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One Day Multidisciplinary State Level Seminar Under Quality Improvement Programme

On

Women in Higher Education: Access, Equity, and Academic Leadership

Saturday, 14th March, 2026

-- Chief Editor --
Prof. Rajkumar Kadam

-- Organised by --

Hind Seva Mandal's
Pemraj Sarda College, Ahilyanagar

-- Under the Aegis of --
Savitribai Phule Pune University, Pune

In Association with
Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC)
Pemraj Sarda College, Ahilyanagar



About the Institution

Pemraj Sarda College, established in 1962, is run by Hind Seva Mandal. It is a Grantin-Aid college under Sections 2(f) and 12 (B) of the UGC. The college is permanently affiliated to Savitribai Phule Pune University. It has been accredited by the NAAC with 'B+' Grade (with CGPA 2.65) in Cycle 3. It is a co-education multi-faculty institution.

The foundation stone of this institution was laid by the then Prime Minister Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru. Chief Minister Shri Y. B. Chavan inaugurated the college in 1962.

The college offers Bachelors' programmes in Arts, Science, and Commerce along with Post Graduate programmes in Marathi, Political Science, English, Commerce, Chemistry, and Zoology. In addition, it has Research Centres for Marathi and Political Science, offering guidance and assistance to the Research Scholars perusing Ph. D.

From The Principal's Desk



It gives me immense pleasure to present this special publication of our college journal, brought out in connection with the State-Level Seminar on "Women in Higher Education: Access, Equity and Academic Leadership" held at Pemraj Sarda College. This volume is not merely a record of proceedings, but a thoughtful reflection of the vibrant academic engagement and critical discussions that marked the seminar.

In the contemporary academic landscape, the role of women in higher education has become more significant than ever. The challenges of access, equity, and leadership continue to shape the discourse, urging institutions to rethink policies and practices. This seminar served as an important platform to deliberate upon these concerns, while also celebrating the resilience, innovation, and scholarly contributions of women across disciplines.

The enthusiastic participation of academicians, researchers, and students from various institutions enriched the seminar with diverse perspectives and meaningful insights. The papers included in this journal reflect rigorous scholarship and a deep commitment to addressing gender concerns in higher education. I am confident that this publication will contribute to on-going academic dialogue and inspire further research in this vital area.

Our college has consistently strived to promote academic excellence and inclusive growth. The successful organization of this seminar and the publication of this journal stand as a testament to the dedication and collaborative efforts of our faculty, IQAC members, organizing committee, and non-teaching staff. Their commitment to quality and innovation continues to strengthen the academic culture of our institution.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our esteemed sponsor, Savitribai Phule Pune University, for their constant support and encouragement. Their guidance has been instrumental in enabling us to create platforms that foster intellectual exchange and empower women in higher education.

I congratulate all contributors and editors for their sincere efforts in bringing out this publication. I hope that this journal will serve as a valuable resource for scholars and educators, and continue to inspire initiatives that promote equity, leadership, and transformation in higher education.

With Regards

Prof (Dr) Maheshwari Gavit

Principal, Pemraj Sarda College, Ahilyanagar



Message from Co-ordinator

It gives me great pleasure and a strong sense of responsibility to present this Special Issue of RAAVI: An International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research, emerging from the One-Day Multidisciplinary State-Level Seminar organized under the Quality Improvement Programme of Savitribai Phule Pune University on the theme "Women in Higher Education: Access, Equity, and Academic Leadership." Serving as the Convener of this seminar has been both professionally enriching and personally transformative, deepening my understanding of the urgency and complexity surrounding women's roles in higher education. While women's enrolment in higher education has increased significantly, persistent challenges remain, including unequal access for marginalized groups, disparities in opportunities and representation, and the underrepresentation of women in academic leadership. This seminar was envisioned as a platform for critical dialogue, reflection, and collaborative thinking on these pressing issues.The multidisciplinary nature of the seminar brought together scholars, educators, and practitioners from diverse fields, fostering discussions that extended beyond policy and statistics to include lived experiences, challenges, and transformative initiatives. This Special Issue reflects that engagement through contributions that examine structural barriers, intersectional inequalities, institutional frameworks, mentorship, and leadership pathways.A central insight emerging from these contributions is that access alone is insufficient; genuine progress requires equity in participation, recognition, and advancement, alongside the promotion of women's leadership in academic institutions. I express my sincere gratitude to all contributors for their valuable scholarly work. I also acknowledge the support of the Governing Body of Hind Sevaa Mandal, the guidance of the Principal, Dr. Maheshwari Gavit, and the dedicated efforts of the Organizing Committee. It is hoped that this Special Issue will serve as both an academic resource and a catalyst for meaningful action, encouraging more inclusive, equitable, and empowering practices within higher education.

Prof. (Dr.) Swati T. Rokade

Coordinator, IQAC and Convener One-Day Multidisciplinary State-Level Seminar

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Dr. Swati Rokade

Dr. Swati Rokade is an accomplished academician with over twenty-six years of teaching experience at Pemraj Sarda College, Ahilyanagar, where she serves as a Professor. Specializing in gender studies, she has published twenty-four research articles in reputed international journals and presented thirty-one papers at national and international conferences, including in Bangkok.She is known for fostering an inclusive and intellectually engaging learning environment and for mentoring students effectively. Dr. Rokade holds a Ph.D. from Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth, has qualified SET from Savitribai Phule Pune University . Masters Degree in Sociology and completed a certificate course from Indira Gandhi National Open University.



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Dr. Satyajit Patil is presently working in Pemraj Sarda College, Ahilyanagar (Maharashtra) as Professor of English. He received National Merit Scholarship on completing higher secondary education. He was University Topper at B. A. and Gold Medalist at M. A. (English). Dr. Patil cleared both the SET and NET in a maiden attempt.Hewas also selected for the Junior Research Fellowship by the UGC.

Dr. Satyajit has 26 years of teaching experience at Under Graduate and Post Graduate Levels. He is the Research Supervisor of Savitribai Phule Pune University. He was the member on the Board of Studies of Chh. Shivaji College (Autonomous), Satara. He hasbeen the Associate Editor of The Criterion: An International Journalin English. He has participated in seminars, conferences and workshops at state, national as well as international levels besides publishing scholarly articles in reputed journals.



Prof. Rajkumar Kadam

Prof. Rajkumar Laxman Kadam is a dedicated academician, dynamic public speaker, and Editor-in-Chief of RAAVI – An International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (ISSN: 3108-253X). He actively contributes to higher education through teaching, research, and academic coordination. Known for his eloquence and intellectual depth, he has delivered speeches at various state-level seminars, National and International Conferences. As an editor, he promotes interdisciplinary scholarship, ensuring quality publications and fostering a culture of research, critical inquiry, and academic excellence. He is a proud alumnus of Vishwasrao Ransing College (1990–1993).

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Impact of Digital Financial Literacy on Women Entrepreneurs and Women's Education.

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Abstract

Financial literacy and digital financial literacy have emerged as essential factors in promoting women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurial development in the modern digital economy. As financial systems increasingly rely on digital platforms and technology-driven services, entrepreneurs must possess not only financial knowledge but also the ability to navigate digital financial tools effectively. Women entrepreneurs, particularly in developing countries, often face structural barriers such as limited financial knowledge, lack of access to digital resources, and socio-cultural constraints that restrict their economic participation.

This study examines the impact of digital financial literacy on women entrepreneurs and its role in enhancing financial inclusion, business performance, and economic empowerment. The research adopts a mixed-method approach by combining primary data collected through surveys with secondary data obtained from scholarly literature and institutional reports.

Keywords: Digital financial literacy, Women entrepreneurs, Financial inclusion, Economic empowerment.

Introduction

The global economy has undergone a significant transformation due to the rapid advancement of digital technologies. Financial services, which were once dependent on physical banking institutions, have increasingly shifted toward digital platforms. Mobile banking, online payment systems, digital wallets, and financial technology (FinTech) applications have revolutionized the way individuals and businesses conduct financial transactions. In this context, digital financial literacy has emerged as an essential skill for participating effectively in the digital economy. Digital financial literacy refers to the ability to understand and use digital financial tools, products, and services in a safe and effective manner. It combines traditional financial literacy with digital competencies that enable individuals to manage financial resources through technology-driven platforms. For entrepreneurs, especially women entrepreneurs, digital financial literacy is becoming increasingly important for sustaining and expanding business activities.

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Women entrepreneurs play a crucial role in economic development by creating employment opportunities, fostering innovation, and contributing to local and national economic growth. However, women often face systemic barriers that limit their entrepreneurial potential. These barriers include limited access to financial resources, lack of financial education, restricted mobility, and cultural norms that discourage women's participation in economic decision-making. Digital financial platforms have the potential to address these barriers by providing alternative methods for accessing financial services. For example, mobile banking applications and digital payment systems allow entrepreneurs to conduct transactions quickly and securely without visiting physical banking institutions.

Despite these opportunities, the adoption of digital financial tools among women entrepreneurs remains uneven. A significant gender gap persists in digital financial literacy, particularly in rural and low-income communities. Women are often less familiar with digital financial technologies due to limited exposure, lack of training, and socio-cultural constraints. Closing the digital financial literacy gap is therefore essential for promoting women's economic empowerment. By equipping women entrepreneurs with digital financial knowledge and skills, governments and organizations can enhance their ability to manage businesses, access financial services, and compete in the global marketplace.

This study explores the impact of digital financial literacy on women entrepreneurs and examines how financial knowledge influences business performance and economic empowerment. It also identifies the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in adopting digital financial technologies and proposes policy recommendations to address these challenges.

Financial literacy has long been recognized as a fundamental factor influencing individuals' financial behaviour and economic well-being. Lusardi and Mitchell (2014) define financial literacy as the ability to use knowledge and skills to manage financial resources effectively for long-term financial security. Financial literacy includes understanding concepts such as budgeting, saving, investing, debt management, and risk assessment. Numerous studies have demonstrated that individuals with higher financial literacy levels are more likely to make sound financial decisions, accumulate savings, and manage debt effectively. In the context of women's economic empowerment, financial literacy plays a particularly important role because it enables women to take control of financial decisions and participate actively in economic activities.

Recent research has emphasized the growing importance of digital financial literacy. As financial services increasingly migrate to digital platforms, individuals must acquire both financial knowledge and digital competencies to access and utilize these services effectively.

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Shalini R. C. conducted a study focusing on financial awareness among women entrepreneurs. The study found that women are gradually moving beyond traditional gender roles and are increasingly participating in entrepreneurial activities. Financial literacy was identified as a key factor contributing to this shift. The relationship between financial literacy and women's economic empowerment and found that digital financial services act as an important mediator in this relationship. Women who possess higher levels of financial literacy are more likely to adopt digital financial tools, which in turn improves their economic independence. The financial behaviour of women entrepreneurs and observed that financially literate women demonstrate a strong understanding of financial concepts such as compound interest, inflation, investment diversification, and stock markets. This knowledge enhances their ability to manage business finances and plan long-term investments.

It explored the role of digital financial literacy in shaping financial decision-making among women in India. Their findings suggest that digital technologies enable women entrepreneurs to overcome traditional barriers related to credit access by using alternative data to assess creditworthiness. Another important dimension of financial literacy is the role of microfinance institutions in promoting financial inclusion. It was found that microfinance programs that incorporate financial literacy training significantly improve women's financial capabilities and economic stability.

Advancing entrepreneurs' empowerment through digital literacy is pivotal, especially for women entrepreneurs who often face systemic barriers. Digital literacy equips entrepreneurs with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate the digital landscape, access financial resources, and expand their businesses effectively. By fostering digital literacy among women entrepreneurs, we empower them to take control of their financial futures, make informed decisions, and capitalize on opportunities in the digital economy. Digital literacy enables women to leverage digital platforms for marketing, networking, and accessing financial services, thus leveling the playing field and enhancing their competitiveness in the market. Moreover, digital literacy fosters resilience and adaptability among women entrepreneurs, enabling them to respond effectively to market dynamics and overcome challenges. Through access to digital resources and training programs, women entrepreneurs can enhance their digital skills, innovate in their business practices, and drive sustainable growth.

In addition to financial institutions, several global initiatives aim to improve women's financial literacy. Programs such as the International Finance Corporation's "Women and Money" initiative and Visa's "Financial Independence for Women" program have demonstrated positive outcomes in enhancing financial knowledge and business performance among women entrepreneurs. Despite these initiatives, several barriers continue to limit women's financial literacy.

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Addressing these barriers requires comprehensive strategies that integrate financial education with digital technologies and gender-sensitive policies. Still women entrepreneurs continue to face significant challenges in accessing financial resources and developing financial knowledge. Many women lack the digital financial literacy necessary to effectively utilize online banking systems, digital payment platforms, and fintech applications. The lack of digital financial literacy restricts women's ability to manage business finances, access credit, and participate in digital marketplaces. As a result, women entrepreneurs may struggle to expand their businesses or compete with more technologically equipped entrepreneurs.

Furthermore, socio-cultural norms and gender biases often limit women's exposure to financial education and digital technologies. In many communities, financial decision-making is traditionally dominated by men, which discourages women from actively engaging infinancial matters. This study aims to investigate the relationship between digital financial literacy and women's entrepreneurship in order to understand how financial knowledge can enhance economic empowerment and business performance. The main objectives of this research is to assess the level of digital financial literacy among women entrepreneurs.

Role of Digital Financial Literacy in Women's Empowerment

Digital financial literacy empowers women by providing them with the knowledge and skills required to manage financial resources effectively. It enhances women's confidence in financial decision-making and enables them to participate actively in economic activities. Through digital financial literacy, women entrepreneurs can utilize digital payment systems, manage online transactions, and maintain digital financial records. These capabilities improve business efficiency and transparency. Digital financial literacy also enables women to access a broader range of financial services, including online credit platforms, insurance products, and investment opportunities. Furthermore, digital financial literacy reduces dependence on informal financial intermediaries and increases financial autonomy.

Women's Digital Entrepreneurship

Digital entrepreneurship refers to the creation and operation of businesses that rely on digital technologies and online platforms. Women entrepreneurs increasingly use digital platforms such as social media and e-commerce websites to market products and services.In 21st Century, the transformation of social fabric of the Indian society, in terms of increased educational status of women and varied aspirations for better living, necessitated a change in the life style of Indian women. Woman constitutes the family, which leads to society and Nation. Entrepreneurship is the state of mind which many women have in her but has not been capitalized in India in way in which it should be. Due to change in environment, now people are more comfortable to accept leading role of women in our society, though there are

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some exceptions. She has competed with man and successfully stood up with him in every walk of life and business. These women leaders are assertive, persuasive and willing to take risks. They managed to survive and succeed in this cut throat competition with their hard work, diligence and perseverance. Developing and developed nations have realized that developing women entrepreneurship is indispensable to flourish, as economically dominant nations in the modern high-tech world. Therefore, creation of platforms and networks for entrepreneurial culture are prominent issues globally. ―The best thermometer to the progress of a nation is its treatment of its women. - ―Swami Vivekananda.

Challenges Faced by Women Entrepreneurs:

Women entrepreneurs in India encounter multifaceted challenges that constrain their ability to start and grow businesses. These can be classified into internal and external barriers.

Financial Barriers:

Limited access to finance remains a significant impediment. Financial institutions often perceive women entrepreneurs as higher-risk borrowers due to lack of collateral and lower credit history, restricting their access to formal loans and capital. Many women lack formal business education, managerial skills, and training essential for entrepreneurship. This limits their capacity to develop business plans, understand regulatory frameworks, or navigate digital markets. Deeply ingrained gender norms restrict women's mobility, decision-making power, and professional networking opportunities. Traditional social expectations often assign household responsibilities to women, limiting the time and resources they can allocate to entrepreneurship.

Women Entrepreneurs may be defined as the women or a group of women who initiate, organize and operate a business enterprise. The Government of India has defined women entrepreneurs as ―an enterprise owned and controlled by women having a minimum financial interest of 51 per cent of the capital and giving at least 51 per cent of the employment generated in the enterprise to women. Women founders often face difficulties in establishing market presence due to intense competition and lack of support networks. Inadequate infrastructure, technology access, and market exposure further constrain growth. Despite challenges, several prospects are transforming women entrepreneurship in India.

Financial inclusion and its impact on India's economic growth:

Financial inclusion, defined as the provision of affordable financial services to all societal segments, plays a pivotal role in India's economic development. By granting individuals and businesses access to essential financial services—such as banking, credit,

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insurance, and digital payment systems—financial inclusion fosters economic growth, reduces poverty, and minimizes income disparities. Empirical studies have demonstrated a positive correlation between financial inclusion and India's GDP growth, highlighting its significance in the nation's economic advancement. Government initiatives, including the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, have been instrumental in promoting financial inclusion by facilitating the opening of bank accounts and providing access to financial services for the unbanked population. These efforts have led to increased financial literacy, improved savings rates, and enhanced credit availability, thereby contributing to economic stability and growth. Introduction Furthermore, the development of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), encompassing systems like the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and Aadhaar, has revolutionized financial transactions in India. This digital transformation has made financial services more accessible, efficient, and secure, thereby accelerating economic activities and fostering inclusive growth.

In short, financial inclusion serves as a catalyst for economic growth in India by integrating marginalized populations into the formal financial system, enhancing resource allocation, and promoting equitable development. Financial inclusion has emerged as a key driver of economic development in India, aiming to provide affordable and accessible financial services to all sections of society. The government, regulatory bodies, and financial institutions have recognized its potential in fostering inclusive growth and reducing poverty.

With advancements in digital banking, microfinance, and fintech innovations, financial inclusion has gained momentum in recent years. This paper explores the Role of Financial Inclusion in Economic Growth and the Role of Digital Financial Services along with a review of relevant literature and policy objectives. Definition of Financial Inclusion Financial inclusion refers to the process of ensuring access to appropriate financial products and services— such as savings accounts, credit, insurance, and payment systems—at affordable costs to disadvantaged and low-income segments of society. The ultimate goal of financial inclusion is to create an inclusive financial system that enables individuals and businesses to participate in the formal economy, leading to overall economic stability and growth. In exploring the role of digital financial services, the study evaluates the adoption of mobile banking, UPI transactions, and fintech innovations. Statistical models and trend analysis are used to measure digital financial services' contribution to financial accessibility and economic growth.

