BREAKING BARRIERS:
ROLE OF EDUCATION IN WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

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Edited Peer Reviewed Book on

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Breaking Barriers: Role of Education in Women Empowerment

Edited by: Dr. Dilipkumar A. Ode, Khushboo, Dr. Shobhna Mishra, Aayushi, Shweta Dahiya, Sandeep Kumar Malik, Dr. Karamthoti Mb & Dr. Damla M

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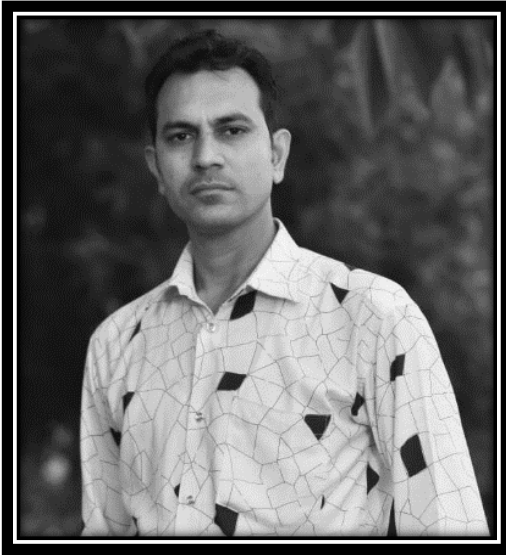
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CONTENTS

FROM PEN TO POWER: THE EVOLUTION OF WOMEN'S LITERATURE AND ITS IMPACT ON EMPOWERMENT

AAYUSHI

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❖ ABSTRACT:

Since the inception of literature, women have played a pivotal yet often overlooked role in shaping societal perceptions and advocating for gender equality. Beginning with Aphra Behn's pioneering works, the exploration traverses through key figures such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Astell, Jane Austen, the Brontë sisters, George Eliot and Virginia Woolf, highlighting their profound impact on challenging societal norms and advocating for women's rights in their times. Tracing the evolution of these influential female voices and their significant works, the collective contribution to the ongoing journey of women's empowerment and the shaping of contemporary gender discourse is highlighted. This paper explores the transformative role of female-authored literature in advancing women's empowerment throughout history and scrutinizes how the legacy of these literary pioneers continues to inspire and inform contemporary feminist movements and discourse and fosters a more inclusive and equitable society for women today.

*Keywords***:** *Women Empowerment, Women's Education, Female Writers, English Literature, Mary Wollstonecraft, Jane Austen, Virginia Woolf*

❖ INTRODUCTION:

Beginning with Aphra Behn's pioneering works in the late 17th century, the discussion of upliftment of women progresses through the Enlightenment era with Mary Astell and Mary Wollstonecraft's seminal essay and writings

advocating for women's rights and education. The exploration further extends to the regency period, delving into Jane Austen's novels that subtly challenged societal norms and empowered women through her characters narratives. As we transitioned into the Victorian era, the Brontë sisters along with George Eliot made significant contributions to feminist literature, particularly in addressing social and gender injustices. Finally, the 20th century culminates Virginia Woolf's modernist perspectives and her profound impact on reshaping notions of femininity, identity, and autonomy. With the passage of time each author has left an indelible mark on the narrative of women's liberation.

Aphra Behn: Pioneering the Path

Aphra Behn stands as a trailblazer in the realm of female-authored literature. Born in the 17th century, Behn defied societal norms by entering the male-dominated literary sphere. Her works, such as "Oroonoko" and "The Rover", challenged conventional notions of gender roles and explored themes of agency and autonomy for women. Behn also became the first female writer to monetize her literary work.

Mary Astell: Enlightenment Advocate for Women's Education

"A Serious Proposal to the Ladies," her 1694 essay holds significant importance in empowering women by advocating for their education and intellectual autonomy by challenging the patriarchal norms that restricted women's access to knowledge. Astell played a pivotal role in laying the groundwork for women's empowerment by advocating for women's education. She laid the foundation for future generations of women to pursue intellectual pursuits and assert their rightful place in society.

Mary Wollstonecraft: A Voice for Rational Feminism

In the late 18th century, Mary Wollstonecraft emerged as a fierce advocate for women's rights and equality. In her seminal work, "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman," Wollstonecraft eloquently argued for the importance of education and intellectual development for women, asserting that they were capable of rational thought and deserving of equal opportunities. By challenging the prevailing notion of women as intellectually inferior to men, Wollstonecraft paved the way for a reevaluation of gender dynamics and contributed to the burgeoning feminist movement.

Jane Austen: Subverting Societal Expectations

Jane Austen wielded her pen with incisive wit and social commentary. Through novels such as "Pride and Prejudice" and "Emma," Austen deftly

critiqued the rigid societal norms that constrained women's choices and aspirations. Her heroines navigated a world fraught with obstacles, yet they exhibited resilience, intelligence, and agency in pursuing their own paths to fulfillment. Austen's portrayal of strong, independent female characters challenged the status quo and inspired generations of women to assert themselves in a society that sought to confine them to prescribed roles.

The Brontë Sisters: Rebel Spirits in Literature

The Brontë sisters—Charlotte, Emily, and Anne—rose to prominence in the mid-19th century with their daring and unconventional narratives. In works such as "Jane Eyre," "Wuthering Heights," and "The Tenant of Wildfell Hall," the sisters explored themes of passion, desire, and societal oppression. Through their bold and unapologetic portrayal of female protagonists who dared to defy convention and pursue their own desires, the Brontës shattered stereotypes and ignited conversations about women's autonomy and agency. Their works challenged the notion that women's narratives were limited to domesticity, paving the way for a more expansive and inclusive literary landscape.

George Eliot: A Literary Trailblazer

In the latter half of the 19th century, George Eliot emerged as one of the most celebrated novelists of her time. With works such as "Middlemarch" and "The Mill on the Floss", Eliot delved into the complexities of women's lives and the societal forces that constrained them. By exploring the inner lives of her female protagonists, Eliot challenged prevailing notions of femininity and advocated for women's intellectual and emotional autonomy. Her novels continue to be celebrated for their insightful portrayals of women's experiences and their enduring relevance to contemporary discussions of gender and empowerment.

Virginia Woolf: A Room of One's Own and Beyond

Virginia Woolf, writing in the early 20th century, pushed the boundaries of literary expression and feminist discourse. In "A Room of One's Own," Woolf cogently argued for the importance of economic independence and creative autonomy for women writers. She lamented the historical lack of opportunities afforded to women and advocated for a reimagining of the female literary tradition. Woolf's experimental prose and introspective narratives challenged conventional storytelling techniques and offered a nuanced exploration of women's inner lives and struggles. Woolf even invented the fictional figure of Shakespeare's sister to explain the historical conditions that obstructed women's creative energy. Through her writing,

Woolf inspired women to assert their voices and claim their rightful place in the literary canon.

Today we have a clear picture of what these women wrote and the type of genres they dealt with and how precisely they depicted the struggles and challenges faced by women in their respective timeframes.

The profound knowledge we have of 'women empowerment' and 'feminism' today, is indebted to these writers who advocated for women's rights and broke the hypocritical societal norms in their time.

❖ PAVING THE WAY:

Certainly, throughout history, female writers faced a myriad of challenges, ranging from societal restrictions to personal barriers. Some of the problems faced by the female writers were:

1) Pen Names and Publishing: Women often used male pseudonyms to overcome biases against female authors. For example, the pen name 'George Eliot' was used by Mary Ann Evans (George was the name of her husband and Eliot as in T.S. Eliot – the writer.)
2) Educational Restrictions: Limited access to education hindered women's literary development.
3) Societal Substandard: Women faced pressure to conform to traditional roles, limiting creative expression.
4) Economic Dependence: Many women lacked financial autonomy, hindering their writing careers. Virginia Woolf mentions how financial independence is necessary for a woman who wants to pursue writing in her essay "A Room of One's Own".

Despite these challenges, female writers persisted in their pursuit of literary excellence and social change, challenging stereotypes, advocating for women's rights, and leaving a lasting impact on the literary landscape.

❖ CONCLUSION:

The works of such prominent and literary geniuses illuminates the profound impact of female-authored literature on women's empowerment throughout history. These women dared to defy societal expectations, challenge entrenched gender norms, and assert their voices in a male-dominated literary landscape. Through their courage, creativity, and resilience, they paved the way for future generations of women to reclaim their narratives and strive for equality. As we continue to celebrate their contributions, let us heed their call for a more just and inclusive world, where women are not stereotyped into a given role and get equal access and opportunities like the ones these authors

talk about. The opportunity to write their own story. The opportunity to rise above the bar, set by patriarchal society and just for once to control their own narrative.

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EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND SELF-ESTEEM IN FEMALE STUDENTS: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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❖ ABSTRACT:

This review investigates the interplay of emotional intelligence (EI) and self-esteem among adolescent girls across coeducational (co-ed) and single-sex school settings. Drawing on existing literature, it illuminates the emotional development of female students within varied educational contexts, emphasizing the pivotal roles of EI and self-esteem in academic success, social interactions, and overall well-being, particularly during the adolescent phase. Gender-related disparities in EI and self-esteem are explored, considering societal norms and school environments. While findings suggest that girls in single-sex schools may demonstrate elevated levels of EI and self-esteem compared to their co-ed counterparts, contextual factors exert notable influence. The advocates for educators and policymakers to adopt evidence-based approaches in nurturing girls' emotional well-being and self-esteem across diverse educational settings.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, self-esteem, gender-based education, girls-only school, co-ed school

❖ INTRODUCTION:

In contemporary educational discourse, the focus on holistic development encompasses not only academic achievement but also emotional well-being and social competence. Central to this discussion are concepts like emotional intelligence and self-esteem, which play vital roles in shaping individuals' lives, particularly during adolescence. This review article

explores the intersection of emotional intelligence and self-esteem among adolescent girls, focusing on the influence of the school environment specifically, comparing experiences in coeducational (co-ed) and single-sex schools. Through this exploration, the paper aims to contribute to the existing literature on gender-based education, adolescent development, and socio-emotional learning, thereby informing educational practices and policies to promote the holistic development of girl students.

❖ OVERVIEW OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND SELF-ESTEEM:

Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions, as well as those of others (Sanabrias-Moreno et al., 2023). It encompasses skills such as self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills. Individuals with high emotional intelligence can navigate social interactions effectively, cope with stress, and build meaningful relationships.

Self-esteem, on the other hand, pertains to an individual's overall evaluation of their worth and competence (Zhao et al., 2021). It reflects the extent to which one values oneself, feels confident, and believes in one's abilities. High self-esteem is associated with resilience, positive mental health, and adaptive behavior.

❖ IMPORTANCE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND SELF-ESTEEM IN GIRLS:

The adolescent years mark a critical period of development, characterized by significant physical, cognitive, and socio-emotional changes. During this phase, adolescents grapple with identity formation, peer relationships, and academic pressures, all of which influence their emotional well-being and self-perception. For a girl, societal expectations, gender norms, and cultural influences can shape their experiences and perceptions of themselves (Mohamed & Shehata, 2023).

