

ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES IN FUNCTIONING OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT SCHEMES IN KARNATAKA WITH REFERENCE TO ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the various schemes for women empowerment and focuses on the challenges faced in functioning of these schemes. A good number of women empowerment and women welfare schemes are implemented in Karnataka state along with several central schemes to provide support, counselling assistance, legal assistance, temporary shelter assistance and financial support to the victims of rape, sexual harassment, domestic violence and dowry harassment. Several of these schemes also aim to providing training to women towards making them self-reliant and self-confident. Each year new women empowerment schemes are added and portrayed as women empowerment is being achieved. But issues of illiteracy, patriarchy, social stratification, financial reliance, digital exclusiveness, persistently present in the Indian social context pose a threat to the successful functioning of the various empowerment schemes. It is observed through various studies that success of any scheme will depend on the co-ordination and collaboration with other schemes and policy regulations.

Keywords: Karnataka state, women empowerment schemes, functioning challenges, role of government

INTRODUCTION

The path to women empowerment is a journey of struggle and resilience. The patriarchal social set up is the biggest hurdle in achieving women empowerment. Gender inequality and social discrimination are very complex reflections of Indian social structure. Making women gain power and control over their livelihood so that they can make strategic choices involves promoting a strong sense of self confidence and identity among them. Even though they have right to access to opportunities and resources their ability to influence the policy makers is still a distant dream.

1. **National family health survey** 2018-2021 reported that only 42 % of women owned a house in India, while compared to 62% men.
2. **National commission for women** reported in 2023 that there were 28 thousand complaints of crimes against women,
3. **National crimes records bureau** reported in 2021 that 50 % of the women suicide deaths were of house wives.
4. **The women and welfare development department** reported that the economic participation and opportunity in the country is only 36%.

The female literacy rate was 71.5% while compared to 85.6 % of men. The Women representation in Lok Sabha was only 14 %. Women labour force participation is only 25%. It is studied that land ownership of women is 19%

DIMENSIONS OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

There are three prominent facets in women empowerment.

1. **Socio- cultural empowerment** – This refers to enhancing women’s capacity to make good choices and transform those choices to actions getting good results.
2. **Economic empowerment** -This refers to providing women with multiple means to achieve economic liberty and possess economic stability and enable them to work freely and entirely in the process of economic development.
3. **Political empowerment** – involves enhancing women’s ability to participate in policy making processes and giving her increased representation in political bodies.

The concepts of women empowerment and gender equality need to be twined together because they are inter-related and inter -functional. Achieving gender equality is the primary requisite in the process of women empowerment. Even after 75 years of independence women continue to reel under socio cultural discrimination and equality in accessing opportunities. Women effectively play an imperative role in Indian society. She is often represented as weak, most vulnerable and defence less individual. This conception itself is very wrong. Even though there are multiple avenues enabling women towards achieving empowerment there are still innumerable social norms economic disparities and gender stereotypes.

1. **Santawana** special treatment units are located at district and taluk hospitals They provide services such as counselling medical aid police assistance and legal assistance. Santawana centres are functioning 24/7 with a counsellor and three social workers to provide counselling to women in distress there are nearly 180 Santawana centres in Karnataka.
2. **Udyogini scheme** – this scheme helps women to take loans from banks and other financial institutions to take up income generative activities listed by Karnataka state women development corporation KSWDC. They supported by subsidy. SC ST women are provided with 1-2 lakh with a subsidy of 50% of the loan amount.
3. **Chethana scheme** - this scheme aims at rehabilitation of sex workers and helps women to get financial assistance of rs fifty thousand for self-employment
4. **Samrudhhi scheme** - this scheme helps street vendor women with financial support to make a decent living
5. **Savi ruchi scheme** - this scheme helps women to encourage district stree shakthi federations with ten lakh interest free loans.
6. **Bhagyashree scheme** - this scheme helps women to improve the status of girl child and provides financial assistance to girl child and health insurance benefits girl child will also receive annual scholarship amount
7. **Sthairya scheme** - this scheme helps women to provides financial relief to women who are victims of atrocities acid attacks violence and intimidation.
8. **Geelathi- scheme** - this scheme helps women to get special treatment and medical support
9. **Ujjwala scheme**- this scheme helps women who are victims of from trafficking and sexual exploitation and helps them with rescue support and counselling.