Platforms such as WhatsApp Business, Instagram, and online marketplaces allow women entrepreneurs to reach wider audiences and expand their customer base. Digital entrepreneurship also promotes innovation and flexibility, allowing women to operate businesses from home while balancing family responsibilities. The findings of the study

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indicate a strong positive relationship between digital financial literacy and entrepreneurial performance among women entrepreneurs. Women with higher digital financial literacy demonstrated better financial management practices and were more likely to adopt digital financial tools. These entrepreneurs also showed higher levels of business growth, improved customer engagement, and greater financial stability.

However, several challenges were identified, particularly among rural entrepreneurs who face limited internet connectivity and lack of digital infrastructure. Educational background was also found to influence digital financial literacy levels, with more educated women demonstrating greater adoption of digital financial technologies.India is undoubtedly becoming digital at a very rapid pace. In the process, women should not be left out and hence policies to make them virtually inclusive should be the core. Giving women equal access to smartphones and the internet will give them the information and tools they need to contribute to the country's economy. Because smartphone ownership encourages internet usage, it is crucial to increase the number of women who own smartphones. Additionally, digital literacy initiatives should be accelerated by joining hands with the Digital Literacy Mission, and efforts to eradicate gender-based digital discrimination should be made.

Recommendations

Introduce digital financial literacy training programs specifically designed for women entrepreneurs. Improve digital infrastructure in rural areas to facilitate access to online financial services. Promote collaboration between government agencies, financial institutions, and NGOs to expand financial education initiatives. Develop user-friendly digital financial platforms with regional language support. Encourage public-private partnerships to support women entrepreneurs through digital financial training and mentorship programs.

Conclusion

Digital financial literacy plays a crucial role in promoting women's entrepreneurship and economic empowerment. Women entrepreneurs who possess digital financial knowledge are better equipped to manage businesses, access financial services, and adapt to the rapidly evolving digital economy. The findings of this study highlight the importance of strengthening digital financial literacy programs to bridge the gender gap in financial knowledge and technology adoption. By investing in financial education and digital infrastructure, policymakers and institutions can empower women entrepreneurs and foster inclusive economic growth.

Enhancing women's digital financial literacy not only improves individual livelihoods but also contributes to broader societal development by promoting gender equality, economic

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participation, and sustainable entrepreneurship. To conclude the strengthening digital financial literacy among women entrepreneurs can significantly improve their economic opportunities and business sustainability. The research recommends policy interventions such as digital literacy training programs, expansion of digital infrastructure, gender-sensitive financial education initiatives, and collaboration between government agencies, financial institutions, and non-governmental organizations. Women entrepreneurs remain a vibrant component that not only will boost the economy, but also will render transformational social and personal development.

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Gender Identity, LGBTQ Community and Gender Sensitive Policies in Higher Education Institutions in India

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Abstract

The concept of gender identity and the recognition of LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer) individuals have gained increasing attention in recent years, particularly within educational institutions. Higher education institutions play a significant role in shaping social attitudes and promoting equality. In India, the recognition of gender diversity has evolved through legal judgments, policy initiatives, and institutional reforms. Despite these advancements, LGBTQ students often face discrimination, social stigma, and structural barriers in universities and colleges. This research paper examines the meaning and significance of gender identity, explores the challenges faced by the LGBTQ community in higher education institutions in India, and analyses gender-sensitive policies implemented by the government and universities. The paper also discusses the role of policies such as the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, the National Education Policy 2020, and guidelines by the University Grants Commission (UGC). It argues that while legal frameworks and policy initiatives have begun to address inequalities, their implementation remains uneven. Creating inclusive campuses requires not only legal recognition but also institutional commitment, awareness, and cultural transformation. The study concludes that gender-sensitive policies in higher education must be strengthened through inclusive infrastructure, curriculum reform, faculty training, and active participation of the LGBTQ community to ensure a truly equitable academic environment.

Keywords: LGBTQ community, gender identity, transgender, gender sensitivity, Hijra

Gender identity and sexual orientation are fundamental aspects of human identity. However, historically many societies, including India, have marginalized individuals who do not conform to traditional gender norms. The LGBTQ community, comprising lesbian, gay,

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bisexual, transgender, and queer individuals, has long faced discrimination, exclusion, and lack of representation in educational institutions.

Higher education institutions are spaces where social ideas are shaped, knowledge is created, and future leaders are developed. Universities and colleges therefore have a crucial responsibility to promote equality, diversity, and inclusion. Yet, many LGBTQ students encounter hostile environments, including bullying, social isolation, lack of recognition of their identities, and absence of institutional support.

In India, the discourse surrounding gender identity has evolved significantly in the last decade. Landmark legal decisions such as the NALSA *versus* Union of India (2014) judgment recognized transgender persons as a "third gender," while the Navtej Singh Johar *versus* Union of India (2018) verdict decriminalized same-sex relations. These developments marked important milestones in acknowledging the rights and dignity of LGBTQ individuals.Despite these legal achievements, the lived experiences of LGBTQ students in higher education remain challenging. Many institutions lack gender-neutral infrastructure, inclusive curricula, or sensitization programs. Addressing these issues requires gender-sensitive policies that ensure equal opportunities and safe learning environments.

This paper examines gender identity and LGBTQ issues in the context of higher education in India, with particular emphasis on policies designed to promote gender sensitivity and inclusivity.

Understanding Gender Identity and the LGBTQ Community

Gender identity refers to a person's deeply felt internal sense of being male, female, both, neither, or somewhere along the gender spectrum. It may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth. Gender identity is distinct from sexual orientation, which refers to emotional or romantic attraction toward others.

The LGBTQ community represents diverse identities that challenge traditional binary understandings of gender and sexuality. Lesbian women are attracted to women, gay men to men, bisexual individuals to more than one gender, and transgender persons identify with a gender different from the one assigned at birth. The term "queer" is often used as an umbrella term encompassing diverse sexual and gender identities.

In India, the existence of gender diversity is not new. Historical texts and cultural traditions have recognized non-binary identities, such as the Hijra community. However, colonial laws and social stigma marginalized these identities over time.

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Today, increasing awareness about gender diversity has led to growing advocacy for LGBTQ rights. Universities and academic institutions have become important spaces for discussing gender equality, promoting inclusivity, and supporting marginalized identities. Nevertheless, many LGBTQ students still struggle with acceptance and recognition. Lack of awareness about gender identity among faculty, administrators, and peers often leads to misunderstanding and discrimination. This highlights the need for gender-sensitive policies and institutional reforms.

Challenges Faced by LGBTQ Students in Higher Education Institutions

Despite legal recognition and growing awareness, LGBTQ students in India continue to face multiple challenges within higher education institutions.

1. **Social Stigma and Discrimination**

   One of the most significant challenges faced by LGBTQ students is social stigma. Many students experience harassment, bullying, or exclusion due to their gender identity or sexual orientation. Negative attitudes from peers and even faculty members can create hostile academic environments. The lack of awareness about gender diversity often leads to stereotypes and prejudice. LGBTQ students may hide their identity to avoid discrimination, which can negatively affect their mental health and academic performance.

2. **Lack of Institutional Support**

   Many universities lack formal mechanisms to support LGBTQ students. Absence of counselling services, gender-neutral restrooms, and inclusive housing arrangements often makes campuses inaccessible for transgender and non-binary individuals.Studies show that only a limited number of institutions collect data or provide dedicated support systems for transgender students. This indicates a lack of institutional preparedness to address gender diversity effectively.

3. **Mental Health Concerns**

   The pressure of hiding one's identity, combined with social discrimination, often leads to anxiety, depression, and emotional distress among LGBTQ students. Without adequate psychotherapy services or supportive communities, these students may feel isolated and marginalized.

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4. Administrative Barriers

Administrative procedures such as admission forms, identity documents, and hostel allocations often follow a strict male-female binary system. This creates difficulties for transgender and non-binary students who may not identify within these categories.

5. Lack of Representation in Curriculum

Most university curricula in India do not adequately address gender diversity or LGBTQ issues. The absence of inclusive content in textbooks and academic discussions perpetuates ignorance and reinforces stereotypes.

Legal Framework for LGBTQ Rights in India

India has witnessed several significant legal developments related to gender identity and LGBTQ rights in recent years. The NALSA v. Union of India (2014) judgment recognized transgender persons as a third gender and affirmed their right to equality, dignity, and non-discrimination. This landmark decision directed the government to implement policies ensuring social and educational inclusion for transgender individuals.

Another major milestone was the Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India (2018) judgment, which decriminalized consensual same-sex relations by striking down Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code. This decision was widely regarded as a historic step toward recognizing LGBTQ rights in India.

Subsequently, the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 was enacted to protect transgender individuals from discrimination in education, employment, healthcare, and housing.

These legal frameworks provide the foundation for inclusive policies in educational institutions. However, translating these laws into effective institutional practices remains a challenge.

Gender Sensitive Policies in Higher Education Institutions

In response to legal developments and growing awareness, several policies have been introduced to promote gender inclusivity in higher education institutions.

University Grants Commission (UGC) Initiatives

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has introduced various initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality and inclusivity in educational institutions. One such initiative is the appointment of Gender Champions in universities and colleges. These students act as

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advocates for gender equality and help create awareness about gender sensitivity on campus. The initiative encourages institutions to develop environments where individuals of all genders are treated with dignity and respect. Additionally, universities are encouraged to establish Equal Opportunity Cells and grievance redressal mechanisms to address discrimination and harassment.

National Education Policy (NEP) 2020

The National Education Policy 2020 emphasizes inclusive and equitable education for all students. It recognizes the importance of creating safe and supportive learning environments for marginalized communities, including transgender individuals. The policy encourages institutions to adopt gender-sensitive practices, provide scholarships, and promote inclusive curricula.

State-Level Policies

Some states in India have introduced specific policies aimed at supporting transgender students in higher education. For instance, the Government of Maharashtra has issued guidelines requiring colleges and universities to establish transgender cells to address discrimination and provide counselling and academic support. Institutions are also expected to ensure that transgender students are not denied admission and have access to hostel facilities. These measures demonstrate growing recognition of the need for institutional support for gender diversity.

Institutional Policies and Best Practices

Several universities have adopted internal policies to promote LGBTQ inclusion. These include:

- Non-discrimination policies based on sexual orientation and gender identity
- Gender-neutral restrooms and housing facilities
- Procedures for changing name and gender in official records
- Anti-harassment policies and reporting mechanisms

Such initiatives aim to create safer and more inclusive campuses for LGBTQ students.

Importance of Gender Sensitivity in Higher Education

Gender-sensitive policies are essential for creating inclusive and equitable academic environments. These policies not only protect the rights of LGBTQ individuals but also

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promote diversity and mutual respect within educational institutions. Gender sensitivity in higher education contributes to:

- Equality and Human Rights
- Inclusive policies ensuring all students have equal access to education and opportunities
- Safe Learning Environment
- Gender-sensitive campuses reduce discrimination, harassment, and violence.
- Academic Growth and Innovation
- Diversity of perspectives enriches academic discussions and research.
- Mental Well-being of Students
- Supportive environments improve students' mental health and overall well-being.
- Social Transformation

Universities play a crucial role in shaping inclusive attitudes within society.By integrating gender sensitivity into policies, curricula, and campus culture, higher education institutions can contribute to broader social change.

Recommendations for Strengthening Gender Sensitive Policies

Although progress has been made, further efforts are necessary to create truly inclusive higher education institutions in India.

A. Awareness and Sensitization Programs

Regular workshops and training programs should be organized for students, faculty, and staff to promote understanding of gender diversity and LGBTQ issues.

B. Inclusive Infrastructure

Universities should provide gender-neutral restrooms, housing facilities, and safe spaces for LGBTQ students.

C. Curriculum Reform

Academic curricula should include discussions on gender identity, sexuality, and social justice to encourage critical thinking and awareness.

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D. Mental Health Support

Dedicated therapycentres should be made available to support LGBTQ students facing emotional or psychological challenges.

E. Data Collection and Research

Institutions should collect data on LGBTQ students and conduct research to better understand their needs and experiences.

F. Inclusion of LGBTQ Communities

Policy-making processes should involve members of the LGBTQ community to ensure that their perspectives are represented.

To conclude, Gender identity and LGBTQ rights have become important issues in contemporary discussions on equality and social justice. In India, significant progress has been made through legal reforms and policy initiatives that recognize the rights and dignity of LGBTQ individuals. Higher education institutions play a vital role in translating these legal principles into practical realities. By implementing gender-sensitive policies, universities can create inclusive environments where all students feel safe, respected, and valued. However, the journey toward full inclusion is still ongoing. Many LGBTQ students continue to face discrimination, social stigma, and institutional barriers. Addressing these challenges requires sustained commitment from policymakers, educational institutions, and society as a whole.

Ultimately, gender-sensitive policies in higher education are not merely administrative measures; they represent a broader commitment to human dignity, equality, and social justice. By fostering inclusive campuses, India can move closer to achieving an educational system that truly respects and celebrates diversity.

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Caregiving Responsibilities and Their Impact on the Professional Lives of Women Academicians: With Reference to Women in the Education Discipline

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Abstract

Women academicians play an essential role in higher education through teaching, research, mentoring, and academic leadership. Despite their increasing participation in academic institutions, many women scholars continue to face challenges related to balancing professional responsibilities with caregiving duties. Caregiving responsibilities such as childcare, eldercare, and household management are often unequally distributed and largely fall upon women due to social and cultural expectations. These responsibilities can significantly affect the professional lives of women academicians, particularly in terms of research productivity, career advancement, and work–life balance. This research article examines how caregiving roles influence the professional experiences of women academicians, especially those working in the field of education. The study relies on secondary data from research literature and policy reports to analyze the relationship between caregiving responsibilities and academic careers. Findings suggest that caregiving obligations frequently limit research opportunities, reduce professional mobility, and create barriers to leadership positions for women in academia. The article highlights the importance of institutional support systems such as flexible work policies, childcare services, and gender-sensitive evaluation processes to support women scholars. Addressing caregiving challenges is essential for promoting gender equality and strengthening academic institutions.

Introduction

Higher education institutions play a vital role in generating knowledge, fostering innovation, and contributing to social development. Within these institutions, women academicians make significant contributions as teachers, researchers, mentors, and academic leaders. Over the past few decades, there has been a considerable increase in the number of women entering academic professions across the world. This growth reflects broader societal changes, including improved access to education and increasing recognition of women's capabilities in professional fields. However, despite these advancements, women in academia

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continue to face multiple challenges that affect their career progression and professional experiences.

One of the most significant challenges faced by women academicians is the responsibility of caregiving. Caregiving refers to the support and assistance provided to individuals who require help due to age, illness, or disability. In most societies, caregiving responsibilities such as caring for children, elderly parents, or other family members are primarily assigned to women. These expectations are deeply rooted in cultural norms and traditional gender roles. As a result, women academicians often have to manage a dual role that involves fulfilling professional duties while simultaneously performing caregiving responsibilities within the family.

The academic profession is demanding and requires continuous engagement in teaching, research, publication, and administrative responsibilities. Success in academia often depends on research productivity, academic networking, conference participation, and collaborative projects. For women with caregiving responsibilities, maintaining these professional commitments while managing family obligations can be extremely challenging. Many women scholars experience work–life conflict as they attempt to balance academic responsibilities with domestic duties.

The discipline of education provides a particularly important context for examining this issue. Women constitute a large proportion of educators in schools and teacher training institutions. However, their representation declines significantly in higher academic positions such as professors, research leaders, and university administrators. This disparity suggests that structural barriers, including caregiving responsibilities, continue to affect women's career trajectories in academia.

This research article seeks to explore the impact of caregiving responsibilities on the professional lives of women academicians, with particular reference to those working in the field of education. By examining existing research and scholarly literature, the study aims to highlight the challenges faced by women scholars and identify strategies that can promote a more supportive academic environment.

Objectives of the Study

1. The main objective of this study is to examine the relationship between caregiving responsibilities and the professional lives of women academicians in the field of education.

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2. The study aims to understand how caregiving duties influence their career progression, research productivity, and work–life balance. It also seeks to explore the challenges women academicians face in balancing family and professional responsibilities.

3. In addition, the study attempts to identify institutional measures and policy interventions that can help support women faculty members with caregiving roles.

4. The research aims to contribute to discussions on gender equality and inclusive policies within higher education institutions.

Conceptual Framework

Caregiving Responsibilities:

Caregiving responsibilities refer to the physical, emotional, and social support provided to individuals who require assistance due to age, illness, or disability. These responsibilities commonly include childcare, eldercare, and household management. In many societies, caregiving is considered a natural responsibility of women. Even when women participate actively in the workforce, they often continue to perform a majority of unpaid domestic labour and caregiving activities. This unequal distribution of responsibilities creates additional pressures for working women and limits their ability to fully engage in professional activities.

In academic settings, caregiving responsibilities can create time constraints that reduce opportunities for research, collaboration, and professional development. Women academicians who are primary caregivers often experience difficulties maintaining the level of productivity expected in competitive academic environments.

Women in Academia

Women's participation in academia has increased significantly over the past several decades. Universities and colleges now employ a growing number of women faculty members in various disciplines. Despite this progress, gender disparities remain evident in leadership positions, research recognition, and career advancement. Women are often underrepresented in senior academic ranks such as full professors, department heads, and university administrators.

Several factors contribute to this disparity, including gender bias, unequal access to resources, and caregiving responsibilities. Women scholars frequently encounter barriers that limit their opportunities to advance within academic institutions.

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Work–Life Balance

Work–life balance refers to the ability to effectively manage professional responsibilities and personal commitments. Achieving work–life balance is particularly challenging in academia, where expectations for productivity, research output, and teaching excellence are high. Academic work often requires extended hours of preparation, research, and writing beyond regular working hours.

For women academicians who also have caregiving responsibilities, maintaining work–life balance becomes a complex and demanding task. The inability to balance these roles can lead to stress, burnout, and reduced job satisfaction.

Review of Literature

Existing research highlights the significant impact of caregiving responsibilities on the professional lives of women academicians. Scholars have consistently emphasized that the division of caregiving work within households remains highly gendered. Women continue to perform the majority of unpaid domestic work and caregiving tasks, even when they are employed full-time in professional occupations.

Research studies have shown that caregiving responsibilities can significantly affect research productivity among women faculty members. Academic success is often measured through publications, research grants, and scholarly recognition. Women with caregiving duties may have limited time for research activities, which can lead to lower publication rates compared to their male colleagues.

