

Women Empowerment

Women's Empowerment

Women's empowerment is the process in which women elaborate and recreate what it is that they can be, do, and accomplish in a circumstance that they previously were denied. Empowerment can be defined in many ways, however, when talking about women's empowerment, empowerment means accepting and allowing people (women) who are on the outside of the decision-making process into it. “This puts a strong emphasis on participation in political structures and formal decision-making and, in the economic sphere, on the ability to obtain an income that enables participation in economic decision-making.

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Empowerment is the process that creates power in individuals over their own lives, society, and in their communities. People are empowered when they are able to access the opportunities available to them without limitations and restrictions. Feeling entitled to make your own decisions creates a sense of empowerment. Empowerment includes the action of raising the status of women through education, raising awareness, literacy, and training. Women's empowerment is all about equipping and allowing women to make life-determining decisions through the different problems in society.

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Alternatively, it is the process for women to redefine gender roles that allows for them to acquire the ability to choose between known alternatives whom have otherwise been restricted from such an ability. There are several principles defining women's empowerment such as, for one to be empowered, they must come from a position of disempowerment. Furthermore, one must acquire empowerment themselves rather than have it given to them by an external party. Other studies have found that empowerment definitions entail people having the capability to make important decisions in their lives while also being able to act on them. Lastly, empowerment and disempowerment is relative to other at a previous time; therefore, empowerment is a process, not a product.

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Women empowerment has become a significant topic of discussion in development and economics. It can also point to the approaches regarding other trivialized genders in a particular political or social context. Women's economic empowerment refers to the ability for women to enjoy their right to control and benefit from the resources, assets, income and their own time, as well as the ability to manage risk and improve their economic status and well being. While often interchangeably used, the more comprehensive concept of gender empowerment refers to people of any gender, stressing the distinction between biological and gender as a role.

Importance of women's empowerment in societies

Entire nations, businesses, communities and groups can benefit from the implementation of programs and policies that adopt the notion of women empowerment. Empowerment of women is a necessity for the very development of a society, since it enhances both the quality and the quantity of human resources available for development. Empowerment is one of the main procedural concerns when addressing human rights and development. Women's empowerment and achieving gender equality is essential for our society to ensure the sustainable development of the country. Many world leaders and scholars have argued that sustainable development is impossible without gender equality and women's empowerment. Sustainable development accepts environmental protection, social and economic development, and without women's empowerment, women wouldn't feel equally important to the process of development as men.

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It is widely believed that, the full participation of both men and women is critical for development. Only acknowledging men's participation will not be beneficial to sustainable development. In the context of women and development, empowerment must include more choices for women to make on their own. Without gender equality and empowerment, the country could not be just, and social change wouldn't occur.

Methods of Economic Empowerment

Economic empowerment increases women's agency, access to formal government programs, mobility outside the home, economic independence, and purchasing power. Policy makers are suggested to support job training to aid in entrance in the formal markets. One recommendation is to provide more formal education opportunities for women that would allow for higher bargaining power in the home. They would have more access to higher wages outside the home; and as a result, make it easier for women to get a job in the market.

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Strengthening women's access to property inheritance and land rights is another method used to economically empower women. This would allow them better means of asset accumulation, capital, and bargaining power needed to address gender inequalities. Often, women in developing and underdeveloped nations are legally restricted from their land on the sole basis of gender. Having a right to their land gives women a sort of bargaining power that they wouldn't normally have; in turn, they gain more opportunities for economic independence and formal financial institutions.

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Women of color are faced with more disadvantages in the work place. Patricia Parker argues that African American women's empowerment is their resistance to control, standing up for themselves and not conforming to societal norms and expectations. In connection to power, feminist perspectives look at empowerment as a form of resistance within systems of unequal power relations. Within the societal setting of race, gender, and class politics, African American women's empowerment in work environment "can be seen as resistance to attempts to fix meanings of appropriate identity and behavior, where such meanings are interpreted as controlling, exploitative, and otherwise oppressive to African American women." When talking about women's empowerment, many scholars suggest examining the social injustices on women in everyday organizational life that are influenced by race, class, and gender.

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Another popular methodology for women's economic empowerment also includes microcredit. Microfinance institutions aim to empower women in their community by giving them access to loans that have low interest rates without the requirement of collateral. More specifically, they aim to give microcredit to women who want to be entrepreneurs. The success and efficiency of microcredit and microloans is controversial and constantly debated. Some critiques claim that microcredit alone doesn't guarantee women have control over the way it is used. Microfinance institutions don't address cultural barriers that allow men to still control household finances; as a result, microcredit may simply be transferred to the husband. Microcredit doesn't relieve women of household obligations, and even if women have credit, they don't have the time to be as active in the market as men.

Political empowerment

Political empowerment supports creating policies that would best support gender equality and agency for women in both the public and private spheres. Popular methods that have been suggested are to create affirmative action policies that have a quota for the number of women in policy making and parliament positions. As of 2017, the global average of women whom hold lower and single house parliament positions is 23.6 percent. Further recommendations have been to increase women's rights to vote, voice opinions, and the ability to run for office with a fair chance of being elected. Because women are typically associated with child care and domestic responsibilities in the home, they have less time dedicated to entering the labour market and running their business.

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Policies that increase their bargaining power in the household would include policies that account for cases of divorce, policies for better welfare for women, and policies that give women control over resources (such as property rights). However, participation is not limited to the realm of politics. It can include participation in the household, in schools, and the ability to make choices for oneself. Some theorists believe that bargaining power and agency in the household must to be achieved before one can move onto broader political participation.

Measurement and assessment

Women empowerment can be measured through the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), which shows women's participation in a given nation, both politically and economically. GEM is calculated by tracking "the share of seats in parliament held by women; of female legislators, senior officials and managers; and of female profession and technical workers; and the gender disparity in earned income, reflecting economic independence". It then ranks countries given this information. Other measures that take into account the importance of female participation and equality include: the Gender Parity Index and the Gender-related Development Index (GDI).

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Some critiques of GEM is that it is not concerned with factors regarding society, such as gender, religion, cultural context, legal context, and violations of women's rights. Gender empowerment measure attempts to makes a consistent standardized approach to measure women's empowerment; in doing so, it has been critiqued that the GEM doesn't account for variation in historical factors, female autonomy, gender segregation, and women's right to vote.

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The Gender-related Development Index (GDI) is a way in which the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) measures the inequality between genders within a country. Some critique of this measurement is that, because GDI calculations rely solely on the achievement distribution between males and females of a population, GDI doesn't measure gender inequality; rather, it measures absolute levels on income, education and health. A more qualitative form of assessing women's empowerment is to identify constraints to action.

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This allows for the identification of power relations between genders. Because this is a participatory process, it facilitates conversation on gender discrimination. Comparing constraints on women at a later time also allows for any changes or expansion to be better identified. The evaluation of the development of women's agency allows for an evaluation of actions taken. These assessments must also be based on the action taken by women, and not external groups. External groups can help facilitate women's empowerment, but cannot bestow it on them.