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Study on Socio-cultural factors influencing Women's Community Participation

Violina Choudhury
Assistant Professor
violinachoudhury99@gmail.com

Abstract:

India is a patriarchal society which is "ruled by the male". The patriarchal ideology and socio-cultural practices creates situations where women's are dominated. Gender injustice towards women in societies is the only reason for deprivation of women from having their say in decision making process. Age, education, caste, religion, marital status, family income, housing conditions are some of the variables affecting women in empowerment and development. Socio-cultural factors have an influence on individual's behavior depending on one's social values. Age old traditional norms and structural barriers restricts women's public representation, land rights and leadership capacity. In many traditional societies these acts as a hidden barrier for women. Culturally and socially it is believed that household chores, looking after family and child is culturally assigned to women. To take participation in external events she needs permission from husband or male elders. In the present study the following objectives have been highlighted- To study the various socio-cultural barriers against women participation in community development, To examine the role of women in the decision-making power of the community development programmes and to study the government schemes launched for women empowerment. This is a review based paper based on previous researches findings have been extracted and research gaps have been found out. The common findings are- Patriarchal dominance, purdah system, age old traditions, gets access to less information, time restrictions, dogmatic thinking, unequal educational opportunities, gender biasness in political participation too pushes women from being empowered. From owning generational land rights women are restricted due to traditional belief of men as the sole heir, polygamy marriage, women are confined only to household chores and child caring. Family responsibilities, customers outlook and society's attitude towards women as entrepreneurs are negatively impacting them. Religious beliefs, unequal working

environment, gender issues, non-encouragement in political representation creates hurdle amongst women to take stand in politics. Unequal remuneration for same work, lack of health facilities and equal education, violence and harassment are the ongoing issues that women face.

Keywords: Patriarchal, Socio-Cultural factors, Gender Injustice, Women Empowerment

Introduction:

The Sustainable Development Goal 5 focuses on closing gender gap and ensuring equal opportunities for all. The World's population is represented by half of the women and girls and so does it represents half of their potentialities and rights too. Unfortunately, it is a country where gender discrimination, patriarchal dominance, injustice against women, unequal distribution of resources, negative outlook towards women prevails. In the pre-independence India, women's position in the society were pathetic facing abuses from husbands, being isolated from society with the purdah system in Muslim community mainly, forced to child marriages, widowed at young ages, burnt alive with the husbands body and many had turned into Devadasi. They were economically dependent on father and husbands, only confined to household chores and rearing child.

In the Vedic age, women's were held in a high position honouring them with various titles like as a birth giver, daughter, wife, goddess. They were compared with God and called as Ardhangini. Although in the modern India women's are struggling hard to improve their social status. They are aware about educating themselves and their rights which has inspired them to come out of the four walls of the room. Around the world women's status and positions varies in every societies. In some societies, women's have made an incredible position while in some they are still declined and unseen. In Modern India, women's have played a high role in many aspects like in administration, politics, education, entrepreneurship etc. Socio-cultural factors like- educational barriers, decent work and property ownership are some of the barriers negatively influencing women to be empowered (**Choudhry, A.N., et.al, 2019**).

Rationale of the Study:

Studying on the socio-cultural factors that influence women's participation in community development is crucial for addressing the issues such as patriarchal dominance, gender inequality, dogmatic thinking, domestic violence, unequal educational opportunities and to ensure equitable development and drive empowerment.

Although in Modern day society women are still trying to break the socio-cultural stereotypes still there remains an unprivileged portion of women who are ignored and are victims to evil practices and always suppressing their voices. Hence, the present study will address the issues along with what interventions are taken.

Objectives of the Study:

The present study has the following objectives-

1. To study the various socio-cultural barriers against women participation in community development.

2. To examine the role of women in the decision-making power of the community development programmes.

3. To study the government schemes launched for women empowerment.

Methodology:

The present study is a review based paper analysing previous research papers from secondary sources. The data has been collected from various journals and websites and its findings have been extracted from the previous done researches. Based on the result implications have been recommended.

Literature Review:

Khan, M., & M., S., (2017) had conducted a study on "Socio-Cultural Impediments & Women Empowerment". From the study it was found that rigid mindsets of community people, weak provision of education, prevailing caste identities, gender imbalance in political participation and representation hinders women empowerment.