Several studies conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted this issue. Female academics reported spending more time on childcare and household tasks during the pandemic, which resulted in reduced time for research and scholarly writing. These findings demonstrate how caregiving responsibilities can influence academic productivity and career development.

Another important issue identified in the literature is the impact of caregiving responsibilities on career advancement. Women who take maternity leave or reduce their workload to manage family responsibilities may experience delays in promotion or tenure decisions. Early career stages are particularly critical because this period often coincides with family formation and childcare responsibilities.

Scholars have also emphasized the role of institutional structures in shaping the experiences of women academicians. Many universities lack adequate support systems for

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faculty caregivers, such as childcare facilities, flexible work arrangements, and family-friendly policies. Without institutional support, women faculty members may struggle to balance professional and family responsibilities.

Methodology

This research study adopts a qualitative and analytical approach based on secondary data. The study relies on previously published research articles, academic journals, policy reports, and scholarly publications related to women in academia and caregiving responsibilities. These sources provide valuable insights into the experiences and challenges faced by women academicians across different educational contexts.

The collected literature was carefully reviewed and analyzed to identify common themes related to caregiving responsibilities, work–life balance, research productivity, and career progression. The analysis focuses particularly on women academicians working in the field of education, as this discipline has a high representation of women yet still exhibits gender disparities in leadership positions.

Impact of Caregiving Responsibilities on Women Academicians

Caregiving responsibilities have multiple effects on the professional lives of women academicians. One of the most common challenges is work–life conflict. Women faculty members often struggle to balance academic responsibilities such as teaching, research, and administrative work with family obligations. Managing these multiple roles can lead to stress, fatigue, and reduced time for professional development.

Another major impact is reduced research productivity. Academic institutions place strong emphasis on research publications and scholarly output as criteria for promotion and tenure. Women academicians who are responsible for caregiving may find it difficult to dedicate sufficient time to research activities. This limitation can result in fewer publications and reduced opportunities for career advancement.

Caregiving responsibilities can also limit participation in professional activities such as conferences, workshops, and academic networking events. These activities are important for building professional relationships and enhancing academic reputation. Women who are primary caregivers may be unable to travel or attend such events, which can affect their visibility within the academic community.

Career interruptions are another significant consequence of caregiving responsibilities. Many women academicians take maternity leave or temporarily reduce their work

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commitments to care for young children or elderly family members. While these decisions are necessary for family well-being, they can slow down career progression and create gaps in academic records.

Psychological stress is also a major concern. Women academicians often experience pressure to excel in both professional and family roles. When expectations in either domain are not met, feelings of guilt, anxiety, and burnout may arise. These emotional challenges can negatively affect overall job satisfaction and well-being.

Caregiving Responsibilities in the Education Discipline

The discipline of education presents unique dynamics related to gender roles and caregiving responsibilities. Women form a large proportion of teachers and educators, particularly at the primary and secondary school levels. However, their representation declines significantly at higher academic levels such as professors and educational administrators.

Education faculty members often carry heavy teaching responsibilities, including lesson planning, student assessment, mentoring, and administrative tasks. These responsibilities require substantial time and emotional engagement. When combined with caregiving duties at home, the workload can become overwhelming for women academicians.

Teaching also involves emotional labour, as educators are expected to provide support and guidance to students. Women educators often take on additional mentoring roles, which further increase their workload. When combined with family caregiving responsibilities, this can lead to increased stress and reduced time for research activities.

Institutional Support and Policy Measures

To address the challenges faced by women academicians with caregiving responsibilities, academic institutions must adopt supportive policies and practices. Flexible work arrangements can help faculty members manage their professional and family responsibilities more effectively. Options such as flexible schedules and remote work opportunities can provide greater autonomy and reduce stress.

The availability of childcare facilities within universities can significantly support working mothers. On-campus childcare services allow faculty members to remain close to their children while fulfilling professional duties. This support can improve work–life balance and enhance productivity.

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Parental leave policies are another important measure. Universities should provide adequate maternity and paternity leave to encourage shared caregiving responsibilities. Such policies can help reduce gender disparities in caregiving roles.

Institutions can also consider tenure clock extensions for faculty members who take caregiving leave. This policy ensures that women academicians are not disadvantaged in promotion processes due to temporary career interruptions.

Conclusion

Caregiving responsibilities play a significant role in shaping the professional lives of women academicians, particularly in the field of education. Although women have made substantial progress in entering academic professions, structural challenges and gendered expectations continue to affect their career advancement. The unequal distribution of caregiving duties creates barriers to research productivity, professional participation, and leadership opportunities.

Women academicians often experience work–life conflict, career interruptions, and emotional stress as they attempt to balance academic responsibilities with family caregiving roles. These challenges highlight the need for institutional reforms and supportive policies that recognize the realities of caregiving in academic life.

Universities and educational institutions must take proactive steps to create gender-sensitive environments that support faculty caregivers. Policies such as flexible work arrangements, childcare facilities, parental leave, and tenure extensions can help reduce barriers faced by women academicians. By addressing caregiving challenges, academic institutions can promote gender equality, enhance faculty well-being, and strengthen the overall quality of higher education.

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Empowered Yet Encumbered: Women's Journey Through Higher Education and Work-Life Balance

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Abstract

Women's participation in higher education has emerged as a transformative force in shaping modern societies, contributing significantly to economic growth, social development, and cultural progress. However, despite increasing enrolment rates and academic achievements, women continue to face systemic challenges in balancing professional aspirations with caregiving responsibilities and maternity-related demands. This paper explores the intersection of higher education, work-life balance, maternity policies, and caregiving responsibilities, with a focus on the Indian context while drawing comparative insights from global practices.

The study highlights how higher education empowers women with skills, confidence, and opportunities, yet structural barriers such as inadequate maternity leave, limited childcare facilities, and persistent gender stereotypes hinder their career progression. Work-life balance remains a critical issue, as women often navigate dual roles in professional and domestic spheres, leading to stress, burnout, and reduced workforce participation. The paper also examines existing maternity policies in India, their effectiveness, and gaps compared to international standards.

Through interpretation of policy frameworks, case studies, and statistical findings, the research underscores the need for holistic reforms that integrate flexible work arrangements, equitable caregiving responsibilities, and institutional support systems. The findings suggest that while education equips women for professional success, sustainable progress requires societal change, supportive workplace policies, and shared caregiving responsibilities.

The conclusion emphasizes that empowering women in higher education is not only a matter of gender equality but also a prerequisite for national development. By addressing maternity and caregiving challenges, societies can unlock the full potential of women, ensuring inclusive growth and balanced professional ecosystems.

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Introduction

The role of women in higher education has become one of the most significant indicators of social progress and national development in the twenty-first century. Across the globe, and particularly in India, women's access to higher education has expanded considerably over the past few decades. This expansion has not only contributed to the intellectual and professional growth of women but has also reshaped the socio-economic fabric of society. Higher education equips women with knowledge, skills, and confidence, enabling them to participate meaningfully in the workforce, assume leadership roles, and contribute to innovation and policy-making. Yet, despite these advancements, women continue to face persistent challenges in balancing their educational and professional aspirations with the demands of family, maternity, and caregiving responsibilities.

The paradox is striking: while women's enrollment in universities and professional courses has steadily increased, their representation in senior academic positions, corporate leadership, and policymaking remains disproportionately low. This imbalance is not merely a reflection of individual choices but is deeply rooted in structural and cultural barriers. Traditional gender roles often assign women the primary responsibility for caregiving, household management, and child-rearing, even when they are equally qualified and ambitious as their male counterparts. As a result, many women experience career interruptions, slower professional growth, and heightened stress in attempting to balance work and family life.

Work-life balance has emerged as a critical issue in contemporary discourse on gender equality. For women in higher education and professional careers, achieving this balance is often complicated by inadequate institutional support, rigid workplace structures, and societal expectations. The challenge is further intensified during maternity, when women require policies that safeguard their health, provide adequate leave, and ensure job security. While India has made progress through legislation such as the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017, which extended paid maternity leave to 26 weeks, gaps remain in implementation, inclusivity, and support for women in informal sectors. Moreover, the lack of accessible childcare facilities and flexible work arrangements continues to hinder women's ability to sustain long-term careers.

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Caregiving responsibilities extend beyond maternity and encompass elder care, support for family members with disabilities, and broader household duties. These responsibilities, often invisible in policy frameworks, disproportionately fall on women, limiting their availability for professional advancement. The absence of shared caregiving models and supportive workplace cultures perpetuates the cycle of inequality, where women are forced to make difficult choices between career progression and family obligations.

This research paper seeks to explore the intersection of women's higher education, work-life balance, maternity policies, and caregiving responsibilities. It aims to analyze how educational empowerment translates into professional opportunities, while also examining the barriers that prevent women from fully realizing their potential. By interpreting existing policies, reviewing statistical data, and analyzing case studies, the paper will highlight both the progress achieved and the challenges that persist. The findings will underscore the need for holistic reforms that integrate flexible work structures, equitable caregiving responsibilities, and institutional support systems.

Objectives

- The primary objective of this research paper is to examine the multifaceted relationship between women's higher education and their ability to balance professional and personal responsibilities. Specifically, the study seeks to:
- Analyze women's participation in higher education and its impact on career opportunities, professional growth, and social empowerment.
- Evaluate challenges of work-life balance, focusing on the dual responsibilities of professional commitments and caregiving duties.
- Assess maternity policies in India, their effectiveness, limitations, and comparison with global standards.
- Explore caregiving responsibilities beyond maternity, including elder care and household management, and their influence on women's career trajectories.
- Identify gaps in institutional and policy frameworks that hinder women's full participation in the workforce despite educational attainment.
- Propose recommendations for strengthening maternity policies, promoting shared caregiving responsibilities, and creating supportive workplace environments.

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Hypothesis

This study is guided by the following hypotheses:

- Women with higher education qualifications face systemic barriers in achieving work-life balance due to disproportionate caregiving responsibilities and inadequate institutional support.
- Effective maternity policies, including extended paid leave, accessible childcare facilities, and flexible work arrangements, significantly improve women's retention and career progression in the workforce.
- Societal attitudes and cultural expectations continue to reinforce traditional gender roles, limiting the extent to which women can fully benefit from higher education in professional contexts.
- Shared caregiving responsibilities between men and women, supported by workplace reforms, lead to more equitable career outcomes and greater gender parity in leadership positions.

Women in Higher Education: Global and Indian Perspectives

Globally, women's enrollment in higher education has increased significantly, with UNESCO reporting that women now constitute more than half of university students in many countries. In India, the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) indicates that female enrollment has steadily risen, particularly in arts, commerce, and medical sciences. However, disparities remain in STEM fields, where women are underrepresented. While education equips women with qualifications, the transition from academic success to professional leadership is hindered by systemic barriers such as workplace discrimination, lack of mentorship, and societal expectations.

Work-Life Balance Challenges

Work-life balance is a critical issue for women professionals, especially those with caregiving responsibilities. Studies show that women often experience "role conflict," where professional demands clash with domestic responsibilities. In India, cultural norms continue to assign women primary responsibility for household management and caregiving, even when they are equally engaged in professional work. This dual burden leads to stress, burnout, and career stagnation. Flexible work arrangements, such as remote work and part-time options, have been introduced in some sectors, but their availability remains limited and often stigmatized.

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Maternity Policies: Comparative Analysis

Maternity policies play a pivotal role in supporting women during childbearing years. India's Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017 extended paid maternity leave from 12 to 26 weeks, positioning India among countries with relatively generous provisions. However, gaps remain in implementation, particularly in the informal sector, where the majority of women are employed. In contrast, countries such as Sweden and Norway offer comprehensive parental leave policies, including paternity leave, which promotes shared caregiving responsibilities. The absence of mandatory paternity leave in India reinforces traditional gender roles, placing disproportionate caregiving burdens on women.

Caregiving Responsibilities Beyond Maternity

Caregiving responsibilities extend beyond childcare to include elder care and support for family members with disabilities. Research indicates that women are more likely than men to assume these roles, often at the expense of career advancement. The lack of institutional support, such as workplace childcare facilities or elder care programs, exacerbates the challenge. In many cases, women reduce working hours or exit the workforce entirely, leading to long-term economic disadvantages and reinforcing gender inequality.

Policy Gaps and Institutional Barriers

Despite progress in legislation, significant gaps persist in policy design and implementation. Many organizations lack supportive infrastructure such as crèches, lactation rooms, or counselling services. Moreover, workplace cultures often stigmatize women who avail maternity benefits or flexible work arrangements, perceiving them as less committed to their careers. This cultural bias undermines the effectiveness of policies and discourages women from fully utilizing available support. Additionally, the absence of gender-sensitive leadership and mentorship programs limits women's opportunities for advancement.

Case Studies and Success Stories

Case studies highlight both challenges and successes. Women in academia often face the "leaky pipeline" phenomenon, where their representation declines at higher levels of leadership despite strong enrollment at the undergraduate level. In contrast, corporate initiatives such as diversity hiring programs and flexible work policies have enabled some women to balance career and caregiving responsibilities effectively. Success stories of women leaders in education, business, and public service demonstrate that supportive policies and cultural shifts can create pathways for women to thrive professionally while fulfilling caregiving roles.

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Comparative Insights

Comparative analysis reveals that countries with comprehensive parental leave policies, accessible childcare, and gender-sensitive workplace cultures achieve higher levels of female workforce participation and leadership. For example, Scandinavian nations emphasize shared caregiving responsibilities, reducing the burden on women and promoting gender parity. India's progress in expanding maternity leave is commendable, but without complementary policies such as paternity leave and workplace childcare, the benefits remain limited. The contrast underscores the need for integrated approaches that address both structural and cultural dimensions of gender equality.

Societal Attitudes and Cultural Expectations

Societal attitudes continue to play a decisive role in shaping women's experiences. Traditional expectations often prioritize women's roles as caregivers over their professional aspirations, leading to guilt, stress, and reduced career engagement. Changing these attitudes requires awareness campaigns, educational reforms, and active participation of men in caregiving roles. Without cultural transformation, policy reforms alone cannot achieve sustainable progress.

Intersectionality of Challenges: Women's experiences in higher education and work-life balance are shaped not only by gender but also by socio-economic status, caste, and rural–urban divides. For example, rural women often face greater barriers in accessing higher education due to limited institutions and cultural restrictions, while urban women may struggle more with workplace discrimination.

Global Benchmarks

According to the World Bank's Women, Business and the Law 2020 report, countries with strong maternity and caregiving policies see higher female labor force participation. For instance, Sweden's shared parental leave system has resulted in nearly 80% of fathers taking leave, reducing the caregiving burden on women. India, by contrast, has no mandatory paternity leave, reinforcing traditional caregiving roles.

Academic Leadership Gap

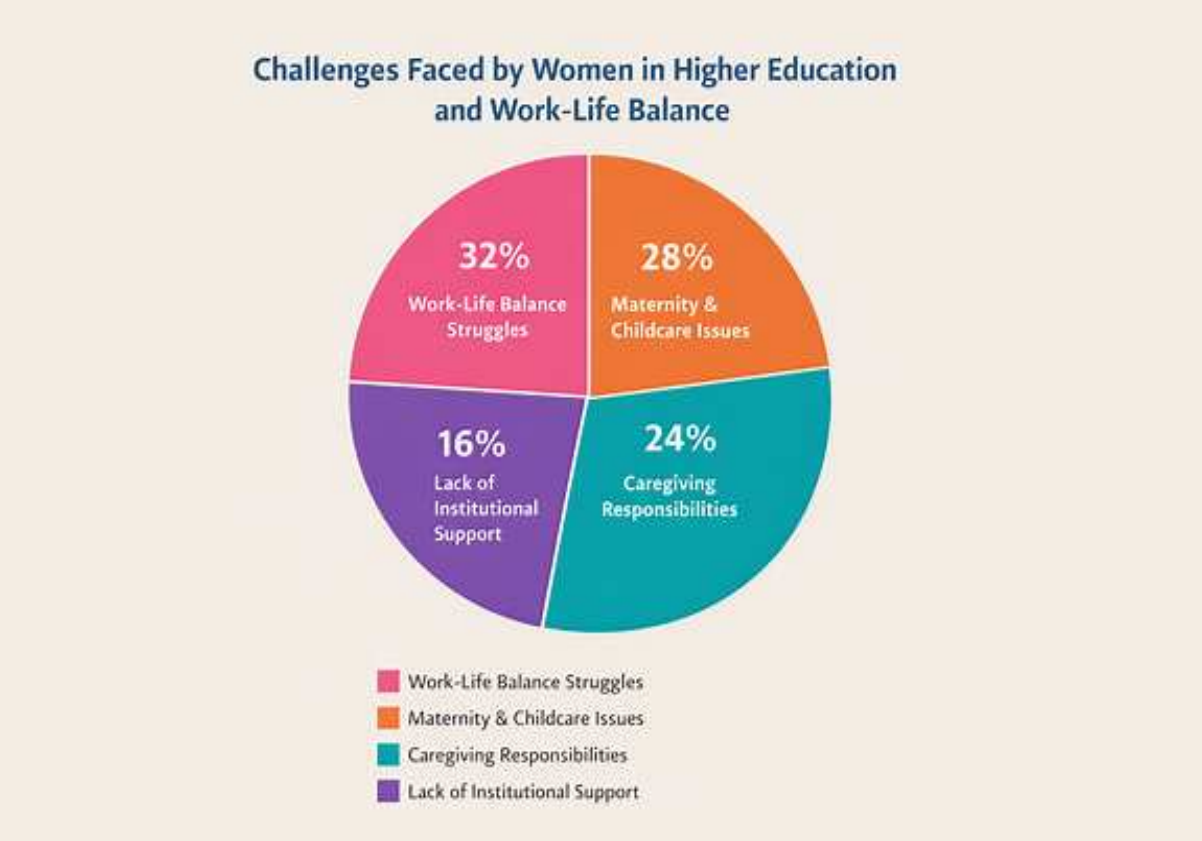
Despite high enrollment, women hold only 27% of faculty positions in Indian universities, and fewer than 15% of vice-chancellor roles. This leadership gap highlights systemic barriers in translating education into authority and influence.

