

A STUDY ON THE ROLE OF NGO'S IN WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

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ABSTRACT

Empowerment is a dynamic multi-dimensional process that enables women to realize their capability and inner power in all spheres of life. It covers social, political, and economic aspects. Women empowerment is essential for the growth and development of a nation. Although women constitute half of humanity in India still they are socio-economically marginalized. Women empowerment is essential for the growth and development of all societies as well as nation. Women should realize that they have constitutional rights for good health, financial security, and access to knowledge, information, education and equal opportunities in all sectors. This paper looks into the process through which women empowerment is achieved with the help of NGO's in India. This paper seeks to explore some measures that should be adopted in order to improve the status of women. It also identifies the challenges the NGOs face in their effort to empower women. This research study develops the concept regarding the relation between NGO's and women empowerment based on secondary sources of data, like the review of existing literature published in the journal, books, and reports of various, NGOs, Governments and websites.

KEY WORDS: NGO, Women, Women Empowerment, India, Development.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Women play an important role in the family as well as in Society. About half of the world's population is women who are supposed to contribute half of the world's economic, social, and political input but it's not happening in reality. Traditionally being a patriarchal society, the role of women is secondary in every family in India. There is an urgent need of women's empowerment in every society, especially in backward areas. Since the 1980's the Government of India has shown increasing concern for women's issues through a variety of legislation promoting the education and political participation of women (Collier, 1998). Since the 1990's women have been identified as a key agent of sustainable development and women's equality and empowerment are seen as central agenda. The Government of India made the Empowerment of Women as one of the principal objectives of the Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002) and also declared 2001 as the year of Women Empowerment. Women's empowerment can be achieved only through education, training and employment facility.

Empowerment is a social process that promotes the participation of people in gaining control over their lives in their community. It is a multi-dimensional and holistic approach that helps women to gain authority and self-realization in improving their life standards. Women's empowerment involves the transformation of economic, social, psychological and political aspect of life. NGO's have been recognized as a very important tool for the empowerment of women in India. Empowering women in social, political, economic and legal aspects is necessary to convert the society into a developed society. For the past several decades, governments, non-governmental organizations and international agencies have been aware and concerned about the status of women. Efforts have been made by these bodies to improve women's overall status. Non-governmental organizations are playing an important role in the empowerment of disadvantaged women, helping them stand on their own through such socio-economic programmes, vocational training and other similar programs.

NGO's have multiple dimensions including: economic, socio-cultural, interpersonal, political, and psychological to empower needy women. NGOs are not only the means access the economic development of women but also create opportunities to achieve social and political empowerment within their family and their communities. It is noteworthy to examine the impact of NGO's intervention on the development of women, especially in backward areas. A lot of literature is developed on women empowerment and there are a few studies have been on the progress made by the NGOs in the direction of women empowerment. The present study, therefore, is an approach to analyzing the role of NGOs for women's empowerment in India and its challenges and opportunities.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The following are the main objectives of the present Study.

- i. To know the brief concept of women empowerment and non-government organization.

- ii. To study the function of NGOs which are expansively involved in the process of Women empowerment
- iii. To identify the key challenges faced by NGO's during the women empowerment process and propose strategies to enhance their effectiveness.

3. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE:

There is by now a large literature on the impact of NGOs on women's empowerment. The study is a modest effort to assess the impact of NGO on the purpose of women empowerment. The following literature has been reviewed for the present study to examine the role of NGO's on women empowerment:

Panda (2000) conducted a study on the Role of NGOs in the process of Women Empowerment. In the study, the researcher examines women empowerment in terms of decision-making power, autonomy, self-awareness, participation in various activities etc. From the study it was revealed that NGOs have a significant role in creating awareness among women as well as in society. It creates opportunities to develop abilities in various fields like power, self-reliance, participation, and awareness which lead women's empowerment.

Clive (2008) made a research study on "Non-Government Organizations and Women Empowerment Strategies – A Case Study of an NGO in Tamil Nadu". The researcher selected an NGO by the name of BLESS. For empowering women BLESS has emphasized on certain strategies such as micro-credit and group mobilization, which increase self-help groups. For creating awareness among people BLESS has been used in street plays, film shows, campaigns etc. This NGO also helps in the process of taking loans from banks and provides training for the capacity building of women. The awareness and training program helped women to realize their true potential. This NGO has given importance to such issues related to women, like- health, literacy and human rights-related issues. The entire process taken by the NGO helped women to be empowered in socially, economically and politically.