Iddy, S.A. & Kisimbii, J., (2017) had conducted a study on "Social Cultural Factors Influencing the Participation of Women in the Implementation of Community Projects (A Case of Kilifi County, Kenya)". From the study it was found that religion and tradition influence women participation in community projects. Male counterparts take the lead in overall decision making without involving female.

Hussain, S., & Hussain, B., (2018) had conducted a study on "Socio-Cultural Constraints To Women's Participation In Rural Support Programs In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan". From the study it was found that socio-cultural practices like male domination, purdah(veil) system do not allow women to participate in developmental process.

Baruah, S., (2021) had conducted a study on "Role Of Women In Decision Making Process of A Family: An Ethnographic Study on Women of Matak Community In Dibrugarh District of Assam". From the study it was found that women are suppressed in the decision-making process as patriarchy prevails. It is also highlighted that a specific 'Gastolor Bihu' is marked as giving freedom to women and girls on that occasion. They are free from restrictions to choose their partner on that Bihu.

Kumari, A.P.Y. & Shankar, A.U., (2021) had conducted a study on "A Study of Socio-Cultural factors and their influence on Rural Women Empowerment in Solar Power Sector in select states of India". From the study it was found that the socio-cultural attitudes of rural women are they needs participation in domestic decision making, needs recognition in the society, needs the right to vote and they are interested in starting solar business.

Kavishe, W.M., & Mahonge, C.P., (2022) had conducted a study on "Role of Socio-Cultural Factors on Women's Right to Land ownership". From the study it was found that there are six socio-cultural factors impeding women from owning land in Tanzania. Those are- traditional custom and belief on men's property ownership, polygamy marriage, women's responsibilities

on domestic work and childbearing, patriarchal dominance, men's supremacy on land ownership even after migrating to another place for work and traditional property inheritance laws.

Mohamed, F., (2023) had conducted a study on "Socio-Cultural Factors and Women's Representation in Political Leadership: Case Study Mbale City Councils". From the study it was found that religion, gender relations and social classes in society significantly effect women's representation in political leadership in Mbale City Councils.

Saha, A., & Sharma, D., (2023) had conducted a study on "Impact Of Socio-Cultural Factors in Developing Women Entrepreneurship in India". From the study it was found that cultural stereotypes, family and peer expectations along with its duties and responsibilities, customer attitude and society's attitude are the hurdles in the development of women entrepreneurship in India.

Khanikor, N., et.al (2024) had conducted a study on "Social and Cultural Conditions of Women in Contemporary society". From the study it was found that women face social, economic and political barriers like unequal pay, lack of access to education and healthcare, limited representation in leadership positions, and violence and harassment.

Daud, K.M.,(2025) had conducted a study on "Assessing the challenges of Women Participation in community development Projects". From the study it was found that women's participation in community development, particularly water projects is hindered by limited access to information, inadequate planning, poor stakeholder communication, and time constraints. Also, socio-cultural expectations and traditional gender roles continue to restrict women's freedom to engage fully in community affairs.

Adhikary, G., & Borah, M., (2025) had conducted a study on "Social Challenges to Women in participation in Politics our region and country: An Analysis". From the study it was found that religious belief, working environment, gender inequality, lack of promotional activities, non-

encouragement of political parties are some of the social factors causing hurdles in women's participation in politics.

Govt. Schemes for Women Empowerment:

There are constant efforts made by the Indian Govt. towards reducing violences and discrimination against women and empowering them. Some of those are-

1. *Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP):* Under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare it was launched with the aim of improving productivity and income of women farmers by promoting agriculture-based livelihood options. It focuses on providing women with technical training, financial support and a better understanding of sustainable agriculture.

2. *Rashtriya Mahila Kisan Yojana:* It encourages women farmers to take leadership roles in agriculture, focusing on skills training and improving agricultural productivity.

3. *Janani Suraksha Yojana(JSY):* Under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare it was launched for pregnant women to provide financial assistance for delivery. It aimed at reducing maternal and infant mortality.

4. *Nari Shakti Puraskar:* Under the Ministry of Home Affairs this is an award given to honor women who have made extraordinary contributions to society recognizing women's efforts in various fields, including social, economic and political sectors.

