WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH TECHNOLOGY -CHANGING ROLE



**Abstract**

Women empowerment refers to the activities undertaken to improve the social, economic, and political status of women in the world. The female gender has faced subjugation and systematic oppression throughout history and the situations call for improvement in their condition in society.

Women empowerment can be conceptualized as increasing women’s self-esteem, abilities to create rational decisions, and right to effect revolutionary change for themselves and others.

Women play an important role in various sectors such as economic, political, social, sports, educational, enterprising etc. Women are crucial part of any economy. Women can be empowered only if they are given education and made aware of their rights so that they can prioritize their lives. Women have to be given due respect in a society to have actual empowerment.

The empowerment of women can help to build their capacity to get involved in decision making in better way to effectively overcome in era of social, political and economic barriers as well as strengthening them to participate in to the same processes.

Technology can promote sustainable socio-economic development and develop the women’s life as a significant portion of the world’s population. Technology exists in a social world and when technology is considered under the social context, the issues of women become of interest.

**Key words** women, empowerment, technology, gender equality,

**Introduction**

(9) Women’s empowerment is a process in which women gain greater share of control over resources material, human and intellectual like knowledge, information, ideas and financial resources like money and access to money and control over decision-making in the home, community, society, nation, and to gain power. Women’s empowerment, or female empowerment, is the process by which women gain influence and equal opportunity to pursue personal, social and economic endeavours, engaging in all parts of society on the same basis as men.

For women, this suggests empowerment in several realms: personal, economic and political.

Technology provides new avenues for economic empowerment of women, contribute to greater gender equality in the professional world, gives access to knowledge, information, education, health care, break barriers that impede women’s progress and enable them to participate in the economy. Digital transformation is a driving force to bridge gender gap and empower women.

**Why women empowerment?**



(6) Today low women’s empowerment and large gender gaps are commonplace. Less than 1 per cent of women and girls live in a country with high women’s empowerment and a small gender gap. Globally, women are empowered to achieve, on average, only 60 per cent of their full potential, as measured by the WEI, and women achieve, on average, 28 per cent less than men across key human development dimensions, as measured by the GGPI.

These disparities are harmful not just to women’s well-being and advancement but also to human progress.

**Some other reasons for the empowerment of women are as follows:**

1. The empowerment and autonomy of women and the improvement of their political, social, economic and health status is a highly important.
2. It is essential for the achievement of sustainable development.
3. The full participation and partnership of both women and men is required in productive and reproductive life, including shared responsibilities for the care and nurturing of children and maintenance of the household.
4. In all parts of the world, women are facing threats to their lives, health and well- being as a result of being overburdened with work and of their lack of power and influence.
5. In most regions of the world, women receive less formal education than men, and at the same time, women's own knowledge, abilities and coping mechanisms often go unrecognized.
6. Women's empowerment helps in preventing the cruel crime of female foeticide.
7. Empowered women can contribute to nation building by joining any sector like an army, social service, politics, education, corporate sector, etc.

**How to bring about women empowerment?**



(2) Real women empowerment involves creating an environment where women can achieve their full potential and live free from discrimination, oppression, and violence. To herald real women’s empowerment, innovative approaches are necessary to challenge the existing power structures and promote gender equality. Here are some ideas:

**Education:** Education is one of the most powerful tools for empowering women. Innovative approaches could provide education in unconventional ways, such as through online learning, mentoring programs, and apprenticeships. women are more likely to know their rights and to have the confidence to claim them.

**Financial Independence**: Empowering women financially can go a long way in breaking the cycle of poverty and dependence. Innovative approaches could include providing microloans, offering entrepreneurship training, and supporting women in non-traditional fields like STEM.

**Technology**: Technology can be a game-changer in promoting women’s empowerment. Innovative approaches could include using technology to provide access to education and healthcare, developing apps to address gender-based violence, and leveraging social media to raise awareness about women’s issues.

**Gender-Sensitive Policies**: Gender-sensitive policies can help address the structural barriers hindering women’s empowerment. Innovative approaches could include implementing quotas for women in leadership positions, providing paid parental leave for both men and women, and instituting gender-sensitive budgeting.

**Cultural Change**: Cultural norms can significantly hinder women’s empowerment. Innovative approaches could include promoting women’s leadership in cultural institutions, engaging men and boys in the conversation around gender equality, and creating spaces for women to share their stories and experiences.

**Community Support**: Community support can play a critical role in empowering women. Innovative approaches could include creating safe spaces for women to meet and connect, providing access to healthcare and childcare, and supporting women’s groups and networks.

