



OVERCOMING SOCIO-ECONOMIC BARRIERS OF WOMEN WITH EDUCATION

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Abstract:

Education is considered one of the most powerful tools for breaking the cycle of poverty and empowering individuals, particularly women, to achieve economic and social mobility. However, women from disadvantaged backgrounds face multiple barriers that hinder their access to education and limit their opportunities for upward mobility. This case study aims to explore the role of education in empowering disadvantaged women from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, specifically examining how education can help break down barriers and create new opportunities for these women. This case study used a qualitative research approach, collecting data through in-depth unstructured interviews of two women from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. The study's findings focused on the hardships of those two women and how education played a crucial role in helping their children come out of financial miseries.

Key words: *Women empowerment, Socio-Economic Barriers, Education for women.*

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INTRODUCTION:

Empowerment is the strength that emanates from within us or from our surroundings, that gives us the power to influence and change things around us for the betterment of ourselves as well as others.

Education plays a crucial role in empowering women from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. It provides them with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to pursue their goals and dreams. Education can help break down traditional gender roles and stereotypes that limit women's opportunities and can enable them to participate more fully in society.

Through education, women can gain access to better job opportunities and higher wages, which can

improve their economic status and that of their families. Education can also improve their health and well-being, as it can increase their awareness of health issues and help them make informed decisions about their own health.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

Women empowerment has been an area of grave concern for any developing or underdeveloped nation. Even when stories of great women achievers have been doing rounds on social media near every International Women's Day, International Day of Girl Child or International Day of Women and Girls in Science, the society seems to jump back on the track of gender inequality with unequal pay or unequal distribution of rights and duties. But what



needs to be shared to the world are stories of women who have not made that great in the eyes of the society but have been doing great for themselves and their families. These uncelebrated women are those whom we see sweeping the streets, picking up garbage from homes, doing domestic chores in someone else's home, etc. These are women from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds who have similar stories of struggles and achievements to share. Keeping this in mind, 2 cases of women from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds were interviewed to study in detail about their lives, their struggles in making ends meet, achievements of their children which they consider as their own and the crucial role education has played in their lives.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

• General Objectives:

To identify the barriers faced by single mothers from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds and to understand their perspective towards the importance of education in the upliftment of their future generations.

• Specific Objectives:

- To identify the barriers and concerns of single women from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds in raising their children
- To identify the achievements of children of single women from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds.
- To assess their perception towards education and its importance.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The study used a qualitative research approach and is exploratory in nature and is based on primary data collected by interviewing women of poor socio-economic backgrounds.

The study was conducted on two single mothers of disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds who have been working as domestic help.

An unstructured interview was used to collect data from the two women which was analysed, and conclusions were drawn for the descriptive data collected.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION:

To get an idea about the socio-economic status of the participants of the study, questions were asked which answered their age, education qualifications, life before marriage, life after marriage, life as a single mother, children's education, current life, perceptions about education and its role in their life, if education has anything to do with gender and how their life would be if they had been if they had completed their education.

Case A is a woman aged 52 years, who is a widow, has 3 children, 1 girl and 2 boys, who works as domestic help in 6 houses. She could not complete her primary education because of domestic responsibilities. She lived a very simple village life before her marriage after which she came to Mumbai. She became a widow when she was around 35yr old. And since then, she started working as a domestic help. Initially, she was working in 13-15 houses since her children were studying and she had no other financial support. Her workday would start at 8a.m. and would end at 11:45p.m. Her children were in their early teens when they lost their father. Her daughter and elder son dropped out of education after their HSC Exams to support their mother financially and the youngest son completed his graduation.

Case B is a woman aged 60, separated from husband, has 3 children, 1 girl and 2 boys and works as a



nanny at present. She has studied till 8th grade and dropped out because of domestic responsibilities. She too lived a simple village life before getting married and coming to Mumbai. She got married at the early age of 16. Her husband separated from her when she was about 32yr old, and her 3rd child was just about 1.5yr old after which she had to move back to her hometown to make a living for her and her children. She enrolled her children in a Christian Missionary School and hostel where she did not have to pay for her children's education and stay. She worked in factories and some years later she came back to Mumbai and started working as home nurse. All her children dropped out after their SSC Exams and started working.

What is common between these two women is the fact that both became single mothers when their children were quite young, and they had to start working to make ends meet. Both women were thrown into difficult situation when their lives were comfortable and peaceful. Their stories are inspiring because of the efforts they made to make the lives of their children better even after all the barriers they had to face in life.

Both women had to face financial difficulties as they didn't get any kind of support from the extended family. Since they were not quite educated, they had to do multiple menial work to make a living for themselves and their children. Both women struggled, not only provide for their children but also make them mentally, emotionally, and morally competent enough to stand up for their own future.

The women were so busy working for their children's futures that they didn't have enough time to look after themselves. They neglected the minor health issues that they faced due to the kind of work

they did. They also could not give much time to their children, to sit with them, enjoy or even visit their native place together.

Amongst all the difficulties, they managed to provide basic education to their children. 2 children of woman from Case A, even though being undergraduates, have managed to get jobs that help them meet their basic needs in life and the last son who completed his graduation works for an MNC and wishes to go for higher education. Her grand children too go to schools and her dream is to see them get good education. Though children of woman from Case B studied only up to SSC, they are doing well in different vocational fields.

Both women still wish their children complete their graduation. They are ready to provide financial support to their children, if needed.

When asked about their perception towards education, they both had the same opinion that education is very important in everyone's life. If they had been given an opportunity to complete their education, they would have been in a better position in life today and their struggles would have been different.

Woman from Case B wanted to be a nurse when she was a child but because of her domestic responsibilities, she did not get a chance to complete her education and Woman from Case A said that the school in her village was not accessible, and she also had to take over the domestic responsibilities when her parents would leave home for farming.

Both women believed gender has nothing to do with education. Be it a son or daughter, both should get equal opportunities for education so that they are able to be independent in life.



Currently both women are doing well in life as their children are sharing her responsibilities. Their workload has been reduced now and they are able to give more time to their grandchildren. They are also able to give more time and importance to their health and live a peaceful life. Though they are comfortable with their lives now, they felt only if they had the opportunity to get proper education, they might have got better job opportunities and would have made a better living condition for their children. But nonetheless they are happy with how their children turned out even after so many difficulties and how very responsible they have been in taking care of the needs of the future generations of the family.

Conclusion:

Importance of education is always felt when one faces real life challenges. It is through education that one gains the confidence and competence to deal with those challenges. Moreover, education can also empower women to make informed decisions, improve their health outcomes, and contribute positively to their communities. However, it is important to acknowledge that access to education is still limited for many women from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. Barriers such as poverty, cultural norms, lack of resources, and

inadequate infrastructure can prevent them from receiving a quality education.

It is important that stories of women mentioned in the study are highlighted so that women from alike situations come forward and try to get help from the society & government. Therefore, it is essential that governments and organizations make efforts to remove these barriers and ensure that all women, regardless of their socio-economic background, have access to education. Only then can we truly empower women and achieve gender equality.

There is no greater pillar of stability than a strong, free & educated woman -Angelina Jolie

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