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# Empowering Women through Education and Promoting Gender Equality

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**ABSTRACT:** Women's education is a multi-faceted factor that can be held responsible for the low rate of education among women in India. The factors like social, demographic, political and economic are the backbone of low or high literacy rate. The low acceptance of girls in schools is one of the main reasons, which hurdles in the way of women's liberation in India. According to reliable sources, 50% of all girls have never been to school. Whereas, two out of ten girls of the age 6 to 11 years have not yet enrolled in schools.

The role of women in the education system can play a big part in society. The factors like cultural, social, political and technological changes in the world have revolutionized the education and social life of women. If schools for female raise human capital, economic growth and productivity as that of male schooling, the women's disadvantage in education is economically wasteful. Studies have shown that the rate of economic growth from women's education matches with those from men's education.

Women empowerment is a pivotal part of any society, state or country. It is a woman who plays a dominant role in the basic life of a child. Women are an important section of our society. Education as a means of empowerment of women can bring about a positive attitudinal change. It is, therefore, crucial for the socioeconomic and political progress of India. The Constitution of India empowers the state to adopt affirmative measures for promoting ways and means to empower women. Education significantly makes difference in the lives of women.

Women Empowerment is a global issue and discussion on women political right are at the forefront of many formal and informal campaigns worldwide. The concept of women empowerment was introduced at the international women conference at NAROIBI in 1985. Education is the milestone of women empowerment because it enables them to respond to the challenges, to confront their traditional role and change their life. Hence, we cannot neglect the importance of education in reference to women empowerment. To see the development in women education India is supposed to the upcoming superpower of the world in recent years. With the increasing change in women education, the empowerment of women has been recognized as the central issue in determining the status of women. For becoming a superpower we have mostly to concentrate upon women's education. By which it will force women's empowerment.

Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. There has been progress over the last decades: More girls are going to school, fewer girls are forced into early marriage, more women are serving in parliament and positions of leadership, and laws are being reformed to advance gender equality. Despite these gains, many challenges remain: discriminatory laws and social norms remain pervasive, women continue to be underrepresented at all levels of political leadership, and 1 in 5 women and girls between the ages of 15 and 49 report experiencing physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner within a 12-month period. Gender equality, also known as sexual equality or equality of the sexes, is the state of equal ease of access to resources and opportunities regardless of gender, including economic participation and decision-making; and the state of valuing different behaviors, aspirations and needs equally, regardless of gender. Gender equality is the goal, while gender neutrality and gender equity are practices and ways of thinking that help in achieving the goal. Gender parity, which is used to measure gender balance in a given situation, can aid in achieving gender equality but is not the goal in

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and of itself. Gender equality is more than just equal representation, it is strongly tied to women's rights, and often requires policy changes. As of 2017, the global movement for gender equality has not incorporated the proposition of genders besides women and men, or gender identities outside of the gender binary. UNICEF says gender equality "means that women and men, and girls and boys, enjoy the same rights, resources, opportunities and protections. It does not require that girls and boys, or women and men, be the same, or that they be treated exactly alike."

**KEYWORDS:** women, empowerment, education, gender, equality, human, right, fundamental

## I. INTRODUCTION

**Women make up more than two-thirds of the world's 750 million adults without basic literacy skills;** women represent less than 30% of the world's researchers; and women journalists are more exposed to assault, threat or physical, verbal or digital attack than their male counterparts.



UNESCO believes that all forms of discrimination based on gender are violations of human rights, as well as a significant barrier to the achievement of the Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals.

Our message is clear: women and men must enjoy equal opportunities, choices, capabilities, power and knowledge as equal citizens. Equipping girls and boys, women and men with the knowledge, values, attitudes and skills to tackle gender disparities is a precondition to building a sustainable future for all.[1,2]

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru once said: "If you educate a man you educate an individual, however, if you educate a woman you educate a whole family. Women empowered means mother India empowered". When women who contribute

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almost half of the population are empowered it will strengthen the national economy. Education is considered as a milestone for women empowerment because it enables them to respond to the challenges, to confront their traditional role and change their lives. Increasing access to education notwithstanding, gender discrimination still persists in India and lot more needs to be done in the field of women's education in India. Women have so much unexplored potential which has never been tapped. As education is both an input and input of human development, educational equity will ensure enabling and entrepreneurial development. Today, the female literacy levels according to the Literacy Rate 2011 census are 65.46% where the male literacy rate is over 80%. Even beyond literacy there is much that education can do for women's rights, dignity and security. Education is the key to unlock the golden door of freedom for development. Eileen Malone Beach sees education, health care, and income as a blessed trinity because they are so closely related. This paper discusses the impact of education on empowerment of women as well as the challenges and changes that we must have to deal with during the process. We call for a renewed emphasis on relevant, quality and holistic education to ensure the desired results.[3,4]