Margaret (2012) examined the impact of NGO interventions on the empowerment of women in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) and Chennai (India)". The findings of the study revealed high empowerment of beneficiary women could take place in the economic, cultural, social and psychological walk of life. There was a significant difference in the level of empowerment before and after NGOs intervention, it was quite positive. Active participation of NGOs is necessary for bringing women empowerment in rural areas.

Sharma (2013) conducted a research study on "Non-Governmental Organizations and Empowerment of women. The NGOs of this district implement short-term and long-term programs for the empowerment of women. Many SHGs are attached to NGOs, which facilitates the economic empowerment of women. By creating an awareness program political participation of women increased. NGOs are also concerned with the health and education of women, which improves social status. It can say that after joining NGOs the overall condition of women has been improved.

Jorvekar (2014) made a research study on "Contribution of NGOs in women's empowerment with special reference to Sangamner Tehsil (Maharashtra). Based on collected data the researcher pointed out that works for women's economic development and provides vocational training to women. Some NGOs work for women's justice and conduct adult education programmes. 100% NGOs are concerned for women's health awareness. It is also observed that in non-political matters contribution of NGOs is very satisfactory. The respondents revealed that the NGOs help them through various need-based programs, it make women economically stable and powerful. Regarding maintaining the budget most of the NGOs face economic difficulties. Through the overall study it is clear that NGOs are playing an important role in empowering women.

In a research study by J. Saritha in 2015 on "Performance of NGOs with special reference to Women Empowerment", conducted at Telangana state. Here the researcher stated that since pre-independence Non-government organizations in India have been playing a crucial role in society building. Over the two decades, NGOs are concerning on issues related to legal right, women empowerment, environmental protection, poverty etc. Today most of the NGOs are working for rural development. Women's issues are an important concern of NGOs, this resulted into the establishment of National and State commission for Women. Social welfare is a major responsibility of NGOs, so the welfare of women and child are important area covered by NGOs. The strength of NGOs depends upon the utilization of existing government schemes and economic assistance.

Bhat et al, (2016) made a research study on "NGOs: A key to Women Empowerment in Kashmir". This study revealed that In Kashmir socio-economic status of women isn't well, they face violence and inferiority. NGOs in Kashmir are working for the development of children, women empowerment, social awareness, and old age homes and so on. The researchers pointed out that these NGOs are mainly working for women empowerment through education, awareness program, through economic aid, skill development training and women participation in social as well as political activities. The also provide basic amenities of life, like- food, drinking water, and medical care.

Narumugai & Kumar conducted a research article in 2017 on "Role of NGOs towards women empowerment". Here the researchers stated that NGOs have played a vital role in the development of rural India since 1970. NGOs are focused on improving the socio-economic conditions of the people with whom they work. Efforts by NGOs mainly focus on the empowerment of poor women; they provide skill development training to improve the socio-economic status of women. NGOs are also working for creating awareness regarding legal and property rights. NGOs give support to women through loans and SHGs. NGOs also play role as capacity-building programs for women. So in the Indian scenario, the role of NGOs in women empowerment is very crucial.

4. METHODOLOGY:

Descriptive research design is adopted for the present study. This study is primarily relying on secondary sources of data. A comprehensive review of existing literature has been done to gather relevant information on the role of NGO's in women empowerment. Data for this study collected from articles, academic journals, govt. reports, concern websites and books. Analysis of data is based on the existing results collected from secondary sources.

5. DISCUSSIONS & RESULTS:

5.1 Concept of Women empowerment:

Empowerment is a process of internal change, expansion of capabilities, or power to collective mobilization. Self-confidence and self-esteem plays an important role in this process. According to Cambridge English Dictionary, empowerment means "to authorize". In this context, people have to be authorized to have control over their lives. The Oxford English Dictionary defines "empowerment" as "the action of empowering; the state of being empowered." It was first used in this form in 1849. The concept of empowerment is used in many ways and in a wide range of contexts.

Empowerment refers to a situation where the powerless gain greater control over resources and ideologies.

Women empowerment can be defined as a process whereby women can found their control over lives, various assets and which helps them to increase their capacity for leading a fulfilling life. It is the process of building a woman's capacity to be self-reliant and to develop her inner strength. Women empowerment implies fundamental changes in the status of women by the way of improving the position of women in society. "According to Kapoor (2002), "Women's Empowerment could cover resource material, human and intellectual like knowledge, information, ideas and finance building a woman's capacity to be self-reliant and all resources like money and access to money and control over decision mankind in home, community, society and nation and to gain "power".