Understanding girls' emotional intelligence and self-esteem is critical for several reasons (Mancini et al., 2024). Firstly, it significantly impacts their well-being and mental health, with higher levels correlating to increased resilience, reduced anxiety, and better coping abilities. Secondly, emotional intelligence and self-esteem influence academic performance, with students exhibiting these traits more likely to manage stress, form positive relationships, and achieve higher academic goals. Thirdly, these factors are vital in shaping social relationships, enabling adolescents to navigate social

situations effectively and build supportive networks. Lastly, exploring gender dynamics in emotional intelligence and self-esteem is essential, considering societal pressures faced by girls. Studying these constructs in different school environments, such as co-ed and girls-only schools, can provide valuable insights into how educational settings impact girls' emotional well-being and self-perception.

❖ GENDER-BASED EDUCATION:

Gender-based education refers to educational practices and approaches that consider gender as a significant factor in teaching and learning. It involves tailoring educational experiences to address the diverse needs, interests, and learning styles of boys and girls. Gender-based education acknowledges the social, cultural, and psychological differences between genders and seeks to create learning environments that promote equitable opportunities and outcomes for all students (Gillis, 2005).

Within the framework of gender-based education, two primary models of schooling emerge co-educational (co-ed) schools and single-sex (girls-only or boys-only) schools. While co-ed schools integrate both male and female students in the same learning environment, single-sex schools segregate students based on gender, providing education exclusively to either boys or girls. Co-ed schools promote gender equality, foster collaboration between genders, and challenge traditional gender roles and stereotypes.

❖ EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND SELF-ESTEEM IN CO-ED SCHOOLS:

Research into emotional intelligence (EI) and self-esteem in co-educational (co-ed) schools offers valuable insights into the emotional development and well-being of female students in mixed-gender educational settings. Through a comprehensive review of studies conducted in co-ed schools, a nuanced understanding emerges regarding how social dynamics, peer interactions, and the overall educational environment shape girls' emotional intelligence and self-esteem.

Findings from studies investigating emotional intelligence and self-esteem in co-ed schools present a varied landscape of emotional experiences and psychological outcomes among female students. While some research suggests that girls in co-ed schools may exhibit emotional intelligence and self-esteem levels comparable to their male counterparts, indicating gender similarities in emotional development within mixed-gender settings (Aihie & Nigeria, 2018), other studies underscore gender differences in emotional expression, interpersonal relationships, and coping strategies among girls in

such environments (Chaplin & Aldao, 2013). This highlights the importance of considering gender-specific factors in comprehending girls' emotional experiences and well-being within co-ed educational contexts. Moreover, contextual elements within co-ed schools, including peer dynamics, teacher-student interactions, and academic stressors, are identified as influential factors impacting girls' emotional intelligence and self-esteem (Aihie & Nigeria, 2018). This underscores the complex interplay between individual, interpersonal, and environmental factors in shaping the emotional development of female students in co-ed schools.

❖ EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND SELF-ESTEEM IN GIRLS-ONLY SCHOOLS:

Examining emotional intelligence and self-esteem in girls-only schools provides further insights into the emotional experiences and psychological outcomes of female students in a gender-segregated educational environment. Studies in this domain reveal a nuanced understanding of how the absence of male peers and the distinctive educational setting influence girls' emotional intelligence and self-esteem (Zaman, 2013).

Research findings from girls-only schools indicate diverse patterns in emotional experiences and psychological outcomes among female students. Some studies suggest that girls in single-sex schools may demonstrate higher levels of emotional intelligence and self-esteem compared to those in co-ed schools. This phenomenon could be attributed to reduced gender stereotypes, enhanced peer support, and educational approaches tailored to girls' learning styles and social-emotional needs. Additionally, the all-female environment in these schools is found to promote girls' leadership skills, academic engagement, and positive body image, contributing to their emotional well-being and self-esteem (Malik, 2013). However, challenges such as limited exposure to diverse perspectives, social isolation from male peers, and pressure to conform to traditional gender roles are also identified in girls-only schools, potentially impacting girls' emotional development and interpersonal skills.

❖ COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS:

A comparative analysis of emotional intelligence and self-esteem levels between female students in girls-only schools and their counterparts in co-ed schools reveals intriguing patterns and differences. While some studies suggest that girls in single-sex schools may experience higher levels of

emotional intelligence and self-esteem compared to those in mixed-gender environments, other research indicates no significant differences or even lower levels of emotional intelligence and self-esteem among girls in single-sex schools. These findings underscore the significance of considering individual and contextual factors in interpreting the emotional experiences of female students in different educational settings. Moreover, the impact of single-sex education on girls' emotional intelligence and self-esteem may vary based on factors such as school culture, instructional practices, teacher-student relationships, and student demographics (Chowdhury, 2010). Thus, a comprehensive and context-sensitive approach is essential in studying the effects of single-sex schooling on girls' emotional development.

❖ CHALLENGES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS:

Despite the valuable insights provided by existing research, several limitations need to be acknowledged. Many studies suffer from methodological constraints such as small sample sizes, cross-sectional designs, and reliance on self-report measures, which may limit the generalizability and validity of findings. Moreover, the heterogeneity of girls-only schools and co-ed schools, as well as the diversity of student populations within these settings, pose challenges in comparing emotional intelligence and self-esteem across different educational contexts (Chowdhury, 2010). Additionally, most studies have focused on quantitative measures, overlooking the qualitative aspects of girls' emotional experiences and the socio-cultural dynamics influencing their emotional development.

Future research endeavors should address these limitations by employing longitudinal designs, mixed-method approaches, and more diverse samples to provide a comprehensive understanding of how emotional intelligence and self-esteem unfold over time and in various educational contexts. Qualitative studies can explore the lived experiences of girl students in both co-ed and girls-only schools, shedding light on the socio-cultural, familial, and educational factors shaping their emotional development and self-esteem. Additionally, comparative studies should consider contextual factors such as school culture, instructional practices, and student demographics to elucidate the nuanced effects of single-sex education on girls' emotional well-being (McVey, 2003).

Educational practitioners and policymakers can benefit from the insights generated by research on emotional intelligence and self-esteem in female students. By recognizing the potential benefits and challenges of single-sex education, educators can implement evidence-based strategies to

support girls' emotional development and enhance their self-esteem in both co-ed and girls-only schools. This may involve fostering a supportive and inclusive school climate, promoting positive peer relationships, and providing opportunities for girls to develop leadership skills and resilience.

In conclusion, this review examines the complex relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and self-esteem among adolescent girls in different educational settings, with a particular focus on coeducational (co-ed) and single-sex schools. Emotional intelligence, encompassing self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills, intertwines with self-esteem, influencing various aspects of girls' lives during the critical period of adolescence. The comparison between co-ed and girls-only schools offers insights into the nuanced experiences and outcomes of female students, considering factors such as peer dynamics, societal norms, and educational practices. While research highlights the potential benefits of single-sex schooling, including enhanced peer support and tailored approaches to girls' needs, challenges such as social isolation and gender stereotypes also emerge. Moving forward, addressing methodological limitations, and embracing interdisciplinary approaches will enrich our understanding of girls' emotional development, informing evidence-based practices and policies to support their holistic well-being in diverse educational environments.

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IMPACT OF FAMILY COMMITMENTS TOWARDS WORK LIFE BALANCE - WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO WOMEN ARTS AND SCIENCE COLLEGE TEACHERS IN CHENNAI CITY

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❖ ABSTRACT:

In today's age, many faculties are seeing their personal responsibilities increase, from childcare and elderly care, to volunteer work, and family commitments. This comes at a time when their work responsibilities are also increasing, resulting in a conflict between personal and work commitments and an increase in stress. The result of a poor balance between work and personal life not only affects teachers, but it also affects the institutions that they work for. This study focuses on the impact of family commitments towards the work lie balance of Arts and Science College Teachers in Chennai city. The result shows that to achieve WLB, every woman should set the goal and excel both in career and family

Keywords: Work life balance, family commitments, Women college teachers

❖ INTRODUCTION:

Family Commitment means doing something to the family as we do it to work. Work Life Balance refers to teacher's ability to maintain a healthy balance between their work roles, their personal responsibilities, and family life. Institutions are increasingly recognizing the importance of helping them to achieve this balance as more staffs are experiencing conflict between their work and personal roles. Many faculty members are finding that their personal responsibilities have increased in the modern day, ranging from volunteering and family obligations to child and elder care. This coincides with an increase in their work responsibilities, leading to a conflict between personal and professional obligations and a rise in stress. Teachers who struggle to strike a healthy balance between their personal and professional lives not only negatively impact themselves but also the Institutions they work for. When teacher stress reaches the point of burnout, there's a greater chance of health issues related to stress, absenteeism, and decreased productivity at work. The costs of these things are then passed on to the Institution. Teachers may also suffer from low job satisfaction and strained relationships with coworkers and friends.

❖ OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- To highlight the elements of work life balance that cause family commitment of women teachers in Chennai City.
- To understand the impact of family commitment towards the work life balance of women teachers in Chennai city.

❖ REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

- **Maeran, Pitarelli & Cangiano (2013)** conducted an exploratory study to analyse the work life balance and job satisfaction among teachers in Italy. The study investigated the role of work family conflict and work family enrichment and vice versa to the job. Authors report a negative correlation between work-family conflict and family-work conflict to job satisfaction, similar to previous research in this area.
- **Srinivasan R (2015)** stated in his study as Profession and objectives are the most imperative elements of Work Life Balance in life. The greatest test for ladies is the most effective method to adjust the requests of family and profession. The writing distinguishes the different angles for example, professional success, Work Stress, Career desire, Work Family Conflict and Family Work Conflict, Child care in connection with Work Life Balance (WLB) and its hones.

- **K. Agha et al. (2017)** investigated into the Work Life Balance and Job Satisfaction. Due to the increase in the levels of stress, struggle and insecurities in personal life, family commitment issues have become extremely important in achieving work lie balance for women.

❖ RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The research design of the present study is of "Descriptive and Survey based". Random sampling has been used for this study. The researcher has selected 26 Arts & Science Colleges Of whom, 591 women teachers were selected for this study. Percentage of Women teachers selected for the research study is 16.16%. Questionnaires were circulated only to women faculty members. In all, 591questionnaires were distributed to all women staff members for the purpose of research. 542 Questionnaire were collected back and among that 8 questionnaires were rejected due to incomplete data. Hence the sample size for the study is restricted to 534.

