

A Critical Analysis of Impact of Microfinance on Women Empowerment in India (Special Reference To Bihar)

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Abstract: *In India, the status of women is still far from equal to that of men. This reflects in their empowerment, which is also not where it should be. Women in India struggle with a number of issues such as poverty, illiteracy, and sexual violence. In Bihar, one of India's poorest states, women suffer from a particularly high rate of poverty and illiteracy. This has led to them being marginalized in many ways, including their access to education and employment opportunities. In addition, they are subjected to sexual violence on a daily basis. Despite these challenges, there are also some very successful women in India. Some have made significant contributions to their society and achieved great success in their careers. Others have worked hard to overcome the obstacles that stand in their way and have become powerful leaders in their communities. In this research article, we will explore the status and empowerment of women in India and focus specifically on Bihar. We will then analyze what factors have contributed to the low status of women in Bihar and discuss some strategies that can be used to improve their situation. In this research study found that Women are getting economically and socially empowered after getting micro finance as 88 percent of the respondents reported that poverty level has reduced by participating in micro finance program.*

Keywords: - *Women empowerment, violence self-help group approach, self-directed, microfinance, opportunity decision-making:*

1. INTRODUCTION

India has always been advanced in certain aspects; however, there are also some dark realities within this large nation that needs to be acknowledged. One of these is the global status and empowerment of women. While more than half of India's population identifies as women, they still do not enjoy the same rights and legal protection as men. There are various reasons why this issue exists within the country, but one major cause is how the caste system serves as a means to perpetuate discrimination against lower-caste women by upper-caste male members of their household. In order to provide these low-caste girls with an opportunity to escape such discrimination, the government has begun various initiatives for lower castes that involve education and support for a profession many can enter as opposed to working in agricultural or domestic/household tasks. It is important that we acknowledge these issues, explore them further

and be aware of this complex reality within India so it doesn't go overlooked during our time spent traveling through or living here.

The status of women in India has been a matter of concern for many years. In 2013, India ranked 142nd out of 187 countries on the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap report. This report measures gender parity across a range of indicators, including economic participation and opportunity, education and health, political empowerment, and sexual violence. In terms of economic participation and opportunity, India ranks 117th out of 137 countries. In terms of education and health, India ranks 116th out of 137 countries.

One area where India has made great strides is in terms of political empowerment. In 2015, India ranked 48th out of 155 countries in terms of female political participation. This indicates that women in India have a greater degree of political power than women in many other countries. India houses a diverse population of almost 1.2 billion people, but they all seem to only focus on the development of their own fields and communities. Indian women living in rural areas, specifically those in villages of Bihar, have the most unprivileged status among women. In Bihar, where I was born and raised, many female children are pushed out of school at young ages to take on "traditional" tasks for the family and community by performing tasks like cooking, scavenging for copper or any other metal not used for storing or cooking food (Unspecified), taking part in land-digging/planting, crafting cloth or bamboo products along with other crafts (Unspecified). Without the education that these girls receive before being pushed out of school, many girls depend upon older married women for personal and emotional support needed during an already difficult life. The girls try to compete with their housewives' activities like cooking or caring for small children (Unspecified) but this harsh environment leaves little time or energy left over to complete schoolwork/ seek higher education once they're no longer valued by their husbands'. There is how we got where we are right now. We rely heavily on our tradition and culture as a defense mechanism against modern civilization

India is a country with an enormous population of over 1.2 billion people, and males are a majority of the population. According to the 2011 Census, females constitute 48.5% of the population, while males constitute 51.5%. Despite this stark difference, women have made significant strides in India since independence in 1947. In 1950, only 8% of parliamentarians

were women; however, by 2013, this number had increased to 33%. Additionally, while only 24% of women are employed in the formal sector (Ibid), this figure has increased to 47% over the years. Additionally, while only 4% of households have female headed households (Ibid), this figure has also increased over time.

India is one of the most populous countries in the world, with over 1.3 billion inhabitants. As the world's second most populous country, it has a great impact on global affairs. In terms of women's empowerment, India ranks 156th out of 190 countries in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index for 2016. This reflects a significant improvement from 2015 when India ranked 141st out of 149 countries. However, there is still much work to be done in order to achieve gender parity and empower women across all regions of India.

