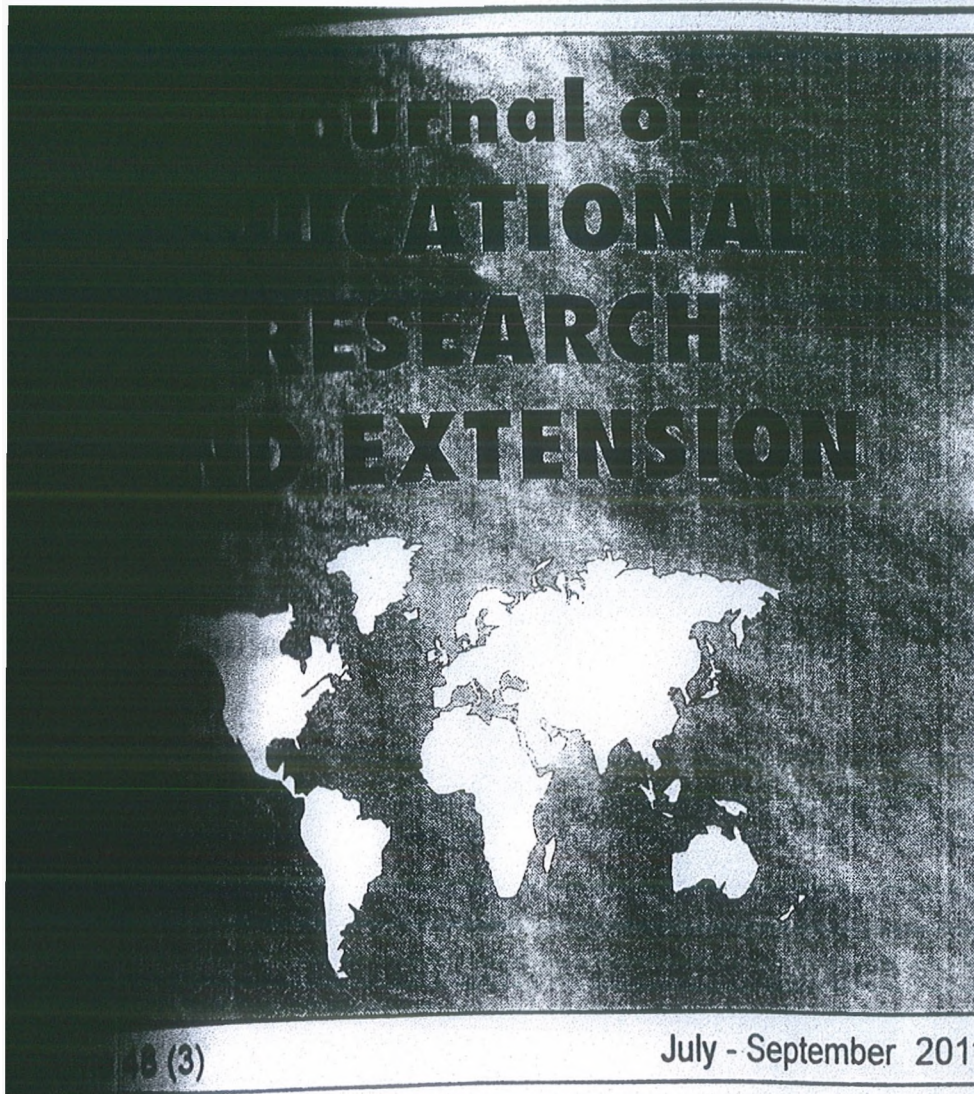
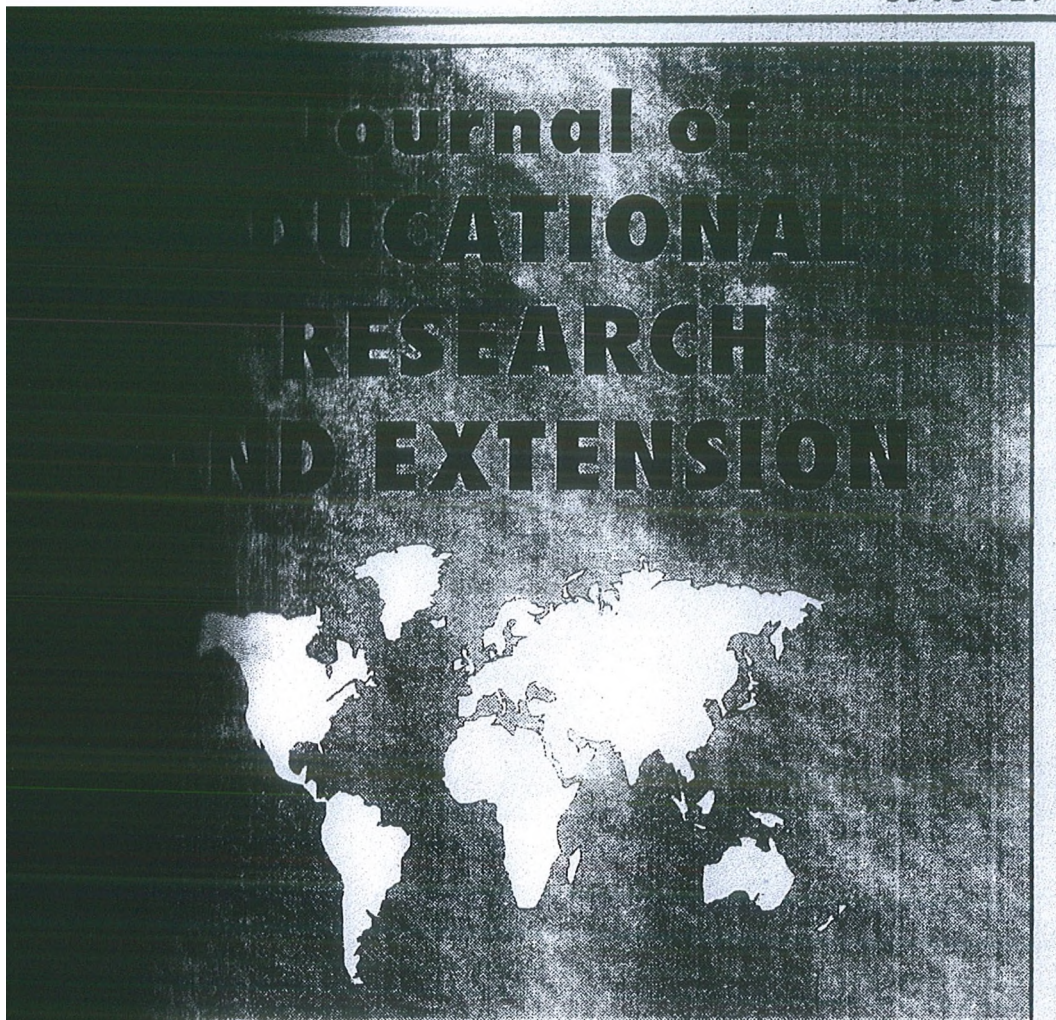


