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# Women Empowerment for Sustainable Development



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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Received:</b> 25-07-2023 <b>Received in revised form:</b> 11-09-2023 <b>Accepted:</b> 14-09-2023 <b>Available online:</b> 30-09-2023</p> <hr/> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Gender Equality; Goals; Sustainable Development; Women Empowerment.</p>	<p>Gender equality is a right. Achieving this right offers the greatest opportunity to tackle several urgent contemporary problems, including but not limited to economic downturns, healthcare disparities, violence targeting women, escalating conflicts, and the looming threat of climate change. Women and girls make up 50% of the global population, and as a result, have half of the potential of humanity, according to UN statistics. Achieving gender equality and empowering women are the focal points of the fifth Sustainable Development Goal. Existing research, however, points to the fact that persistent gender disparity prevents sustainable growth. In order to achieve gender equality and consequently ensure sustainable development in India, this study attempts to shed light on the role of women's empowerment. Data is gathered through secondary sources. Published research indicate that the contribution of the female labour force to the nation's economic development is lower than that of the male labour force. Similar to this, men predominate in politics, while women contribute significantly less to decision-making. According to the study's findings, women cannot have a substantial impact on the political, social, economic, and environmental realms unless they are given more power and gender equality is not attained. Therefore, the goal of this study is to get policymakers to commit to and work for women's empowerment and to use the potential of the entire nation to achieve sustainable development.</p>

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

“We shall see better days soon and our progress will be accelerated if male education is persuaded side by side with female education.”

**Dr. B. R. Ambedkar**

Giving women more authority and control over their own lives is a key component of empowering them. Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi stated at the UN Sustainable Development Summit in 2015, “the world and our beautiful planet will tremendously benefit from

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the sustainable development of one-sixth of humanity. It will be a world with fewer barriers, more hope, and increased confidence in its accomplishment". Gender equality aims to guarantee that an individual's "rights, obligations, and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female." Women must be confident in their abilities and see themselves as having control over their lives, both inside and outside of the home. Women must be "empowered" in order to close the "gender gap" and create an equal role in the legislative, educational, political, and economic institutions with males before gender equality can be attained and preserved.

### 1.1 Review of Literature

[Tripathi \(2015\)](#) studied various aspects of women empowerment psychological, economic, social, political empowerment. In this study, special light has been laid on the psychological empowerment of women. After studying different aspects, she found that women have been empowerment in India in recent times but there is a lot of difference between superficial empowerment and reality, in the society if parents, family, teachers, media, and society, work together psychological empowerment can be achieved.

[Alvarez \(2013\)](#) studied emphasis on gender equality as a matter of human rights as well as a requirement for and a sign of sustainable development.

[Kabeer and Natali \(2013\)](#) assumed that gender equality and sustainability have a straightforward "win-win" relationship. In fact, some economic growth patterns are predicated on preserving gender disparities, such as through upholding salary differences between men and women and institutionalizing gender-discriminatory attitudes, values, and practices.

[Dankelman \(2010\)](#) Although they contribute to sustainable development, women are equally affected by the negative effects of climate change and environmental deterioration.

[UNDP \(2008\)](#) stated that the woman who feels confident in herself is empowered. She has the freedom to make her own decisions and has access to a variety of resources and opportunities that give her options she can choose from. She has authority over her life, both within and outside the house, and she has the power to shape societal change to establish a more equitable social and economic system on a global scale.

### 1.2 Objectives

1. To review the study on the research topic to understand how women empowerment and sustainable development are related.
2. To underline the importance of women's empowerment and gender equality as UN Sustainable Development Goals for advancing the world.
3. To examine the connections between women empowerment for sustainable development with the help of secondary data in order to discover the suggestions for achieving the objective.

