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Interest and Attitude of Working Women Towards Women Empowerment in Agra (U.P.)



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Abstract

This study is an attempt to know about the interest and attitude of working women towards women empowerment. As food prepared by others cannot be beneficial to a person until he/she eats it, in the same way efforts and laws made by government towards women empowerment cannot bear fruits until women take interest in women empowerment. To know about working women's attitude towards women empowerment a sample of 200 educated (at least graduate) working women of Agra (U.P.) was taken. Their opinion on various issues related to women empowerment was sought through a self made questionnaire.

On the basis of the investigations made by the researcher it can be said that there is awakening amongst women towards women empowerment, still there is need of spreading education and awareness so that ladies may avail their rights and fulfill duties competently. The day when birth of a male child will not be considered essential by each and every man and woman, the real dawn of women empowerment will take place.

Keywords : Working women, Women empowerment, Attitude, Right, laws.

Introduction

"A society that is unable to respect, protect and nurture its women and children loses its moral moorings and runs adrift."

The Hindu- Opinion Sept, 15 2012

All through the ages women on the basis of gender have always been discriminated in almost all the societies of the world. Sexual difference is biological, but gender difference is sociological. In India, there are various factors which perpetuate gender inequality and keep the status of women low. Right from their childhood, they are deprived of an equal access to health care, education and economic rights, as compared to the males. Gender inequality in India exists in terms of gross population, literacy, sex ratio, socio-economic status and opportunities. The low literacy of women is much because of child marriage, social discrimination, low house hold and social status. Sex ratio has always been a matter of serious concern for India as it has been 943 per 1000 males according to census 2011.

Among various factors the prominent ones are high maternal mortality rate, female foeticide, low status of women, patriarchal society, neglect of girl child, etc. Among all the main causative factors which lead to high death rates amongst woman are the preference for son and social stigmas.

According to a global study conducted by Thomson Reuters, India is the "fourth most dangerous country" in the world for women. India ranks 115th of 162 countries in terms of gender development.

Women are the focus of all development. For any sustainable change towards progress needs involvement of women. There is a great variation across the world in empowering women, even in developed industrial countries. High income is not a prerequisite to create opportunities for women. Gender empowerment focuses on gender inequality in economic and political opportunities and participation in decision making process and values. The inequality varies from community to community, race to race and region to region within a particular country. It can be seen in terms of the percentage of women in parliament, state legislatures, senior officials and managers and among professional and technical workers.

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The Awakening of Women in India

Undoubtedly women in ancient India enjoyed a much higher status than their descendants in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. From the earliest days there had been many notable women in India—poetess, scholars, capable administrators and leaders of religious movements. Even the eighteenth century produced women like Ahalyabai Holkar whose administration of Indore state was considered model for all Indian states. But there is no doubt that speaking generally, the condition of Indian womanhood had sunk low. Kept vigorously secluded behind the purdah (veil) in many parts of India, denied facilities of education and compelled under a system of child marriage, at least among some of the higher classes to maternity when their sisters in other countries were in school, and kept under subjection during marriage and forced to live a life of misery during widowhood, Indian women in the beginning of the nineteenth century were probably among the most backward of their sex all over the world.

The Brahm Samaj led the movement for women emancipation but as even the educated classes generally showed a disinclination towards the emancipation of their women folk the movement for their upliftment was slow in taking shape. Many notable leaders and social reformers like Raja Rammohan Roy, Ishwar Chand Vidya Sagar, Swami Dayanand Saraswati made efforts for women's education and their upliftment. By the beginning of the twentieth century the position had begun to show some change. The education of women had gradually become popular and some of those who had tasted the fruits of modern education took seriously the work of women's upliftment. During the freedom movement in India women participated with active interest in freedom struggle for over twenty five years. Gandhiji appealed women to come forward. In free India women were appointed on high posts freely. In this way the condition of woman gradually improved.

Position of Women in India in 21st Century

Today modern woman is so deft and self-sufficient that she can be easily called superwoman, as she juggles many fronts single handedly. Women are now fiercely ambitious and are providing their metal not only on the home front, but also in their respective careers, education in the society. We have examples of Karnam Malleshwari (first Indian woman to win medal in Olympics), Puneeta Arora (first lieutenant general), Pratibha Patil (first woman president), Miera Kumar (first woman Lok Sabha speaker), Aruna Roy (worked to the save RTI Campaign) and Medha Patkar (associated with Narmada Bachao Andolan) and many more.

Indian women enjoy the right to independent, property, freedom of marriage, right to education and employment. Their share in gainful or paid employment in industry and services has increased in most of the states. In 2010 March 9, one day after International Women's day, Rajya Sabha passed the Women's Reservation Bill requiring that 33% of seats in India's Parliament and state legislative bodies be reserved for women. Yet there is much to improve in women's social economic and political status in India.

The Constitution of India guarantees to all Indian women equality (Article 14), no discrimination by the State (Article 15(1)), equality of opportunity (Article 16), and equal pay for equal work (Article 39(d)). In addition, it allows special provisions to be made by the State in favour of women and children (Article 15(3)), renounces practices derogatory to the dignity of women (Article 51(A) (e)), and also allows for provisions to be made by the State for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief. (Article 42). The Government of India declared 2001 as the Year of Women's Empowerment (*Swashakti*). The National Policy for the Empowerment of Women was passed in 2001.