Many women around the world still lack basic human rights and face discrimination and gender-based violence. The world's parliaments are no exception. With a global average of 25 per cent women, most parliaments remain male-dominated, and women MPs are often under-represented on decision-making bodies. The IPU is one of the leading organizations for the empowerment of women, recognizing the link between strong democracies and gender equality in parliaments. Our work focuses on three main objectives: increasing the number of women in parliament through well-designed quotas and parliamentary caucuses; supporting women in parliament; and transforming parliaments into gender-sensitive institutions that deliver on women's rights.

We are the authority on the percentage of women in national parliaments, including comparative analyses between countries and annual studies that look at historical trends over decades. We have published landmark reports on sexism and gender-based violence in parliament, looking at both female MPs and female parliamentary staff. Our self-assessment toolkit for gender-sensitive parliaments is an essential reference that has been used by dozens of

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Vol. 7, Issue 7, July 2018

parliaments around the world. Practising what we preach, we have adopted groundbreaking practices ourselves to ensure gender equality in our assemblies, committees and staff.[5,6]

## II. DISCUSSION

The entire paper is divided into three parts. The first part is introductory that talks about the second and third goal of MDGs which is achieving universal primary education and promote gender equality and empower women respectively with certain indicators to achieve these goals. This part also gives a brief account of the gender inequality in education and employment world wide. In the second portion, the importance of education in general and women education in particular has been highlighted. It talks about the gender inequality in literacy in India. A comparative analysis between different states of the country is being made with regard to the parameters like education dimension index and the same index if adjusted for inequality. Further, the parameters like inequality adjusted HDI, education and income index have been taken for few countries to make a comparative analysis. To find the impact of inequality in education on various other parameters, a correlation matrix has been calculated. To know the level of women empowerment in various parts of the world, the variables like female share in national parliament, percentage of female literacy and female labour force participation rate has been taken. The third and final part is given to concluding observations.[7,8]



**Education is defined as learning or studying existing knowledge and cultural legacy.** It is a fundamental human right, accessible to all genders or sexes. Across the world, education is viewed as a necessity yet millions of women remain illiterate because of poverty, social stigma, discrimination, lack of resources and much more. In this blog, we will understand the importance of women's education and will see some of the famous quotes of world leaders on women's education. Women's education is critical to the country's entire development. It's similar to an effective medicine that may know how to cure a patient and recover their health. A well-educated lady is capable of managing both her personal and professional lives. The physical and intellectual growth of the child is the moral goal of education. Education's true objective is to provide students with "full knowledge" or "greater information." [9,10]