### 1.3 Women Empowerment and Sustainable Development

Developing a sustainable society requires women's empowerment. Women's empowerment leads to greater accessibility to resources, opportunities, and decision-making power, which benefits social, economic, and environmental outcomes. The phrase "women empowerment" itself implies that women need to be given more authority because they are currently under-powered. In recent years, noticeable strides have been made toward lifting women out of their insignificance and

powerlessness. Women's freedom worldwide was suppressed by patriarchal societies. Women were prohibited from voting or even expressing their opinions and were confined to their homes. Over time, they realized that their lives mattered much more than merely supporting their families. As more women started to push barriers, the growth of women became apparent for the first time in the world. Women, unlike males, never attempt to silence the voice of the other gender. These are the hands that restrain the hands of everyone who is oppressed, both men and women, lifting them out of poverty as they strive to improve their lot in life.

The country is making progress financially, but it must prioritize social and human development, as well as women's empowerment, while also prioritizing other aspects. Strengthening women's rights and enabling them to take charge of their lives and shape society requires the economic contribution and empowerment of women.

#### **1.4 UN Sustainable Development Goal 5**

Sustainable development can take place through the economic empowerment of women. By 2030, India has committed to ensuring that women and girls contribute equally as partners to the nation's growth and development in accordance with the SDG-5. It has also been noted that if women and men participate equally in economic activities, the world's annual GDP in 2025 will increase by \$11 trillion. This shows the significance of women participation in all aspects life. From conception till death, women experience discrimination, therefore women must be allowed more authority over all aspects of their lives to achieve the exact development of the country.

#### **1.5 Challenges Women Facing in Day-to-Day Life**

Studying the main obstacles women faces, particularly in emerging economies, is crucial for a better understanding of women's empowerment. Let's have a quick idea of what this means:

##### *1.5.1 Discrimination*

Discrimination against women is a common occurrence in many spheres of life, including the job and the household. This may limit their ability to take advantage of educational and job possibilities, as well as result in unfair treatment and poorer compensation.

##### *1.5.2 Lack of Access to Employment and Education*

Women face significant barriers to employment and education. This is a result of women's inability to work due to societal and cultural restrictions, a lack of access to education and training, and other factors.

##### *1.5.3 Gender - Based Violence*

Gender-based violence is a serious issue. This includes instances of dowry-related violence, physical and sexual assault, and female infanticide. According to statistics obtained by the UN from official sources, police record more than 2,50,000 occurrences of rape or attempted rape each year.

##### *1.5.4 Poverty*

Millions of women and girls will live in extreme poverty globally, according to recent estimates of poverty from UN Women, UNDP, and the Pardee Center for International Futures.

Poverty can harm women's health and nutrition in addition to posing obstacles to their pursuit of employment and education.

### *1.5.5 Disparities*

According to the brief, New data shed light on gender disparities in the labour market, 15% of working-age women worldwide do not have a job despite seeking one, compared to 10.5% of men. This gender gap has largely not changed between 2005 and 2022.

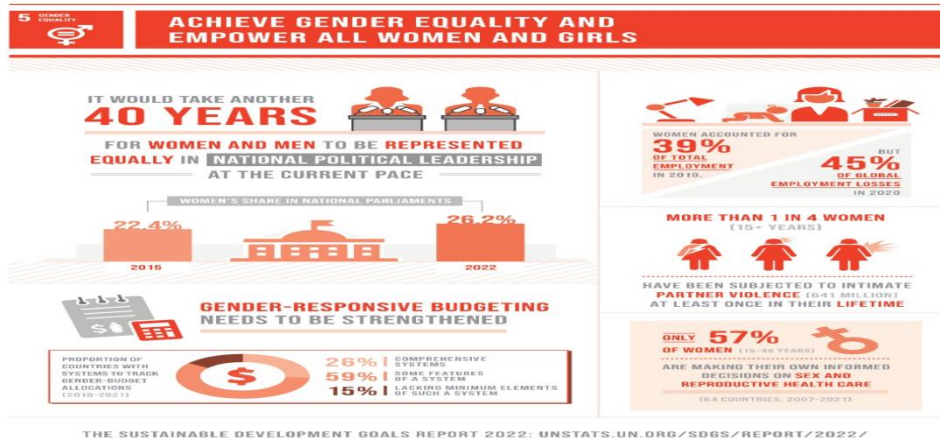
## **1.6 Causes of Less Female Participation**

In order to discover the suggestions to improve the status of women, the reasons for less participation of women in country's development is the need of the hour. Therefore, the following points highlights the causes of less female participation.