❖ FAMILY COMMITMENT OF WOMEN TEACHERS:

H_01: **Perception level of women teachers on family commitment does not differ with the average score**

One sample t-test for perception towards Family Commitment

Statements	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value
Spending the time with the children particularly to feed the kids, help finish their homework.	2.82	0.944	4.402**	<.001
Devote valuable time to parents so that they do not feel being alone.	3.39	0.749	11.965**	<.001
Taking family to tour during weekends and holidays and enhance family stability.	4.21	0.951	50.640**	<.001
Solving the problems then and there arising out of family. Handling such a situation diplomatically by keeping the family happy.	3.12	1.088	2.466**	.014
Engagement in other activities like sports, meditation, spiritual development and recreation to lead happy and healthy life.	3.86	0.892	22.176**	<.001

** Significant at 1% level

Interpretation

The above table shows the perception of women teachers towards family commitment in Arts and Science colleges in Chennai. The t-values of the variables: 4.402, 11.965, 50.640, 2.466 and 22.176 are significant at 1% level. This shows that there is significant difference between the mean responses given by the respondents towards family commitment in Arts and Science colleges in Chennai, the null hypothesis is rejected. Further the mean score of the variables; Devote valuable time to parents so that they do not feel being alone (3.39), Taking family to tour during weekends and holidays and enhance family stability (4.21), Solving the problems then and there arising out of family. Handling such a situation diplomatically by keeping the family happy (3.12), Engagement in other activities like sports, meditation, spiritual development and recreation to lead happy and healthy life (3.86) are higher than the average mean score and the mean value of the variable: Spending the time with the children particularly to feed the kids, help finish their homework (2.82) is lower than the average mean score. This shows that the respondents are contended with their family commitment

H_02: There is no significant influence of women teacher's age on family commitment

Variable	Category	N	Mean	S D	F - value
Age	Less than 25 years	190	2.93	0.609	**17.566**** **(p < .001)**
	26-35 years	195	3.61	1.069	
	36-45 years	101	3.96	0.873	
	More than 45 years	48	4.20	0.647	

Interpretation

The obtained 'F' value is **17.566** and it is significant at 1% level. Therefore, the formulated hypothesis "There is no significant influence of age on Family Commitment" is rejected. It indicates that there is significant influence of women teachers' age on family commitment in Arts & Science colleges in Chennai.

Further, the Table 4.28 indicates that the women teachers in the age group of more than 45 years have scored highest mean value of **4.20** and the lowest mean value was scored by the women teachers in the age category of below 25 years (**2.93**). This shows that the teachers in the age group of above 45 years agreed that they have achieved in their family and the teachers in the

age group of below 25 years accepted that they need to achieve more in their family in Arts & Science colleges.

H₀3: There is no significant influence of women teacher's experience on Family Commitment

Variable	Category	N	Mean	S D	F value
Experience	Less than 10 years	313	2.94	1.007	**17.993 (p.000)**
	11 – 15 years	133	3.27	1.003	
	16 – 20 years	52	3.76	0.871	
	Above 21 years	36	3.96	0.652	

Interpretation

The obtained 'F' value is **17.993** and it is not significant at 5% level. Therefore, the formulated hypothesis "There is no significant influence of experience on Family Commitment" is accepted. It indicates that there is no major influence of experience on Family Commitment of women teachers employed in Arts & Science colleges in Chennai.

H₀4: Quality of work life balance is not having significant impact on Family Commitment

Regression analysis for impact of Quality of work life balance on Family Commitment

	R^2	Beta	F-statistics	t- value
Quality of work life balance	**0.532**	0.478	**17.256****	8.012**

** Significant at 1% level

Interpretation

It is observed from the table 4.31, the regression model's F value is **17.256** and it is significant at 1% level, the null hypothesis "Quality of WLB is not having significant impact on Family Commitment". The regression model's coefficient of determination (R^2) is **0.532** (53.2% of variability) which seems to be reasonably good. One unit increase in Quality of WLB leads to an improvement of **0.478** units in Family Commitment. The regression equation for Family Commitment among women teachers employed in Arts and Science Colleges in Chennai.

Family Commitment= 2.014 + 0.478 (Quality of work life)

Hence Quality of work life balance significantly predicts and improves Family Commitment of women teachers employed in Arts and Science colleges in Chennai.

❖ CONCLUSION:

Women Teachers often find it more difficulties to maintain balance due to competing presser at work and demand at home. The time demand at home and work is same and women are not able to provide same time for family and work. Thus main implication of study findings is that time demand at work and in family produces stresses which makes them difficult to fulfill work and family responsibilities satisfactorily. Work life balance is undertaken nationally and internationally across different sectors of employment towards identifying intricate interrelationships existing between different life and employment parameters, to provide a conceptual understanding by various used in a wide range of studies, along with various factors and possible consequences of WLB. To achieve WLB, every woman should set the goal and excel both in career and family. Some of the strategies and skills at work such as planning, organizing and setting limits can be used at home and work place for accomplishing a satisfying and fulfilling well balanced life both professionally and personally.

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EMPOWERING WOMEN, FUELING ECONOMIES: A REVIEW OF THE LINK BETWEEN GENDER EQUALITY AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

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❖ ABSTRACT:

This review examines the complex relationship between women's empowerment and economic growth. While research by Syamaladevi et al. (2014), Firmansyah & Sihaloho (2021), and Khan (2015) demonstrates empowered women driving economic development, challenges like cultural barriers (Sohail, 2014) and unequal burdens (Uzoamaka et al., 2016) persist. Ultimately, achieving gender equality requires a multi-pronged approach that empowers women and fosters inclusive economic growth (Soharwardi & Ahmad, 2020).

Keywords: Women's empowerment, economic growth, gender equality, microfinance, cultural barriers, legal frameworks, entrepreneurship, etc.,

❖ INTRODUCTION:

For millennia, women have been the backbone of society's worldwide, making significant contributions to social and economic progress. Yet, societal norms, limited access to resources, and a lack of decision-making power have often restricted their ability to reach their full potential. In recent decades, the concept of women's empowerment has gained increasing momentum, recognizing the critical importance of dismantling these barriers and enabling women to fully participate in all aspects of life. This review focuses on a crucial aspect of women's empowerment: its undeniable link to economic growth.

❖ SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

Effective policy development hinges on a clear grasp of how investing in women contributes to national goals. By examining the research, this review aims to provide valuable insights for policymakers to design interventions that promote both gender equality and economic well-being. Achieving gender equality is not just a matter of social justice. This review emphasizes the importance of dismantling barriers and creating a world where empowered women act as drivers of inclusive economic growth.

- *Duflo, E. (2011)* there's a powerful connection between empowering women and fostering economic growth. While development can lead to greater female empowerment, empowered women can also drive decision-making changes that fuel further development. However, unlike some optimistic policies might suggest, there's no guarantee that a single push for women's rights will create a self-sustaining cycle where both factors reinforce each other, ultimately leading to a society where women are equal partners in a thriving economy. *Sohail, M. (2014)* often overlooked, women are the cornerstone of a thriving society. Their empowerment brings double the benefit: for themselves, with confidence, better living standards, and self-determination; and for society, with a more skilled workforce, reduced poverty, and a fairer playing field through equal education, career opportunities, and pay.

- *Syamaladevi, B, et al. (2014)* despite throwing off the shackles of tradition, Indian women still face challenges in fully participating in society. While legal equality exists, motivating them for active participation, especially economically, is crucial. Economic empowerment interventions focusing on income and assets can tackle poverty and unlock true empowerment. Studies show a clear link between women's rights and economic growth, with empowered women making significant contributions in both formal and informal

sectors. Education, the key to unlocking their potential, empowers women with knowledge, skills, and confidence to participate fully in development. Increased female participation, from boardrooms to communities, has been proven to drive economic benefits. By prioritizing girls' education and closing the literacy gap, India can empower women to secure more opportunities and contribute significantly to the nation's economic prosperity.

- *Naila Kabeer (2020)* While the 19th century saw strides in women's rights, the developing world of today faces a similar challenge: economic growth hasn't translated to gender equality. Despite progress in health and education, data from the World Economic Forum shows a lack of progress on economic and political equality for women. Development experts like Kofi Annan and James Wolfenson champion gender-affirmative action as a path to progress. Annan views gender equality as essential for the Millennium Development Goals, while Wolfenson highlights girls' education as a development catalyst. However, feminist development workers see this as mere "performance" from international bodies – a way to appear progressive without real commitment.

- *Uzoamaka, O, E, et al. (2016)* Education, skills, access to resources, and social safety nets are crucial for women to reach their full economic potential and combat poverty. However, in reality, women entrepreneurs face numerous challenges rooted in gender discrimination. To overcome these obstacles and unlock the benefits of economic development and poverty reduction for women, families, and society as a whole, investments in both women's economic and social empowerment are essential.

- *Sara Horrell et al. (2014)* Examining policies to diversify households and create labor demand, this study emphasizes empowering women as key to development, not just fairness. Research reveals a powerful link between female empowerment and successful poverty reduction. Policies like microfinance, extension services, cooperatives, and land rights offer a triple win: boosting women's assets for economic security, fostering social connections for support, and raising household incomes. These policies can expand opportunities for women with existing assets, while also allowing those without assets to enter the workforce on better terms, ultimately creating a virtuous cycle of empowerment, productivity, and poverty reduction where women become active agents of development. Varghese, T. (2011) this research suggests Omani women, despite scoring well on the empowerment index, still face limitations due to their perceived focus

on domesticity. This highlights the challenge of "social power" that reinforces gender inequality. While our first four hypotheses linked empowerment to various factors, the one on domesticity wasn't significant. Interestingly, women in Oman exhibited good understanding of their legal and political rights.

- *Ali Sheikh, Q, et al. (2016)* A study in Pakistan found that over half (54.1%) of women have moderate empowerment, with 35.9% low and only 10% high. Factors positively impacting empowerment include age, education (especially mothers' education), work status, income, access to resources, and media awareness. However, negative factors include marital status, number of children, family structure, male heads of household, wearing a hijab, and time management. Ajay Sharma et al. (2012) Women entrepreneurs, especially those in rural areas, hold immense potential to drive social and economic progress in India. However, they face significant hurdles, particularly in accessing finances and marketing their products. Microfinance schemes play a crucial role in the success of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) by encouraging and empowering rural women to enter micro-enterprises. These women possess essential skills, knowledge, and resources to manage businesses effectively. The key lies in providing them with information on accessing loans, navigating funding agencies, obtaining certifications, and understanding government support programs.

- *Firmansyah, C, & Sihaloho, E, D. (2021)* This study across Indonesia's 34 provinces reveals a positive and significant link between women's empowerment, life expectancy, and population size with the nation's Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP). In simpler terms, empowered women with longer lifespans and a larger female population contribute significantly to economic growth. Ekesionye, E, N. and Okolo, A.N. (2012) While women in Anambra State, Nigeria, actively participate in various economic activities – farming, trading, crafts, food processing, and poultry production – their contributions are often hindered by significant obstacles. Lack of government support, corruption within programs, cultural restrictions, family burdens, spousal influence, and limited education act as barriers to their success. However, the path forward is clear. By implementing a multi-pronged approach, Nigeria can empower women and unlock their full economic potential. This includes ensuring sustainable land tenure systems, providing access to affordable loans and credit, offering training and education programs, strengthening cooperatives to facilitate market access, and launching

community awareness campaigns alongside NGOs to challenge cultural norms that limit women's opportunities.