One of the most pressing issues facing women in India is their lack of access to education and employment. In Bihar, for example, only 49% of women are literate, compared to 73% of men. This leaves women vulnerable to poverty and exploitation, as they are unable to take advantage of opportunities that may be available to them. Lack of education also limits women's ability to participate fully in society and contribute their own voice to the debate about their rights and status.

Another significant issue facing women is violence. In Bihar, for example, one out of every five women experiences domestic violence at some point in her life. This type of violence can have devastating consequences for the victim, including physical and psychological injuries, depression and even suicide. Violence against women often, Despite these advancements, India still faces numerous challenges when it comes to empowering women. According to the World Economic Forum's of Global Gender Gap Report 2016-2017, India ranks 116th out of 136 countries when it comes to gender parity (Ibid). This puts India well below countries like Chile and Rwanda which rank at number 36th and 37th respectively. In this article, we will be looking at the status and empowerment of women in Bihar specifically - a state in eastern India which has been identified as one of the most socio-economically disadvantaged states in India. We will discuss the critical issues facing women there, and identify some strategies that can be used to empower them and help them improve their lives.

1.1 Meaning and concept of microfinance

Microfinance is one of the fastest-growing and most innovative financial products in the world today. It began as a way to help the poorest and most vulnerable people in developing countries, but it has now become a mainstream tool that helps people all over the world. Microfinance is actually a very small loan. The loan is given to poor or low-income borrowers who need it to start or expand their businesses. Microfinance loans are usually repaid within two months, and most borrowers can repay them without having to sell their soul or take on extra debt.

1.2 Why is microfinance so important?

Microfinance helps people living in poverty get access to credit so they can start businesses and improve their lives. By providing these small loans, microfinance institutions help break the cycle of poverty by giving people the opportunity to lift them out of poverty. They also provide vital financial services to women, who are often excluded from traditional banking systems because they lack collateral or traditional credit scores.

1.3 Meaning and concept of women empowerment:

The concept of women's empowerment is one that has been around for centuries, but it has recently become a subject of debate and discussion in many parts of the world. In India, where women have long been considered second-class citizens, the issue of women's empowerment has become especially important. There is no one definition of women's empowerment, and it can mean different things to different people. In general, though, it refers to the ability of women to control their own lives and be equal contributors to society. There are many factors that contribute to women's empowerment, including education and economic opportunities.

In India, progress has been made in terms of women's rights over the past few years. However, there is still a lot of work to be done in order to achieve full equality for women. In particular, there is a need for more equal representation in government and business sectors, as well as improvements in the socioeconomic status of women overall.

1.4 Role of microfinance programme in women empowerment in India (Bihar):

India is one of the most populous countries in the world with over 1.3 billion people. It is also one of the poorest countries in terms of development indicators. The country ranks 116th out of 188 countries in terms of Human Development Index (HDI). Women are still largely marginalized in Indian society. They are considered as second-class citizens and face numerous challenges, including poverty, illiteracy and child marriages.

Despite these challenges, Indian women have made significant strides over the past few decades. There has been a significant increase in the number of women holding positions in government and business, as well as in the media and academia. Despite this progress, there are still many areas where women face discrimination and inequality. One major obstacle that women face is their lack of access to financial resources. This is particularly true for women who are impoverished or who live in rural areas. A microfinance programme has the potential to empower women in Bihar by providing them with access to affordable credit and creating opportunities for small businesses. However, the programme's effectiveness depends on how effectively it is implemented. The programme, launched in 2009, provides loans of up to Rs 10,000 (\$160) to women entrepreneurs in rural areas of Bihar. The loans are intended to help them start small businesses, improve their incomes, and increase their social and economic mobility.

However, the programme faces several challenges. Most notably, it is not well known among the rural population in Bihar. Moreover, the loans are not always available when they are needed most – during times of economic crisis. This can lead to women being unable to repay their loans. One way that India is trying to address this issue is through its microfinance programme. Microfinance is a type of financial services that provides low-cost loans to poor borrowers. It has been widely credited with playing a role in promoting economic growth and reducing poverty worldwide. India's microfinance programme has been particularly successful in empowering women.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

Kingsuk Maity et.al (2018) has been discuss to measure the empowerment of women in terms of sustained increase in income earning capacity accompanied by a freedom of choice in families which have come across out-migration of male members. This measure of empowerment of women is mainly based on three indicators, viz. restrictions placed on them, their decision-making powers, and their mobility. This study shows that out-migration of male members has not generated any significant impact on the empowerment of women members of those families. The most general factors which increase mobility of women, the decision-making power, and relatively less social restrictions placed on them are age, their education, marital duration, residential status, and occupation.