**FUTURE OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT**

1. Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by
2. addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective
3. Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls
4. More recognition and opportunities to women:- (4) The Ministry of Defence, in its notice, said, "After detailed deliberations, it has been decided that Republic Day 2024 will have women participation, including contingents (marching and bands), tableaux and performances during the parade at the Kartavya Path.”
5. (5) focus on innovation, financing, and collective action to end gender-based violence, elevate human capital, expand and enable economic opportunities, and engage women as leaders.
6. Lay emphasis on the critical role digital tools can play in empowering women and girls and making their voices heard. These tools can be particularly powerful in the context of crisis, as in the devastating earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria, and in conflict, including Russia’s unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine and the worrisome deterioration of women’s rights in Afghanistan.
7. Digital technology provides an important means for all women and girls to access information and share views, and contributes to promoting their inclusion, participation and rights in society.
8. Women and girls also need to be able to access the online space free from harassment and intimidation.
9. “Whether we focus on the protection, prevention, or participation of women – empowerment is a key component. And digital tools make a real difference. They can provide access to life-saving information, health and other public services, and platforms for employment, training and education,” said Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid. “The digital world can either become an additional barrier for women and girls or an important tool for their empowerment. We are here to tilt the scales toward empowerment.”

**Women Empowerment and technology**



(9) Importance of Information Technology for Women Empowerment

(A)Social Empowerment

* + 1. New knowledge and information.
    2. Awareness and understanding of issues.
    3. Skills, abilities and competence.
    4. Support, friendship and inspiration.
    5. Participating in group activities with women.

(B)Political Empowerment

Participating in policy making.

Taking action to change your life or your community.

Networking and lobbying.

Changing stereotypes about rural women.

(C)Technical Empowerment

Knowledge about ICTs.

Awareness and understanding about ICTs.

Skills and competence in using new ICTs.

Ongoing support and advice in using ICTs.

Access to high quality technologies.

Confidence to use and speak about ICTs.

(D) Economic Empowerment

Women’s control over income.

Relative contribution to family support.

Employment opportunities.

**Benefits of Digital Technology for Working Women**

Digital technology has changed the role of the women in the present times. Some of the benefits of digital technology to women can be seen in the following: -

1. Information technology has catalysed the process of women's empowerment by opening up avenues for women to freely articulate and share their experiences, concerns and knowledge created the possibility of their further enrichment.
2. The use of IT has broadened the scope of their activities and enabled them to address issues previously beyond their capacity.
3. It opened a direct window for women to the outside world.
4. Information flows to them without any distortion and censoring. This leads to broadening of perspectives; greater understanding of their current situation.
5. IT also has played an important role in changing the concept of work and workplace. Now, women have employment options as flexibility and work at home concept.
6. IT has made the role of time and distance less significant in organizing business and production related activities. As a result of technology, a high proportion of jobs outsourced by big firms are going to women.
7. IT offers women flexibility in time & space. Women, therefore can work from outside the office, often from their home and at any time and raise extra income to become more financially independent and empowered.
8. New areas of employment such as telemarketing, medical transcriptions etc. have also opened up tremendous job opportunities for women. These jobs are definitely underpaid and fall at lower segment of IT Jobs, nevertheless, they are opening up avenues where none existed before.

**Failure of Women career in Science and Technology**

Education is a key factor in deciding the future career path of students, and educational institutions are also important in their success or otherwise in training individuals to make a living out of what they have learned.

Societal and cultural factors are the key to defining which subject a woman might choose for her education.

Arriving at a higher rate of women’s presence in science and technology fields requires a thorough understanding of the barriers they face at the time skilled women enter the job market.

Among the factors that have restrained women’s further involvement in science and technology, the following three could be the most important:

1. gender pay gap,
2. (ii) culture and gender inequity, and
3. (iii) lack of political will.

To make the decision-making process more sensitive to the problems faced by women, the number of women on decision-making and policy advisory bodies has to be increased.

The implications of the absence of women at these top- level positions in the science and technology sphere are significant and leads to the marginalization of women in the allocation of opportunities such as research funding and employment.

The absence of women in top political and managerial positions in educational and research institutions eliminates the opportunity of hearing the voices of women in key decisions on the current and future orientation of science and technology.

New technologies can improve women’s competitiveness in selected areas where intellectual competence supersedes physical strength.

However, whether women are able to take advantage of these opportunities depends primarily on socio-economic factors. It is quite difficult to assess career opportunities in general, as career paths are rarely organized and documented, shortage of data makes any such assessment difficult.