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Cultural Expectations

Studies show that Indian women spend 5 hours daily on unpaid care work, compared to men's 1.5 hours. This imbalance is not only a personal challenge but also a structural issue that reduces women's availability for professional growth



Findings

The analysis of women's participation in higher education and their subsequent professional trajectories reveals a complex interplay of progress and persistent challenges. The findings of this study are organized into four key areas: enrollment and representation, work-life balance, maternity policies, and caregiving responsibilities.

- Enrollment and Representation

Recent data from the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) shows that women constitute nearly 49% of total enrollment in higher education institutions in India. This

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reflects significant progress compared to earlier decades, when female participation was far lower. Women's enrollment is particularly strong in disciplines such as arts, commerce, and medicine, while their representation in engineering and technology remains comparatively limited. Despite high enrollment rates, women's representation declines sharply at postgraduate and doctoral levels, and even more so in academic leadership positions. This "leaky pipeline" phenomenon suggests that while education provides access, systemic barriers prevent women from sustaining long-term academic and professional careers.

- Work-Life Balance

Survey data and qualitative studies consistently highlight that women face greater challenges in achieving work-life balance compared to men. Women professionals report higher levels of stress and burnout due to the dual burden of professional responsibilities and domestic caregiving. Flexible work arrangements, though increasingly available in urban corporate sectors, are not widely accessible in academia or public service. Moreover, women who avail such arrangements often face stigma, being perceived as less committed to their careers. This cultural bias undermines the effectiveness of work-life balance policies and discourages women from fully utilizing available support.

- Maternity Policies

India's Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017, which extended paid maternity leave to 26 weeks, represents a significant step forward in supporting women during childbearing years. However, the findings reveal critical gaps in implementation. Many organizations, particularly in the private sector, are reluctant to hire or retain women of childbearing age due to perceived costs associated with maternity benefits. In the informal sector, where the majority of women are employed, maternity benefits are largely absent. Comparative analysis shows that countries with comprehensive parental leave policies, including paternity leave, achieve better outcomes in terms of female workforce participation. The absence of mandatory paternity leave in India reinforces traditional caregiving roles, placing disproportionate burdens on women and limiting their career progression.

- Caregiving Responsibilities

Caregiving responsibilities extend beyond maternity to include elder care and support for family members with disabilities. Findings indicate that women are more likely than men to assume these roles, often at the expense of career advancement. The lack of institutional support, such as workplace childcare facilities or elder care programs, exacerbates the challenge. Women frequently reduce working hours or exit the workforce entirely, leading to

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long-term economic disadvantages. This pattern reinforces gender inequality and limits the extent to which women can fully benefit from higher education.

- Policy Gaps and Cultural Barriers

The findings underscore that policy reforms alone are insufficient without accompanying cultural change. Workplace cultures often stigmatize women who avail maternity benefits or flexible work arrangements, perceiving them as less ambitious. This bias discourages women from fully utilizing available support and perpetuates inequality. Additionally, the absence of gender-sensitive leadership and mentorship programs limits women's opportunities for advancement. Cultural expectations that prioritize women's roles as caregivers over their professional aspirations continue to shape women's experiences, leading to guilt, stress, and reduced career engagement.

- Positive Outcomes

Despite these challenges, there are notable success stories. Women leaders in academia, business, and public service demonstrate that supportive policies and cultural shifts can create pathways for women to thrive professionally while fulfilling caregiving roles. Corporate initiatives such as diversity hiring programs, flexible work policies, and mentorship networks have enabled some women to balance career and caregiving responsibilities effectively. These examples highlight the potential for systemic reforms to create more equitable professional ecosystems.

Conclusion

The study of women in higher education and their experiences with work-life balance, maternity policies, and caregiving responsibilities reveals both remarkable progress and enduring challenges. Higher education has undeniably empowered women, equipping them with knowledge, skills, and confidence to participate meaningfully in professional and public life. Yet, the translation of educational attainment into sustained career success remains hindered by systemic barriers, cultural expectations, and inadequate institutional support.

Findings indicate that while India has made significant strides in expanding women's access to higher education and improving maternity leave provisions, gaps persist in implementation and inclusivity. The absence of comprehensive parental leave, limited childcare facilities, and workplace cultures that stigmatize flexible arrangements continue to restrict women's professional growth. Caregiving responsibilities, often disproportionately borne by women, further exacerbate these challenges, leading to career interruptions and economic disadvantages.

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The evidence underscores that education alone cannot dismantle entrenched gender inequalities. Sustainable progress requires integrated reforms that combine supportive policies with cultural transformation. Institutions must adopt gender-sensitive practices, including mentorship programs, flexible work structures, and accessible childcare facilities. Policymakers must expand maternity benefits to the informal sector and introduce paternity leave to promote shared caregiving responsibilities. Equally important, societal attitudes must evolve to recognize caregiving as a shared responsibility, not a burden assigned exclusively to women.

Ultimately, empowering women in higher education and addressing their work-life balance challenges is not only a matter of gender justice but also a prerequisite for national development. A society that enables women to thrive academically and professionally, while balancing caregiving roles, harnesses the full potential of its human capital. By fostering inclusive policies and equitable cultural norms, India can ensure that women's educational achievements translate into leadership, innovation, and sustainable growth. The path forward lies in collective responsibilityfamilies, institutions, and governments working together to create an ecosystem where women can flourish without compromise.

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Representation of Gender Equity in Fiction and Its Adaptations: A Sample Study of *A Song of Ice and Fire*

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Abstract

Depiction of Gender Equity in fiction has long been a subject of scholarly discussion, as literary narratives often reflect and shape societal perceptions of gender roles. Fantasy literature, in particular, has historically relied on traditional gender stereotypes, portraying men as heroes and women as passive figures. However, contemporary fantasy works have begun to challenge these conventions. George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* series provides a compelling case study for examining gender representation in modern fantasy literature and its adaptations, particularly the television series *Game of Thrones*. This research paper explores how gender identities and roles are portrayed within the narrative and how these portrayals are transformed through adaptation. By analyzing key female characters such as Daenerys Targaryen, Arya Stark, Cersei Lannister, and Sansa Stark, the paper evaluates the balance between empowerment and oppression in the series. It also discusses how the television adaptation amplifies, alters, or sometimes simplifies these gender dynamics. The study argues that Martin's work simultaneously critiques patriarchal systems and reproduces certain gendered tropes. Ultimately, the representation of gender in *A Song of Ice and Fire* demonstrates the complex relationship between fiction, cultural values, and media adaptation, highlighting the evolving discourse on gender roles in contemporary storytelling.

Keywords:gender equity, fiction, fantasy literature, adaptation, masculinity

Gender equity refers to the principle of fairness and justice in the treatment of individuals of all genders. It involves recognizing that people of different genders may face different challenges due to social, cultural, and economic inequalities, and therefore measures and policies are needed to ensure equal opportunities and outcomes for everyone. Gender equity is

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closely related to gender equality, but while equality focuses on treating everyone the same, equity emphasizes fairness by addressing historical and structural disadvantages.

Gender equity means providing individuals with the resources, opportunities, and support they need according to their circumstances so that they can achieve equal outcomes regardless of gender. It acknowledges that women, men, and gender-diverse individuals often experience different levels of access to education, employment, healthcare, and political participation.For example, in many societies women have historically faced barriers such as limited access to education, wage gaps, and underrepresentation in leadership positions. Gender equity seeks to remove these barriers through targeted policies and programs.

Although the terms Gender Equality and Gender Equity are often used interchangeably, they have distinct meanings. Gender Equality stands for treating everyone the same regardless of gender and ensuring equal rights and opportunities. On the other end, Gender Equity ensures fairness by providing additional support or resources to those who have been historically disadvantaged. It is essential for building a fair and inclusive society. It contributes to social development, economic growth, and improved well-being for all individuals.

Representation of gender equity in literature reflects broader social and cultural attitudes toward masculinity, femininity, and power. For centuries, literary narratives reinforced traditional gender roles, often portraying male characters as heroes and women as secondary or passive figures. With the emergence of feminist literary criticism in the twentieth century, scholars began to examine how gender is constructed and represented in fictional narratives.

Fantasy literature has historically been associated with rigid gender stereotypes. Classic fantasy works often depict male warriors embarking on heroic quests while female characters serve as romantic interests or symbols of virtue. However, modern fantasy has increasingly challenged these conventions by introducing more complex and diverse representations of gender.

George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire*, first published in 1996, represents a significant development in the evolution of gender representation in fantasy literature. Set in the fictional continents of Westeros and Essos, the series portrays a brutal political landscape where power, survival, and ambition shape the lives of its characters. Unlike many traditional fantasy narratives, Martin's series features a wide range of female characters who occupy diverse roles, from queens and warriors to political strategists. At the same time, the narrative is deeply embedded within a patriarchal society, where women often face violence,

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marginalization, and limited social mobility. Scholars have noted that the series represents forms of female oppression such as marginalization, exploitation, and powerlessness, reflecting the patriarchal structure of its fictional medieval world. The adaptation of the novels into the television series *Game of Thrones* further expanded the cultural impact of Martin's work. The show brought global attention to the narrative and sparked debates about gender representation, sexual violence, and female empowerment.

This research paper explores gender representation in A Song of Ice and Fire and examines how these representations are shaped and transformed through adaptation. By analyzing major female characters and the narrative structures that define them, the study aims to highlight the complexities of gender politics in contemporary fantasy fiction.

Gender Representation in Fantasy Literature

Fantasy literature has traditionally relied on gendered archetypes. Male characters frequently embody strength, leadership, and heroism, while female characters are often portrayed as caretakers, princesses, or magical figures. These archetypes reinforce social expectations about gender roles. However, contemporary fantasy authors have increasingly challenged these conventions. Modern narratives often present female characters with agency, leadership, and moral complexity. Scholars argue that modern fantasy literature reflects a shift toward more nuanced portrayals of gender, allowing female characters to confront and reshape patriarchal structures within fictional societies.

Despite this shift, gender stereotypes still appear in many fantasy narratives. Women may still be sexualized or defined primarily by their relationships with male characters. The tension between progressive representation and lingering stereotypes creates a complex landscape for analyzing gender in contemporary fiction.

A Song of Ice and Fire stands at the intersection of these developments. The series portrays women as both victims of patriarchal oppression and powerful agents of change. This duality makes the narrative particularly valuable for examining gender representation in modern fantasy literature.

Gender and Power in *A Song of Ice and Fire*

One of the most significant aspects of Martin's narrative is its depiction of power dynamics. The fictional society of Westeros is deeply patriarchal, where political authority is predominantly held by men. Women are often expected to marry strategically, produce heirs, and maintain family alliances. However, many female characters resist or navigate these constraints in creative ways.

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Daenerys Targaryen: From Victim to Ruler

Daenerys Targaryen is one of the most prominent female characters in the series. Initially portrayed as a vulnerable young woman forced into marriage, she gradually transforms into a powerful political leader. Her journey from victimhood to leadership illustrates the possibility of female empowerment within a patriarchal system. Through resilience, strategic thinking, and moral conviction, Daenerys challenges traditional gender expectations.

Arya Stark: Challenging Gender Norms

Arya Stark represents a different form of gender resistance. Unlike traditional female characters in fantasy narratives, Arya rejects conventional feminine roles such as courtly behavior and domestic responsibilities. Instead, she pursues skills traditionally associated with male warriors, including sword fighting and survival training. Arya's storyline challenges the assumption that strength and heroism are inherently masculine traits.

Cersei Lannister: Power Through Political Manipulation

Cersei Lannister presents another perspective on gender and power. As a queen and political strategist, she operates within a male-dominated political system.However, her power often emerges through manipulation, alliances, and strategic calculation rather than traditional military strength. Cersei's character demonstrates how women can exercise influence even within restrictive social structures.

Sansa Stark: Transformation and Adaptation

Sansa Stark's character arc reflects the process of personal transformation within oppressive systems. Initially portrayed as naive and idealistic, she gradually learns to navigate the political dangers of Westeros. Her development illustrates how survival and empowerment can emerge through adaptation and emotional resilience.

Female Oppression and Patriarchal Structures

Despite the presence of strong female characters, the world of A Song of Ice and Fire remains fundamentally patriarchal. Women frequently face violence, exploitation, and social marginalization. Scholars analyzing the series have identified several forms of oppression experienced by female characters, including marginalization, powerlessness, and gender-based violence. These portrayals reflect the historical context that inspired the narrative. Martin's fictional world draws heavily from medieval European history, where patriarchal norms dominated social and political structures. At the same time, the series does not present these injustices uncritically. Instead, many storylines highlight the consequences of gender

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inequality and encourage readers to question these structures. For example, characters such as Daenerys and Arya actively resist the limitations imposed upon them. Their journeys illustrate the possibility of transformation within oppressive systems.

Adaptation and Gender Representation in *Game of Thrones*

The television adaptation of *A Song of Ice and Fire*, titled *Game of Thrones*, significantly influenced public perceptions of gender representation in the series. Adaptations often involve reinterpretation, as directors and writers must translate complex narratives into visual media. In the case of *Game of Thrones*, certain aspects of gender representation were amplified or altered. Some scholars argue that the television adaptation intensified depictions of sexual violence and nudity, which generated controversy among viewers and critics.At the same time, the show also contributed to the global recognition of female characters as central figures in the narrative. Characters such as Daenerys, Arya, and Brienne became widely celebrated as symbols of female empowerment.

Another important aspect of adaptation involves narrative structure. Studies comparing the novels and their adaptations highlight differences in character relationships and narrative emphasis across media formats. These changes demonstrate how adaptation can reshape the portrayal of gender and power within a story.

Feminist Interpretations of the Series

The question of whether *A Song of Ice and Fire* is feminist remains a subject of debate among scholars and readers.Some critics argue that the series promotes feminist values by presenting complex female characters who challenge patriarchal systems. Others contend that the narrative reinforces problematic tropes through frequent depictions of sexual violence and the sexualization of female characters. Research examining the series suggests that its representation of gender is neither wholly feminist nor entirely misogynistic. Instead, it reflects the contradictions of a society undergoing cultural transformation.

The series portrays women as multifaceted individuals with diverse ambitions, personalities, and moral complexities. At the same time, the narrative acknowledges the structural inequalities that shape their lives.This combination of realism and critique contributes to the series' enduring popularity and cultural significance.

Cultural Impact of Gender Representation

The global success of *A Song of Ice and Fire* and its television adaptation has had a significant cultural impact. The series sparked widespread discussions about gender roles,

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sexual violence, and female empowerment in media. It also encouraged audiences to reconsider traditional assumptions about gender representation in fantasy literature. Furthermore, the popularity of the series has influenced subsequent fantasy narratives, many of which now feature stronger and more diverse female characters. The cultural influence of the series demonstrates how fictional narratives can shape public conversations about social issues.

In this way, representation of Gender Equity in fiction plays an important role in shaping societal perceptions of identity, power, and equality. George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* offers a complex and multifaceted exploration of gender dynamics within a fictional medieval world. The series portrays women as both victims of patriarchal oppression and agents of political and social change. Through characters such as Daenerys Targaryen, Arya Stark, Cersei Lannister, and Sansa Stark, the narrative challenges traditional gender stereotypes while also acknowledging the structural inequalities that shape their lives.The television adaptation *Game of Thrones* further expanded these themes, bringing the discussion of gender representation to a global audience. While the adaptation introduced new controversies, it also highlighted the central role of female characters in the narrative.

In the end, the representation of gender in *A Song of Ice and Fire* reflects the evolving nature of contemporary storytelling. By presenting complex female characters within a patriarchal society, the series encourages readers and viewers to question traditional assumptions about gender, power, and identity. As fantasy literature continues to evolve, works like A Song of Ice and Fire demonstrate the potential of fiction to engage with important social issues and inspire meaningful cultural dialogue.

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Leadership Roles of Women in Academic Libraries: Changes and Challenges

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Abstract:

In higher education institutions, academic libraries are essential to research, teaching, and learning. Despite making up a sizable share of the global library workforce, women have long been underrepresented in senior positions. The field of librarianship has changed over time, enabling more women to take on leadership roles in academic libraries. This study looks at women's evolving leadership responsibilities in university libraries as well as the difficulties they face in administrative and decision-making jobs. The study examines academic papers and reports about gender dynamics in Library and Information Science (LIS) using a qualitative literature-review methodology. The results show that women leaders play a major role in collaborative academic services, technological innovation, and strategic management. However, a number of obstacles still hinder the advancement of leadership, such as institutional constraints, work-life balance issues, gender bias, and limited networking opportunities. In order to empower women leaders in university libraries, the study recommends tactics such professional networking opportunities, institutional support policies, mentoring programs, and leadership training. In academic institutions, encouraging inclusive leadership techniques will improve creativity, diversity, and efficient knowledge management.

Keywords: Women leadership, academic libraries, gender equality, library administration, LIS leadership, professional development

Introduction:

Universities and other higher education establishments must have academic libraries. Through a variety of services, they encourage learning, assist scholarly research, and give access to information resources. Academic libraries have changed significantly during the last few decades as a result of new technology, digital resource management, and changing user expectations.

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In terms of involvement in the workforce, women have historically dominated the library profession. Nonetheless, males have traditionally occupied leadership positions in academic libraries despite this numerical superiority. This disparity was a reflection of larger institutional and social systems that prevented women from rising to positions of leadership.

More women were able to assume leadership positions in the workplace in the late 20th century thanks to societal movements promoting gender equality and easier access to higher education. Consequently, women's representation in academic library administration progressively rose.

Women leaders now have a significant influence on how university libraries are developed. They direct information literacy initiatives, administer digital infrastructure, supervise strategic planning, and encourage cooperation between academics, students, and researchers.

There are still a number of structural and societal issues in spite of these developments. Gender stereotypes, a lack of professional networking opportunities, and challenges juggling work and personal obligations are common challenges faced by female executives. Promoting fair leadership opportunities in academic libraries requires an understanding of these concerns.

The goal of this research is to assess how women's leadership roles in academic libraries are evolving and what obstacles they face in these roles.

Literature Review:

In the field of library and information science, research on gender representation in library leadership has greatly increased.

According to Bladek (2019), leadership positions have historically been controlled by men even though women make up the majority of the library workforce. The study found that in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, there was a steady increase in the number of women in leadership roles.

Ashiq et al. (2021) looked at how women leaders in academic libraries advanced in their careers and discovered that institutional support, professional development, and mentoring were important factors.

Moran, Leonard, and Zellers (2009) state that qualities including strategic planning, technological know-how, and good communication skills are necessary for leadership in

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university libraries. Strong leadership skills in various domains have been shown by female professionals.