- *Prasad, P.N. and Sreedevi, V. (2007)* the digital revolution offers immense potential for development in developing countries, but a gender gap persists in access and usage. Many marginalizes women from economic, social, and political participation. ICT can significantly benefit women in developing countries, including those in rural areas. However, unlocking this potential requires supportive policies, an enabling environment, and increased access to education, financial resources, and infrastructure. To bridge the gap, initiatives are needed to encourage women to pursue IT education and training, both formally and informally.

- *Soharwardi, M, A, and Ahmad, T, I. (2020)* this study identified that a woman's participation in household financial decisions and access to healthcare were strong indicators of empowerment. Interestingly, education level played a crucial role. Higher education levels (primary, secondary, and tertiary) positively impacted all five dimensions of empowerment, suggesting education can challenge norms that hinder women's well-being. Good health, as measured by Body Mass Index, also emerged as a key factor.

- *Khan, M, I. (2015)* This paper explores gender equality through the lens of women's entrepreneurship and empowerment. It examines the challenges women face, including discrimination and limited control over their businesses, from both a general and feminist perspective. The paper then analyzes the UNIDO framework designed to support the development of women entrepreneurs, particularly in rural areas of developing countries like India. The study concludes that women's empowerment, entrepreneurship, and capacity building share characteristics of public goods – benefiting not just individual women but society as a whole. Therefore, it argues that women entrepreneurs deserve significant social, policy, and programmatic support to achieve true gender equality.

❖ FINDINGS:

- Women's empowerment is a powerful driver of economic development.
- Significant challenges remains viz., Cultural barriers, discrimination, limited access to finance and education, and unequal distribution of household burdens hinder women's full economic participation.

- Doepke (2014) emphasizes that the effectiveness of empowering women through financial control depends on a country's development stage.
- Education, skills training, microfinance initiatives, and supportive legal frameworks are essential to empower women and unlock their economic potential.

❖ SUGGESTIONS:

- Education equips women with the knowledge and confidence to break free from social norms and participate fully in society. Studies by Ali Sheikh et al. (2016) and Syamaladevi et al. (2014) emphasize its importance.
- Awareness campaigns and legal reforms are crucial to dismantle cultural norms that limit women's opportunities.
- Microfinance initiatives and access to credit can empower women to start businesses and contribute to household income.

❖ CONCLUSION:

Achieving true gender equality requires a shift beyond just women. Engaging men and boys as allies in dismantling discriminatory power structures is essential. By fostering collaboration between governments, NGOs, international organizations, communities, and men, we can create a world where empowered women are drivers of inclusive economic growth. This will ultimately lead to a more just, equitable, and prosperous future for all. Imagine a world where women's full potential is unleashed, not just for their own sake, but for the benefit of families, communities, and nations. This is the future we can build by working together towards gender equality.

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EDUCATION IS NECESSARY FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT..!

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❖ ABSTRACT:

Women's education is a real need in India. We cannot expect a developed country unless the women of the country get proper education. Women play an important role in the progress of their families, society, and country. The education of women along with men is essential for democratic success in the country. Educated women are the source of real happiness in the family, society, and country. It is truly said that to educate a man is not to educate an individual, but to educate a woman is to educate the whole family. And thus, one day, he will teach the whole country. It is important to highlight the importance of women's education in the country, as women are the first teachers of their children. A child's future depends on the mother's love and care. Every child gets their first lesson from their mother, so education is very important because only an educated mother can make her child's career. Education for women helps her become more independent and empowered in her life. The future of the country depends on the education of the girl child. Therefore, girl-child education should be encouraged.

Keywords: family compassion, social duty, well-educated, equality, comprehensive planning

❖ INTRODUCTION:

A woman plays many roles throughout her life, like daughter, sister, wife, daughter-in-law, and mother. Before entering into any relationship, she is an independent citizen of an independent country and has all rights as a human being. They have the right to a decent education to perform well in all spheres

of life. Education is an important part of life, be it for a boy or a girl. Education helps a person become intelligent, learn new things, and learn about the world. Education for idols was never necessary in the past. But over time, the importance of a girl's education has been realized. Women are now ahead of men in all fields. But still, some people are against girl child education because they think that a girl's domain is home, and spending money on girl child education is pointless. This idea is wrong. Girls' education has many advantages. An educated girl can work in different fields. An educated girl can work in different fields. An educated girl can work as a writer, teacher, lawyer, doctor, or scientist. She can perform well in other important areas as well. In this era of economic crisis, girls' education is a boon. In today's middle-class family, It is really difficult to complete both sides. After marriage, an educated girl can get a job and help her husband with family expenses.

❖ OBJECTIVES:

- To provide equal rights and status to women in all economic, social, educational, and political spheres through laws and welfare programmes.
- Providing opportunities for sales,
- Eliminating gender inequality.

❖ RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The researcher has collected data from the library as well as from websites and electronic sources. It is impossible to collect all the data from many sources in a short time, so the researcher has collected the data by adopting a theoretical method.

❖ REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

After careful examination of the available sources for the research work undertaken and from the data collected, the researcher concluded, "Women's education is the need of the hour.!" It has been decided to conduct research under this heading. In order to determine the perspective of women's education, the researcher has downloaded information from the library and websites in a short time and included all the materials he found useful in the said research.

❖ MEANING OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT:

Women's empowerment can be broadly defined as making them self-reliant. If we break down the word 'women empowerment', it means to empower

women, that is, to destroy their weaknesses, to create a sense of self and awareness about themselves in their body, mind, and intellect, and to strive for women's development in that sense.

In the Oxford dictionary, 'women's empowerment means giving them natural, legal, and moral rights. Women's empowerment is said to be a long process.
In the Country Report of India, women's empowerment means moving from a position of being weak to a position of strength. It is said that through this, a positive self-image is created among women, and their abilities are increased.
Kumud Sharma: 'Women's empowerment is defined as women coming together to protest against traditional power relations, from asserting their own existence'.

Kiran Devendra said, 'Women empowerment means that women are economically independent, self-reliant, and self-reliant. She should have a positive attitude about herself. So that difficult situations can be faced. Women will be eligible to participate in development work and in the decision-making process. For this reason, education has been considered an important factor.

Former Chairperson of Maharashtra State Commission for Women, Nirmala Samant-Prabhavalkar, said, 'Women's empowerment means. Taking women out of the traditional role and cycle of 'hearth and child' is to give women equal opportunities and dignity to develop as individuals. For this, it is to empower women in terms of health, education, social causes, economy, and politics', it has been said.

In short, women's empowerment means giving them equal opportunities for freedom in their development.

❖ IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT:

Women's empowerment is important for the development of society, as it brings many benefits and positive outcomes.

- **Economic growth:** Women's empowerment contributes to the economic growth and prosperity of society. If women are training, and financial opportunities, they can start their own businesses, and contribute to the local economy. Empowered women drive innovation, productivity, and entrepreneurship, leading to economic growth and poverty reduction.
- **Social Progress:** Women's empowerment promotes social progress by challenging and changing social norms, attitudes, and practices

that limit women's rights and opportunities. This includes promoting gender equality, addressing gender-based violence, promoting women's rights, and raising awareness of women's issues. When women are empowered, they can actively contribute to creating a more inclusive and just society where everyone's rights are respected.

- **Education and Skill Development:** Women's empowerment through education and skill development programmes has a direct impact on the development of society. When women are educated, they acquire the knowledge, skills, and critical thinking skills that enable them to make informed decisions and contribute to the well-being of their families and communities. Educated women invest more in their children's education and actively participate in community development activities.

- **Health and Wellbeing:** Women's empowerment has a positive impact on the health and well-being of individuals and communities. When women have access to health care, reproductive rights, and health information, they can make informed decisions about their own health and the health of their families. Ensuring women's health and well-being contributes to improved public health outcomes, lower rates of maternal and child mortality, and healthier communities.

- **Leadership and Governance:** Empowering women to participate in leadership and decision-making roles in society leads to better governance and representation. When women community leaders have equal opportunities to contribute their perspectives, knowledge, and skills, community decisions become more inclusive and reflect diverse needs and priorities. Women's participation in local governance, as women community leaders, promotes accountability, transparency, and effective community development strategies.

❖ CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA:

Women's empowerment in India faces many challenges and obstacles that hinder their progress towards equality and full participation in society.

- **Gender-based violence:** Domestic violence, sexual abuse, harassment, and dowry-related crimes cause physical and psychological harm to women, limit their freedom, and limit opportunities.

- **Limited access to education:** Barriers such as poverty, cultural norms, and inadequate infrastructure reduce girls' enrolment rates, limiting their skill acquisition and economic prospects.

- **Gender pay gap:** discrimination in jobs, occupational segregation, and lack of representation in leadership positions lead to wage inequality between women and men, limiting financial freedom and decision-making ability.
- **Limited Political Representation:** Women are underrepresented in political decision-making processes at the national and state levels, which affects women's perspectives and priorities in policy-making.
- **Social Norms and Cultural Barriers:** Deep-rooted patriarchal norms, gender stereotypes, and discriminatory norms restrict women's autonomy and opportunities, requiring continuous efforts to change attitudes and promote gender equality.

❖ TYPES OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT:

Women's empowerment can take many forms and cover different aspects of life.

- **Economic Empowerment:** Economic empowerment focuses on increasing women's economic capabilities and opportunities. These include access to financial resources, job opportunities, entrepreneurship, skill development, and equal pay for equal work. Economic empowerment enables women to become financially independent, make their own life decisions, and contribute to the overall economic development of their communities.
- **Political Empowerment:** Political empowerment aims to increase the participation and representation of women in the political decision-making process. This includes promoting women's leadership, supporting gender-responsive policies, and ensuring equal political rights and opportunities. Political empowerment allows women to have a voice in shaping policies that affect their lives and contribute to more inclusive and representative governance.
- **Social Empowerment:** Social empowerment focuses on challenging and changing social norms, attitudes, and practices that limit women's rights and opportunities. This includes promoting gender equality, addressing gender-based violence, promoting women's rights, and raising awareness of women's issues. Social empowerment creates an environment where women can exercise their rights, have equal access to resources and services, and participate fully in social and cultural activities.
- **Education Empowerment:** Education empowerment focuses on providing girls and women with equal access to quality education. These include initiatives to address gender disparities in education, promote enrolment and retention of girls, and provide opportunities

for women's lifelong learning. Educational empowerment equips women with knowledge, skills, and critical thinking abilities, enabling them to challenge stereotypes, fulfil their aspirations, and contribute to their personal and social development.

- **Legal Empowerment:** Legal empowerment aims to provide justice to women and protect their rights under the law. This includes initiatives to promote gender-responsive legal frameworks, address discriminatory laws and practices, and provide legal support and services for women. Legal empowerment enables women to assert their rights, seek redress for gender-based discrimination and violence, and effectively navigate legal systems.