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EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN THROUGH EDUCATION IN INDIA

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"We cannot be educated people without educated women. If general education has to be limited to men or women, that opportunity should be given to women from them it would most surely be passed on to the next generation"- Dr.Radhakrishnan (1948)

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Education is a potent tool in the emancipation and empowerment of women. It is a milestone of women empowerment because it enables women to respond to the challenges, to confront their traditional role and to improve their life. So that we can't neglect the importance of education in relation to women empowerment. Education is the first step towards empowerment and the most crucial factor in overall development of an individual as well as nation. Empowerment is a process of acquiring knowledge, developing self (personality development) and deciding by self (self decision-making process). Empowering of women involves a dynamic and democratic change in the perception and participation from women in the society. The empowerment of women is one of the central issues in the process of development of countries all over the world and it is very much essential to achieve sustainable development. Education is an effective instrument for social and

development and national integration. Education enables women to understand their social and legal rights, become economically independent, acquire a voice in the affairs of the family and the community. Education is a gateway to get information, opportunities and empowerment. The greatest single factor which can incredibly improve the status of women in any society is education.

Women's powerlessness arises from their illiteracy, lack of information, lack of information and knowledge about market and lack of self-esteem and self-confidence, lack of money, lack of opportunities, lack of connections to those who can provide jobs and them money to start their own small enterprises. The women's lack of awareness and insight into their circumstances aggravate their powerlessness. They remain in a state of blissful ignorance and most often in the belief that they cannot change their poor situation.

Education especially of women has a major impact on health and nutrition as an instrument of developing a sustainable strategy for population control. Women's education too, often spreads this way, more socially, through same sex effects. i.e. an educated women is far more likely to send her daughter to school than an uneducated woman. She is likely to maintain better conditions of nutrition and hygiene in her household and thereby improve her family's health (Sen 1997). Presently it also facilitates them to procure a job and supplement the income of family and achieve social status. Moreover educated women play an equally important role as men in nation building.

Empowering Women through Education

Education is important for everyone, but it is especially significant for girls and women. This is true not only because education is an entry point to other opportunities, but also because the educational achievements of women can have ripple effects within the family and across generations. Investing in girls' education is one of the most

effective ways to reduce poverty. Girls who have been educated are more likely to marry later and to have smaller and healthier families (Kishor, 2001). Educated women can recognize the importance of health care and know how to seek it for themselves and their family. Education helps girls and women to know their rights and to gain confidence to claim them and sets free from ignorance, exploitation and poverty. Education liberates the minds, opening up new horizon, opportunities and confidence with the knowledge, skills; self respect and freedom to participate sustain and shine in their life. Illiteracy on the other hand breeds ignorance, which leads to exploitation, poverty, neglect and number of social evils. However, women's literacy rate is significantly lower than men's in most developing countries.

