

Participation in higher education and women empowerment



In the research conducted by Samina Malik and Kathy Courtney the finding from Malik's 2005 study was summarized. It was from his study that the wanted to investigate that to what extent does women empowerment was dependant on the gaining of higher education by women. In the research the importance of the prevailing culture and norms on women empowerment was also highlighted as they play a key role in preventing women from claiming the rights that they have been given by law which includes having equal rights to education.

As Pakistan is a developing country it has been rated s the nation with the widest gender gap and discrimination against women (UNICEF 2006). The united nations population information network gave the understanding that women empowerment has five major components, which include women sense of self-worth, their right to have and to determine choices, their right to have access to opportunities and resources, their right to have power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home, their ability to influence the direction of social changes to create a more social and economic order, nationally and internationally,(POPIN n. d)

However it has come to notice that overall the girls and women are at disadvantage and the movement to bring about any change in their position or their standard of living has failed. Forming a conclusion from the research it has been proven that the attainment of higher education in particular is accepted as a means for social change. The participation in education has many advantages for the women one of the most important one being economic independence.

As agreed upon by Iram, samiullah, tanveer, bedi-uz-zaman, shujaat and Ali women empowerment is a social phenomenon. Women in Pakistan are subject to very little participation in the economic sphere of life. Usually they are either underpaid or unpaid workers in the agricultural background. In their research the authors also subject that women empowerment can be measured based on their participation in politics. However the most important aspect being catered to in their study is the impact of male youth's views on women empowerment. Since Pakistan is clearly a male dominated society and the views of the male segment plays either a supportive or opposing role towards women empowerment. It was concluded after the study that the prevailing view of women empowerment from the eyes of the male youth has different aspects of acceptance. Regarding ownership of property, vote casting and registration the response was fairly positive. It was also positive towards equal job opportunities, training program and membership of union and organization but political participation and participation in public protests and political campaigns was a negative. Overall however the attitude of youth towards women empowerment was considered a positive but the family practice of the positive attitude was very limited which may be due to the parent's background and quality of education.

According to Malik hassaan the reason for women being neglected and lookdown upon may lie in some common factors which stem from the history of the country. The social norms and cultures and the menace of poverty have been put down on the shoulders of the women of this country since its birth. The idea proposed that economic development to actual take place in

a nation requires the participation of the entire citizens of the nation by Malik is crucial to this country. The concept highlighted is the importance of poverty and government intervention in the developing worlds. The history bearded by the developing nation's plays an important part also in another study relevant to this is by N'drit. Assie-Lumumba regarding the women and empowerment in Africa.

The idea being discussed by both the authors lie in the fact that the nations having participated in many international betterment and development programs and organizations the implementation of laws pro-women have been poor due to the history of poverty and culture prevailing in these nations. The insignificant intervention of the government and the lack of positive will towards this idea not only hinder the social well-being but also the economic wellbeing of these developing nations. As Assie-lumumba explains the participation of women in higher education and universities are extremely low due to which any research conducted from these institutions don't show the actual picture. Although the educational system has been taken from the west's example, the persisting lack of participation by the female sector cannot be ignored. The reason for the lack of involvement doesn't however lie solely with the historic practices but also by the recent practices which have stemmed out from the historic practices in essence strengthening them. The issue being that without access to primary and secondary education the female masses cannot have the opportunity to advance into higher education. The practice of not allowing equal opportunity at the initial levels of education is a major hindrance for the women of Africa. The other main issue discussed in the study relates to the

lack of power to have time, equipment and finances being allocated to women in the African society. This also raises the gender gap and in essence reduces the ability of women to participate in education. The absence of proper policies and implementation of these policies thus result in the discriminatory policies regarding education and women in the African continent.

The idea that most of the conclusive research done in the developing countries result from the research conducted in the university setting, the absence of women form these institutions result in a lack of information and authentic research. The formation of policies also rest on the information collected therefore the lack of information subsequently result in improper and insufficient efforts being conducted in the way to women empowerment. Lumumba also rightly concludes based on assessment that the role of the researchers are highly crucial in the forward view of the continent and it is their responsibility to interrogate all analyze all the social sectors to finally come up with conclusions. Therefore educating the female masses of the nation is essential to not just economic wellbeing and eradication of poverty but also a healthier social standing of the nation.

The same standing is put forth by Malik Hassan in his research that poverty and economic sustainability of Pakistan rests on the shoulders of policy makers and researchers. There is a crucial need for proper research and data availability and a dire need of the policy makers, the government to shape up reforms and implement them in the most efficient and effective manner as without this the nation will not be able to move from the developing category to the developed.

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The nuisance of poverty and the economic instability is directly related to the no participation of the entire nation towards their amputation. In his conclusion Malik also explains the importance of awareness amongst the citizens, capacity building of women, research and documentation on the achievements of women and advocacy for policy in political parties as essential and substantial requirements to overcome the structural obstacles and lack of awareness in the country. The importance of women participation in policy formulation and their representation at all levels of the government is necessary for the wellbeing and progress of Pakistan.