**(7)** Bindiya Vohra, Co-founder & Director- Digital Solutions at ThoughtSol Infotech Pvt. Ltd.“As a female entrepreneur and technology aficionado myself, I strongly believe that technology is and will be a major driver of gender equality in the coming years. Through technology, it is becoming easier for women to access education, find jobs, and start businesses while breaking down traditional gender roles and stereotypes. From access to education and healthcare to opportunities to pursue economic and financial independence, technological advancements have the power to break down the barriers that impede women’s progress and enable them to fully participate in the economy."

“In the coming years, I anticipate that the advances in artificial intelligence, machine learning, cloud computing, and other digital technologies will enable women of all backgrounds to gain access to resources, tools, and networks that will help them grow as entrepreneurs or as independent individuals."

Technology can also help challenge and break gender stereotypes and biases that often limit women's potential."

The digital future of work is set to provide additional opportunities for women to participate with flexible schedules and with greater geographical portability including work from home.

 pay parity and leveraging technology as an enabler for us to provide certain benefits such as remote working flexibility, online learning and skill upgradation  and driving technical innovation across industry

remote work and flexible schedules to online education and mentorship programs, technology is paving the way for a more inclusive and diverse future where everyone can thrive regardless of gender.

**(8) Women Empowerment Through ICT**

ICT was seen by women as an enabler to increase their economic empowerment in terms of earning power and position.

This is mainly seen in terms of additional social status and increased participation in decision making.

As such, results recorded here will also have an impact on levels of social and hence political empowerment.

It is relevant to mention that ICT as an instrument to meet women’s development needs could offer a promising future. But, the condition is that technology must be socially relevant, that is, appropriate in a particular setting and for the particular programme.

It is the responsibility of state to make technology work for the people and invest in people centric technology rather other way round and this requires a gradual transition in ICT usage.

**Challenges in using of ICT For Women’s Empowerment**

Women face enormous challenges to use ICT for their own empowerment. Using and benefitting from ICT requires education, training, affordable access to the technology, information relevant to the user and a great amount of support.

Access to affordable services and availability of infrastructure is, without doubt, a major requirement if ICTs are to be used for women’s empowerment.

Availability of electricity, transport, and security may also influence the use of ICT.

Radio and television, as the widest form of communication, provide one way of solving information dissemination.

In addition to being used as an effective ICT means for development, radio and television could be better medium that can be used as a means of re-socializing the population about the benefits of ICT for development.

Radio and Television programmes can be developed to educate women on various development issues, including the various uses of ICT, thus increasing awareness and knowledge of ICT’s uses.

When possible, such programmes should be developed and conducted by women and their content should reflect a gender perspective.

Even when infrastructure is available, affordable access is a concern in most developing countries.

Universal access policies aimed at developing solutions that provide community access at affordable prices.

Lack of local and community‐related content in local languages continues to be a major barrier to women’s use of ICT for their empowerment.

To make ICT more useful and meaningful, particularly for women, relevant information and tools need to be provided to address women’s needs and demands.

Multimedia can be developed to provide information both in spoken and written language.

The challenge is to develop content that is relevant and useful to communities in their own language.

**Conclusion**

Majority of women seek to obtain ICT training with the intention to enhance the quality of their lives through acquiring knowledge, enhancing their employment position and earning power, or enhancing their employment opportunities.

The analysis has revealed that the majority of women, whether in employment or not, did perceive a positive impact in terms of ability to gain economic empowerment.

Science and technology brings economic growth and well-being to people and it is not only the empowerment of women through science and technology, but also the enrichment of science and technology through women’s participation.

It is not the concern of one nation only, but there are many players and stakeholders in the aim to reach this millennium goal.

We just hope that women become empowered at 100% and become equal to men so that both of them may work side by side for a better world of today. It is necessary to recognize that the participation of women in science and technology is no longer simply an issue of gender equity: it is also an issue that should be considered in national economic development.

Women are both consumers and producers, they can make a difference if they are involved and considered in economic development plans.

With science and technology at the heart of economic development, women’s participation in science and technology is therefore an essential part of economic development strategies.

Government’s role is crucial in bringing about these changes, through providing an adequate social infrastructure and policy environment which facilitate women’s entry into the fields of science and technology.

The empowerment of women is one of the most important and alarming concerns in today’s time.

Gender equality will definitely make this world a better place to live in and will reduce crime exponentially.

Mere Government initiatives will not be enough to achieve this goal.

The society together has to participate and contribute towards this goal and make a climate which suits all the genders and an atmosphere that pleases all.

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