Education is a cornerstone of women's empowerment because it enables them to respond to opportunities, to challenge their traditional roles and to change their lives. Educating women benefits the whole society. It has a more significant impact on poverty and development than men's education. It is also the most influential factor in improving child health and reducing infant mortality. The ability of women to control their own fertility is absolutely fundamental to women's empowerment and equality. When a woman can plan her family, she can plan the rest of her life. When she is healthy, she can be more productive. Empowerment enables a woman to gain relative strength as a result of having choices and bargaining power and when her reproductive rights including the right to decide the number, timing and spacing of her children, and to make decisions regarding reproduction free from discrimination, coercion and violence are promoted and protected, she has freedom to participate more fully and equally in society.

2.0 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The core aim of this paper is to find out the importance of education in allusion to women empowerment and know the major weakness in women education in India.

will become a developed country by 2020. The year 2020 is nigh; it is just 10 year away. Women education can become a reality when the women of this nation became empowered. India accounts for the largest number of illiterates in the world level. In addition, Indian government paying attention to the education of women. Ultimately, education should lead to the improvement of socio-economic and political status.

EDUCATIONAL EVOLUTION IN INDIA

The 2001 Census report indicates that literacy among women as 65.38 percent. It is virtually disheartening to observe that the literacy rate among women India is even much lower to national average i.e. 65.38 percent. The growth of women's education in rural areas is very low. This obviously means that still larger number of women of our country is illiterate, the weak, backward and exploited. Moreover education is also not available to all equally. Gender inequality is reinforced in education which is proved by the fact that the literacy rate for the women is only 65.38 percent against 76 percent of men as per 2001 Census.

TABLE - 1

LITERACY RATE OF INDIA FROM 1951- 2001

Year	Literacy rate in percent
1951	18.33
1961	28.30
1971	34.45
1981	48.57
1991	52.21
2001	65.38

Source: Census of India, Government of India (2001)

In the above census data, it is evident that after independence in India there has been considerable progress in literacy rate. The literacy

rate for the total population has progressively gone up from 18.33 percent in 1951 to 65.38 percent in 2001.

TABLE - 2

LITERACY RATES BY SEX, INDIA, 1981-2001 (In percent)

Year	Literacy Rate			Male-Female
	Person	Male	Female	Gap
1981	43.6	56.4	29.8	26.6
1991	52.2	64.1	39.3	24.8
2001	65.4	75.8	54.2	21.6

Source: Census of India, Government of India (2001)

The literacy rate by sex indicates a very significant increase in both males and females particularly during the 1990s. The literacy rate gap between male and female have increased 75.8 percent and 54.2 percent from 1991 to 2001. As of 2001 census, almost two-thirds of India's population is literate, the male literacy rate has risen to three-fourth while female literacy rate at 54.2 percent indicates that more than half of the female population is literate, that is, has the ability to read and write. The reduction of gap in male and female literacy rates from 26.6 percent in 1981 to 21.6 percent in 2001. The higher rate of illiteracy of women is undoubtedly attributing for women dependence on men and to play a subordinate role. The lack of education is the root cause for women exploitation and negligence. Only literacy can help women to understand the Indian's constitutional and legislative provisions that are made to strengthen them. Thus promoting education among women is of great important in empowering them to accomplish their goals on par with men in different spheres of life.

TABLE - 3

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF FEMALE IN INDIA (2001)

Educational Level	Female in numbers
	272,299,475
	224,154,081
But Below Matric/Secondary	161,184,164
/Secondary But Below Graduate	41,375,623
ical Diploma Or Certificate Not Equal ree	765,841
ate and Above Other Than Technical	10,724,570
ical Degree Or Diploma Equal To Or Post-Graduate Degree	1,412,269

Source: Census of India, Government of India (2001)

The occurrence of data shows the educational level of female in various categories in that many of the female are still illiterate due to poverty, lack of awareness, lack of information and knowledge about the education system and their overall lack of self-esteem and self-confidence. In similar manner that lots of female are undergraduate and post-graduate in India because they are aware of the role of education in their life.

REASONS FOR WOMEN LOWER LEVEL OF LITERACY IN INDIA

Poverty is attributes as one of the main cause of deprivation of girls from education. They need to either take care of their siblings at home and to do household work and work outside for the family to contribute financially.

Lack of qualified female teacher is a major barrier to girl's education.

- Fear of sexual harassment is another aspect in deterring girls from attending schools and it is a main factor for high drop out rates.
- Fixed schooling hours do not suit girls in rural areas, as they need to do domestic work at home or in farms and fields during these hours. This is one of the causes of the lower participation rates of girls in education.
- In rural areas still parents are not allowing the female child to pursue higher education because they have thought that educated child will help the family.
- The female child in every Indian family irrespective of her economic status should be moulded to overcome the challenges of inferiority; subservience and domesticity which place limitations on her education and development.
- In India family systems have their own traditional beliefs and customs that makes the female child to be uneducated.

5.0 CONCLUSION

When we realize about women empowerment firstly, we will try to minimize the literacy gap between men and women and give priority to educate a woman. So that education plays a crucial role in accelerating the women empowerment. Thus education seen as "Unique investment in present and future in reference to Women Empowerment. Access and equality are the two most important components to empower women and to facilitate the delivery of social justice to them. Thus the study suggests that appropriate steps should be taken by the educational authorities with the participation of communities in order to bring girl children to the main stream of education and development at every level including family and community.

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