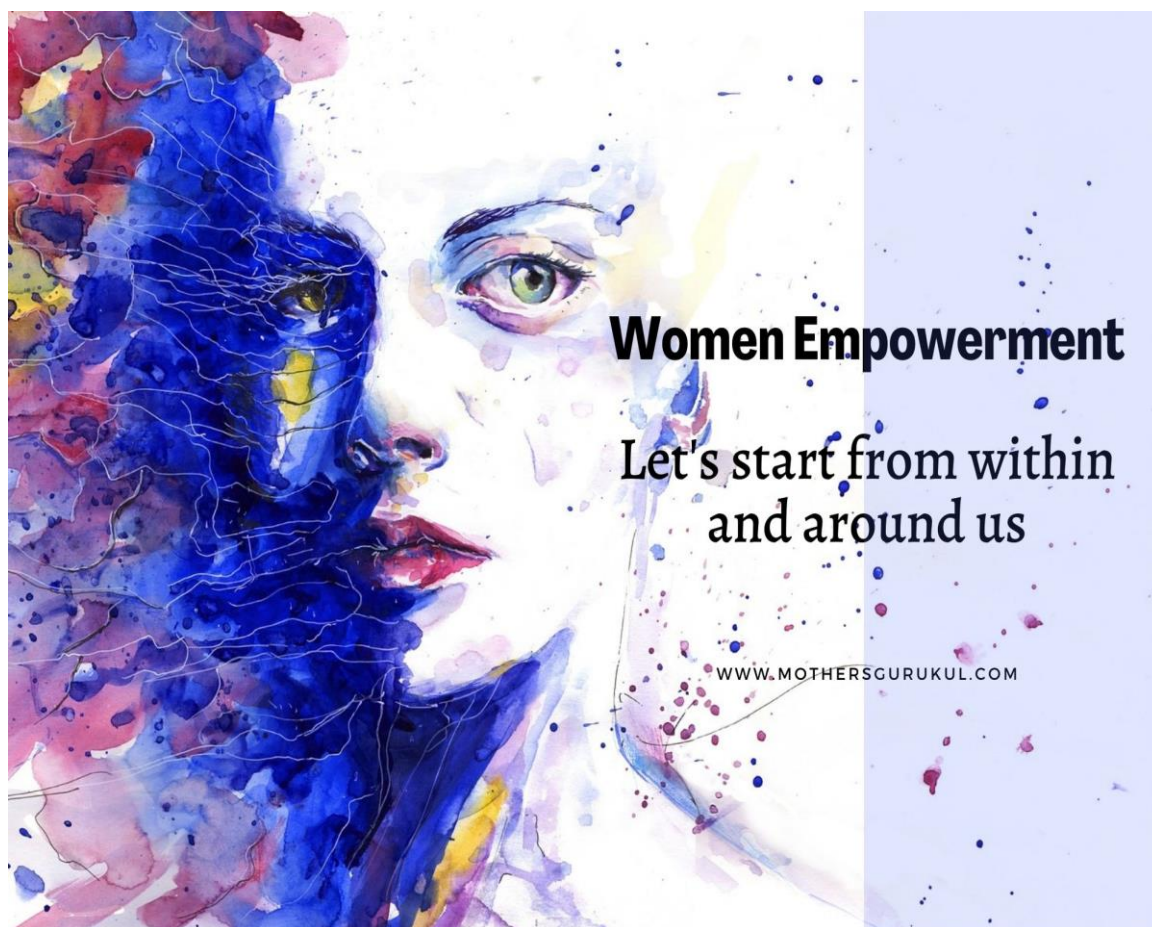
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A well-educated woman provides the skills, knowledge, and self-assurance necessary to be a better mom, worker, and citizen. A well-educated woman will also be more productive and well-paid at work. Indeed, the return on investment in education is often higher for women than for males.



**Women's empowerment is an important element of every community, state, or nation.** In a child's basic life, it is a woman who performs a prominent role. Women have a significant role in our culture. Women's empowerment via education might result in a good attitude change. As a result, it is critical for India's socio-economic and political development. The Indian Constitution gives the government the authority to take affirmative action to promote women's empowerment. Education has a huge impact on the lives of women. Women's empowerment is a global problem, and many formal and informal movements throughout the world focus on women's political rights. Women's empowerment begins with education, which helps them to adapt to difficulties, face their traditional roles, and alter their lives. As a result, we must not overlook the value of education in terms of women's empowerment. In light of recent advancements in women's education, India is seen as the world's emerging superpower.[11,12]

**Women's empowerment, according to the United National Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), involves:**

- Gaining knowledge and awareness of gender relations, as well as the ways in which they may be changed.

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**Vol. 7, Issue 7, July 2018**

- Gaining a sense of self-worth, faith in one's ability to effect desired changes, and the ability to direct one's own life.
- Having the ability to make decisions that give you negotiating power.
- Improving one's abilities to organize and influence social change to achieve a more just social and economic order on a national and worldwide scale.



As a result, empowerment is defined as a psychological sense of personal control or influence, as well as a concern for actual social power, political authority, and legal rights. Individuals, organizations, and communities are all included in this multi-level architecture. Empowering women and promoting gender equality is crucial to accelerating sustainable development. Ending all forms of discrimination against women and girls is not only a basic human right, but it also has a multiplier effect across all other development areas. Since 2000, UNDP together with our UN partners and the rest of the global community has made gender equality central to our work, and we have seen some remarkable successes. More girls are now in school compared to 15 years ago, and most regions have reached gender parity in primary education. Women now make up to 41 percent of paid workers outside of agriculture, compared to 35 percent in 1990.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aim to build on these achievements to ensure that there is an end to discrimination against women and girls everywhere. There are still gross inequalities in access to paid employment in some regions, and significant gaps between men and women in the labour market. Sexual violence and exploitation, the unequal division of unpaid care and domestic work, and discrimination in public decision making, all remain huge barriers.[13]