5. *Mahila Police Volunteer (MPV):* Under the MHA, this scheme was introduced to create and empower women acting as a mediator between the police and the community, facilitating women in distress and fighting crime against women.

6. *Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme(PMEGP):* Launched under the Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises(MSME) it is a credit-linked subsidy program aimed at promoting self-employment and entrepreneurship among the youth, especially women, in rural and urban areas.

7. *Udyogini Scheme:* This aimed at empowering women by offering financial assistance to women entrepreneurs from rural and urban areas to establish micro-enterprises in diverse fields such as manufacturing, services and trade.

8. *One-Stop Centres:* It is a scheme launched under the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) aiming to provide support services for women affected by violence, offering shelter, legal aid and psychological counselling. It provides immediate help to women facing violence and supporting their recovery and empowerment.

9. *Mahila Shakti Kendra (MSK):* It empowers rural women through community participation. It strengthens the role of women in local governance and provides opportunities for rural women in areas like skill training, advocacy and financial inclusion.

10. *Swayamsiddha Scheme:* The primary objective of the Swayamsiddha Scheme is to empower rural women by enhancing their self-reliance, improving their economic status and increasing their social and decision-making power. It focuses on skill development, capacity building, promoting health, education, nutritional support and legal awareness.

Research Gap:

1. The barriers like religion and age old tradition, purdah system restricts women from community developmental projects. There is a gap in the existing literature exploring how this barriers influence women from participating in community projects. Hence, there is a need to conduct study on this.

2. Rigid mindsets of community people, weak provision of education, prevailing caste identities, gender dominance hinders women empowerment. In the existing literature it overlooks the societal perceptions, unequal provision of education, patriarchal dominance against women pulling them back from being empowered. Therefore, a study can be conducted on this.

3.Regarding land ownership rights various issues such as old traditions, polygamy marriage, patriarchal dominance restricts women from owning generational land. In the existing literature there is a gap in exploring how these factors affect women from owning their generational land. Hence, there is a need to explore it.

4. For women entrepreneurship the barriers are customer's attitude and society's attitude towards them. In the existing literature there is a gap in assessing the customer biases and society's attitude towards women entrepreneurs. Hence, there is a need to conduct study on it.

5. Unequal work payment, lack of access to education, healthcare, less representation in leadership roles are barriers to women in involving them in community works. In the existing literature there is a gap in addressing these issues. Hence, there is a need for the study.

Results/Discussions:

Analysing out the previous studies done various findings have been extracted like religion and old traditions stand as hurdles against women pulling them back to take part in decision-making process where males are the all in all of the family. Age old practices like purdah system in Muslim community and system of patriarchal dominance don't let women participate in any leading role except household works. Women's participation in water projects for community development are restricted by factors like- they are kept out of important discussions where they get limited information, improper planning of work schedules without considering women's condition, lack of proper communication and time limitations as women have to take care of households too. Dogmatic thinking, unequal educational opportunities, gender biasness in political participation too pushes women from being empowered. Women are being impeded

from owning land rights due to traditional belief of men as the sole heir, polygamy marriage, women are confined only to household chores and child caring. Family responsibilities, customers outlook and society's attitude towards women as entrepreneurs are negatively impacting them. Religious beliefs, unequal working environment, gender issues, non-encouragement in political representation creates hurdle amongst women to take stand in politics. Unequal remuneration for same work, lack of health facilities and equal education, violence and harassment are the ongoing issues that women face.

Conclusion:

The present study has focused on the socio-cultural factors that influenced women's participation in community initiatives. From the result section various barriers have been discussed that has been hampering women from having their say in decision making or participating in community projects. Patriarchal dominance, purdah system, age old traditions towards women don't let them to participate in community developmental projects. They are kept out of important communication, gets access to less information, time restrictions as women have to look after the household chores, rearing child and office works. Dogmatic thinking, unequal educational opportunities, gender biasness in political participation too pushes women from being empowered. Women are being impeded from owning land rights due to traditional belief of men as the sole heir, polygamy marriage, women are confined only to household chores and child caring. Family responsibilities, customers outlook and society's attitude towards women as entrepreneurs are negatively impacting them. Religious beliefs, unequal working environment, gender issues, non-encouragement in political representation creates hurdle amongst women to take stand in politics. Unequal remuneration for same work, lack of health facilities and equal education, violence and harassment are the ongoing issues that women face.

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