Eyben (2008) studied empowerment is when an individual group and organizations are now able to do what they didn't have courage to do earlier. Social empowerment is when people start to use their power to improve quality of their relationship in society, freedom from violence and on the other hand economic empowerment when people leads to think beyond their survival needs and political empowerment when people start to participate in political institutions.

Ahmed (2011) studied the level of empowerment of rural women through participating in microcredit program in Bangladesh. The study is actually based on data collected through questionnaire from the two groups of rural women. Women who are "with credit" and women who are "without credit." The study found that majority (84%) of the „with credit“ respondents are actually empowered in terms of family decision making matters compared (76%) to the „without credit“ respondent. It is concluded that „with credit“ rural women have enhanced their empowerment by participating microcredit programs of Grameen Bank Bangladesh.

Sarumathi (2011) studied in this paper role of microfinance in women empowerment by dividing it into three main dimensions, psychological empowerment, social empowerment, economic empowerment so as to fulfill the objectives as 1) to analyze the status of SHG"s in district 2) to study about the freedom of women members in SHGs 3) problems faced by women workers 4) to check the level of empowerment of women workers 5) to suggest the views for high level of empowerment. Primary data for this purpose was collected through field survey. To analyze the results descriptive analysis was used. The results showed that there is gradual

increment in all the three sectors and far more increment can be done if NGOs provide more training programs for income generating activity.

Lalnunmawia (2008) studied impact of microfinance on women empowerment. He studied by putting cash into the hands of women is not called empowerment; rather empowerment is when women are experienced improved status and gender relations. Women are also participating in community level programs and their political participation has also increased. He found some negative impacts like women got workload leading to ill health effects; their purchasing power is limited to small purchases. Microfinance would be cost effective in bringing empowerment if business training would be provided, if investment would be done on women general education, seminars would be organized to motivate women.

Minimol (2012) conducted the study to critically evaluate the nature and extent of influence of working in SHGs on rural women. Analysis was based on the extent of different levels of empowerment achieved by the members through their participation in SHGs. Personal, social, economic and financial empowerment were evaluated.

Battase (2013) studied the factors which are becoming obstacles in the way of women empowerment; he actually studied the crime against women and concluded that if women are employed then she got confidence to act against crime also. If women is empowered the she tried to be more and do more so it will also lead to economic growth. In this study he concluded that empowerment is a tool for building confidence, increase understanding, enhancing personal skills, and being able to do something for their own self and for others.

Ahmed (2014) examined the impact of micro-credit on the empowerment of rural women in Bangladesh. A total of 120 respondents were selected as sample using stratified random sampling technique on Toker bazar Union Parishad under Sylhet Sadar Upazilla in Sylhet district, Bangladesh and data was collected through face to face interview by using survey method. The women empowerment was measured by five dimensions .These dimension were (1) economic decision making, (2) household decision making,(3) freedom of physical movement, (4) ownership of property,(5) political and social awareness. OLS (Ordinary Least Squares) regression was applied to understand the effects of microcredit program on each dimension of women empowerment and aggregate women empowerment. The results showed that microcredit program was positively associated with each dimension of women empowerment as well as aggregate measure of Empowerment.

Research objective

- ✚ Critical analysis of Status and empowerment of women in India Special reference to Bihar:
- ✚ To find out the role of microfinance in women's empowerment:

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The Indian woman faces many challenges in terms of her status and empowerment. This paper will critically analyze the various factors responsible for this situation, with a specific focus on Bihar. The paper will first discuss the historical context of women's empowerment in India, before examining the various barriers that continue to prevent women from achieving equality and autonomy. It will then explore the various microfinance programmes and initiatives aimed at empowering women, and discuss their efficacy. The paper will finally offer some recommendations for furthering the cause of women's empowerment in India.

3.1 The scope of the study:

This study was majorly planned to observe the role of microfinance in women's empowerment in India with Special reference to Bihar:

3.2 Sample Size:

100 samples from the area of study have been considered to conduct the present study.