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Vol. 7, Issue 7, July 2018



Achieving gender equality, advancing women's empowerment and fulfilling the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and girls are crucial to reaching the Sustainable Development Goals and achieving the targets set in the 2016 United Nations Political Declaration on Ending AIDS. Four decades of the HIV response has heralded significant success. Yet, much more is needed, particularly in terms of ensuring that women and girls are not left behind. Pervasive gender inequality, patriarchy and discrimination undermine the progress in the HIV response. Young women and adolescent girls face a heightened vulnerability to HIV infection and every week 7000 young women (aged 15–24) acquire HIV. Gender-based violence is a global epidemic and one in three women worldwide has experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner, or non-partner sexual violence, in her life. Studies have shown that, in some regions, women who experienced physical or sexual intimate partner violence were 1.5 times more likely to acquire HIV. Among women living with HIV, intimate partner violence can lead to lower antiretroviral therapy use and adherence to HIV treatment, and higher viral loads. Access to education, including comprehensive sexuality education, and to sexual and reproductive health services is essential to supporting the autonomy and agency of women and girls. When women are empowered in decision-making, they are more likely to negotiate safer sex, have higher HIV-related knowledge and use condoms. Additionally, the integration of sexual and reproductive health services with



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Vol. 7, Issue 7, July 2018

other health services improves access to, for example, tuberculosis and cervical cancer screening, prevention and treatment, and mitigates the impact of gender-based violence. [25]



The UNAIDS Secretariat and Cosponsors, together with a wide range of partners, including women living with HIV and women's organizations, work towards meeting the needs of girls and women across all targets in the Political Declaration on Ending AIDS. They work towards ensuring that women and girls everywhere have their rights fulfilled and are empowered to protect themselves against HIV and that all women and girls living with HIV have immediate access to treatment and care. Ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health, and affording women equal rights to economic resources such as land and property, are vital targets to realizing this goal. There are now more women in public office than ever before, but encouraging more women leaders across all regions will help strengthen policies and legislation for greater gender equality. Gender equality is one of 17 Global Goals that make up the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. An integrated approach is crucial for progress across the multiple goals. [14,15]

## III. RESULTS

**Considerable attention has been directed towards the number of women at board level, and to a lesser extent, in executive positions.** This has led to positive developments, as we see that the percentage of women on boards has increased across all regions over recent years. The following flow charts show the proportion of companies according to the percentage of women on their board, and how the trend evolves over time. Each flow represents the percentage of assessed companies which moved between brackets from one year to the next. [24] The percentage of women at different levels of responsibility and equal remuneration. The third part 'Care responsibilities in times of a pandemic' will then focus on the importance of family-care policies, which can remove some of the barriers women face in their career development. Every year, the largest 3,500 companies in the world are invited to participate in the Corporate Sustainability Assessment, for potential inclusion in the Dow Jones Sustainability Indices. The graphs in this article present the data collected through the assessment of these companies over the years.

### Proportion of companies according to the percentage of women on their board

**Methodology:** Our universe of assessed companies in Africa is almost exclusively composed of South African companies, which is why we single out South Africa when analysing regional trends.



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Vol. 7, Issue 7, July 2018



## Regulatory frameworks

Regulatory frameworks have been a driving force towards increasing gender diversity within companies. The European Union has been the most proactive in this domain, issuing a proposal for a directive on improving the gender balance on corporate boards as early as 2012<sup>10</sup>. As a result, six EU member-states have adopted binding quotas for gender board diversity: Belgium, Italy, Portugal, Germany, Austria and France.[23] Another nine states have resorted to soft and non-binding quotas: Denmark, Ireland, Spain, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Finland, Slovenia and Sweden. The UK has also put in place soft quotas. Beyond Europe, India issued the Companies Bill in 2013 which requires public companies to have at least one woman director. Malaysia adopted a policy in 2011 for companies with more than 250 employees to have boards that are at least 30% women by 2016.

**The number of women on the board is an easily measurable gender performance indicator, which explains why this is a focal area.** Furthermore, it is expected that having more women on the board will have trickle-down effects on the rest of the workforce. For example, it could break down stereotypes on women in leadership and encourage women to pursue their careers further, to seek for roles which they would have not otherwise considered and to ask for more raises and promotions<sup>11</sup>. Having more diversity on the board can break down gender barriers by broadening women's "professional imagination", providing them with role models and increasing their capacity to project themselves into leadership roles. Higher numbers of women on boards can therefore instigate cultural change and has a strong symbolic meaning, showing that women can be leaders. However, more research has been conducted showing that gender diversity in the boardroom matters because it brings a broader collection of experience, viewpoints and backgrounds which result in better decision-making. Having more women on the board also tends to curb excessive risk taking, decrease aggressive tax strategies and improve firm reputation, earnings quality and sustainability performance. These outcomes are not negligible for companies and their shareholders, especially in times of a global pandemic which will require companies to differentiate themselves from their industry peers. The benefits of diversity apply not only at