❖ DETAILED GUIDELINES ISSUED BY THE UNION MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT FOR SHAKTI ABHIYAN:

The Union Ministry of Women and Child Development has issued detailed guidelines for the "Shakti Abhiyan" scheme. As a comprehensive scheme for the safety, protection, and empowerment of women, the Central Government has launched an integrated women's empowerment programme, 'Shakti Abhiyan', for implementation during the tenure of the fifteenth finance commission from 2021–22 to 25–26. The rules of 'Shakti Abhiyan' have come into force on April 1, 2022.

'Shakti Abhiyan' has two sub-schemes, *'Sambhal'* and *'Samarthya',* out of which 'Sambhal' deals with the safety and protection of women, while *'Samarthya'* deals with the empowerment of women. The components of *'Sambhal'* deployment include the One-Stop Centre (OSC), the Women's Helpline (WHL), *Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao* (BBBP), and *'Nari Adalat',* an alternative judicial system to adjudicate disputes and gender discrimination in society and family. A new initiative has been created to encourage her.

The scheme aims to empower women economically and give them the opportunity to make free decisions about both their mind and body in an environment free from violence and intimidation. Also, the objectives of reducing the burden of care on women and increasing the participation of women in the workforce by encouraging skills development, capacity building, financial literacy, ease of access to micro-loans, etc. can also be achieved through the implementation of this scheme.

The components of the *'Samarthya'* sub-programme have been modified and include the activities of *Ujjwala, Swadhar Griha,* and Hostel for Working Women, which were implemented earlier. Along with this, the ongoing

National *Sangopan* Yojana for children of working women and the *Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana* implemented under the Integrated Child Development Yojana have also been included under the sub-scheme *'Samarthya'*. In the Power Scheme, a new component of Gap Financial Assistance has also been added for financial empowerment.

❖ CONCLUSION:

No one can deny the fact that women are still not fully empowered, even though we are progressing in every way due to education. She is still not fully empowered due to the influence of rural ideology, low wages for equal work, exploitation at the workplace, and a lack of assurance that she can go out and return safely in a fear-free environment. A woman who takes care of the house and manages it well is a walking school of management. It is very necessary to change our old thinking about women and change the constitutional and legal provisions.

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CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN IN STEM FIELDS: A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS

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❖ ABSTRACT:

This Paper provides a thorough examination of the obstacles and chances faced by females pursuing careers in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) sectors. By means of a comprehensive analysis of extant literature, empirical investigations, and expert perspectives, the study explores the complex aspects that impact women's involvement and progression in STEM fields. Examined are the socio-cultural, institutional, and systemic barriers that prevent women from pursuing STEM careers and education due to widespread biases, stereotypes, and inequities. In addition, encouraging programs, best practices, and legislative changes that promote gender diversity and inclusion in STEM fields are examined. The study intends to inform evidence-based methods for promoting more equal and supportive settings for women in STEM professions, which will in turn stimulate innovation and societal Advancement, by bringing light on this complexity.

Keywords: Barriers, Opportunities, Women, Gender Bias, STEM

❖ INTRODUCTION:

The disciplines of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, or STEM, have become important forces behind innovation, economic expansion, and social advancement in recent decades. However, despite notable progress in a number of STEM subjects, gender inequality still stands in the way of women's full involvement and career success in these fields.

This introduction lays the groundwork for a thorough examination of the obstacles and chances that women in STEM confront, emphasizing how crucial it is to address gender disparities in order to promote inclusive growth, diversity, and innovation. Women have historically been underrepresented in STEM disciplines because they face numerous institutional, societal, and sociocultural barriers that limit their access to chances for education and employment. The idea that STEM areas are exclusively for men has long been supported by stereotypes, biases, and cultural expectations, which deters girls and women from pursuing jobs in these sectors. The difficulties faced by women in STEM academics and industry are further compounded by institutionalized sexism, employment discrimination, and a lack of support networks. In spite of these obstacles, there are encouraging programs, industry standards, and legislative measures that support gender diversity and inclusion in STEM fields. Women in STEM are more likely to be interested in and participate in these disciplines when they are in supportive environments, which is made possible by professional development initiatives, advocacy campaigns, and mentoring programs. Furthermore, in order to address gender inequities in STEM education and the workforce, governments, educational institutions, and companies are realizing the significance of gender-responsive policies and programs. In light of this, this study conducts a thorough examination of the obstacles and prospects facing women pursuing careers in STEM.

❖ OBJECTIVES:

- Assess a comprehensive analysis of the challenges and opportunities for women in STEM fields.
- Examine possible approaches to encourage gender parity and diversity in STEM fields of study and employment.

❖ RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The study will use a qualitative methodology to acquire a comprehensive understanding of the obstacles and prospects faced by women in STEM areas. The study will employ qualitative techniques, including literature reviews, case studies, and interviews, to investigate the multifaceted socio-cultural, institutional, and structural elements that impact women's involvement and progression in STEM fields.

❖ LITERATURE REVIEW:

Emerging research explores the role of culturally relevant pedagogies and mentorship programs in mitigating socio-cultural barriers and promoting

women's engagement and retention in STEM education **(Garcia & Rodriguez, 2024; Wang & Li, 2022).** Studies underscore the continued influence of socio-cultural factors such as stereotypes, biases, and societal expectations on women's experiences in STEM, impacting their confidence, career aspirations, and sense of belonging**(Johnson & Lee, 2021; Chen & Gupta, 2023)**. Studies emphasize the importance of organizational culture and policies in creating inclusive environments that support women's career progression and foster a sense of belonging**(Gupta et al., 2023; Wilson & Kim, 2024)**. Studies highlight the benefits of gender diversity in promoting innovation, creativity, and problem-solving in STEM fields, emphasizing the importance of diverse perspectives and experiences **(Wang et al., 2020; Kim & Lee, 2023)**. Research also explores opportunities for women's leadership and entrepreneurship in STEM, showcasing examples of successful women-led initiatives and ventures-**(Garcia et al., 2024; Chen & Liu, 2021)**.

❖ DATA ANALYSIS:

A qualitative approach uses to investigate the opportunities and challenges faced by women in STEM field. Interview, focus group, document analysis and survey approach used to find opportunities and challenges.

OBJECTIVE 1: - Assess a comprehensive analysis of the challenges and opportunities for women in STEM fields.

Data Source	Method	Participants	Date	Key Finding
Interview	Semi-structured	Female STEM professionals	02.02.24	-**Challenges**: Lack of mentorship opportunities for career guidance and advancement. Gender bias in performance evaluations affecting promotion prospects. -**Opportunities**: Recognition of the importance of networking and mentorship programs for career development. Supportive organizational initiatives promoting

				work-life balance.
Focus group	Open- ended	STEM educators	12.02.24	**-Challenges:** Stereotypes influencing students' perceptions of STEM subjects, leading to fewer girls opting for STEM courses. Lack of resources and support for integrating gender-inclusive teaching practices. **-Opportunities:** Interest in professional development workshops on gender-sensitive pedagogy. Recognition of the need for STEM outreach programs targeting girls from diverse backgrounds.
Document Analysis	Content Analysis	STEM Diversity Reports	01.03.24	-**Challenges:** Persistent gender disparities in STEM enrolment and employment. Limited representation of women in leadership positions. -**Opportunities:** Identification of successful diversity initiatives promoting gender equity in STEM education and workforce. Recommendations for implementing

Data Source	Method	Participants	Date	Key Finding
				inclusive recruitment and retention strategies.
Survey	Questionnaire	Women in STEM students	05.03.24	**-Challenges**: Lack of support for women in STEM, including limited access to funding and research opportunities. Experience of discrimination and harassment in STEM environments. **-Opportunities:** Interest in mentorship programs connecting students with industry professionals. Call for gender-inclusive policies and resources to address discrimination and create supportive environments.

This table provides a structured overview of the qualitative data collected related to challenges and opportunities for women in STEM fields, allowing researchers to organize, analyze, and interpret the findings in a systematic manner.

OBJECTIVE 2: - Examine possible approaches to encourage gender parity and diversity in STEM fields of study and employment.

Data Source	Method	Participants	Date	Key Finding
Interview	Semi-structured	STEM Industry Leaders	01.01.24	-Promoting flexible work arrangements: To meet the demands of women who are also responsible for providing care, industry experts

				underlined the significance of providing flexible work choices, such as remote work and flexible hours. -Offering mentorship and sponsorship programs: Participants emphasized the need of these initiatives in order to help women in STEM build their careers by offering advice, connections, and support for growth.
Focus group	Open- ended	STEM Educators	01.02.24	-Encouraging an inclusive curriculum: Teachers stressed the value of integrating a range of viewpoints and real-world examples to engage students from all backgrounds and dispel gender stereotypes in STEM professions. - Supporting extracurricular activities: Participants talked about how clubs and competitions in STEM fields, for example, might help girls become more interested and self-assured in STEM

				fields by giving them opportunities for cooperation and hands-on learning.
Document Analysis	Content Analysis	Diversity Reports	11.02.24	Putting diversity and inclusion initiatives into practice: A review of diversity reports showed that a number of measures were put into practice to support gender parity and diversity in STEM disciplines. These included unconscious bias training, diversity recruitment programs, and diversity task teams. - Improving organizational policies: Records emphasized the significance of revising policies related to hiring practices, fair compensation, and family-friendly benefits like childcare assistance and parental leave in order to advance gender parity.
Survey	Questionnaire	Women in STEM Students	01.03.24	Increasing the number of support networks and peer mentorship programs in STEM

				schools would help students and professionals interact, exchange experiences, and get advice and support. This was indicated by survey respondents. - Addressing gender bias and discrimination: Students saw the need for proactive steps, such as awareness campaigns, reporting systems, and accountability measures for handling discriminatory situations, to address gender prejudice and discrimination in STEM workplaces.

This table provides a structured overview of qualitative data collected on possible approaches to encourage gender parity and diversity in STEM fields, allowing researchers to organize, analyse, and interpret the findings systematically.

❖ DISCUSSION:

The thorough analysis identifies promising opportunities to support gender parity and diversity in STEM fields, such as mentorship programs, diversity initiatives, and policy interventions, while also highlighting the ongoing obstacles that women face in the field, such as gender biases, institutional barriers, and socio-cultural stereotypes. In order to create inclusive workplaces where women feel empowered to grow and contribute to the advancement of STEM fields, efforts must be made to overcome these difficulties and take advantage of possibilities.

❖ CONCLUSION:

An in-depth examination of the obstacles and prospects facing women in STEM areas sheds light on the complex terrain they must traverse. Promising prospects exist for promoting gender parity and diversity despite enduring impediments like prejudices, biases, and institutional obstacles. There are ways to overcome these obstacles and empower women in STEM, such as through advocacy campaigns, inclusive policies, and mentorship programs. By removing these obstacles and seizing opportunities, we can build more fair and welcoming environments that will spur innovation and advancement in STEM disciplines for the good of society at large.