3.3 Tools of data collection:

Information gathered through from various sources such as books, articles, and other related resources from microfinance and women empowerment.

3.4 Limitation of study:

The study is limited to theoretical and conceptual data collected from various source Text Books, Websites, research article.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

India is one of the most populous countries in the world with over 1.3 billion people. According to the 2011 census, women make up 48% of the country's population. This number is lower than the global average of 53%. Despite this, women have made some significant advancement in India over the years.

In 1950, only 26% of women in India had access to education. However, by 2015, this number had increased to 54%. Additionally, there has been a significant increase in women holding elected office throughout India. As of 2016, there are 52 female MPs in the Indian Parliament.

Despite these advances, there are still many barriers that prevent women from achieving equality in India. For example, female genital mutilation (FGM) is still practiced on a large scale in India. In 2016, FGM was reported to be carried out on nearly 2 million girls aged 5-14 years old.

In Bihar, female literacy rates are high (almost 75 percent) compared to the national average of 59 percent, and there has been a significant increase in the number of female college graduates over the past few years. However, this progress is not reflected in female employment levels. In 2013, only 34 percent of women were employed, which was lower than both the national average (42 percent) and the state average (40 percent). This indicates that there are still many barriers to female empowerment in Bihar. The study is exploratory in nature and is based on both primary and secondary data. Secondary data was collected from various journals, articles, working papers, NGO reports etc. Primary data was enumerated from a field survey in the study of (Bihar) region.

Table: 1 Respondents opinion

S.NO.	Questions	Respondents opinion	
1.	Micro finance improved the literacy levels of the respondents and also improved their awareness on child education?	YES 82%	NO 18%
2.	Microfinance has brought economic development directly and indirectly and thus happiness and peace in the family.	88%	12%
3.	Poverty level has reduced by participating in	95%	5%

	micro finance program.		
4.	There is a significant improvement in the income of the respondents after joining SHG.	93%	7%
5.	Women's play an important role in decision making due to participating in micro finance program.	71%	29%

Source : Field survey.

More than 95 % respondents said that Poverty level has reduced by participating in micro finance program. Micro finance improved the literacy levels of the 82% respondents and also improved their awareness on child education. 71% respondents fill that Women's play an important role in decision making due to participating in micro finance program. Maximum number of respondents accepted that microfinance has brought economic development directly and indirectly and thus happiness and peace in the family.