Despite of all these efforts crime against women are not decreasing. Incidence and rate of Cognizable Crimes (IPC) and % change during the years:

Crime head	2001	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Rape (Section 376 IPC)	16075 (1.6%)	19348 (1.7%)	20737 (1.8%)	21467 (1.9%)	21397 (1.8%)	22172 (1.9%)	24270 (2.6)	24915 (3.07)	33764 (5.16)

Source: Crimes in India, National Crime record Bureau, GOI.

A total of 3,09,546 cases of crime against women (both under various sections of IPC and SLL) were reported in the country during the year 2013 as compared to 2,44,270 in the year 2012, thus showing an increase of 26.7% during the year 2013. The highest number of missing women at birth is in the north-western states of Punjab, Rajasthan and Haryana. Recently the brutal gang rape against 23 year student in Delhi again sparked the debate on Indian mental set up and existing law and order in the Country.

Efforts Being Made By India Government For Women Empowerment

In India women have been recognized as a separate target group since 1980s in our developmental planning. For raising their status at par with that of men, The National Commission for women

was set up in January, 1992. Besides constitutional safeguards, initiatives in the areas of capacity building, employment and income generation, welfare and support services and gender sensitization have been undertaken by the department of women and child development under the national policy for empowerment of women, 2001.

No doubt Government and NGOs are making efforts to improve condition of women. It is heartening that the enrolment, participation and literacy rate of girls as compared to boys has increased with the growth of our national literacy rate, India still has to go a long way to catch up the HDI levels of the developed countries.

Present Research Study

"It is impossible to think about the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved.

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It is impossible for a bird to fly on only one wing."

Swami Vivekananda

No policy or rules bear fruit until they get support of those for whom policies are made. Indian Govt. is trying to improve condition of women at every front but it seems women themselves are responsible for their weak condition in some spheres. 'How far women are interested in women empowerment has been a query for researcher, so the selection of the problem 'Interest and attitude of working women towards women empowerment' seems justified. Working women are generally considered more aware towards women empowerment so to know about their interest in this aspect may also help in assuming the condition of house wives and uneducated women in determining their interest towards women empowerment.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

1. To find out the interest and attitude of working women towards women empowerment.
2. To find out working women's attitude about use of favourable laws in need.
3. To find out the difference between the interest and attitude of working women aged 23 to 35 and above 35 years towards women empowerment.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses have been tested:

1. Working women have no interest in women empowerment.
2. There is no difference between the interest and attitude of working women aged 25 to 35 and above 35 years towards women empowerment.
3. Working women do not avail various laws if needed.

Methodology

Descriptive survey method was adopted in this study. In order to achieve the objectives stated above and to test the corresponding hypotheses a purposive sample of 200 working in women of Agra (U.P.) was taken. The range of their age group was from 23 to 57 years. Sample included School teachers, Bank employees, Corporate office employees and entrepreneurs. A self made questionnaire consisting of 40 questions was used by the investigator. Percentage was computed for testing the hypotheses.

Analysis of Data and Findings

The following conclusions were drawn:

1. 100% working women accepted that they would try to get higher education whenever they get opportunity.
2. All the women were found in favour of equal education and facilities to their daughters and sons.
3. The results pertaining to the question 'If there are one or two daughters in a family birth of son is not essential'. Even 40% working women understand that birth of son is essential while 10% women are not certain.
4. All the women like to do essential works related to market hospitals etc themselves.

5. 70% women accepted that decisions taken by them are honoured by other members of the family while 30% did not know.
6. In case of injustice done to them in family only 68% women were found in favour of taking help of law.
7. All the women advocated for equal seats for women and men in Rajya Sabha and State legislative councils.
8. All the women were found confident in handling their duties in and outside home.
9. 90% women extended their wish to support victim of dowry case in need while 10% did not know.
10. 86% women wished to raise their voice to support victim of rape while others responded, 'Don't Know'.
11. All the women were found ready to take some extra job to meet financial needs.
12. 78% women agreed to take help of National Women Commission to get rid of exploitation being done to them while, 4% denied and 18% did not know.
13. Working women's attitude about keeping their parents with them after marriage in need got 88% 'Yes' and 12% 'Don't Know' reply.
14. All the women opposed purdah system.
15. 90% women wished to spend their salary or earned money themselves wisely while 10% did not know.

Conclusion

On the basis of collected data following conclusions are drawn-

Working women have keen interest in women empowerment as their scores were nowhere less than 70% except on 'need of a son in family'. 50% educated working women consider birth of son essential for family, status of uneducated women would be worse about it.

It was observed that attitude of ladies below 35 years is stronger towards women empowerment. This may be due to generation gap.

Even educated women are not 100% in favour of using laws to help themselves if needed.

The Final Word

On the basis of the investigations made by the researcher it can be said that there is awakening amongst women towards women empowerment, still there is need of spreading education and awareness so that ladies may avail their rights and fulfill duties competently. The day when birth of a male child will not be considered essential by each and every man and woman, the real dawn of women empowerment will take place.

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