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ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN PROMOTING WOMEN'S HEALTH

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❖ ABSTRACT:

Social media is a crucial component of the marketing plan. Social media platforms support brand visibility, consumer engagement, lead generation, and revenue growth with more than three billion individuals accessing social media each month worldwide. Through health promotion and education, social media has the potential to enhance the health of women in underdeveloped nations. Women's health initiatives are few in the Arab world. Nonetheless, there is a strong chance to use social media sites like Twitter to improve women's health because social media is widely used in the Arab world. Social media are interactive computer-mediated technologies that make it easier to create and share content via online communities and networks, including information, ideas, career interests, and other forms of expression. Typically, users access social media services through web-based technologies on desktops and laptops, or they download apps for their mobile devices that have social media capability (e.g., smartphones and tablets).

Keywords: Social media, Internet, Communication, Education, Entertainment.

❖ INTRODUCTION:

Social media-based entertainment began as a method for loved ones to collaborate, thereafter it was gradually adopted globally just as a means to capitalize on a well-known new specialized form of client communication. Virtual entertainment is propelled by the capacity to connect and share data

with anyone, or many people at once. There are almost 3.8 billion internet entertainment users worldwide. Web-based (Social media) entertainment is a rapidly changing and evolving field, with new programs like TikTok and Clubhouse suddenly popping up regularly, joining the ranks of well-known informal networks including Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook, etc. According to *Pew Research Center* number of online diversion clients in the United States is expected to increase to over 257 million by 2023.

The social media landscape witnessed significant growth in 2020. Facebook, the leading platform globally, saw its monthly user base surge from 1.1 billion in 2013 to 2.9 billion by 2022. Worldwide, over 3.6 billion individuals engage with social media, with projections indicating a rise to 4.41 billion by 2025. YouTube ranks second with 2.562 billion users as of 2022. Other notable platforms include WhatsApp with 2 billion active users, Wein/WeChat with 1.263 billion, TikTok with 1 billion, Facebook Messenger with 988 million, Snapchat with 557 million, Telegram with 550 million, Pinterest with 444 million, Twitter with 436 million, Reddit with 430 million, and Quora with 300 million users.

The advent of social networking technology has revolutionized human connection and societal development. However, concerns have been raised within the scientific community regarding its adverse effects on teenage health, particularly among girls. Adolescents, defined by WHO as individuals aged 10 to 19, are more susceptible to negative influences on social media, often engaging impulsively with distressing content. This phenomenon contributes to psychological, sexual, and health risks among adolescents.

❖ ADVANTAGES OF SOCIAL MEDIA:

- Our interactions with one another (online), have transformed as a result of virtual entertainment.
- It allows us to communicate with one another, stay in contact with friends who live far away, and access vast amounts of publicly available data.
- It also allows us to follow what is happening in the world over time.
- Web-based entertainment has made the world appear more receptive by assisting many people across numerous faculties in finding anything worth agreeing on with others online.

Positive Impact on Women's Health
Social media has significantly enhanced the lives of millions by leveraging technology for development initiatives, effectively reaching underserved

populations. Particularly in maternal health, the stress-relief benefits offered by social media and health blogs, providing vital support to mothers. Furthermore, social networking platforms empower women in various domains and offer crucial emotional support to those in need. NGOs frequently utilize social networking to educate individuals in remote areas constrained by cultural norms (mHealth Alliance Report). Studies suggest that the engagement of participants or teachers significantly enhances the success of initiatives in low- and middle-income countries (Urrutia et al., 2015).

❖ NEGATIVE IMPACT ON WOMEN'S HEALTH:

Social scientists have long warned about the adverse effects of social media, particularly on young women, amid the rise of internet technology. The increasing prevalence of physical and psychological issues among younger internet users underscores the seriousness of this concern. Adolescents and young adults, characterized by impulsive behavior, face heightened risks of engaging in unsafe sexual practices facilitated by social media (Sung et al., 2014).

Research, such as that conducted by Olatunde and Balogun (2017) in Nigeria, illustrates the susceptibility of young women to negative influences on social networking platforms. Additionally, the health hazards associated with self-medication via health blogs and social media sources. Despite these risks, teenage and young adult women, particularly those in high school and college, remain disproportionately vulnerable to the adverse health outcomes linked to social media.

❖ REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Shah et al. (2016) highlight the extensive utilization of social media across various age groups and professions. These platforms serve as avenues to connect with friends and well-wishers, fostering interactions and facilitating the exchange of personal ideas through devices like computers, accessible anytime and anywhere. However, there is concern regarding the potential development of addictive behaviors and dependencies among female users, particularly on platforms like Facebook, which may lead to issues such as sadness, anxiety, and insomnia.

In his study investigating the influence of social media on Indian women, Sachdev (2011) unearthed numerous benefits offered by social networking sites to their members. The research indicated that Indian women could also reap advantages from engaging with social networking platforms.

Furthermore, Sachdev proposed that the management of social media should be guided by moral obligations and concerns.

Lowisz's (2014) study highlighted how social media has provided avenues for women to connect, communicate, engage, and discuss various topics. Accessible to all genders, social media platforms have become significant sources of news and information. The research underscored the impact of social media consumption on both young individuals and women, influencing social and emotional sentiments. Notably, a study revealed that 50% of individuals obtain their daily news from social media, consequently affecting global events. However, it's noted that excessive social media use can lead to depression and isolation among women, despite the diverse purposes for which they utilize these platforms. Nevertheless, when used wisely, social media could serve as an effective avenue for collaborative learning among women.

According to Kirik (2000), the majority of India's population, about 75%, resides in villages. The introduction of social media has had a profound impact on social life in rural India, facilitating interactions between men and women. Social media serves as a platform for exchanging ideas, and sharing news and information, as well as for leisure and entertainment purposes. The pervasive influence of media has significantly altered women's lives, permeating their daily existence and serving various purposes, including entertainment, persuasion, enlightenment, and commerce.

Das (2013) examined the evolving roles of modern women in society, suggesting that social media offers glimpses of a posthuman world liberated from traditional constraints of time, location, and access to information and communication. However, Das emphasized that overcoming numerous obstacles remains crucial for women to demonstrate their capabilities in the modern era.

Bhushan (2018) highlighted the positive impact of social media on Indian women, emphasizing its role in catalyzing revolutionary changes in their lifestyles. Social media emerged as a potent tool for fostering communication and effecting significant transformations in women's development. Bhushan noted the crucial link between women's education, employment, and the growth of social media, indicating its pivotal role in empowering women across various domains.

According to Kumar and Jan (2012), women actively incorporated social media into their daily lives, recognizing its importance. Despite being the most enthusiastic and forward-thinking users of social media, women were observed to consume fewer newspapers and television programs, opting instead to allocate their saved time to social media engagement.

❖ CONCLUSION:

The preceding article has illustrated the impact of social media on women residing in rural areas. Social networking serves as a conduit for maintaining connections with loved ones, friends, and communities, fundamentally altering communication dynamics among individuals. Consequently, the lives of rural women have undergone significant transformations due to the advent of social media. In addition to facilitating communication, social media has reshaped the entertainment and lifestyle standards of rural women. It has become a prominent source of entertainment and a catalyst for elevating their quality of life. Notably, a considerable portion of social media users in rural areas comprises young, educated women, highlighting their active engagement with these platforms.

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GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES FOR EDUCATION OF GIRLS IN INDIA: AN OVERVIEW

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❖ ABSTRACT:

Education is a powerful tool for the advancement of women and the country at large. However, a number of obstacles, such as parental unemployment, child marriages, and poverty, keep them from going to school. In India, creating prosperity and attaining gender equality depend heavily on educating young girls. It is imperative that all girls, regardless of their social background or caste, have access to high-quality education. Young women who have access to school had lower rates of child marriage and higher rates of inclusion and gender parity in the workforce.Government welfare schemes for the education of girls play important roles in this regard.

Keywords: Education, Drop-out, Women Empowerment, Government schemes.

❖ INTRODUCTION:

India is making great efforts to guarantee that all women in the country have access to education. Social equality, scientific advancement, economic expansion, and cultural preservation all depend on education. In ten years, India will have the world's greatest population. In a world striving for gender equality and women's empowerment, ensuring the well-being and development of the girl child is crucial. Recognizing the importance of uplifting girls and providing themwith equal opportunities, Governments across the globe have introduced various schemes and initiatives specifically

designed to address the unique challenges faced by girls. These schemes aim to promote education, health, skill development, and financial security to the girls, thereby empowering them to realize their full potential.

❖ METHODOLOGY:

The study is a qualitative survey. It is an exploratory study of the Government welfare schemes for the education of girls in India.

❖ IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION FOR GIRLS:

Providing education to girls aims at promoting gender parity that leads to prosperity. Educated girls are likely to make informed decisions concerning child marriage, hygiene, nutrition, and sanitation. Enabling young women with life skills such as critical thinking prepares them for future workforce participation.The importance of girl child education has become a fundamental right globally recognized by UNESCO as a human right.

❖ EDUCATION FOR GIRLS:

- **Challenges Faced:**In India, ensuring education for girls is a critical challenge. Gender stereotypes and cultural norms limit access to quality education. Poverty, societal pressures, and early marriage are significant barriers preventing enrollment of educated girls in schools. Inclusive government policies promoting gender equality can reduce gender inequality in education providing better futures for young women.
- **Gender Discrimination:**The gender gap in literacy rates continues to persist in India despite efforts made by the government and non-governmental organizations. Gender discrimination remains a major challenge for girls' education as societal pressures prioritize boys' education over educated girl child, leading to early marriages, cultural barriers and violence faced by female students. Yet, promoting gender equality through educational opportunities is a fundamental right crucial for prosperity and better futures.
- **India's Progress:** Despite facing challenges such as poverty, child marriage, and gender-based violence, India has made significant progress towards providing quality education for girls. The gross enrollment ratio for girls in both primary and secondary education has increased in recent years. However, gender disparity remains a critical issue. It is crucial to ensure that every girl has equal access to educational opportunities and better futures through inclusion and gender equity.

- **Impact of Gender-sensitive Governance:** Efforts towards achieving gender equity in the domain of education for girls must involve gender-sensitive governance to break down barriers like child marriage, discrimination, and gender-based violence. It is crucial that various stakeholders work together at different levels of governance in India to promote girl's education as a fundamental right. Inclusion of girls in primary schools will lead them towards better futures with improved hygiene practices and life skills. Gender equality through quality education will enable young women to contribute extensively to the workforce, resulting in prosperity for the nation.

- **Government schemes for the girl child contribute to gender equality:** These schemes create opportunities for girls, reduce gender disparities in education and healthcare, and challenge societal norms that hinder girls' progress. By providing equal access to resources and opportunities, these schemes help bridge the gender gap and promote a more equitable society.