- Women are paid less than men, it is not an unknown fact and one of the major reasons for less participation by women. The wage gap certainly establishes the fact of women being less eligible for work than their male counterparts and a notion is spread in the minds of women to compromise and settle more than men in the workforce. According to the 2017 gender gap report, the wage gap remained at 23 percent and seemed unchanged in 2019 and 2021. And it should be noted that these figures can not be relied on completely as the gender wage gap exists in developing countries where women tend to be employed in the informal sector and self-employment and the number for those are not considered in the report.
- Women have less social and family support which pulls them back mentally, gender inequalities in employment result in unwanted disadvantages in various spheres of employment like availability of pensions, security of work, and unemployment benefits or maternity compensation and protection. These are the struggles faced by an average woman seeking a way out to earn but it gets much more difficult for girls and women from low-income families to get out of the norm when the only goal of their families is to marry them. A hollow narrowness of the society and pre-defined roles of women leads to lesser participation of women in the development of the nations.
- No matter their age, geography, money, or social standing, women experience violence and harassment at work, which discourages them from working. A narrative of Women being naïve to understand the atrocities of the world is well established and the cases of violence and harassment at work add fuel to the fire and create more confusion and anxiety among women to work. This lack of sense of security holds a lot of women from moving to different places for better opportunities at work.
- The digital divide is one of the specific reasons for the fewer participation of women as a lot of women from rural areas are still offline and the majority of them being women leads to less awareness of the reforms taking place and thus in a way haphazardly causes implementation.

## **1.7 Secondary Source on Women Empowerment for Sustainable Development**

The secondary data were obtained from the Government's Report on Sustainable Development Goals, 2022 and 2023.

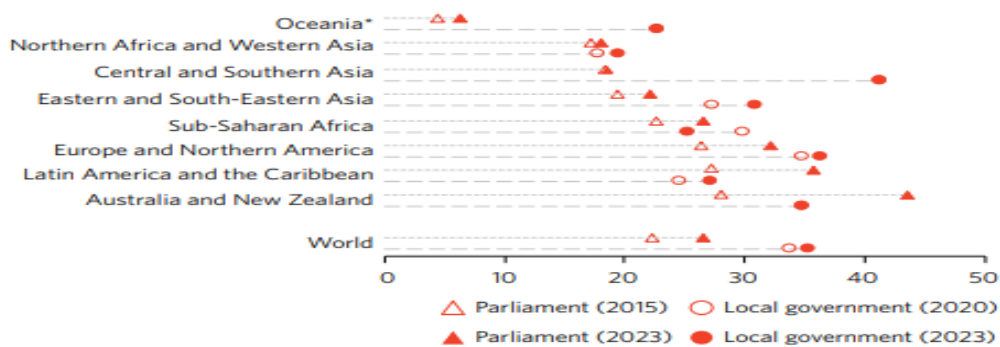


Source: The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022

From the above figure, the following inferences were framed. They are as follows,

- Approximately 26% of women aged 15 or older who have been in a relationship at some point in their lives, which amounts to around 641 million women worldwide, report experiencing physical or sexual abuse by their husband or another close partner at least once.
- In 2021, Southern Asia witnessed 35% of young women being married as infants, while in Sub-Saharan Africa, the corresponding figure was 28%. Approximately one out of every five young women were wedded before reaching the age of 18. Over the past five years, there has been a global decrease in child marriages by roughly 10%.
- Apart from the initially projected 100 million girls at risk, it is anticipated that the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic may lead to an additional 10 million girls becoming child brides by the year 2030.
- Over 200 million females, including women and children, have undergone female genital mutilation, primarily concentrated in 31 countries around the world.

**Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments and local governments (percentage)**



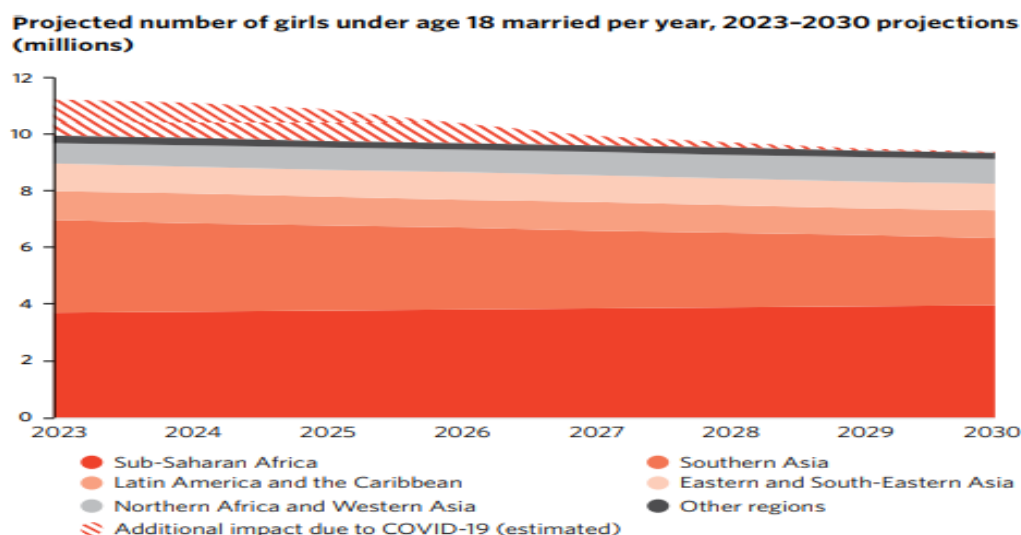
\*Excluding Australia and New Zealand.

Source: The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023

The above figure gives the political participation of women at the present scenario,

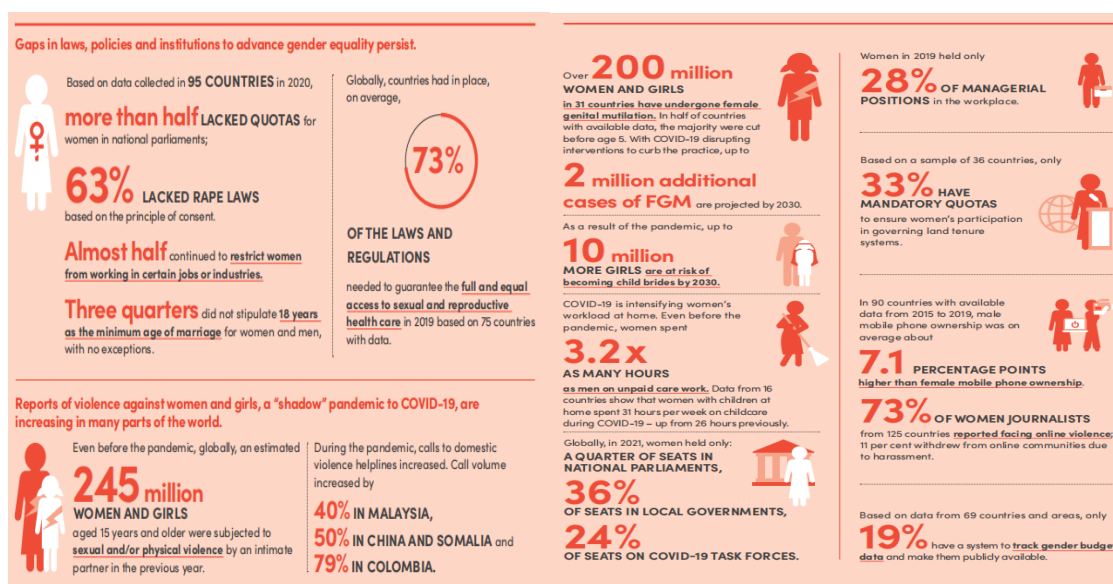
- On January 1, 2022, there were 26.2% more women in lower and single houses of national parliaments around the world than there were in 2015. Globally, there were 26.5% of women in lower and single chambers of national parliaments as of January 1, 2023, a minor rise since 2015 of 4.2 percentage points, but only an average annual

gain of 0.5 points. Women held 35.5% of the seats in local governments at the local level in 2023, up from 33.9% in 2020. If current trends continue, it will take more than 40 years to eliminate the gender representation gap in the national legislature, and 30 years to eliminate it at the municipal level. Government-mandated gender quotas have been found to be successful, with an average of 30.9% of women being represented in parliamentary elections in quota-applying nations, as opposed to 21.2% in non-quota-applying nations, in 2022. The average increase in women's representation in local government due to quotas is seven percentage points.