5.2 Concept of NGO:

A non-governmental organization is any non-profit, voluntary citizens' group organized on a local, national or international level that works for a common interest. There are different types of NGOs working in the International, National and State levels. Non-Government-Organizations, variously known in India as Voluntary Organizations, Non-Party Processes, Social Action Groups, Charitable Organizations, Community Based Organizations etc. NGOs perform a variety of humanitarian functions, it bring citizen concerns to Governments, monitor policies and encourage political participation through the provision of information. The NGOs have a legal status; they are registered under a specific Act on the basis of their activities and objectives. The most common areas in which the NGOs are working are education, employment, health, empowerment, women issues, child rights, environmental protection, etc. Some NGOs consists the limited number of persons and some have thousands of members and hundreds of professional staff.

Duggal (1988) defines NGOs in the following manner: (i) they are registered as public trusts or societies; (ii) the different programs adopted by the NGOs are welfare ones and sometimes government funded too; (iii) NGOs, as a rule, do not generate their own funds completely but rely on external financial assistances from government agencies-both national and international; (iv) they are private organizations, but their nature makes them somewhat different from what one generally expects from the private sector. Thus, they are not supposed to make any profit.

The broad definition holds that every organization which is not part of a government and which operates in civil society is an NGO.

6. SOME INITIATIVES OF NGOs ON WOMEN EMPOWEMENT:

NGOs are emerging as major facilitator of women empowerment in India. Women empowerments, especially in backward areas of India have been a primary focus for Non-Government Organizations (NGOs). The Ministry of Women and Child Development collaborates with many NGOs for the implementation of its various schemes. Some initiatives undertaken by NGOs in this area are as follows:

- In 1973, Alpanalaya works for women's empowerment in India by helping them to overcome social, political, and economic barriers. They provide sewing classes and train to women who have not been given the choice or opportunity to become financially independent.

- In 2005, Maitri has worked with over 45,000 individuals on the issues of social and health problems and public health concerns through education, community outreach, networking and legal advocacy. The organization has been addressing the issue of violence against women, running a victim support program and providing support to abandoned elderly widows in Vrindavan.
- Gauravi is the first crisis center set up in India with the help of the Department of Health in 2014, to fight for Indian women's rights and save them from domestic violence. Currently, there are 22 Gauravi centers across the country and over 40,000 cases have been registered in the centers.
- The Navachetana home run by Ashadeep rescues women with mental health issues and provides them with shelter, food, and medical care. They also help these women reunite with their families if possible after treatment. So far, 355 women have been rescued and rehabilitated under Ashadeep mission.
- Apna Ghar Ashram supports destitute, disabled women who get a safe and caring home through it. 458 men and 1,004 women currently live in the Ashrams spread across 17 major cities across India. The Ashram was also awarded the State Award by the State Government as the Best Services Organization.

Foundation for Mother and Child Health works to bring good health and nutritional provisions to vulnerable mothers and children in poor communities. Their programs encourage preventive health, balanced nutrition, and child development practices in underprivileged communities.

7. ROLES AND FUNCTIONS OF NGOS:

In India Women Empowerment has been one of the most crucial agenda for both government and NGO's. It plays significant role to develop the social, economic and political life of women. The various roles of NGOs for women empowerment are described below for better understanding:-

- i. It works to Educating the Women through various programmes. NGO is a dedicated organization that educates the women belongs from neglected society.
- ii. NGOs are work for demolishing the gender discrimination of society. They try to give equal status to women in every society.
- iii. Women should be motivated to earn their livelihood. NGOs train poor women and provide them opportunities of self-employment to improve their social and economic status.
- iv. It is enhancing perceptions of women's contribution to household income and family welfare. Many NGOs are devoted to the cause of women welfare and want to make them independent.
- v. NGOs are working with women to generate awareness regarding their legal rights as a member of democratic society.
- vi. Women are always dependent on men for each and every social and economic matter. NGOs offer leadership training to the women and try to make them self-sufficient.
- vii. Women have always been ignorant about their health. NGOs bring awareness regarding major health issues and their prevention.
- viii. NGOs have a comparative advantage to bringing women's concerns to the attention of policy-makers and fostering the political participation of women.
- ix. NGO provides independent sources of income and microcredit help to reduce economic dependency of the women on husbands that enhance autonomy.
- x. It also makes aware of the women about the issues of child marriage, dowry, domestic violence etc.
- xi. NGO promotes the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for empowering women.

