



Women Empowerment in Urban and Rural Areas: Challenges, Opportunities, and Policy Implications

Samreen

Department, Faculty of Management & Commerce,
Swami Vivekanand Subharti University, Meerut-250005, Uttar Pradesh, India
samreenahmed333@gmail.com

Abstract

This article examines women empowerment in both urban and rural areas, highlighting the key challenges and opportunities unique to each context. It also analyzes the role of policies, government initiatives, and community-based interventions in addressing gender disparities. By exploring urban-rural differences, the study aims to provide insights for effective policy formulation and strategies to promote equitable and sustainable women empowerment.

Women are impacted by gender discrimination in a number of sectors, including public life, employment, education, health care, nutrition, and the reduction of the female population. Since education is crucial for enhancing women's social standing, career prospects, and overall contribution to national development, addressing educational gaps is crucial for women's empowerment. Early marriage hinders girls' personal development, negatively impacts their physical and emotional well-being, and limits their access to jobs and education.

Women are benefiting from government initiatives like Mission Shakti and Samarthya, which provide job prospects, safety, and skills in both urban and rural regions. Strong policy execution, more awareness, and improved education are necessary to establish true women's empowerment. In addition to improving their personal lives, empowered women may contribute to the general advancement of society and the country.

Keyword: *Urban and Rural Areas, Women empowerment, Gender equality, sustainable development, Domestic violence.*

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Introduction

Women empowerment is a fundamental component of gender equality and sustainable development because it allows women to fully engage in social, economic, and political life, women's empowerment is essential to gender equality and sustainable development. The significance of women's empowerment in promoting social justice and inclusive growth has received more emphasis in recent years. However, because of differences in access to healthcare, work, education, and institutional support, women's experiences vary greatly across urban and rural settings.

Women frequently gain from improved educational resources, job prospects, and exposure to progressive social standards in

metropolitan regions. Despite these benefits, metropolitan women still have to deal with issues including discrimination at work, unequal pay, and juggling work and home obligations.

The study intends to offer insights for effective policy creation and measures to enhance equitable and sustainable women's empowerment by examining urban-rural inequalities.

This article examines women empowerment in both urban and rural areas, highlighting the key challenges and opportunities unique to each context. It also analyzes the role of policies, government initiatives, and community-based interventions in addressing gender disparities. By exploring urban-rural differences, the study aims to provide insights for effective policy

formulation and strategies to promote equitable and sustainable women empowerment.

Challenges.

Disparity in Education.

There is still a sizable educational gap between men and women notwithstanding advancements in the modern era. The level of education attained by women is still lower than that of males, especially in rural regions. Over 63% of women in rural areas are still illiterate, which is a startlingly high rate. Poverty, early marriage, restricted educational opportunities, and ingrained societal traditions that favor male education over female education are the main causes of this disparity. Many women are thereby deprived of the abilities and information required for both economic independence and well-informed decision-making. Since education is crucial for enhancing women's social standing, career prospects, and overall contribution to national development, addressing educational gaps is crucial for women's empowerment.

Child Marriages.

In India, child marriage is a severe societal problem that still affects girls, particularly in rural regions. In order to spare their daughters from the burden of dowries and financial obligations, many parents set up early weddings. Girls are thus married young, sometimes before finishing their schooling. Early marriage hinders girls' personal development, negatively impacts their physical and emotional well-being, and limits their access to jobs and education. In addition to preventing women from gaining autonomy and empowerment, this practice perpetuates gender inequity. For women to be empowered and for girls to have equal rights and opportunities, child marriage must be abolished.

Domestic Violence

In both urban and rural settings, domestic abuse is a severe societal issue that directly impedes women's empowerment. It covers financial, emotional, sexual, and physical abuse at the hands of a spouse or family member. Due to fear, social shame, financial dependency, and ignorance of their legal rights, women frequently keep quiet. Domestic violence may go unreported in metropolitan areas owing to societal pressure and family reputation, but it is frequently accepted in rural regions due to traditional beliefs and poor access to support resources. Women's physical and emotional health, as well as their capacity to engage in work, education, and decision-making, are all impacted by domestic violence. Achieving genuine women's empowerment requires

addressing domestic abuse through legal protection, awareness campaigns, counseling services, and severe enforcement of the law.

Gender discrimination.

Compared to males, women are viewed as a weaker segment of society and are accorded less significance. Children of girls are becoming actual victims of prejudice. Because Indian households are patriarchal, there is also discrimination between men and women in terms of power and employment. Women are impacted by gender discrimination in a number of sectors, including public life, employment, education, health care, nutrition, and the reduction of the female population.

• Problems of female

Education Because women are discouraged from pursuing higher education, such as professional and technical education, the percentage of educated women in India is low, particularly in rural regions.

•Problems related to unemployment

Women are finding it more difficult to find suitable employment. They are more vulnerable to harassment and exploitation at work.

Opportunity.

Significant government programs like Mission Shakti and Samarthya provide excellent chances for women's empowerment in India's rural and urban areas. Through support services including one-stop centers, helplines, legal aid, and rehabilitation facilities, Mission Shakti aims to ensure women's protection, security, and empowerment. The mission empowers women to live with dignity and engage more fully in social and economic life by tackling problems including gender-based abuse and domestic violence. In order to increase women's economic independence, Samarthya, which prioritizes women's capacity building and skill development, offers training, education, and livelihood possibilities. When taken as a whole, these programs boost women's self-esteem, increase their access to resources, and encourage their equitable involvement in work, education, and decision-making in both urban and rural communities.

Conclusion

Gender equality and sustainable development depend heavily on the empowerment of women. Even though metropolitan women have better facilities, they still have to deal with issues like discrimination in the job and uneven pay. More severe issues that rural women must deal with include spousal abuse, child marriage, and a lack of education. These problems prevent women from becoming self-reliant and self-assured.

Women's empowerment is essential for achieving gender equality and sustainable development. While urban women have greater access to education and employment, they continue to face challenges such as workplace discrimination and unequal pay. Rural women encounter more severe obstacles, including limited education, child marriage, domestic violence, and restricted employment opportunities. These challenges hinder women's ability to become self-reliant and confident.

Women are benefiting from government initiatives like Mission Shakti and Samarthya, which provide job prospects, safety, and skills in both urban and rural regions. Strong policy execution, more awareness, and improved education are necessary to establish true women's empowerment. In addition to

improving their personal lives, empowered women may contribute to the general advancement of society and the country.

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