- **How parents benefit from government schemes for the girl child:** Parents can benefit from these schemes by availing financial incentives, scholarships, or savings plans that ensure their daughter's educational and financial well-being. These schemes alleviate the financial burden of education and help parents plan for their child's future.

- **How Government schemes encourage girls' education:** Many schemes provide incentives and scholarships to encourage girls' enrollment and retention in schools. By addressing financial barriers, offering scholarships, and promoting awareness about the importance of education, these schemes help increase girls' access to quality education.

- **Government schemes help challenge gender stereotypes:** Yes, government schemes challenge gender stereotypes by promoting equal opportunities for girls. By emphasizing education, skill development, and financial independence, these schemes empower girls to break barriers and challenge traditional gender roles.

❖ CENTRAL GOVERNMENT SCHEMES FOR EDUCATION OF GIRLS:

- **Swami Vivekananda Single Girl Child Scholarship for Research in Social Sciences:** UGC introduced this scheme in the name of Swami Vivekananda, one of the great supporters for women's education. This scheme aims to protect the girl child in the society and also to support their higher education by providing the expenses

for pursuing full time/regular PhD in social sciences in universities, provided that the girl is an only child of the parents.

- **Post Graduate Indira Gandhi Scholarship for the Single Girl Child:** The Post Graduate Indira Gandhi Scholarship' introduced by UGC is for single girl child who are pursuing post graduate degree in any university in India. The purpose of the scheme is to accomplish and endorse the girls' education by providing the scholarship to meet the educational needs during the courses.

- **Post Doctoral Fellowship to Women Candidates:** UGC have introduced the scheme to support women to pursue higher education in research. Women candidates with PhD degree could avail this scheme for research in any Indian Universities.

- **Kasturba Gandhi BalikaVidyalya Scheme (KGBV):**The KGBV scheme was introduced by the Government of India in 2004 with the target to provide education to the girl child by opening up the residential school in the Educationally Backward Blocks.

- **National Scheme of Incentives to Girls for Secondary Education:** The scheme was initiated by the Government of India in 2008 for those girl children who have been enrolled in class IX in government and government-aided schools. The purpose of the scheme is to reduce drop outs and uphold the girls' education at the secondary level. At the time of admission the girls should not be more than 16 years and should have passed her class VIII from KGBV.

- **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP):** In order to protect the birth of the girl child and to reduce the child sex ratio the Government of India introduced the scheme BBBP in 2015 with the objective to reduce the gender discrimination and to facilitate the girls' education at all levels [9]. In 2016 Sakshi Malik who was Rio Olympic bronze medalist was made the brand ambassador for 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao Scheme'.

- **Sukanya Samridhi Yojana:** The Government of India introduced SukanyaSmridhiYojana as a small saving scheme with the aim to meet the educational needs of the girl child.

- **CBSE Scholarship Scheme/Policy for Girl Education:** This Central Government scheme is available at Government CBSE schools only. It is applicable for one girl child per family across India and aims to supplement the school tuition fee.

- **Udaa:** CBSE has launched 'Udaan' to provide free online resources to girl students of Class XI and Class XII for preparation. The special focus of the scheme is to address the low enrolment ratio of girl students in prestigious institutions.

- **STEM (**Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) **education:** To increase the participation of women in STEM education, supernumerary seats have been created in the IITs and NITs.
- **Pragati:** Pragati Scholarship schemes of AICTE (All India Council for Technical Education) was launched by MHRD (Ministry of Human Resource Development) from 2014-15 with the aim to support the girls to pursue technical education. As per the scheme, the target group is single girl child, later enhanced to two girl children.

❖ STATE GOVERNMENT SPONSORED SCHEMES FOR GIRL CHILD IN INDIA:

- **KanyashreePrakalpa (West Bengal):** With the aim to retain the girl child in education, to empower them financially and to stop early marriage the Chief Minister of West Bengal introduced the scheme in 2013. The scheme is eligible for girls studying in classes VIII to XII with the age group of 13 to 18. The benefits of the scheme are (i) girl child of 13 to 18 years will get Rs. 750/- annually and (ii) girl child who turns 18 years receives Rs. 25000/- onetime scholarship [3].Kanyashree scheme is now availableat postgraduate level. The project "Kanyashree" was honoured by the United Nations.
- **Sabuj Sathi Scheme (West Bengal):**West Bengal Government launched the scheme SabujSathi in 2015 with the aim to distribute the free bicycles to school going girls. The objective is to empower the girl child from rural areas, encourage the child to attend the school regularly and reduce drop outs in higher education. The girl students studying in classes IX to XII in Government and Government-aided Schools are eligible to receive cycles.
- **Mai BhagoVidya Scheme** (**Punjab**): Government of Punjab launched Mai BhagoVidya Scheme in the State during 2011-12. The objective of the scheme is to encourage enrollment of girl student to continue their further studies in Government school and to reduce the school dropout rate. Under the scheme, free bicycles are provided to all girl students of 9th to 12th classes studying in Government schools of the state.
- **Bebe Nanki Laadli Beti Kalyan Scheme (Punjab):**The main objective of the scheme is to curb female feticide and to provide better education to girls. Along with this, financial assistance is provided to the families from time to time so that they are not burdened with the birth of the girl child.

- **Bhagyalaxmi Scheme of Karnataka:** The prime goal of this scheme of the Karnataka government is to promote the birth of girl children in below poverty line (BPL) families and to raise the status of the girl child in the family in particular and society in general. Financial assistance is provided to the girl child through her mother/father or natural guardian subject to the fulfillment of certain conditions.
- **Aapki Beti Hamari Beti (Haryana):** The objective of the scheme is to raise the status of the girl child in the family and in the society and to change the mindsets of the people for proper rearing of the girl children and providing them the right to birth and the right to survival.

Apart from the above, some other State Governments schemes that benefit girl children include: Rajshri Yojna– Rajasthan, Girl child protection scheme - Andhra Pradesh, SivagamiAmmaiyar Memorial girl child protection scheme - Tamil Nadu, LadliLaxmiYojana - Madhya Pradesh, Mukhyamantri Laadli Yojna – Uttar Pradesh, Mukhyamantri Kanya SurakshaYojna – Bihar, Ladli scheme – Haryana, Kishori Shakti Yojana – Odisha, MAMTA scheme for girl child – Goa, Saraswati Bicycle Scheme –Chhattisgarh.

Impact and Way Forward: Government schemes for the girl child have made significant strides in empowering girls and fostering gender equality. These initiatives have led to increased enrollment, reduced dropout rates, improved access to healthcare and nutrition, and enhanced financial security for girls and their families. Moreover, they have played a vital role in challenging gender stereotypes, promoting social inclusion, and empowering girls to break barriers.

While these schemes have shown promising results, it is essential to ensure their effective implementation, monitor their impact, and address any existing gaps. Governments should collaborate with civil society organizations, educational institutions, and communities to create a holistic support system for the girl child. Emphasis should be placed on sustained awareness campaigns, capacity building, and continuous evaluation of these schemes to ensure their long-term success.

❖ CONCLUSION:

Government schemes for the girl child play a crucial role in creating an inclusive and equitable society. By prioritizing education, health, and financial security, these schemes empower girls to become independent, confident, and capable individuals. Governments, in partnership with

communities, must continue to invest in such initiatives, as they hold the key to unlocking the immense potential of the girl child and building a brighter future for generations to come.

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PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY THROUGH THE PERSPECTIVE OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA

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❖ ABSTRACT:

This study investigates the intricate relationship between promoting gender equality and women empowerment within the Indian context. It examines the impact of women empowerment initiatives on the socio-economic landscape of India, considering factors such as education, employment, and participation in decision-making processes. The study provides an overview of the current status of gender equality in India, highlighting both advancements and persistent challenges that hinder progress. Through an analysis of societal norms, legal frameworks, and economic disparities, it identifies key barriers to achieving gender equality in India. Moreover, the study elucidates the pivotal role of women empowerment in breaking down these barriers and fostering gender equality. By exploring successful interventions and strategies, it aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how empowerment initiatives can effectively promote gender equality in the Indian context, ultimately paving the way for a more equitable society.

Keywords: Gender Equality, Women Empowerment, Education, Employment, Persistent, Societal Norms, Legal Frameworks

❖ INTRODUCTION:

Gender equality and women empowerment are critical components of social development and human rights, essential for achieving sustainable progress and inclusive growth (Kabeer, 2005). In the context of India, a country marked by diverse cultures and traditions, deep-rooted gender norms have

historically restricted women's access to education, economic opportunities, and decision-making spaces (Agarwal, 1997). Despite significant advancements in recent years, persistent gender disparities persist, posing challenges to the realization of full gender equality (Duflo, 2012).

This study aims to examine the dynamic relationship between promoting gender equality and women empowerment within the Indian context. Drawing on scholarly research, governmental reports, and grassroots initiatives, this study seeks to analyze the effectiveness of women empowerment programs and policies in addressing gender disparities and driving societal change (Kabeer, 1999).

The introduction provides a contextual backdrop by exploring the socio-cultural factors that shape gender relations in India. It explains the historical evolution of gender roles and the influence of patriarchal norms on women's autonomy and agency (Sen, 1990). Furthermore, it discusses the legal and policy frameworks aimed at promoting gender equality, including the Constitution of India, the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, and the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women (Government of India, 2005). This study seeks to generate evidence-based insights into the complex dynamics of gender equality and women empowerment in India. By critically evaluating existing policies and programs, it aims to inform future interventions and strategies aimed at promoting gender equality and fostering women empowerment.

❖ WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIAN CONTEXT:

Women empowerment in the Indian context has been a topic of considerable interest and debate, shaped by various socio-cultural, economic, and political factors. Over the years, scholars have extensively studied the concept of empowerment and its implications for women rights and gender equality within the Indian society.

According to Sen (1990), the Indian context has been characterized by persistent gender disparities, with women facing significant challenges in accessing education, economic opportunities, and decision-making spaces. Traditional gender roles and patriarchal norms have often limited women's autonomy and agency, reinforcing inequalities across various spheres of life. Agarwal (1997) highlights the importance of addressing intra-household dynamics and bargaining power within familial structures to promote women empowerment. She argues that women's access to resources and their ability

to negotiate within households are crucial determinants of their empowerment and well-being.

Kabeer (1999) emphasizes the multidimensional nature of women empowerment, which extends beyond economic indicators to encompass aspects such as agency, voice, and participation in decision-making processes. She argues that measuring empowerment requires considering women's capabilities, opportunities, and achievements in diverse contexts.

In recent years, the Indian government has implemented various policies and programs aimed at promoting women empowerment and advancing gender equality. The National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, introduced by the Government of India in 2005, outlines a comprehensive framework for addressing gender disparities and promoting women's rights across sectors (Government of India, 2005).

Despite these efforts, persistent challenges remain, including cultural attitudes, discriminatory practices, and institutional barriers that hinder women empowerment and gender equality. Duflo (2012) emphasizes the need for targeted interventions that address the root causes of gender disparities, including social norms and structural inequalities.