Women empowerment is defined as a change in the context of a woman's life that will enable her to lead a fulfilling human life, it being reflected both in external qualities and internal qualities (human development in south Asia (2000) as quoted by Mathew (2003). In the research by Purusottam Nayak and Bidisha Mahanta it is found that women of India, another developing nation, are relatively disempowered and given a lower status than their male counterparts. The existing of this gender gap exists basically with regards to education and employment. Different aspects of the study focused on different factors that were looked at by the researcher. These include women having the right to education and employment; domestic violence and say on spending their earnings; women's exposure to media and their involvement in politics. After a clear view it was concluded that women were subject to unequal treatment by the male dominating society. Dr. Suvarna Sen and Ishita Mukherjee also in their study look at the prevailing trends of role of women in India and they also examine the employment levels, wages, literacy and school enrolment; their participation in politics and personal

health issues. They also suggest from their study that women are being subject to socio-economic biases which in retrospect affect their status in society.

The most alarming find from both these studies show the acceptance of this unequal and bias treatment by the women in general. All these factors are either the result of government's shift from raising actual awareness and or implementation of policies structured for women empowerment. The major role of higher education and employment is the conclusive factor in both the studies. It has been seen in Dr surarna sen and ishita mukherjee's finding that rising of awareness and education are the only forums which may result in ability to combat these practices. The entire idea of is also supported by purusottam nayak and bidisha mahanta in their findings that access to education and employment are the only enabling factors to empowerment. However in similarity the studies also conclude that the hindrance towards this goal is mainly due to the lack of government support. The idea that government does not support encouragingly the institutions set to formulate policies regarding the betterment of the female population and also doesn't take steps in helping in the implementation of these policies for proper coverage and benefits.

The idea of empowerment if not wholly supported by the mass of male population and the authoritarian of the country, cannot flourish and bloom. The presence of education plays a pivotal role for women in helping them realize and understand their rights and their rewards. Without which they may not be able to come out of the current situation and remain to believe themselves subjugate to domestic vigilance and gender bias.

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Another study conducted by purusottam nayak and bidisha mahanta examines the impact of women empowerment in Assam. In this study as well the women empowerment quotient is judged on the basis of indicators such as education, employment, household decision making power, financial autonomy, and freedom of movement, exposure to media, political participation and experience of domestic violence. Assam is one of the states of India and the largest state in the region of North east India on basis of population. Although it is free from a lot of social evils like dowry, sati, female feticide and infanticides it is still ranked very low in the scale of female empowerment. There is a wide gender gap in the state which is even not found in other comparable states in India. the study concludes that the development of the state is being affected by the widening inequality in gender and that the development process is not gender neutral as women are subject to lower status as even when compared to the rest of the states in India. There does seem to be political involvement of the woman segment in the state however other than that the educational and employment status is very low. Also the access and reach over resources is very low as well.

Meetika Srivastava In her study gives a profound view on women empowerment. She begins by explaining the importance of women in the society and their pivotal role in shaping the nation's future as mothers, teachers etc. she also very clearly signifies the women rights that are considered under the act of humanitarian law worldwide. The basic human right that woman is entitled to live in dignity and esteem. Have freedom of want and freedom from fear just as her male counterparts. The importance

of this equality has been underscored by its inclusion as one of the Millennium Development Goals.

However she goes on to explain further that even though worldwide gender equality has been given an important stature it remains to a practically neglected avenue. Violence and discrimination is a very common practice however now economic discrimination has also joined in the list of inequalities which include health and education.

Despite a lot of controversy and a lot of this agenda being raised by the international organizations, women are still more likely to be ill, poor, illiterate and tortured than men. Another important factor for empowerment measurement is the control of their own fertility. This aspect is so crucial that it is considered sometimes, as the benchmark for empowerment as said in the study that, when a woman can plan her family, she can plan the rest of her life. Srivastava 2009

Ms Srivastava is on the right path when she concludes by her study that women empowerment is a strong factor towards development. She explains further that despite the said progress that is made the female segment of the society is the most neglected segment as yet. Especially with regards to basic health and education they seem to be suffering magnanimously. she goes on to close with the fact that no kind of social empowerment, legal empowerment or economic empowerment may be able to take place without focusing on women empowerment.

In his study of women empowerment in India, Mr. gagandeep kaur explains that the empowerment assumed to be prevalent in the society where women
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are known in literature and religious scrolls as “devis” or “shakti” is all a façade. It doesn't exist and all the rights and privileges so called adhered to women in the Indian society are just on paper in ink and not in real life. He goes on to explain that the status of women cannot change by the mere idea of introducing the terms but it requires a complete change of mental setup which is deep rooted in not just the minds of the people but also of the woman herself. The biggest problem is that women are unaware of their own rights and what world of opportunities lies for them. Various efforts are being conducted by free lance NGO's, media and welfare organizations, but what is most important is the involvement of the government he says.

Gary S Becker, William H J Hubbard and Kevin M Murphy follow on the research that they conducted regarding the worldwide boom in higher education with regard to women education. In their research they explain that there has been a high increase in the education of female and males around the globe. They agree that citizens in developing nations and developed nations do get different share of education however according to new statistics there has been a substantial increase in both the world's higher education trend. The most important factor that they have come to notice is that the research provides them with sufficient facts that the increase in higher education is due to women. In their research they provide a model of supply and demand in market for college educated workers. They also examine the effects of the costs of college education and difference in gender and also means and distribution of skills.