According to Sharma and Singh (2020), female leaders frequently use collaborative leadership philosophies that promote cooperation and group decision-making. These strategies work especially well in academic settings where departmental collaboration is crucial.

But a number of research also point to enduring obstacles. Jaradat (2019) discovered that corporate culture and gender stereotypes can prevent women from rising to positions of leadership.

In a similar vein, the American Library Association's research shows that women librarians often face difficulties with work-life balance, few administration chances, and inadequate leadership training.

Research indicates that although women's leadership participation in university libraries has increased, more work is still needed to remove the remaining obstacles.

Methods:

Research Design:

A qualitative research methodology based on a review of the literature and thematic analysis is used in this study.

Data Collection:

Data was gathered from:

i. Academic papers in the field of library and information science.

ii. Papers from academic conferences.

iii. Reports from professional associations.

iv. Books about gender studies and library leadership.

Data Analysis:

Thematic categorization was used to analyze the gathered material. Among the major themes found are:

i. The evolution of women in librarianship throughout history.

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ii. Roles and obligations of leadership.

iii. Obstacles that female leaders must overcome.

iv. Techniques for empowering leaders.

Results:

Trends in Women's Representation in Academic Library Leadership:

Chart 1: Women's Leadership and Workforce Representation in Libraries

Year Period	Women in Library Workforce	Women in Leadership
1960s	70%	10%
1980s	75%	25%
2000s	80%	40%
2020s	85%	55%

Interpretation:

Although women have always made up the majority of library employees, their representation in senior positions has steadily grown over time.

Women's Principal Leadership Positions in Academic Libraries:

Numerous crucial administrative and strategic tasks are carried out by female leaders.

Table 1: Essential Leadership Duties

Leadership Area	Activities
Strategic Planning	Institutional planning and policy development
Resource Management	Management of collections and budgeting
Technology Integration	Databases and digital library systems
Research Support	Data services and institutional repositories
Staff Leadership	Staff mentoring and training

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Leadership Style Characteristics

Chart 2: Leadership Style Distribution

Leadership Style	Percentage Among Women Leaders
Transformational Leadership	45%
Participatory Leadership	30%
Transactional Leadership	15%
Authoritative Leadership	10%

Observation:

Women leaders in academic libraries are frequently linked to transformational and participatory leadership styles.

Challenges Faced by Women Leaders:

Table 2: Major Challenges

Challenge	Impact
Gender Bias	Restricts opportunities for promotion
Work-Life Balance	An increase in stress and disruptions to one's profession
Institutional Barriers	Restricted ability to make decisions
Networking Limitations	Diminished visibility in the workplace
Skill Development	The necessity of ongoing technical education

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Conceptual Model of Women Leadership Development:

Research Model Diagram:

Higher Education in LIS

↓

Professional Experience

↓

Mentoring & Networking

↓

Leadership Training Programs

↓

Women Leadership in Academic Libraries

↓

Innovation, Collaboration & Institutional Development

The elements impacting women librarians' leadership growth are depicted in this model.

Discussion:

The results show that women have made great strides toward becoming leaders in academic libraries. This shift is a reflection of larger cultural shifts that support gender parity in the workplace.

Fostering collaborative work environments is one of the most significant contributions made by female executives. Academic libraries function in intricate institutional settings where collaboration between instructors, administrators, and students is crucial. Women leaders frequently use participatory leadership methods that promote candid dialogue and collaboration.

Technological leadership is another significant factor. Digital infrastructure, such as online databases, digital repositories, and research data management systems, is crucial to modern academic libraries. Women leaders have taken an active role in promoting digital literacy initiatives and putting these technologies into practice.

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Notwithstanding these encouraging advancements, the investigation identifies enduring difficulties. Leadership advancement is still significantly hampered by gender bias. Traditional ideas about gender and authority still have an impact on leadership positions in some organizations.

Another important issue is work-life balance. Significant time commitments are necessary for leadership roles, including scholarly partnerships, policy preparation, and administrative meetings. There may be more pressure on female professionals who also handle family obligations.

Opportunities for professional networking have an impact on leadership development as well. Librarians may exchange expertise, find employment opportunities, and hone their leadership abilities through robust professional networks. These networks can be strengthened by encouraging more women to attend conferences and professional associations.

In order to advance gender equality, institutional support is essential.Opportunities for female leaders can be greatly enhanced by policies including open promotion processes, leadership development initiatives, and flexible work schedules.

Conclusion:

Worldwide, women have always played a crucial role in the growth and operation of libraries. But historically, their contributions to leadership positions have gone unacknowledged. Significant improvements in academic libraries over time have made it possible for more women to hold senior roles.

These days, female leaders are essential in staff development, academic collaboration, digital transformation, and strategic management. Their leadership styles frequently place a strong emphasis on cooperation, diversity, and creativity, all of which are crucial for contemporary academic libraries.

Despite these advancements, obstacles like gender bias, problems with work-life balance, and a lack of networking opportunities still hinder women's growth in leadership. Institutional dedication to inclusive policies and leadership development programs is necessary to address these issues.

Women professionals in university libraries can be empowered by supporting mentorship programs, leadership development, and gender-equitable promotion procedures. Increasing the number of women in senior positions will eventually improve academic library services' efficacy, creativity, and sustainability.

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Academic libraries' future depends on inclusive leadership that prioritizes diversity, teamwork, and technological flexibility. This future will continue to be shaped in large part by female leaders.

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Intersectionality: Caste, Class, Race, Disability and Higher Education Access

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Abstract

Intersectionality has become an important analytical framework for understanding the complex nature of social inequalities. The concept, introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw, emphasizes that individuals experience discrimination not through a single identity but through multiple intersecting identities such as caste, class, race, gender, and disability. In the context of higher education, these intersecting identities significantly influence access, participation, and success. Despite global commitments to inclusive education, many marginalized groups continue to face structural barriers in accessing higher education institutions. This paper examines how caste, class, race, and disability interact to shape educational opportunities. The study explores institutional inequalities, socio-economic barriers, and discriminatory practices that hinder educational inclusion. By analyzing the intersection of these identities, the paper argues that addressing educational inequality requires policies that recognize the interconnected nature of social disadvantages. An intersectional approach can help create more inclusive and equitable higher education systems.

Introduction

Higher education is widely regarded as a powerful tool for social mobility, economic empowerment, and intellectual development. Universities are expected to provide equal opportunities for individuals regardless of their social background. However, access to higher education is not equally distributed across different sections of society. Social hierarchies based on caste, class, race, and disability continue to influence who gains access to educational institutions and who remains excluded.

The concept of intersectionality provides a valuable framework for analyzing these inequalities. The term was first articulated by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 to explain how different forms of discrimination overlap and interact. Intersectionality challenges the idea that social inequalities operate independently. Instead, it argues that multiple forms of oppression intersect to produce unique experiences of disadvantage.

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In many societies, marginalized communities face systemic barriers in accessing higher education. For instance, caste-based discrimination remains a significant issue in India despite constitutional guarantees of equality. Similarly, racial discrimination continues to shape educational opportunities in countries such as the United States. Students with disabilities also encounter physical and institutional barriers that limit their participation in higher education.

These inequalities become even more complex when different forms of disadvantage intersect. For example, a student belonging to a marginalized caste who also comes from a low-income family and lives with a disability may face multiple barriers simultaneously. Therefore, understanding educational inequality requires examining the intersection of caste, class, race, and disability.

This paper analyzes how these intersecting social identities affect access to higher education and discusses strategies for creating more inclusive educational systems.

1. Theoretical Framework: Intersectionality and Social Inequality

Intersectionality has become a widely used theoretical framework in sociology, gender studies, and political science. The concept highlights the interconnected nature of social identities and systems of oppression. According to intersectional theory, inequalities based on caste, race, class, gender, and disability do not operate independently but interact with each other to produce complex patterns of discrimination.

The framework developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw initially focused on the experiences of Black women in the United States, who faced both racial and gender discrimination. Crenshaw argued that traditional legal frameworks often failed to recognize these overlapping forms of oppression because they treated race and gender as separate categories. Later scholars expanded intersectionality to examine other dimensions of social inequality, including class, disability, sexuality, and nationality. Sociologist Patricia Hill Collins introduced the concept of the “matrix of domination,” which explains how different systems of power interact to shape social experiences.

In the field of education, intersectionality helps researchers understand why some groups remain underrepresented in universities. Educational inequality is not solely the result of economic factors; it is also shaped by cultural norms, institutional practices, and historical discrimination. An intersectional approach encourages policymakers and educators to recognize the diverse experiences of students and to develop policies that address multiple dimensions of inequality simultaneously.

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2. Caste and Higher Education Access

Caste remains one of the most significant determinants of social inequality in India. Historically, the caste system created rigid social hierarchies that restricted access to education and other opportunities for marginalized communities.

For centuries, communities categorized as “lower castes” or “untouchables” were denied access to formal education. Although constitutional reforms and affirmative action policies have attempted to address these historical injustices, caste-based disparities in higher education continue to exist.

Students belonging to Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBC) often face numerous challenges in higher education institutions. These challenges include discrimination, lack of academic support, social stigma, and economic disadvantage. Reservation policies have increased the enrollment of marginalized caste groups in universities. However, mere access does not guarantee equal participation or success. Many students from disadvantaged caste backgrounds are first-generation learners who lack academic guidance and institutional support. Moreover, caste discrimination sometimes manifests in subtle ways, such as social exclusion, stereotyping, and bias from peers and faculty members. These experiences can affect students’ confidence, mental health, and academic performance. Therefore, addressing caste inequality in higher education requires not only affirmative action policies but also efforts to create inclusive and supportive campus environments.

3. Class Inequality and Economic Barriers

Economic class plays a crucial role in determining access to higher education. Students from low-income families often struggle to afford the costs associated with university education, including tuition fees, accommodation, books, and other academic resources. In many countries, the rising cost of higher education has created significant barriers for economically disadvantaged students. Even when government scholarships and financial aid programs are available, they may not fully cover the expenses required for higher education.

Economic inequality also influences access to quality schooling. Students from wealthy families often attend better schools, receive private tutoring, and have access to educational resources that improve their chances of entering prestigious universities.

In contrast, students from poor backgrounds may attend underfunded schools with limited facilities and inadequate teaching resources. As a result, they may struggle to compete with students from more privileged backgrounds during university admissions.

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Class inequality often intersects with other forms of social disadvantage such as caste and race. Marginalized caste groups and racial minorities are disproportionately represented among lower socio-economic classes. Consequently, economic barriers further reinforce existing social inequalities in higher education. Addressing class-based inequality requires expanding scholarship programs, reducing tuition costs, and providing financial assistance for disadvantaged students.

4. Race and Higher Education Inequality

Racial inequality has historically shaped educational systems in many parts of the world. In countries like the United States, racial minorities such as African Americans, Native Americans, and Hispanic communities have faced systemic barriers in accessing higher education.

These barriers have their roots in historical processes such as slavery, segregation, and institutional discrimination. Although civil rights movements have brought significant reforms, racial disparities in higher education remain evident. Racial minority students often face unequal access to quality schooling, financial constraints, and discriminatory practices in educational institutions. Additionally, they may experience cultural alienation in universities where faculty members and curricula do not reflect diverse social backgrounds. Racial inequality also affects representation in academic leadership and research institutions. Many universities still lack diversity among faculty members and administrators, which can limit opportunities for minority students.

Affirmative action policies and diversity initiatives have been introduced to address racial inequality in higher education. However, debates about these policies continue in many countries. Understanding racial inequality through an intersectional lens helps reveal how race interacts with other factors such as class and disability to create complex patterns of disadvantage.

5. Disability and Barriers to Inclusive Education

Students with disabilities face numerous obstacles in accessing higher education. These barriers can be physical, institutional, and social. Many universities lack accessible infrastructure, including ramps, elevators, accessible classrooms, and assistive technologies. As a result, students with physical disabilities may find it difficult to navigate campus environments. Students with visual or hearing impairments may also face challenges if universities do not provide accessible learning materials such as Braille texts, screen-reading software, or sign language interpretation. In addition to physical barriers, students with disabilities often encounter negative attitudes and stereotypes. Some educators and peers may

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underestimate their abilities or fail to provide appropriate support. Inclusive education policies aim to remove these barriers by promoting accessibility and equal opportunities for students with disabilities. However, the implementation of such policies varies across institutions and countries. When disability intersects with other forms of marginalization such as poverty or caste discrimination, students may face even greater challenges in accessing higher education.

6. Intersectional Experiences in Higher Education

The concept of intersectionality highlights that social identities do not exist in isolation. Instead, they interact with each other to shape individuals' experiences. For example, a student who belongs to a marginalized caste and also comes from a poor family may face both social discrimination and financial hardship. Similarly, a disabled student from a racial minority community may encounter multiple forms of marginalization within educational institutions.

These intersectional experiences often lead to compounded disadvantages. Students facing multiple forms of discrimination may experience higher levels of stress, lower academic performance, and increased risk of dropping out. Intersectional inequalities also influence students' sense of belonging within universities. When students feel excluded or marginalized, it can affect their academic engagement and overall well-being. Therefore, addressing educational inequality requires recognizing the complex ways in which different forms of social disadvantage interact.

7. Policy Measures and Inclusive Strategies

Promoting equitable access to higher education requires comprehensive policy interventions that address multiple forms of inequality simultaneously. Governments and educational institutions can adopt several strategies to improve inclusion in higher education.

First, financial support systems such as scholarships, grants, and student loans should be expanded to support economically disadvantaged students. Second, affirmative action policies can help increase representation of marginalized communities in universities.

Third, universities must improve accessibility for students with disabilities by providing accessible infrastructure and assistive technologies. Fourth, educational institutions should implement strong anti-discrimination policies to address caste-based, racial, and disability-related discrimination. Fifth, mentorship programs and academic support services can help first-generation students navigate the challenges of higher education. Finally, universities should promote diversity in faculty recruitment and curriculum development to reflect the experiences of marginalized communities. These measures can help create more inclusive and equitable higher education systems.

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8. Conclusion

Higher education has the potential to promote social mobility and reduce inequality. However, access to educational opportunities remains deeply shaped by social hierarchies such as caste, class, race, and disability.

The intersectionality framework provides a powerful tool for understanding how these different forms of inequality interact to influence educational outcomes. By recognizing the interconnected nature of social disadvantages, policymakers and educators can develop more effective strategies for promoting inclusion in higher education.

Addressing educational inequality requires structural reforms, inclusive institutional practices, and targeted support for marginalized communities. Universities must move beyond symbolic commitments to diversity and actively work toward creating equitable learning environments.

Ultimately, achieving equal access to higher education is not only a matter of social justice but also essential for building inclusive and democratic societies.

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Women's Leadership in the Realm of Pharmacy and Healthcare: Challenges and Opportunities

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Abstract

The pharmaceutical and healthcare industries play a crucial role in improving global health outcomes. Women represent a significant proportion of the healthcare workforce worldwide, yet they remain underrepresented in leadership positions. This research paper examines the challenges faced by women leaders in pharmaceutical and healthcare sectors and explores the opportunities that can promote gender-inclusive leadership. The study reviews existing literature on gender bias, work–life balance issues, limited mentorship, and structural barriers that hinder women's career advancement. At the same time, it highlights emerging opportunities such as leadership training programs, inclusive organizational policies, and global movements advocating gender equality in healthcare leadership. The paper concludes that empowering women leaders can enhance innovation, collaboration, and patient-centred decision-making in healthcare systems. Addressing gender disparities through policy reforms, education, mentorship programs, and institutional support can significantly improve leadership diversity and strengthen the future of the healthcare and pharmaceutical sectors.

Keywords: Pharmacy, healthcare, gender-inclusive leadership, gender disparity, mentorship

Introduction

Healthcare and pharmaceutical industries are among the most critical sectors for global development and public well-being. These sectors employ millions of professionals worldwide, and women constitute a large portion of this workforce, particularly in roles such as nursing, pharmacy, clinical research, and healthcare administration. Despite their strong presence in the workforce, women are still underrepresented in senior leadership roles, executive positions, and decision-making bodies. Leadership in healthcare is essential because it shapes policies, healthcare delivery models, research priorities, and patient outcomes. Inclusive leadership ensures that diverse perspectives are incorporated into decision-making processes, which ultimately leads to better healthcare solutions. Studies show that gender-diverse leadership teams often demonstrate stronger collaboration, innovation, and organizational performance.

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However, systemic barriers and cultural expectations continue to limit women's advancement into leadership positions within the pharmaceutical and healthcare sectors. These barriers include gender stereotypes, limited access to mentorship, unequal opportunities for promotion, and challenges related to balancing professional and family responsibilities. This research paper explores the current status of women's leadership in healthcare and pharmaceuticals, identifies the major challenges that hinder their progress, and highlights opportunities that can promote gender equity in leadership positions. Understanding these issues is important not only for gender equality but also for improving the efficiency and inclusivity of healthcare systems worldwide.

Overview of Women in the Healthcare and Pharmaceutical Workforce

Women form the backbone of the healthcare workforce globally. According to various global health reports, women make up nearly 70% of the health and social care workforce. They contribute significantly as physicians, nurses, pharmacists, researchers, and healthcare administrators. In the pharmaceutical industry, women are increasingly involved in drug research, clinical trials, regulatory affairs, and patient advocacy. Despite this strong representation at the workforce level, leadership positions remain largely dominated by men. Many healthcare organizations still have fewer women in executive roles such as chief medical officers, hospital directors, pharmaceutical company CEOs, and board members.

Research indicates that only a small percentage of women in healthcare receive formal leadership training or opportunities to manage healthcare institutions. In one study of female healthcare professionals, only 13.2% reported receiving leadership training and about 27% held leadership positions, highlighting a gap between workforce participation and leadership representation. This imbalance reflects structural and cultural challenges that prevent women from reaching senior positions despite having the qualifications and experience required for leadership roles.

Importance of Women's Leadership in Healthcare and Pharmacy

Women's leadership is essential for building inclusive, responsive, and effective healthcare systems. Leaders influence policies, resource allocation, workplace culture, and innovation within organizations. When women participate in leadership roles, they bring diverse perspectives that can improve healthcare outcomes and patient care. Recent research suggests that organizations with gender-diverse leadership teams often demonstrate higher levels of creativity and innovation. Female leaders tend to emphasize collaborative decision-making, empathy, and team engagement, which are important qualities in healthcare environments where patient-centred care is critical.