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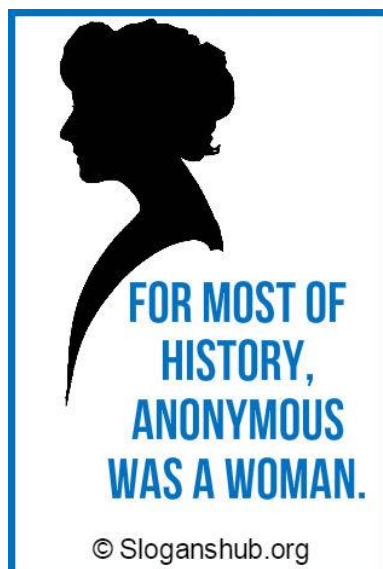
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Vol. 7, Issue 7, July 2018

board level but throughout companies more broadly, and the question has therefore been raised whether better representation at board level improves overall diversity metrics of a company.[16]

### The impact on other diversity indicators

The development of women's "professional imagination", i.e. their career expectations and aspirations, within companies with more women on the board is difficult to measure and grasp through quantitative metrics, at least in the short term.[22] Furthermore, the expected improvement in diversity metrics such as the percentage of women in leadership and management roles and the pay ratios has not translated into the data. Indeed, based on the analysis conducted on the data disclosed by companies within the Corporate Sustainability Assessment, the correlation between women on the board and other diversity indicators is low.



Companies with more women on the board have a slightly higher proportion of women on average at different levels of responsibility. However, it is unclear whether greater board diversity drives this trend or whether companies with a more diverse workforce appoint more women directors. These companies might be more aware of diversity and gender equality issues, or simply have more women in their talent pool who can be appointed as directors. It is therefore unsurprising that companies with more women in the workforce tend to have more women on the board, and as the correlation is not statistically significant, it is difficult to make a strong statement about the relationship between both indicators.[21]

### Below, we have listed some of the famous quotes by some of the most popular personalities in the world:

"There is no greater pillar of stability than a strong, free, and educated woman." ~Angelina Jolie

"If we are going to see real development in the world then our best investment is WOMEN!" ~Desmond Tutu

"As a tribute to the legions of women who navigated the path of fighting for justice before us, we ought to imprint in the supreme law of the land, firm principles upholding the rights of women." ~Nelson Mandela

"We should be respectful but we must also have the courage to stop harmful practices that impoverish girls, women and their communities." ~ Graca Machel

"When women are educated, their countries become stronger and more prosperous." ~Michelle Obama

"Young women who want an education will not be stopped." ~ Freida Pinto

"Women share this planet 50/50 and they are underrepresented – their potential astonishingly untapped." ~Emma Watson

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“To educate girls is to reduce poverty.” ~ Kofi Annan

“The seeds of success in every nation on Earth are best planted in women and children.” ~Joyce Band

## IV. CONCLUSION

Education has been linked to fewer child and maternal deaths, better child health, and decreased fertility in various research. Women with some formal education are more likely than uneducated women to use contraception, marry later, have fewer children, and be more knowledgeable of their children’s nutritional and other needs.[17]



- **Feedback:** Girls’ education assists women in limiting the number of children they have. Over time, increasing girls’ school attendance lowers fertility rates.[20]
- **Mental Health:** Increased access to education for women improves maternal health. An additional year of education for 1,000 women is known to help avoid two maternal deaths.
- **Child Survival:** Increasing the educational opportunities for girls has a beneficial impact on infant and child health. A child born to an educated mother has a 50% higher chance of living through the age of five than a child born to an illiterate mother.
- **HIV/AIDS:** A girl’s or woman’s chance of getting HIV or passing HIV to her baby is decreased by education. Women in 32 countries who continued their education after elementary school was five times more likely than illiterate women to know basic HIV facts.
- **Income Potential:** Women’s earning potential is enhanced by education. A single year of primary school has been proven to improve women’s earnings by 10% to 20% later in life, whereas female secondary education returns range between 15% and 25%.

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Women's education is critical to the country's entire development. It's similar to an effective medicine that may know how to cure a patient and recover their health.[19] A well-educated lady is capable of managing both her personal and professional lives. The physical and intellectual growth of the child is the moral goal of education. Education's true objective is to provide students with "full knowledge" or "greater information." Diversity also needs to expand its scope to move away from addressing women as one group and to instead recognise the heterogeneity of women's experiences in the workplace. More efforts need to be made to collect data on indicators such as race, ethnicity, caste, religion, disability, sexual orientation and other identity markers, in order to address the further inequalities that some women experience according to their intersecting identities. Eventually, the discourse should also shift to recognise women for their abilities, experience and skills rather than branding them as diversity trophies. Companies and investors can help the world to wake up to the possibility that women deserve a say in the decisionmaking process as legitimate leaders and fully-entitled human beings.[18,25]

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