8. CHALLENGES FACED BY NGO'S ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT:

Working on women's empowerment is challenging for NGOs in India due to a range of factors. Some of the problems faced by these NGO'S in their process of women empowerment are as follows:

- i. Fund is important for every work. NGOs face problems to secure adequate funding to maintain their women's empowerment initiatives,
- ii. Some NGOs have limited access to resources, such as technology, communication and human resource, which can limit their ability to implement their programs effectively.
- iii. Lack of awareness is one of the important problems. Women belongs from backward areas of India area are not aware of the services that NGOs offer, which can limit their ability to access benefit from them.
- iv. NGOs also face challenges in securing support from the government for women empowerment initiatives.
- v. Negative mindset and conservative thinking of people towards development create big problems in the effective implementation of projects of NGOs in India.
- vi. Many women in India may lack access to education and training, which create hamper to have benefit from NGOs programs and services. They are not motivated in the initiative.
- vii. NGOs face language barriers when working with women from diverse linguistic backgrounds, it hamper to communicate effectively and deliver services.

- viii. In some regions, NGO leaders identified the interference of local politicians and civic leaders. It is a major hindrance to their work.
- ix. The number NGO is not sufficient in all regions. It is one of the major challenges.
- x. Groups and conflicts among people also create a major problem in the implementation of developmental programs of NGOs.

9. INITIATIVES TO ENHANCE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF NGO:

Through some strategies the effectiveness of NGOs can improved. These are:

- i. NGOs should establish workshops that, helps to provide skill based training like: sewing, art and craft etc. to increase levels of employment to create their own income generating activities.
- ii. NGOs should develop discussions on activity plans with local people and other collaborations to identify what have to do to achieve specific goals.
- iii. NGOs should educate the public of a particular area about the issues of women to ensure that all human should receive equal opportunities.
- iv. There is a lack of need based training which concentrates on utilizing local resources. Hence, training programmes should be organized by NGOs keeping in view their need and local resources.
- v. The NGOs have to more focus on the political empowerment of women, as various studies found that political empowerment of women were found to be low. In order to increase the number of women in elected offices. Women should have confidence on themselves.
- vi. NGOs should act as a bridge between the government and the local community, and promote participatory approaches to development people's participation.
- vii. NGOs should create village self-help groups in which women independently establish financial institutions that can manage profit making programs
- viii. Besides governments effort NGO's should provide financial assistance to the families those who below the poverty.
- ix. There should be the utilization of the latest technologies like the Internet, websites to collect information and improve the communication system.
- x. Exchange programmes should be designed by NGO'S or government to encourage harmony between women. Exchange of experiences between developed and developing countries could facilitate more proficient ways of empowering women through these NGO'S.
- xi. Caste and religion based NGOs should be abolished. There should be no discrimination regarding caste, religion and creed while serving the society. Equality and quality should be their main motive.
- xii. NGOs have to articulate their vision and mission clearly. They should carefully implement, monitor and evaluate the strategies for fruitful outcomes.
- xiii. NGOs should consider the values and morals of the society for which they work.
- xiv. NGOs should provide education on maternal health, and safe child birth and child care. It is also an important part of women empowerment.
- xv. Establishment of more NGOs will help in effectively solve the issues faced by women.

9. CONCLUSION:

There is a noteworthy impact of NGOs on women. The demand for NGOs is increasing day by day in India. As per the review of the literature, NGOs are helpful to improve the capacity building and social mobilization of women. Women empowerment is a major concern of NGOs, for this they play various roles like- educating rural women, ensuring women's participation, promoting leadership, promoting, providing effective training etc. Now women have started earning money, becoming independent and self-motivated. They can take their own decisions in some matters and give their suggestions on family concerns. Women are assisted to be empowered in several ways by the NGOs. The NGOs are the supplementary tools for improving the economic conditions of the women and at the same time creating economic, social and political awareness among them.

NGOs proved that they have the potential to facilitate the process of empowerment among women. It can conclude that NGOs are very significant for the overall empowerment of women like economic empowerment, social empowerment, and political empowerment. They play a crucial role in the process of Women empowerment in India. If the challenges can minimize faced by the organization during the process of women empowerment, it will be more effective.

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