Furthermore, women leaders often advocate for policies that support employee well-being, family-friendly workplaces, and equitable healthcare access. Increasing female representation in leadership roles can also inspire younger generations of healthcare professionals and create more inclusive workplaces. Studies also indicate that empowering women leaders contributes to stronger organizational culture and improved business

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outcomes. Increased representation of women in leadership positions helps organizations address gender bias and create opportunities for talent development within the workforce.

Therefore, promoting women's leadership in healthcare and pharmaceuticals is not only a matter of gender equality but also a strategic step toward strengthening healthcare systems.

Challenges Faced by Women in Healthcare and Pharmaceutical Leadership

Although progress has been made in recent years, women continue to face numerous challenges in advancing to leadership roles within healthcare and pharmaceutical industries.

Gender Bias and Stereotypes

One of the most significant barriers is gender bias. Traditional perceptions often associate leadership with traits such as assertiveness, authority, and dominance, which are stereotypically considered masculine characteristics. This mismatch between gender expectations and leadership traits can result in discrimination against women seeking leadership roles.

Role congruity theory suggests that women leaders may face prejudice because their leadership behaviour conflicts with traditional gender roles. Such biases can influence hiring decisions, performance evaluations, and promotion opportunities. As a result, women may have to work harder than their male counterparts to prove their competence and leadership capabilities.

Glass Ceiling and Limited Career Advancement

The "glass ceiling" refers to invisible barriers that prevent women from rising to top leadership positions despite having the necessary qualifications and experience. In many pharmaceutical and healthcare organizations, leadership positions are still dominated by men. Women often experience slower career progression compared to men due to unequal access to leadership opportunities, fewer sponsorship opportunities, and limited representation in decision-making networks. Additionally, many organizations lack transparent promotion policies, which can further reinforce existing inequalities.

Work–Life Balance and Family Responsibilities

Healthcare professions are often demanding and require long working hours. Women frequently face additional responsibilities related to childcare, family care, and household management. Balancing professional and personal responsibilities can limit the time and energy women can dedicate to leadership roles. Career interruptions due to maternity leave or family responsibilities may also affect promotion opportunities.

Many women report that they experience a "second shift" after work, where domestic responsibilities continue even after professional duties are completed. This imbalance can contribute to stress, burnout, and reduced career advancement opportunities.

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Lack of Mentorship and Role Models

Mentorship plays a crucial role in leadership development. However, women often have limited access to mentors and role models within healthcare and pharmaceutical organizations. Because leadership positions are often male-dominated, women may struggle to find mentors who understand the specific challenges they face. Without guidance and support, it can be difficult for women to navigate organizational structures and build professional networks. Mentorship programs that connect experienced female leaders with emerging professionals can significantly improve leadership development.

Limited Access to Leadership Training

Leadership development programs are essential for preparing professionals to manage teams, make strategic decisions, and lead organizations. Unfortunately, many women in healthcare do not receive sufficient training in leadership and management skills. Research shows that leadership training significantly increases the likelihood of women assuming leadership positions. However, access to such programs is often limited, which creates a gap between potential and opportunity.

Opportunities for Women in Healthcare Leadership

Despite these challenges, several opportunities exist to promote women's leadership in the pharmaceutical and healthcare sectors.

Leadership Development Programs

Leadership training programs designed specifically for women can help develop essential management and strategic skills. Such programs often focus on communication, negotiation, decision-making, and conflict resolution. Organizations that invest in leadership development initiatives can empower women to pursue leadership roles confidently.

Mentorship and Networking

Mentorship networks provide guidance, support, and career advice for emerging leaders. Establishing professional networks for women in healthcare can help them build connections, share experiences, and access leadership opportunities. Mentorship programs also help women develop confidence and leadership skills while navigating workplace challenges.

Organizational Policy Reforms

Healthcare institutions can promote gender equality by implementing inclusive policies such as:

- Flexible work arrangements
- Parental leave policies
- Equal pay initiatives

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- Transparent promotion processes

Providing supportive workplace policies allows women to balance professional and personal responsibilities while pursuing leadership roles.

Education and Professional Development

Higher education and specialized training significantly improve leadership opportunities for women. Studies show that women with postgraduate qualifications and professional training are more likely to obtain leadership roles in healthcare organizations.

Encouraging women to pursue advanced education and professional certifications can enhance their leadership potential.

Cultural and Institutional Change

Long-term change requires transforming organizational culture. Healthcare institutions must actively challenge gender stereotypes and promote diversity in leadership.

- Gender-inclusive leadership practices include:
- Diversity-focused recruitment strategies
- Gender equality policies
- Inclusive decision-making structures
- Leadership accountability for diversity goals

Such cultural changes can create environments where women feel supported in pursuing leadership careers.

Future Directions for Women's Leadership in Healthcare

The future of healthcare leadership depends on creating inclusive environments that encourage diversity and innovation. Governments, healthcare institutions, and pharmaceutical companies must work together to promote gender equity.

Key future strategies include:

- Expanding leadership training programs for women.
- Increasing female representation on boards and executive teams.
- Implementing gender-sensitive workplace policies.
- Supporting mentorship and networking initiatives.
- Conducting research to understand barriers to women's leadership.

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Digital transformation and technological advancements in healthcare also create new leadership opportunities for women in areas such as telemedicine, digital health, biotechnology, and pharmaceutical innovation. By empowering women leaders, healthcare organizations can build more resilient and effective systems capable of addressing complex global health challenges.

Conclusion

Women play an indispensable role in the healthcare and pharmaceutical sectors, contributing significantly to patient care, research, and organizational management. However, despite their strong presence in the workforce, women remain underrepresented in leadership positions.

This research paper examined the challenges faced by women leaders in healthcare and pharmaceuticals, including gender bias, work–life balance issues, lack of mentorship, and limited access to leadership training. These barriers continue to limit women's advancement into senior leadership roles. At the same time, several opportunities exist to promote gender equity in leadership. Leadership development programs, mentorship networks, inclusive organizational policies, and educational opportunities can empower women to pursue leadership roles.

Encouraging women's leadership is not only a matter of fairness but also a strategic necessity for improving healthcare systems. Diverse leadership teams foster innovation, collaboration, and better decision-making. Therefore, healthcare organizations, policymakers, and academic institutions must work together to create supportive environments that enable women to achieve their full leadership potential. By addressing systemic barriers and promoting inclusive leadership practices, the healthcare and pharmaceutical industries can build a more equitable and effective future.

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Study of Gender Sensitive Policies in Higher Education Institutions in India

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Abstract

Gender equality and inclusiveness have become important priorities in higher education across the world. In India, higher education institutions play a crucial role in promoting gender-sensitive environments that ensure equal opportunities, safety, and dignity for all students and staff. The present study examines the nature, implementation, and effectiveness of gender-sensitive policies in higher education institutions in India. The research focuses on institutional frameworks such as internal complaints committees, gender sensitization programs, equal opportunity cells, and policy guidelines introduced by regulatory bodies. The study adopts a qualitative and descriptive research methodology based on secondary sources such as government reports, policy documents, research articles, and institutional guidelines. The findings suggest that while several initiatives have been introduced to promote gender equality, their implementation varies significantly across institutions due to administrative limitations, lack of awareness, and socio-cultural barriers. The study concludes that strengthening institutional commitment, policy enforcement, and awareness programs can significantly enhance gender-sensitive practices in higher education institutions in India.

Keywords : Gender-sensitive policies, Higher education institutions, Gender equality, Policy implementation, India

Introduction:-

Gender equality has emerged as a key issue in educational development and social progress. Higher education institutions are expected to create inclusive academic environments that promote equality, safety, and respect among students and staff. In India, efforts to address gender inequality in educational institutions have gained importance through policy interventions and institutional mechanisms designed to protect the rights of women and other marginalized gender groups.

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The concept of gender-sensitive policies refers to institutional strategies and practices that acknowledge gender differences and aim to reduce discrimination and inequality. These policies focus on creating safe learning spaces, preventing gender-based violence, and promoting equal participation in academic and administrative processes.

In India, the regulatory framework for gender-sensitive policies in higher education institutions has been strengthened through various legislative and institutional measures. One of the most significant developments was the implementation of the **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013**, which requires institutions to establish Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs) to address complaints related to sexual harassment. Similarly, the **University Grants Commission** has issued guidelines for the prevention and redressal of sexual harassment in higher educational institutions.

Despite these initiatives, gender inequality and harassment incidents continue to be reported in several institutions, highlighting the need for effective policy implementation and institutional accountability.

Objectives of the Study:-

The study aims to examine gender-sensitive policies in higher education institutions in India. The specific objectives are:

1. To analyze the concept and importance of gender-sensitive policies in higher education institutions.
2. To examine the existing gender-related policies and institutional mechanisms implemented in Indian higher education institutions.
3. To evaluate the effectiveness of these policies in promoting gender equality and safety within academic institutions.
4. To identify the challenges faced in implementing gender-sensitive policies.
5. To suggest policy recommendations for strengthening gender-sensitive practices in higher education.

Research Methodology:-

This study is based on qualitative and descriptive research methods. The research relies primarily on secondary data collected from academic journals, government reports, institutional guidelines, policy documents, and books related to gender studies and higher education.

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The study reviews policies and regulatory frameworks related to gender equality in higher education institutions, including guidelines issued by national educational authorities and relevant legislation addressing workplace harassment and gender discrimination.

The data collected from secondary sources is analyzed through a thematic approach in order to understand the nature of gender-sensitive policies, their implementation mechanisms, and the challenges faced by institutions in enforcing them.

Theoretical Framework:-

The study of gender-sensitive policies in higher education institutions is grounded in several theoretical perspectives from **Gender Studies**, **Feminist Theory**, and **Public Policy**. These theoretical approaches help explain how institutional structures, social norms, and policy frameworks shape gender equality within educational settings.

Feminist Theory:-

One of the key theoretical perspectives used in this study is feminist theory, which focuses on understanding and addressing gender inequalities embedded in social institutions. Feminist scholars argue that educational institutions often reflect broader patriarchal structures in society that reproduce gender-based inequalities in access, participation, and leadership opportunities (Acker, 1990). Within higher education institutions, gender-sensitive policies aim to challenge these structural inequalities by ensuring equal opportunities and protection from discrimination.

Feminist institutional theory further explains how institutional practices and organizational cultures may unconsciously reinforce gender hierarchies. Policies that promote gender sensitivity—such as grievance redressal mechanisms, gender awareness programs, and inclusive administrative practices—seek to transform these institutional norms and create more equitable environments.

Gender Mainstreaming Approach:-

Another important framework used in this study is the concept of gender mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming refers to the integration of gender perspectives into all stages of policy development, implementation, and evaluation. According to international policy frameworks developed by organizations such as the **United Nations**, gender mainstreaming ensures that the needs and experiences of different genders are systematically considered in policy-making processes.

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In the context of higher education institutions, gender mainstreaming involves incorporating gender equality principles into institutional governance, curriculum design, infrastructure planning, and student welfare programs. This approach ensures that gender equality is not treated as a separate issue but rather as an integral component of institutional development.

Institutional Theory:-

Institutional theory provides another useful lens for understanding the implementation of gender-sensitive policies in higher education institutions. Institutional theory emphasizes the role of formal rules, organizational norms, and regulatory frameworks in shaping institutional behavior (Scott, 2008). In India, higher education institutions are influenced by policy guidelines issued by regulatory authorities such as the **University Grants Commission**.

These institutional regulations require universities and colleges to establish mechanisms such as Internal Complaints Committees to address gender-based harassment and discrimination. However, institutional theory suggests that the effectiveness of such policies depends not only on formal regulations but also on the willingness of institutions to internalize and enforce these norms.

Intersectionality:-

The concept of intersectionality also contributes to the theoretical foundation of this study. Intersectionality recognizes that gender inequality often interacts with other social identities such as class, caste, ethnicity, and disability. This framework highlights that women and gender minorities may experience discrimination in different ways depending on their social positions (Crenshaw, 1991).

In the context of higher education in India, intersectionality is particularly relevant because students and staff come from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Therefore, gender-sensitive policies must address multiple forms of inequality to create truly inclusive educational environments.

Gender-Sensitive Policies in Higher Education Institutions:-

Gender-sensitive policies are institutional frameworks that ensure equal access to opportunities, protection from discrimination, and safe working and learning environments. In Indian higher education institutions, these policies focus on several areas, including prevention of sexual harassment, gender equality initiatives, and awareness programs.

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The **University Grants Commission** has issued guidelines mandating the establishment of Internal Complaints Committees in universities and colleges to address complaints related to sexual harassment. These committees play a crucial role in investigating complaints and ensuring that appropriate action is taken.

In addition to complaint mechanisms, many institutions have established gender sensitization cells, women's development cells, and equal opportunity centers. These bodies aim to promote gender awareness through workshops, seminars, and awareness campaigns.

Gender-sensitive infrastructure is also an important aspect of institutional policies. This includes the provision of safe campus facilities such as secure hostels, adequate lighting, grievance redressal systems, and gender-neutral support services.

Challenges in Implementation:-

Although gender-sensitive policies have been introduced in many higher education institutions in India, several challenges hinder their effective implementation.

One of the major challenges is the lack of awareness among students and faculty regarding institutional policies and complaint mechanisms. Many individuals are unaware of the procedures for reporting harassment or discrimination.

Another challenge is the persistence of socio-cultural attitudes that discourage victims from reporting incidents of harassment. Fear of stigma, social pressure, and institutional hierarchy often prevent victims from seeking justice.

Administrative limitations also affect the implementation of policies. Some institutions lack trained personnel to manage complaint committees or conduct gender sensitization programs effectively.

Furthermore, policy enforcement often varies between institutions, particularly between well-funded universities and smaller colleges.

Outcome of the Study:-

The findings of the study indicate that gender-sensitive policies are essential for creating safe and inclusive learning environments in higher education institutions. The introduction of legislative measures and institutional guidelines has significantly improved the policy framework addressing gender equality.

However, the effectiveness of these policies depends largely on institutional commitment, awareness programs, and transparent grievance mechanisms. Institutions that

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actively conduct gender sensitization programs and ensure accountability in complaint redressal mechanisms tend to create more inclusive environments.

The study suggests that strengthening policy implementation, improving institutional accountability, and promoting awareness among students and faculty are necessary for achieving gender equality in higher education institutions.

Conclusion:-

Gender-sensitive policies play a vital role in ensuring equality, safety, and inclusiveness in higher education institutions. In India, several legal and institutional frameworks have been established to promote gender equality and address issues such as sexual harassment and discrimination.

Despite these developments, challenges such as lack of awareness, socio-cultural barriers, and administrative constraints continue to affect policy implementation. Therefore, strengthening institutional commitment, improving monitoring mechanisms, and encouraging gender sensitization initiatives are essential steps toward building inclusive educational environments.

Higher education institutions must actively integrate gender equality principles into their governance structures, academic policies, and campus culture to ensure that education remains accessible, safe, and equitable for all.

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Work–Life Balance, Maternity Policies, and Caregiving Responsibilities of Women: Challenges and Organizational Implications

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Abstract

Despite significant increases in female employment over the last few decades, the balance of work and family responsibilities continues to pose a challenge to women. Key issues such as maternity policies, care giving roles, working hours, and gender stereotypes affect women's careers and general well being. This study, aims to analyse the relationship between work life balance, maternity policies, and women's care giving responsibilities in the work environment. It investigates how organizational policies and provisions regarding working mothers' access to maternity benefits, protection, and flexible working schedules can allow them to sustain their performance while balancing with domestic duties. The results of the study show that appropriate maternity policies, an effective child care infrastructure, and employee friendly organizational culture contribute greatly towards enhanced employee satisfaction, retentions, and overall well being. Some recommendations for companies and policy makers to foster gender equality and sustained workforce participation are offered in this research paper.

Keywords: Work–life balance, maternity policies, caregiving responsibilities, women workforce, gender equality, organizational support.

Introduction

In the last few decades there has been increasing numbers of women in the global workforce. Even with increased participation women have continued to struggle in the balance between work and family particularly with regard to pregnancy and the early stages of motherhood. Work-life balance has emerged as a major concern of working women since the greater portion of care responsibilities are assumed by them which are family responsibilities, children's care, old people's care, and housekeeping.

Work-life balance is defined as the satisfactory and appropriate management of duties and responsibilities to be performed both at work and within the family environment. The achievement of work-life balance is however often hampered by societal norms, rigidity in workplace structures and inadequate maternity provisions. Work-related stress and disruptions due to maternity and care responsibility are common in the case of women which is known to have adverse effect on career progression and job satisfaction.

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Maternity provisions are social and institutional measures that offer support and benefits to working mothers. Maternity provisions consist of maternity leave, provision of child-care, facilities for working mothers to adopt flexible working conditions and special protection for pregnant workers at work. Adequate protection for maternity helps the working women to continue working and also be in good health during pregnancy and after childbirth.

The issue of care responsibilities has also a great bearing on the women's employment prospects. Even today in majority of the societies, women remain largely responsible for the care of children and family members. Inequitable division of the domestic work results in shorter working hours, employment interruption and lesser degree of labour force participation by the women. Research suggests that the mental and emotional workload borne by women concerning care of children and family is relatively higher than that of their male counterparts.

This study focuses on the work-life balance of women employees with reference to Maternity provisions and Care Responsibilities. It aims to examine how organizational and institutional factors, in addition to the available support, impact the balancing of women employees' work and family lives and examines them within the frameworks of existing researches and policy documents to draw some conclusion for future organizational practices and public policy.

Women's participation inside the body of workers has elevated globally because of better instructional possibilities, employment possibilities and extra social cognizance approximately gender equality. Notwithstanding development in ladies' empowerment, demanding situations continue to be, especially with recognize to work-life balance, that is vital for operating girls who juggle process duties with household duties, including toddler care and worrying for aged relatives. Ladies face greater pressure and paintings-circle of relatives struggle than guys, which adversely influences their careers.

Maternity guidelines play an vital position in shielding the interests of pregnant women and supporting the continuity of their employment. Those policies generally cover maternity go away, activity safety, and maternity care services, and are critical for the health of mothers and babies. In India, the Maternity gain (change) Act 2017 represented a widespread development with the aid of extending paid maternity leave to 26 weeks and promoting place of work crèche facilities and bendy working conditions. However, organizational assist in addition to effective implementation of those rules remains a venture.

