Not effective	33	33
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Survey

A plurality of respondents, 39%, perceives community-based organizations as very effective in advocating for women's rights and empowerment. 28% of respondents consider these organizations to be somewhat effective in their advocacy efforts. However, a significant portion of respondents, 33%, believe that community-based organizations are not effective in advocating for women's rights and empowerment.

Table 15: Do Existing Government Policies Effectively Address Gender Disparities in the Workforce?

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	36	36
No	33	33
Partially	31	31
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Survey

Most of the respondents, 36%, believe that existing government policies effectively address gender disparities in the workforce. However, a significant portion of respondents, 33%, perceive that these policies do not effectively address gender disparities. Additionally, 31% of respondents feel that existing policies only partially address gender disparities in the workforce.

Findings of the Study

A majority of respondents acknowledge the positive impact of empowering women on sustainable economic development, there is a significant proportion expressing skepticism or disagreement, indicating a diversity of perspectives on this issue.

A substantial majority of respondents, 59%, believe that women in their community do not have equal access to education and training opportunities.

A significant majority of respondents, 54%, believe that there are not sufficient job opportunities available to women. This indicates a widespread perception of a lack of equal employment opportunities for women, potentially indicating existing barriers or challenges in accessing the workforce.

A significant majority of respondents, comprising 66%, perceive financial resources, such as loans and grants, as not readily accessible to women entrepreneurs. This underscores a widespread perception of barriers hindering women's ability to access the necessary financial support for their entrepreneurial endeavors.

Nearly half of the respondents, 49%, believe there is gender parity in leadership roles within organizations, a considerable portion, and 26%, perceive the absence of such parity.

A majority of respondents, 64%, believe that policies are in place to support work-life balance for women in the workforce, a significant proportion, 36%, perceive either a lack of such policies or that existing policies are insufficient.

A significant majority of respondents, comprising 61%, have witnessed instances of gender discrimination in the workplace.

A significant majority of respondents, 63%, believe there is a need for vocational training or skill-building programs tailored specifically for women.

A significant majority of respondents, 73%, believe there are no support networks or mentorship programs available for women in their community.

A large majority of respondents, 73%, report the absence of support networks or mentorship programs for women in their community. This indicates a significant gap in resources and opportunities for women to access guidance and support for their personal and professional development.

A majority of respondents, 39%, perceive community-based organizations as very effective in advocating for women's rights and empowerment, a significant portion, 33%, believe these organizations are not effective in their advocacy efforts.

There is a mixed perception among respondents regarding the effectiveness of existing government policies in addressing gender disparities in the workforce.

Suggestions

Researcher offered various following suggestions to government, organizations, financial institutions and other concerned stakeholders based on the findings of the study:

- Implement targeted educational campaigns and awareness programs aimed at addressing misconceptions and highlighting the tangible benefits of empowering women for sustainable economic development. This could help bridge the gap in understanding and garner broader support for initiatives promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.
- Implement policies and programs aimed at addressing the barriers to education and training faced by women in the community. This might include initiatives such as scholarship programs, vocational training tailored for women, mentorship opportunities, and awareness campaigns to promote equal access to education and training resources. Additionally, efforts to challenge societal norms and stereotypes that limit women's educational opportunities can play a crucial role in fostering a more inclusive and equitable learning environment.
- Encouraging businesses to adopt diversity and inclusion practices that prioritize equal employment opportunities for women.

- Providing training and support programs to equip women with the skills and resources needed to access and excel in traditionally male-dominated industries.
- Creating incentives for companies to establish flexible work arrangements that accommodate women's diverse needs, such as childcare support or remote work options.
- Collaborating with educational institutions to ensure that women have access to relevant training and vocational programs that align with market demand.
- Establish targeted financial programs and initiatives specifically designed to support and empower women entrepreneurs. This could involve offering tailored loan programs with flexible terms, providing grants or subsidies aimed at women-owned businesses, and offering financial education and mentorship programs to help women navigate the entrepreneurial landscape and access the resources they need to succeed.
- Implement diversity and inclusion initiatives within organizations, focusing on promoting gender equality in leadership positions. This could involve setting specific targets for gender representation in leadership roles, implementing bias-free recruitment and promotion practices, and providing training and mentorship programs to support the advancement of women into leadership positions.
- Conduct a comprehensive review of existing policies and practices related to work-life balance, with a focus on identifying areas for improvement and implementing measures to better support women in the workforce. This could involve enhancing existing policies, such as offering flexible work arrangements and parental leave options, as well as implementing new initiatives aimed at promoting a more inclusive and supportive work environment for women.
- Implement comprehensive anti-discrimination policies and provide regular training to all employees to raise awareness about gender discrimination and promote a culture of inclusivity and respect in the workplace. Additionally, establishing clear reporting mechanisms and offering support resources for those who experience or witness discrimination can help address and prevent such instances effectively.
- To establish and promote programs specifically designed to support female entrepreneurs, providing them with access to resources, mentorship, funding opportunities, and networking events tailored to their needs. Additionally, raising awareness about existing support programs and initiatives can help ensure that female entrepreneurs are aware of and able to access available resources to support their ventures.
- Conduct a thorough assessment of educational opportunities available to women in the community to identify any specific skills or areas where opportunities may be lacking. Following this assessment, implementing targeted programs and initiatives to address these gaps, such as vocational training programs or scholarship opportunities, can help ensure that women have equal access to education and skill development opportunities in all areas.
- Establish and promote vocational training or skill-building programs specifically designed for women, focusing on addressing their unique needs and empowering them with relevant skills for professional advancement. Additionally, ensuring accessibility and inclusivity in these programs can further enhance their effectiveness in supporting women's skill development and career opportunities.
- To collaborate with local organizations and community leaders to establish support networks and mentorship programs specifically tailored for women. These initiatives can provide valuable guidance, networking opportunities, and support for women in their personal and professional endeavors, helping to address the identified gap in resources and opportunities.
- Governments should conduct comprehensive reviews of existing policies, seeking feedback from stakeholders, and consider potential reforms to better address gender disparities in the workforce. This could involve implementing measures such as gender-sensitive policymaking, targeted initiatives to promote women's participation in the labor market, and monitoring mechanisms to track progress and ensure accountability in addressing gender inequalities.

Conclusion

Empowering women for sustainable economic growth is imperative for achieving inclusive and resilient economies. Despite progress made in recent years, significant gender disparities persist, hindering the full realization of women's economic potential. However, the evidence is clear: when women are empowered, economies thrive. By providing women with equal access to education, employment, and entrepreneurial opportunities, societies can unlock a powerful driver of economic growth and development. Addressing the barriers to women's economic empowerment requires a multi-faceted approach that includes policy interventions, institutional reforms, and societal change. Governments must enact and enforce laws that promote gender equality in the workforce, eliminate discriminatory practices, and provide support for women-owned businesses. Businesses can play a crucial role by implementing gender-sensitive policies, offering equal opportunities for advancement, and fostering inclusive workplace cultures.

Moreover, investing in women's education, health, and skills development is essential for building human capital and fostering innovation and productivity. Community-based initiatives, awareness campaigns, and advocacy efforts are also instrumental in challenging gender norms and promoting positive attitudes towards women's economic empowerment.

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