Note: "Other regions" include Europe and Northern America, Central Asia and Oceania.

Source: The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023



Source: The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023

From the above statistics of the report 2023,

- Nearly 50% of married women lack the authority to make decisions regarding their rights and sexual and reproductive health. According to information gathered from 68 nations for the years 2007 to 2022, only 56% are married between the ages of 15

and 49 are capable of making choices regarding their sexual and reproductive rights. While 89% of women have the choice to use contraception, 1 in 4 do not have the freedom to make their own health care decisions or avoid sex. With regard to this, 115 countries examined that, about 76%, have supportive laws and rules ensuring full and equal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights.

- The reduction of intimate partner violence has not made enough progress over the past 20 years. Over the past 20 years, despite increased global awareness and proof of successful prevention methods, there has been insufficient progress in reducing violence against women and girls. Between the ages of 15 and 49, 16% of women who had ever been in a romantic relationship at the time reported having been physically or sexually abused by a current or former male partner. Achieving the goal of eradicating violence against women and girls by 2030 would be unattainable unless there is a committed investment in strengthening preventive initiatives, implementing effective policies, and offering support services.
- Based on data spanning from 2009 to 2020 in 46 countries, it's evident that a significant number of both women and men engaged in agricultural production do not possess ownership or secure rights to agricultural land. In one-third of these countries, neither women nor men own land or have solid rights to it. While this is going on, in more than half of these countries, men own at least twice as many enterprises as women. In over 60% of the 71 reporting countries, women's land rights are either not legally protected at all or are relatively loosely protected.
- Possessing a mobile phone can serve as a powerful tool for empowering women, but gender equality in this regard remains elusive in many regions. Having a mobile phone has been demonstrated to enhance women's empowerment by facilitating connectivity and access to resources and services. Globally, mobile phone ownership among individuals aged 10 and above is projected to reach 73% in 2022, up from 67% in 2019. However, the gender gap in mobile phone ownership stands at only 12%, a figure that has remained relatively stable since 2019. Regional variations are substantial, with gender parity being largely achieved or nearly achieved in high- and middle-income areas but falling significantly short in regions with lower income levels.

## 2.0 SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

According to the report, women in India lack financial and personal liberty. Despite the fact that fundamental health and education indicators for women have improved significantly over the past ten years, policymakers must consider that, it is very essential for women to reach their full potential, socioeconomic and political autonomy. The scope and intensity of ecological movements in independent India has rapidly broadened as a result of the expansion of development projects across the nation and the increased insatiable exploitation of the natural resources. In India, women have always had a stronger connection to nature and have contributed significantly to environmental preservation. Therefore, it is important to continue to support women's participation and leadership, both at the grassroots and in decision-making processes.

The international framework has instructed each participating country to concentrate on empowering women in the goal of achieving the SDGs by 2030. The UN has urged the participating countries to abolish all forms of gender discrimination and to advance women in all walks of life.

Therefore, it is imperative for India and its policymakers to close any gaps that still exist. In addition to the country's current policies, more attention needs to be paid to women and issues that affect them. Both public and private stakeholders have a significant role to play when it comes to providing women with enough access and accurate information about their education, health, public policies, programs, etc. and motivating them to engage in the political, economic, and environmental spheres. The utilization of conventional and digital media to improve the lives of women across all social strata must be prioritized. Women's empowerment is not only crucial but also required for sustainable development. Leaving no one behind without harming resources for future generations is the goal, and while we are all learning and evolving, ignorance is not bliss, sustainability is subjective to one's perspective, so women's role in it cannot be ignored, whether it be economically, politically, or socially. To ensure the development of the world, we must encourage more and more female participation, identify any gaps in the laws, and ensure that they are implemented effectively.

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