Supportive schemes for the welfare of women and girl children - there are other supportive schemes for the welfare of women and girl children.

1.	Karnataka Marriage Act Of 1976
2.	Dowry Prohibition Act Of 2007
3.	Special Cell For Eradication Of Social Evils 1984
4.	Prohibition Of Child Marriage Act
5.	Protection Of Women From Domestic Violence Act 2005
6.	Hoysala Bravery Award
7.	Keladi Chennamma Bravery Award

MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF WOMEN WELFARE SCHEMES

1. Women groups such as self-help groups can be made accountable for making women empowerment schemes reach the target groups more individually. The peer support provided through these women associations will support women with the comprehensive understanding of the government initiatives.
2. Ever increasing focus of government and NGOs in various schemes need to be reviewed periodically. The feed backs help to fill the gaps and support policy makers to make up with the lacuna.
3. It is imperative to make a distinction between programmes that are for women and that are exclusively designed to empowerment of women. Because it has become a fashion to label all schemes under one brand heading empowerment of women. But the designing structural functioning of each scheme is different and preoccupies dissimilar dimensions.
4. There is a need to formulate a single data base of women self-help groups, women collectives, women associations leaders , women funders ,women NGO funding agencies, women run NGOs and government authorities . This will support in reviewing the effectiveness of efforts towards women empowerment.
5. The debate on women empowerment has intensified as a fundamental approach for transforming power relations in favour of women. But the actualities reflect a different picture.
6. The fallacy that women self-help groups and such other associations offer empowerment capabilities to women is turning out to be real because the women associations are increasingly used as vehicles to route government and private d funds and subsidies offered This is considered as the primary cause for deviation in women empowerment schemes functioning.
7. The need for gender budgeting- it is often felt that a separate budgeting for women will help to amplify women's; voices in political decision-making processes and fair action delivery.
8. All empowerment issues directing women empowerment need to concentrate on enhancing their access to education. It is observed that if women can get education their access to economic support system will get eased and their economic inclusion will assist them to attain monetary liberty. With proper education they can access vocational and skill up-gradation trainings and benefit out of entrepreneurship and capacity building schemes .Besides education will help them to get knowledge about legislations, legal support and policy regulations enabling their protection , rehabilitation and sustenance.

ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

1. **Need for commitment-** The issues of women empowerment involves the policy makers' commitment in creating effective remedies and sanctions to discourage discrimination. The deep rooted social and cultural discriminative attitude is a very big hazard which is hampering complete success of women empowerment schemes.
2. **Promoting public awareness campaign** -Government of Karnataka is organizing several campaigns and rallies in support of the schemes launched. But the public commitment is still very less. The public inclusiveness needs to be augmented in order to make women empowerment schemes functional to the core.
3. **Easing access to digital inclusiveness** -Providing access to financial and digital inclusion and reviewing and monitoring the beneficiary feedback regularly will make the functioning of the schemes more supportive. Most of the schemes fail to reach the targeted beneficiaries because of the financial and digital exclusion. Unless and until they are made to include in the financial awareness and digital inclusion processes, most of the schemes will become in operational. All kinds of women empowerment plans need to concentrate on enhancing women access to basic digital education. It is observed that if women can get inclusive digital education their access to economic support system will become supportive to financial inclusion.

Besides, Establishing specialised equality bodies which orient completely in achieving success of women empowerment schemes is needed.

CONCLUSION

Thus, there are ample schemes for women empowerment but the persistent existence of issues of gender discrimination, financial constraints, economic exclusiveness etc strongly hinder the potential functioning of women empowerment schemes. It is observed that weak program implementation makes interpretation of results of these schemes very complex. Measures to make public involvement more supportive will assist government in achieving success of all schemes.

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