Caregiving duties fall mostly on ladies, leading to profession boundaries, lower wages, and less opportunities for advancement. Organizational way of life and rules, inclusive of flexible paintings preparations and supportive control, extensively effect ladies' capacity to stability their paintings and circle of relatives roles, increasing overall productivity and employee retention.

Recent discussions among coverage makers, researchers, and employers have targeted on growing gender-inclusive offices. Improving paintings-life stability and motherhood policies

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is crucial to increase lady group of workers participation and contribute undoubtedly to social improvement. Goal of this research

Literature overview explores studies by using Indian authors (2020–2025) concerning work-existence balance, maternity coverage, caregiving activities and their impact on girls' careers. It is dependent across the goals of the current study which include the impact of work-life stability, the role of maternity rules, the stress of caregiving and organizational methods to supporting ladies.

Work-lifestyles balance and women's career development:

The compare emphasizes that paintings-life stability considerably affects girls' process pride and basic overall performance. studies suggest that many Indian girls face paintings-circle of relatives conflicts, particularly highlighted by way of Shah (2020) and Vijayalakshmi et al. (2023), revealing damaging consequences on fitness and pleasure due to simultaneous expert and domestic responsibilities. Extra findings from Hepsiba and Swetha (2025) and Huda and Nafeesa (2025) verify that work-lifestyles stability is definitely associated with task performance, whilst Devisri (2025) factors to systemic obstacles along with gender discrimination and shortage of flexible work preparations.

Position of Maternity coverage:

Maternity guidelines are essential to useful resource walking mothers.research indicates that multiplied maternity depart, as analysed by using Thakral and Nirwani (2024), improves fitness results and staff retention, despite the fact that implementation remains a mission. Verma (2024) and Chakraborty (2025) country that maternity advantages often help women stay inside the labour force however spotlight boundaries to profession continuity due to inadequate organizational help after childbirth.

Impact of Caregiving activities:

Caregiving roles are essential for girls' profession advancement. Studies by using manner of Dharmaraj and Basavaraj (2025) and Maheshwari et al. (2025) show that caregiving duties cause good sized pressure and reduce profession improvement opportunities for going for walks women, often ensuing in pay disparities and fewer promotions. The idea of "highbrow load" refers back to the psychological stress related to household control, which further complicates girls' career paths.

Organizational approach:

Organizations can enhance art work-lifestyles stability via several helping tasks in conjunction with bendy work arrangements and nicely-being applications. moreover, research imply that a supportive organizational tradition and tasks which includes baby care services and mentoring applications make a contribution substantially to preserving skilled lady personnel and helping their professional development.

The accumulated literature outlines the essential interrelationships between work-existence stability, motherhood rules, caregiving roles and organizational assist in shaping

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women's profession reviews in India, highlighting the need for continued studies and coverage improvement in these areas.

This literature assessment explores the relationship among work-life balance, motherhood rules, caregiving and girls' careers in India. This highlights that paintings-lifestyles stability has a massive impact on job pleasure and psychological properly-being among women, given that many girls experience warfare due to the twin responsibilities of labour and home obligations. The positive results of labour-existence stability on profession fulfilment had been diagnosed, although obstacles inclusive of gender stereotypes and rigid paintings preparations nevertheless persist. Maternity rules, specially the Maternity benefit (modification) Act 2017, help women's hard work pressure participation and maternal fitness. However, difficulties often arise after maternity leave due to insufficient support from the workplace. In addition, caregiving responsibilities often fall on women, which lead to role conflict that can hinder career advancement.

The overview advocates supportive strategies at the part of companies to improve ladies' profession improvement possibilities, which include flexible paintings schedules and childcare centres.

Primarily based at the findings of this take a look at, numerous guidelines can be proposed to improve work-existence stability and assist inside the career development of girl employees.. First, there's a want to reinforce maternity regulations to make sure that working moms get good enough maternity depart, task protection, and appropriate fitness care guide at some stage in pregnancy and after transport. Effective implementation of such regulations can help ladies keep their employment whilst pleasurable their maternal responsibilities. 2nd, groups need to introduce flexible running arrangements which include flexible working hours, faraway paintings opportunities and part-time employment alternatives. These preparations can permit operating mother and father, mainly ladies, to manipulate each professional and family responsibility more efficaciously. 0.33, companies ought to increase childcare help programs by way of presenting place of job crèche facilities or economic help for childcare offerings. Such initiatives ought to considerably reduce the burden on running mothers and encourage them to remain within the team of workers. Moreover, promoting gender equality both at domestic and in the place of work is critical to gain sustainable work-existence balance. Encouraging shared caregiving duties among companions may additionally help reduce the disproportionate household workload borne via girls. Sooner or later, corporations have to cognizance on developing supportive place of job cultures via enforcing mentorship applications, providing leadership help, and adopting gender-inclusive guidelines. Those initiatives can enhance women's profession development, improve process delight, and sell extra equitable and inclusive work environments.

Conclusion

The issue of work-life balance, maternity benefits and the role of caregivers are interrelated factors impacting women's work lives. Though the women workforce participation has expanded dramatically, several factors such as structural barriers and social perceptions still impact women to work and family integration. The women's careers can be

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retained during childbearing by implementing strong maternity benefits, the availability of affordable childcare facilities and conducive work environment, organizations with comprehensive family-friendly policies also gain an advantage in terms of work satisfaction, increased productivity and retention of the work force. It is also advisable to future studies and researches, on longitudinal impact of family friendly work environments on women's career development and progression towards leadership positions, with the ultimate goal of bringing about a gender equitable workplace, and a stable work force.

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Socio-Economic and Institutional Factors Influencing Women's Higher Education in India : An Empirical Approach

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Abstract

Women's higher education in India has undergone rapid quantitative expansion over the past decade, yet deep-seated socio-economic inequalities and institutional deficiencies continue to shape access, participation, and outcomes. This paper presents an empirical analysis of secondary national data — primarily from the All-India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2021–22 and related educational statistics — to examine how socio-economic and institutional factors influence women's participation in tertiary education. By situating trends within broader socio-economic contexts and policy frameworks, the paper identifies critical avenues for enhancing gender equity in Indian higher education.

Women's education has a significant social impact. Lower fertility rates, infant mortality rates, and maternal mortality rates are only a few of the most evident socio-economic benefits. Bridging the educational gender gap promotes gender equality and it is vital both inside and outside the classroom in ensuring equal rights and opportunities for people of all genders. Increases in the number of women educated in a region are linked to high levels of development such as the development of the economy. Women's education increases their salaries which helps the economy flourish. Women's education leads to women's empowerment.

Keywords: Women education, Fertility, Mortality. Equality, gender equity, higher education, socio-economic barriers, AISHE.

Introduction

Education is widely acknowledged as a foundational mechanism for individual empowerment and national development. In India, the expansion of higher education has been a central policy objective, with a focus on increasing access and improving equity for disadvantaged groups. Women, in particular, have been a priority within this policy paradigm due to historical gender disparities in educational attainment and labour force outcomes. Women's education refers to any type of education that aims to improve the knowledge and abilities of women and girls. It covers general education in schools and colleges, vocational and technical education, professional education, and health education, among other things, and incorporates all facilities and opportunities for female learners. The socioeconomic

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impact of women's education has spawned a burgeoning field of investigation in international development. Increases in the number of women educated in a region are linked to high levels of development. Some of the consequences are linked to economic growth. Women's education raises their earnings and contributes to GDP growth. Other side effects are linked to societal progress.

Women's education has a host of societal benefits, many of which are tied to women's empowerment. The Indian government has stated a strong commitment to universal education; however, India continues to have one of Asia's lowest female literacy rates. In 2020, the female literacy rate is 70.3 percent, implying that 29.7% of women in India remain illiterate today. This low literacy rate has a severe influence not only on women's lives but also on their families lives and the economic development of their country. Illiterate women, according to various studies, have a high risk of fertility and mortality, poor nutritional status, little economic potential, and little household autonomy. The health and well-being of a woman's children are also negatively affected by her lack of education. In India, for example, infant mortality was found to be inversely associated with the mother's educational level in the present study

Over the past decade, India has witnessed remarkable increases in the number of women accessing higher education institutions (HEIs). According to the All-India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) — an annual data collection initiative of the Ministry of Education — female enrolment in higher education increased from approximately 1.57 crore in 2014–15 to 2.07 crore in 2021–22, reflecting roughly a 32 % increase over this period. Female students now comprise about 48 % of total higher education enrolment, marking significant progress toward gender parity in participation. Despite these promising trends, socio-economic and institutional challenges continue to shape women's access and outcomes in higher education. Issues such as uneven representation across disciplines, lower participation in technical fields, socioeconomic barriers, and institutional inadequacies underscore the complexity of gender equity in the Indian context.

This paper synthesises empirical evidence from national datasets to explore these dynamics and analyse how structural factors influence women's participation in higher education.

Literature Review

Understanding women's access and participation in higher education requires engagement with literature across several thematic lenses: quantitative trends in enrolment, socio-economic determinants, institutional barriers, and policy responses. The impact of women's education on growth can be measured in a variety of ways, according to academics. Typically, studies focus on the gender disparity in educational attainment between boys and girls, rather than just the level of education attained by women. This makes it easier to discern between the special effects of women's education and the general benefits of education. It's worth noting that some studies, particularly older ones, focus solely on women's overall educational attainment. Examining the percentage of men and women who graduate from

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each stage of school is one approach to gauge education levels. Examining the average number of years of schooling received by members of each gender is a similar, more precise method. Because literacy is one of the early and major goals of the school, a third approach looks at literacy rates by gender. This shows not only how much education was given, but also how effective it was. The most popular technique to assess economic progress is to examine changes in GDP growth. Correlations are examined across multiple countries and periods to determine that a link exists. The result is usually a pretty constant average effect, though fluctuation over time can be measured as well. It is also possible to examine the advantages of education for an individual. This is accomplished by first calculating the cost of schooling and the amount of revenue gained during the years spent in school. The net return is the difference between the entire gain in income owing to education and the sum of these two values.

Effects on economic development

Women's education benefits both people and countries alike. Throughout their lives, people who invest in education make a net profit. The profitability of education, according to estimates of the private rate of return, is indisputable, universal, and global, according to Harry Patrinos, the lead education economist at the World Bank. If female education increases human capital, productivity, and economic growth at the same rate as male education, women's educational disadvantage is economically wasteful. The economic benefits of women's education, measured as the economic rate of return to education, are equivalent to those of men's education, according to research conducted around the world. As a result, the gender gap in education is undesirable in terms of its effects on economic development. When a country is just moderately impoverished, the effect of the educational gender gap is more obvious. As a country rises out of extreme poverty, the incentive to invest in women increases. Women's education promotes the equitability of income distribution in a society, in addition to overall economic growth. Increased women's education is critical to attaining this goal since it focuses on underprivileged women, who are a particularly vulnerable demographic. There is also evidence that a developing country's lower gender discrepancy in educational attainment correlates with a society's lower total economic disparity.

Effects on social development

Education for women has a tremendous social impact. Reduced fertility rates, lower infant mortality rates, and lower maternal death rates are only a few of the most noticeable socio-economic benefits. Closing the gender gap in education also promotes gender equality, which is vital both in and of it because it assures that people of all genders have equal rights and opportunities. Women benefit cognitively from schooling. Women's quality of life is enhanced by improved cognitive abilities, which also have additional advantages. Educated women, for example, are better able to make health-related decisions for themselves and their children. Increased political participation among women is also linked to cognitive abilities. Educated women are more likely to participate in civic engagement and attend political meetings, and there are multiple examples of educated women in developing countries securing benefits for themselves through political activities. There is further evidence that countries with well-educated women have a higher chance of democratic administration.

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There are other advantages associated with a woman's role at home. Domestic abuse is less common among educated women, regardless of other social status markers such as employment position. Women with a higher level of education are also more involved in family decision-making and report making more decisions over time. These advantages extend to financial decisions in particular. Aside from the intrinsic advantage of boosting a woman's agency, having women take a more active role in the family also benefits family members socially. Children, particularly girls, are more likely to attend school when their mother is educated. Adult literacy initiatives can indirectly aid to teach mothers the value of education and urge them to send their children to school in households where the mother is uneducated. Children benefit from having an educated mother over an educated father for a variety of reasons, including higher survival rates and better nutrition.

Limitation of impact

Women's education has a lesser impact on development in particular situations. In locations where there is a lot of poverty, the economic benefits of investing in women are substantially smaller. In some circumstances, women's education is of poorer quality than men's, reducing its efficacy. This tendency is sometimes accompanied by what is known as a "hidden curriculum" in schools, which reinforces particular ideals. Because of the emphasis on males' superiority, educated women may forego economic prospects in favour of lower-paying traditionally female employment, resulting in bad economic and social outcomes. Curricula can also be differentiated based on gender in some circumstances. It promotes traditional gender roles by employing educational environments and materials to reinforce gendered views about women's primary responsibilities to their families, which include their job and education. Female students study needlework, household science, and child welfare in primary school, whilst male students study wood and metal crafts. Male students have access to technical and vocational training in secondary school that female students do not. There are other instances where women's education aids macro-development but is ineffective for a family. In India, the majority of working women are employed in traditionally female-dominated fields such as teaching, medicine, nursing, and social work. As a result, the country faces a significant problem: a high proportion of unemployment among educated women. Furthermore, while investing in women's education has a better total return when looking at all levels of education, investing in men has a higher rate of return through primary school.

Relationship between Women education and Socio-economic factors in India

Communities all around India might serve as useful case studies for demonstrating the complicated interaction between education and socioeconomic systems. Traditional conservative thinking, early marriage, child labour, and structural and institutional reasons are just a few of the societal factors that have kept women from getting an education in India. Men are 80.9 percent literate, while women are 64.6 percent literate, indicating a gender discrepancy in literacy across the country. While India as a whole appears to support the thesis that a lack of female education is a barrier to economic development, a closer examination of the relationship between education and socioeconomics between states reveals a more

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complicated picture. The complexity of education, which is both a cause and an effect of social and economic issues, can be illustrated by comparing states.

Kerala, in the southern state of India, has the highest female literacy rate, at 91.98 percent. In Kerala, 26.9% of female students are expected to seek higher education, whereas 19.3% of male students are. The state's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is ranked 11th out of all Indian states. The unusually high female literacy rate, especially when compared to the national rate of 65.46 percent, can be linked to a historical, societal emphasis placed on women in comparison to other Indian states. Kerala has one of the lowest rates of early marriage in India since women have the power to inherit the land and choose their partners. The lowest fertility rate in Kerala, which achieved —below replacement level fertility two decades ahead of the all-India target year of 2011, is the strongest link between educational impacts on social systems. Educated women are thought to have more opportunities that need more time than a woman can handle with more children, and educated women have more knowledge, access, and choice in family planning devices such as contraceptives. As women feel more confident and capable in their kid's care and are more informed of health practices, the state has the lowest infant and child mortality rates in India—a universal measure of educational influence. Rajasthan, with a female literacy rate of 52.66 percent, is the state with the lowest female literacy. Male students in Rajasthan pursue higher education at a rate of 20.8 percent, while female students enrolled at a rate of 14.9 percent.

Socio-Economic Barriers

Socio-economic conditions play a pivotal role in shaping higher education access for women. Lower household income, limited financial resources for tuition and accommodation, and entrenched gender norms often restrict women's educational trajectories, especially in rural and marginalised communities.

While AISHE data often tracks enrolment and institutional metrics, broader socio-economic research points to persistent inequalities that influence access to tertiary education. For instance, gender norms, early marriage, domestic responsibilities, and labour division contribute to differential participation rates across socio-economic groups.

Policy frameworks like the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasise inclusive access, equity, and quality improvement in higher education. Targeted scholarship programmes, girls' hostel facilities, and affirmative action are among the mechanisms designed to enhance women's participation. However, the effectiveness of these measures varies across regions and institutional types.

Methodological Framework

Given the focus on secondary analysis, this study primarily utilises data from:

All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2021–22: Provides detailed information on enrolment, faculty, institutions, gender parity indices, and other educational indicators.

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Supplementary data points from government press releases and media analyses of AISHE findings to contextualise trends.

The analytical approach involves descriptive statistical summarisation of key variables, complemented by thematic interpretation grounded in socio-economic theory and institutional analysis. According to AISHE 2021–22 data, total female enrolment in higher education stood at 2.07 crore, accounting for 48 % of overall student enrolment across Indian Housemate enrolment has increased significantly over the past decade:

In 2014–15, female enrolment was approximately 1.57 crore. By 2021–22, it rose to 2.07 crore, a growth of roughly 32 %. These figures reflect a sustained upward trend, indicating improved access and participation for women.

Socio-Economic Determinants

Socio-economic status influences access to higher education. Lower household income often correlates with delayed or limited tertiary participation, particularly for women who may face competing domestic or economic pressures. Although AISHE data does not directly capture household income metrics, the broader pattern of enrolment suggests that women from economically disadvantaged backgrounds may encounter barriers related to affordability and opportunity cost.

Institutional infrastructure — including campus safety mechanisms, girls' hostels, transport connectivity, and gender-responsive facilities — influence women's ability to participate in higher education, especially at the undergraduate and residential levels. Policy initiatives aimed at expanding hostel facilities and safety measures are ongoing but vary widely across states and institutional types.

Conclusion

Women's higher education in India has made substantial quantitative gains over the past decade, with increased enrolment and growing gender parity across academic levels. Yet, socio-economic and institutional factors continue to shape unequal participation and outcomes. Improving gender equity in Indian higher education requires multi-pronged strategies that address economic inequalities, disciplinary segregation, faculty representation, and institutional culture. Sustained policy focus, combined with data-driven institutional reforms, can help unlock the full potential of women as both learners and contributors to India's educational and economic growth.

The study concludes that women's education has a huge social influence. Only a few of the most visible socioeconomic benefits include lower fertility rates, infant mortality rates, and maternal mortality rates. Closing the gender gap in education promotes gender equality, which is important both within and outside education since it ensures that people of all genders have equal rights and opportunities.