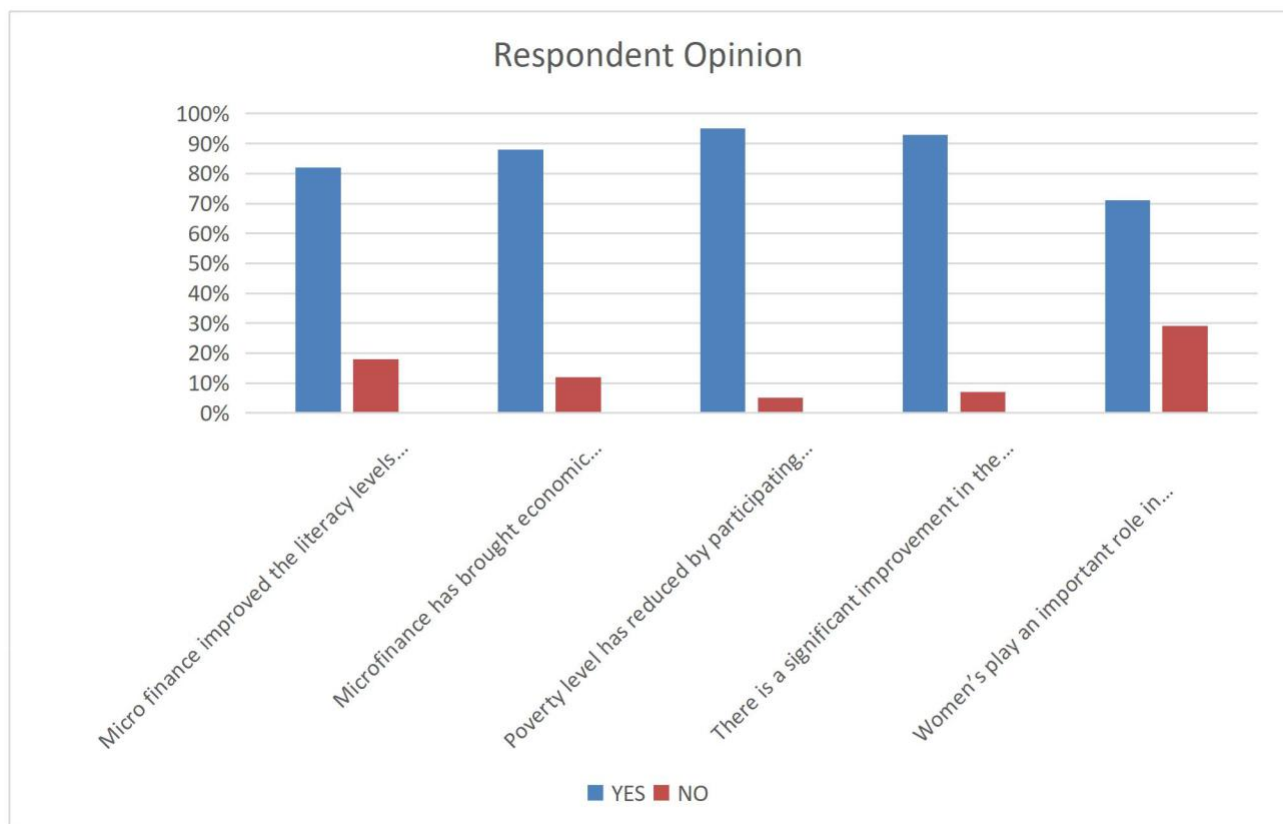


Figure 1: Respondents opinion, Source: Field survey.

5. FINDING

- ✚ The Indian government has made progress in terms of gender equality, but there are still many challenges that need to be addressed. Status is an important factor to consider when discussing women's empowerment in India.
- ✚ The lack of status for women in India has a number of consequences. Women are often not able to achieve their full potential because they do not have the same opportunities as men. This is especially true for women who are from marginalized groups, such as Dalits or scheduled castes.
- ✚ In Bihar, female literacy rates are high (almost 75 percent) compared to the national average of 59 percent, and there has been a significant increase in the number of female college graduates over the past few years.
- ✚ In 2013, only 34 percent of women were employed, which was lower than both the national average (42 percent) and the state average (40 percent). This indicates that there are still many barriers to female empowerment in Bihar.
- ✚ It is found that micro finance improved the literacy levels of the respondents and also improved their awareness on child education.
- ✚ Maximum number of respondents accepted that microfinance has brought economic development directly and indirectly and thus happiness and peace in the family.
- ✚ Women are getting economically and socially empowered after getting micro finance as 88 percent of the respondents reported that poverty level has reduced by participating in micro finance program.
- ✚ More than 96 % respondents said that they play an important role in decision making and they were consulted for making important decisions of the family. This is an important factor of economic empowerment.
- ✚ There is a significant improvement in the income of the respondents after joining SHG.

6. SUGGESTIONS

1. In India, the status and empowerment of women is a complex issue that has been addressed in a number of ways.

2. The Hindu religion places a high value on the role of women, but the situation is far from perfect.
3. In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of women who are working outside the home. However, their opportunities remain limited.
4. In Bihar, for example, only about 30 percent of jobs are available to women, and they earn only half as much as men.
5. The government has made efforts to improve the situation for women, but much more needs to be done.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the status and empowerment of women in India varies drastically from state to state. In states like Bihar, where there is a strong patriarchal culture, women are generally limited in their opportunities and rights. In contrast, states like Kerala have a more liberalized society, where women enjoy greater rights and opportunities than in some other parts of India. The factors that influence the status and empowerment of women in India include cultural tradition, economic development, public policy, and social attitudes. Women in India suffer from a number of systematic disadvantages. These disadvantages include, but are not limited to: unequal rights and opportunities, violence, sexual abuse, and lack of education and employment opportunities. In spite of these challenges, women have made strides in recent years, as indicated by the fact that they now make up about half of the Indian population. The empirical findings of the study suggests that microfinance has a profound influence on the economic status, decision making power, knowledge and self-worthiness of women participants of self-help group linkage program in Bihar.

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