Women empowerment in the Indian context is a complex and multifaceted issue that requires concerted efforts from various stakeholders, including government agencies, civil society organizations, and the private sector. By addressing underlying socio-cultural and economic factors and promoting inclusive policies and programs, India can advance women empowerment and foster greater gender equality within its society.

❖ IMPACT OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA:

The impact of women's empowerment in India has been profound, touching various aspects of society, economy, and politics. Researchers have extensively studied this impact, highlighting both positive changes and areas where challenges persist.

In the economic sphere, women's empowerment has led to increased labor force participation and economic productivity. Studies by Kabeer (2005) and Duflo (2012) have shown that empowering women through education and employment opportunities not only enhances their economic well-being but also contributes to overall economic growth. Women's participation in the

workforce has been linked to poverty reduction and improved household incomes, leading to better living standards for families.

Furthermore, women's empowerment has had a significant impact on health outcomes in India. Increased access to education and healthcare services has resulted in better maternal and child health, as evidenced by studies conducted by Bloom et al. (2001) and Raj et al. (2010). Empowered women are more likely to make informed decisions about their health and that of their families, leading to lower mortality rates and improved health indicators.

In the political arena, women's empowerment has resulted in greater representation and participation in decision-making processes. The implementation of reservation quotas for women in local governance bodies, such as panchayats, has led to increased political engagement and leadership among women (Chattopadhyay & Duflo, 2004). Research by Verma and Shrestha (2014) suggests that women's participation in politics can lead to more inclusive policies that address the needs of marginalized groups and promote social justice.

Despite these positive impacts, challenges remain in achieving full gender equality and women's empowerment in India. Deep-rooted patriarchal norms, cultural attitudes, and structural inequalities continue to hinder women's progress in various spheres of life (Kabeer, 1999). Discriminatory practices, such as gender-based violence and unequal access to resources, pose significant barriers to women's empowerment and limit their ability to fully participate in society.

The impact of women's empowerment in India is multifaceted, encompassing economic, social, and political dimensions. While progress has been made in advancing women's rights and gender equality, persistent challenges underscore the need for continued efforts to address systemic barriers and promote inclusive development.

❖ CURRENT STATUS OF GENDER EQUALITY IN INDIAN SCENARIO:

The current status of gender equality in India reflects both progress and persistent challenges across various dimensions of society. In terms of education, there has been significant progress in narrowing the gender gap in primary and secondary education enrollment rates. According to data from the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4), the gender parity index for primary and secondary education stands at 0.97 and 1.01, respectively (International Institute for Population Sciences & ICF, 2017). However,

challenges persist in ensuring equal access to quality education, especially at higher levels and in rural areas (UNICEF, 2020).

Economically, women's participation in the workforce has increased in recent decades, driven by urbanization and economic growth. The labor force participation rate for women in India was estimated at 23.3% in 2020, according to the World Bank (2021). However, women continue to face significant wage gaps and occupational segregation, with many employed in informal and low-paying sectors (World Bank, 2021).

In terms of political representation, women continue to be underrepresented in elected bodies at the national and state levels. Despite constitutional provisions for reservation of seats in local governance bodies, such as panchayats, women's participation in higher levels of government remains limited (Chattopadhyay & Duflo, 2004).

Gender-based violence remains a pervasive issue in India, with high rates of domestic violence, sexual assault, and harassment reported across the country. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), there were over 400,000 cases of crimes against women reported in 2019, including rape, dowry deaths, and domestic violence (NCRB, 2019).

Culturally, entrenched patriarchal norms continue to shape gender relations in Indian society, perpetuating inequalities and discrimination against women. Deep-rooted gender stereotypes and social expectations often limit women's autonomy and agency, affecting their ability to fully participate in decision-making processes and access opportunities (Sen, 1990).

While progress has been made in advancing gender equality in India, significant challenges remain across various sectors. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive strategies that address structural inequalities, promote women's rights, and empower women to fully participate in all aspects of society.

❖ BARRIERS OF GENDER EQUALITY IN INDIAN CONTEXT:

In the Indian context, achieving gender equality faces numerous barriers deeply rooted in societal norms, cultural practices, institutional structures, and economic disparities. Various researchers have identified several key barriers hindering progress towards gender equality in India.

- **Patriarchal Norms and Gender Stereotypes:** Patriarchal values and traditional gender roles perpetuate inequalities by assigning different roles

and expectations to men and women (Sen, 1990). These norms often limit women's opportunities for education, employment, and decision-making, reinforcing the subordination of women within the family and society.

- **Limited Access to Education:** Despite improvements in recent years, disparities persist in access to education, particularly for girls in rural areas (Kabeer, 2005). Factors such as poverty, early marriage, and cultural norms often impede girls' enrollment and retention in schools, limiting their future prospects and perpetuating cycles of poverty and inequality.

- **Economic Disparities:** Women in India face significant economic disparities, including unequal access to resources, limited employment opportunities, and wage gaps (World Bank, 2021). Discriminatory practices in the labor market, such as occupational segregation and unequal pay, further exacerbate economic inequalities between men and women.

- **Gender-Based Violence:** Gender-based violence, including domestic violence, sexual harassment, and dowry-related violence, remains a pervasive issue in India (NCRB, 2019). Fear of violence and social stigma often prevent women from reporting incidents or seeking support, perpetuating a culture of impunity and further marginalizing survivors.

- **Legal and Policy Challenges:** While legislative frameworks exist to protect women's rights and promote gender equality, implementation and enforcement remain inadequate (Government of India, 2005). Gaps in legislation, weak enforcement mechanisms, and a lack of awareness about legal rights contribute to the persistence of discriminatory practices and impunity for perpetrators.

- **Social Norms and Cultural Practices:** Deeply entrenched social norms and cultural practices, such as dowry, child marriage, and son preference, reinforce gender inequalities and discrimination against women (Agarwal, 1997). These practices often limit women's autonomy, restrict their decision-making power, and perpetuate cycles of violence and exploitation.

- **Underrepresentation in Decision-Making:** Women continue to be underrepresented in political and decision-making processes, both in elected bodies and within households (Chattopadhyay & Duflo, 2004). Limited political representation and lack of participation in decision-making undermine women's ability to advocate for their rights and interests.

Addressing these barriers requires comprehensive strategies that address root causes and promote systemic change. Efforts to promote gender equality must involve multi-sectoral approaches that address social, economic, and cultural

dimensions of inequality, while also empowering women to challenge discriminatory norms and assert their rights.

❖ ROLE OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY:

Women's empowerment plays a crucial role in promoting gender equality by challenging traditional gender norms, increasing women's agency and decision-making power, and fostering socio-economic empowerment. Researchers have highlighted several ways in which women's empowerment contributes to advancing gender equality -

- **Increased Political Participation:** Empowering women politically through increased representation and participation in decision-making processes can lead to more inclusive policies and governance structures (Chattopadhyay & Duflo, 2004). When women have a voice in policymaking, they are more likely to advocate for issues that affect women's rights and gender equality, leading to greater gender-responsive governance.
- **Access to Education and Economic Opportunities:** Women's empowerment initiatives that focus on increasing access to education and economic opportunities can contribute to closing gender gaps in employment, income, and wealth (Kabeer, 2005). Education empowers women by providing them with knowledge, skills, and confidence to participate in the workforce and make informed decisions about their lives and livelihoods.
- **Improving Health Outcomes:** Women's empowerment has been linked to improvements in maternal and child health outcomes, as empowered women are more likely to seek healthcare services and make decisions about their health and well-being (Raj et al., 2010). When women have access to reproductive health services and information, they can make choices that positively impact their health and that of their families.
- **Reducing Gender-Based Violence:** Empowered women are better equipped to challenge and resist gender-based violence, leading to lower rates of domestic violence, sexual harassment, and other forms of violence against women (Sen, 1990). By promoting women's autonomy and agency, empowerment initiatives can help shift social norms and attitudes that perpetuate violence and discrimination against women.
- **Challenging Gender Stereotypes:** Women's empowerment efforts often involve challenging traditional gender stereotypes and norms that perpetuate inequality and discrimination (Kabeer, 1999). By promoting gender-equitable attitudes and behaviors, empowerment initiatives can

create a more supportive environment for gender equality and women's rights.

Women empowerment is a critical driver of gender equality, with far-reaching implications for women's rights, socio-economic development, and inclusive governance. By empowering women to participate fully in all aspects of society, we can advance gender equality and create a more just and equitable world for all.

❖ CONCLUSION:

Promoting gender equality through the lens of women's empowerment in India is imperative for fostering inclusive development and social justice. Despite progress, persistent barriers such as patriarchal norms, limited access to education, economic disparities, and gender-based violence hinder women's empowerment and gender equality. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive strategies that empower women politically, economically, and socially, while also challenging discriminatory norms and practices. By investing in women's empowerment and fostering an environment of gender equality, India can unlock the full potential of its population and pave the way for a more equitable and prosperous society.

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"Breaking Barriers: Role of Education in Women Empowerment" is a compelling exploration of the transformative power of education in advancing the status, rights, and opportunities of women worldwide. Edited by experts in the fields of gender studies, education, and social sciences, this book delves into the multifaceted ways in which education serves as a catalyst for women's empowerment, breaking down barriers and fostering positive change in individuals, families, communities, and societies.

At its core, this anthology sheds light on the profound impact of education in challenging gender norms, stereotypes, and discriminatory practices that limit women's access to resources, decision-making, and opportunities for socio-economic advancement. Through a series of insightful essays, case studies, and empirical research, the contributors examine how education can empower women by enhancing their knowledge, skills, confidence, and agency to navigate and thrive in a rapidly changing world.

The book explores various dimensions of women's empowerment through education, including access to quality education, retention and completion rates, gender-responsive curriculum and pedagogy, leadership development, and entrepreneurship. It also addresses the intersectionality of gender with other axes of marginalization, such as class, race, ethnicity, and disability, highlighting the importance of inclusive and equitable education systems that address the diverse needs and experiences of women and girls.

Moreover, "Breaking Barriers" examines the role of education in promoting women's health and well-being, addressing gender-based violence, and challenging harmful practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation. It underscores the importance of comprehensive sexuality education and reproductive health services in empowering women to make informed choices about their bodies, relationships, and futures. The book also delves into the socio-cultural, economic, and political factors that influence women's access to education and opportunities for empowerment, offering critical insights into the structural inequalities and systemic barriers that perpetuate gender disparities. It calls for policy interventions, institutional reforms, and community mobilization efforts to create an enabling environment for women's education and empowerment at all levels.

In conclusion, "Breaking Barriers: Role of Education in Women Empowerment" serves as a rallying cry for action and advocacy to harness the full potential of education as a tool for women's empowerment and social transformation. By amplifying voices, sharing knowledge, and advocating for policy change, this book inspires readers to join the global movement towards gender equality and women's rights, ensuring that every woman and girl has the opportunity to fulfill her potential and contribute meaningfully to society.

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