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Women's Leadership in Emerging Avenues of Civil Engineering: Tasks and Prospects

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Abstract

Civil engineering has historically been viewed as a male-dominated profession. Although the number of women entering engineering education has steadily increased over the past few decades, their representation in leadership positions within civil engineering remains relatively low. Emerging areas of civil engineering such as sustainable infrastructure, smart cities, environmental engineering, and digital construction technologies offer new opportunities for leadership and innovation. However, women continue to face several barriers including gender bias, lack of mentorship, limited access to leadership roles, and challenges associated with work–life balance. This research paper explores the evolving role of women leaders in emerging areas of civil engineering, highlighting both the obstacles they encounter and the opportunities available for their advancement. Through a review of recent research and industry trends, the paper discusses structural and cultural barriers affecting women engineers while also emphasizing strategies that can promote inclusive leadership. The study concludes that fostering gender diversity in civil engineering leadership can lead to more innovative solutions, improved project management, and sustainable infrastructure development.

Keywords: Civil engineering, sustainable infrastructure, smart cities, environmental engineering, digital construction technologies

Introduction

Civil engineering plays a crucial role in shaping modern society by designing and constructing essential infrastructure such as roads, bridges, water systems, and urban developments. As the world faces rapid urbanization, climate change, and technological advancements, the discipline is expanding into new domains such as sustainable infrastructure, smart cities, green construction, and digital engineering. These emerging avenues require innovative leadership and diverse perspectives to address complex societal challenges.

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Despite progress in education and workforce participation, civil engineering continues to be dominated by men, particularly in senior management and leadership positions. Women engineers often face barriers that limit their professional growth and opportunities to lead major projects or organizations. Globally, the participation of women in engineering and construction sectors remains limited, and their representation decreases further at higher levels of leadership. For example, studies indicate that women remain significantly underrepresented in structural engineering and leadership positions within engineering organizations.

The underrepresentation of women in leadership positions is not only a gender equity issue but also an industry challenge. Diverse leadership teams often produce better solutions, especially in fields that directly influence community development and infrastructure planning. This research paper examines the current status of women's leadership in civil engineering, identifies major challenges they face, and explores emerging opportunities that can promote gender-inclusive leadership in the industry.

Evolution of Women in Civil Engineering

Historically, engineering professions were largely inaccessible to women due to societal norms and educational limitations. However, during the twentieth century, increased access to education and policy reforms gradually opened doors for women to pursue engineering careers.

In recent decades, the number of women studying civil engineering has grown significantly. Many universities and professional organizations now actively encourage female participation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. However, while more women are entering the profession, retention and career progression remain major concerns. Research indicates that a significant proportion of female engineers either leave the profession or shift to non-technical roles due to workplace barriers and limited opportunities for advancement.

Furthermore, women remain underrepresented in leadership positions such as project managers, chief engineers, construction directors, and infrastructure planners. This disparity highlights the need for structural changes within engineering organizations to support women's professional growth.

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Emerging Avenues of Civil Engineering

Civil engineering is undergoing a major transformation due to technological innovation, environmental concerns, and urban expansion. Several emerging areas are creating new opportunities for leadership and innovation.

Sustainable Infrastructure and Green Construction

Sustainable infrastructure focuses on designing structures and systems that minimize environmental impact while maximizing efficiency and resilience. This includes green buildings, renewable energy integration, and climate-resilient infrastructure. Women engineers are increasingly contributing to sustainability initiatives, environmental design, and policy development related to infrastructure planning.

Leadership in sustainable infrastructure requires interdisciplinary collaboration, stakeholder engagement, and long-term planning—areas where diverse leadership perspectives can be particularly valuable.

Smart Cities and Digital Engineering

Advancements in digital technologies have introduced concepts such as smart cities, digital twins, and data-driven infrastructure management. These technologies integrate sensors, artificial intelligence, and advanced analytics into urban infrastructure systems. Civil engineers working in smart city development must collaborate with professionals from fields such as information technology, urban planning, and environmental science. Women leaders in this area can play a significant role in shaping inclusive and sustainable urban environments.

Environmental and Water Resources Engineering

Environmental engineering and water management are increasingly important due to climate change, water scarcity, and environmental degradation. Women engineers have been actively involved in projects related to wastewater treatment, water conservation, flood management, and ecological restoration. Leadership in this area involves balancing engineering solutions with environmental and social considerations, making diversity in decision-making particularly valuable.

Construction Technology and Project Management

The construction industry is adopting new technologies such as Building Information Modelling (BIM), automation, robotics, and modular construction techniques. These

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technological advancements are transforming traditional construction processes and creating opportunities for engineers with leadership and digital management skills. Women leaders in construction management can help promote safer and more inclusive workplaces while introducing innovative project management practices.

Challenges Faced by Women in Civil Engineering Leadership

Although opportunities are expanding in emerging fields, women still face several challenges in achieving leadership positions within civil engineering.

Gender Bias and Stereotypes

Civil engineering has long been perceived as a physically demanding profession that is more suitable for men. Such stereotypes continue to influence workplace attitudes and hiring decisions. Women engineers often report having to repeatedly prove their technical competence and leadership abilities in male-dominated environments.

Research indicates that cultural perceptions and gender stereotypes can significantly limit women's professional recognition and advancement in engineering careers.These biases may appear in subtle forms such as exclusion from key decision-making discussions, reduced project responsibilities, or limited access to leadership opportunities.

Male-Dominated Work Environments

Construction sites and engineering firms have traditionally been male-dominated spaces. This can create environments where women feel isolated or excluded from professional networks. Studies have also noted the persistence of “boys’ club” cultures in engineering workplaces, which can hinder women's career progression.

Informal networking opportunities—such as social gatherings, industry events, or client meetings—often play a crucial role in career advancement. However, women may have limited access to these networks.

Lack of Mentorship and Role Models

Mentorship is essential for career development, particularly in technical fields where experience and professional guidance are critical. However, the scarcity of women in senior engineering roles means that younger female engineers often struggle to find mentors who can relate to their experiences and challenges. The absence of visible female leaders can also discourage aspiring engineers from pursuing long-term careers in civil engineering.

Work–Life Balance Challenges

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Civil engineering projects often involve demanding schedules, site visits, and travel requirements. These factors can make it difficult for professionals to balance work responsibilities with personal and family commitments. Women are often expected to manage both professional and domestic responsibilities, which can limit their availability for leadership roles that require extended working hours or relocation. Workplace policies that lack flexibility can further intensify these challenges.

Limited Access to Leadership Opportunities

Another major challenge is the unequal distribution of leadership assignments. Women engineers may be assigned smaller projects or supportive roles rather than being given opportunities to lead major infrastructure developments. Some studies have found that women engineers often receive fewer high-visibility assignments compared to their male counterparts, which directly affects their career progression. Without opportunities to demonstrate leadership skills, it becomes difficult for women to advance into senior management positions.

Opportunities for Women in Emerging Civil Engineering Fields

Despite these challenges, several developments are creating new opportunities for women to assume leadership roles in civil engineering.

Growing Demand for Diverse Leadership

Organizations are increasingly recognizing the importance of diversity in leadership teams. Diverse perspectives can improve decision-making, innovation, and problem-solving.

In infrastructure development, diverse leadership helps ensure that projects address the needs of different communities. Many engineering firms and professional organizations are now implementing diversity and inclusion initiatives to support women's advancement.

Educational Opportunities and STEM Promotion

Universities and educational institutions are actively encouraging women to pursue engineering education. Scholarships, mentorship programs, and outreach initiatives aimed at young women are helping increase female participation in civil engineering programs. Higher education and professional training can significantly improve women’s chances of obtaining leadership roles in emerging engineering fields.

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Professional Networks and Mentorship Programs

Professional networks play a critical role in career advancement. Organizations such as engineering societies and women-in-engineering groups provide platforms for networking, mentorship, and professional development. These initiatives help women build leadership skills, gain industry insights, and connect with experienced professionals.

Technological Advancements and Remote Collaboration

Technological advancements are transforming traditional engineering practices. Digital tools such as Building Information Modelling (BIM), remote monitoring systems, and collaborative project management platforms allow engineers to work more flexibly. These innovations can reduce the need for constant physical presence at construction sites, making leadership roles more accessible to a diverse workforce.

Policy Support and Gender Equality Initiatives

Governments and international organizations are increasingly promoting gender equality in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Medicine) fields. Policies aimed at equal pay, workplace safety, parental leave, and anti-discrimination practices can help create supportive environments for women engineers. Organizations that adopt gender-inclusive policies are more likely to retain talented female engineers and develop future leaders.

Strategies for Promoting Women's Leadership in Civil Engineering

To increase women's representation in leadership roles, several strategies can be implemented, as under:

1. Organizations should promote mentorship programs that connect experienced engineers with early-career professionals. These programs can help women navigate career challenges and develop leadership skills.
2. Engineering firms should establish transparent promotion policies that ensure equal opportunities for all employees.
3. Educational institutions should encourage young women to pursue civil engineering careers through outreach programs and scholarships.
4. Organizations must address workplace culture by promoting diversity, inclusivity, and respect in professional environments.

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5. Professional development programs focusing on leadership, communication, and management skills can help prepare women engineers for executive roles.

Conclusion

Women's leadership in civil engineering is becoming increasingly important as the field evolves to address global challenges such as climate change, urbanization, and technological transformation. Although women continue to face significant barriers—including gender bias, limited mentorship opportunities, and male-dominated workplace cultures—progress is being made through educational initiatives, policy reforms, and diversity programs. Emerging areas such as sustainable infrastructure, smart cities, environmental engineering, and digital construction provide new opportunities for women to assume leadership roles.

Promoting gender diversity in civil engineering leadership is not only a matter of social equity but also essential for fostering innovation and developing resilient infrastructure systems. By supporting women engineers through mentorship, education, inclusive policies, and leadership training, the civil engineering industry can build a more diverse and dynamic workforce capable of addressing the complex challenges of the future.

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Gender, Media Representation, and The Construction of Black Female Identity in *The Bluest Eye* By Toni Morrison

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Abstract:

The present research paper examines the relationship between media representation, gender ideology, and the construction of Black female identity in *The Bluest Eye* (1970) by Toni Morrison. The novel presents a critical exploration of how dominant cultural images shape individual perceptions of beauty, race, and self-worth. In the social context represented in the novel, popular media repeatedly promotes ideals of beauty associated with whiteness, particularly blue eyes, light skin, and blonde hair. These images circulate through films, advertisements, toys, and other cultural symbols, gradually influencing the consciousness of individuals and communities. The present study analyzes how such representations affect the psychological formation of Black female characters in the narrative. The character of Pecola Breedlove demonstrates the internalization of these dominant beauty standards. Her desire for blue eyes reflects a deeper longing for acceptance and social recognition within a culture that devalues Black appearance. In contrast, Claudia MacTeer offers a partial resistance to these ideals by questioning the cultural authority of white beauty symbols. Through this contrast, Morrison reveals how media images function as ideological forces that influence gendered and racialized subjectivity.

The present research paper argues that the novel reveals how dominant media imagery functions as an ideological force that constructs racialized beauty standards and shapes Black female subjectivity. By portraying the psychological consequences of internalised beauty ideology, Morrison critiques the social structures that privilege whiteness and marginalise Black femininity. The study therefore examines the internalisation of these ideals in Pecola

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Breedlove and the questioning perspective of Claudia MacTeer, as well as the influence of culturally dominant imagery on the formation of gendered and racial identity.

Keywords: Media Representation; Black Female Identity; Beauty Ideology; Gender and Race; Cultural Ideology; Subjectivity

Introduction:

In modern societies, media and popular culture play a significant role in shaping ideas about beauty, gender, and identity. Images circulated through films, advertisements, magazines, toys, and other cultural products influence how individuals understand themselves and others. These images do not simply entertain; they also communicate cultural values and social expectations. Through repeated representation, media constructs ideals about what is considered beautiful, desirable, and socially acceptable. As a result, individuals often measure their own identity and self-worth according to these dominant cultural standards. The influence of media representation therefore becomes particularly significant in shaping gendered and racial identities. Within many Western cultural contexts, beauty has historically been associated with whiteness. Physical features such as light skin, blue eyes, and blonde hair have often been represented as symbols of attractiveness, innocence, and social value. These ideals are continuously reinforced through popular culture and media imagery. Such representations create a hierarchy of beauty in which white physical features are presented as the norm or standard. Consequently, individuals whose appearance does not conform to these ideals may experience feelings of exclusion or inadequacy. For Black women in particular, the dominance of white beauty standards often leads to the marginalization of their bodies, identities, and cultural expressions.

Toni Morrison explores this problem with great depth in her novel *The Bluest Eye*. The novel presents a powerful critique of racialized beauty standards and the psychological consequences they produce. Set within an African American community in the United States during the early twentieth century, the narrative reveals how social attitudes about beauty and race influence the lives of young Black girls. The character of Pecola Breedlove represents the most tragic example of the internalization of dominant beauty ideology. Pecola comes to believe that possessing blue eyes would make her beautiful and lovable. Her desire reflects a deeper longing for acceptance within a society that repeatedly associates beauty and value with whiteness. In contrast, Claudia MacTeer initially questions the cultural authority of white beauty symbols and reveals the constructed nature of these ideals. Through these contrasting responses, Morrison illustrates how individuals may either internalize or resist dominant cultural messages.

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Media, Ideology, and Representation:

It is essential to analyze media representation and identity formation in the selected novel through relevant theoretical perspectives. Concepts related to media representation, ideology, and Black feminist thought provide a useful framework for examining how cultural images influence gendered and racial identities. The ideas developed by scholars such as Stuart Hall, Louis Althusser, bell hooks, and Patricia Hill Collins help explain how social meanings are produced and how individuals internalize cultural values about beauty, race, and gender.

One important perspective comes from the theory of cultural representation developed by Stuart Hall. He argues that "representation is the production of meaning through language" (28). According to this view, representation is a process through which images, symbols, and narratives construct particular interpretations and meanings of the world. Through repeated circulation in films, advertisements, television, and other cultural forms, certain ideas become normalized and widely accepted. These representations influence how individuals interpret categories such as race, gender, and beauty. Representations of media images therefore play a significant role in defining what is considered attractive, desirable, or socially valuable. In this way, media and cultural symbols become a powerful force that shapes both social perception and individual identity.

Another important concept for understanding identity formation is the theory of ideology developed by Louis Althusser. Althusser explains that ideology functions through social institutions that shape how individuals understand themselves and their social roles. These institutions, which include education, religion, family structures, and cultural media, communicate dominant social values and expectations. According to him, individuals are often unconsciously shaped by these ideological systems. As Althusser notes, "Ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence (162)." It suggests that people understand their position in society through symbolic meanings and cultural narratives that often conceal the material structures of power. Through everyday cultural practices, individuals come to accept dominant beliefs as natural and unquestionable. Media representation can therefore be understood as an ideological mechanism that influences how people perceive their own identity and social position.

The insights of Black feminist theory further deepen this analysis. Scholars such as bell hooks and Patricia Hill Collins emphasize that Black women experience oppression through the intersection of both race and gender. Black feminist thinkers argue that cultural

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representations often reinforce hierarchical ideas about beauty and femininity that privilege whiteness. bell hooks argues that Black women have historically been positioned as the "Other" within dominant social and cultural structures, reflecting the intersection of racial and gender oppression. In many media contexts, white female beauty is presented as the universal standard, while Black women are either marginalized or portrayed through limiting stereotypes. These representations influence how Black women are perceived in society and how they may perceive themselves. Black feminist theory therefore highlights the importance of examining how media images reproduce racialized and gendered power relations.

Media Representation and Beauty Ideology in the Novel:

In The Bluest Eye, Toni Morrison critically examines how media representation and cultural symbols contribute to the formation of racialized beauty standards. The novel illustrates that ideas about beauty are not natural or universal; rather, they are socially constructed and reinforced through cultural institutions such as media, popular entertainment, and consumer products. Through repeated images and narratives, society promotes a particular model of beauty that privileges whiteness while marginalizing Black physical features. The experiences of young Black girls, Claudia, Frieda, and Pecola, in the novel demonstrate how these representations gradually influence their perception of beauty, identity, and social worth.

One of the central concerns of the novel is the dominance of white beauty ideals within American culture. Characteristics such as blue eyes, blonde hair, and light skin are repeatedly presented as the defining features of beauty. These physical traits become powerful cultural symbols that represent innocence, purity, and social value.

Within the community portrayed in the novel, these standards shape the way individuals evaluate themselves and others. Young girls grow up observing that the most admired images of beauty in films, advertisements, and popular culture are white. For Black girls, this standard creates a painful distance between their own physical appearance and the ideal that society celebrates. Morrison further explores the influence of beauty ideology through various cultural symbols that appear in the narrative. These symbols function as everyday objects that communicate dominant cultural values, particularly to children who are still developing their sense of identity.

One important example in the novel is the presence of dolls. In the novel, Black girls are often given white dolls as toys. These dolls have physical features associated with the dominant beauty ideal, such as light skin, blue eyes, and blonde hair. Society presents these

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dolls as objects that every girl should admire and treasure. In the narrative, adults and family members give these dolls to Black girls, expecting them to love and care for them. The dolls therefore become symbols of what society considers beautiful and desirable. Although the dolls appear to be simple toys, they carry deeper cultural meanings. They communicate subtle messages about beauty and worth. By encouraging Black girls to admire these dolls, society indirectly suggests that whiteness represents the standard of beauty. In this way, the dolls function as symbols of cultural expectations and aesthetic norms within the social world depicted in the novel.

Another important cultural influence appears through popular films and entertainment. The child star Shirley Temple represents one of the most celebrated images of innocence and beauty in American popular culture during the time in which the novel is set. Her appearance, which reflects the dominant white beauty ideal, is admired and widely celebrated. Characters in the novel observe how society praises this image and reproduces it through media and cultural narratives.

Through these cultural symbols, the novel illustrates the formation of a hierarchy of beauty within society. At the top of this hierarchy are the physical features associated with whiteness, which are represented as desirable and socially valuable. In contrast, Black physical features are often ignored, devalued, or presented as inferior. Media images, toys, films, and everyday cultural practices collectively promote the idea that certain physical features are superior. Over time, these repeated representations encourage individuals to internalize these beliefs and measure their own worth according to them.

Internalization and Psychological Fragmentation:

The process of internalizing dominant cultural values plays a crucial role in shaping identity in the novel. The narrative portrays how racialized beauty standards promoted through media and social attitudes influence the psychological development of individuals. Among the characters in the narrative, Pecola Breedlove represents the most powerful example of how these cultural ideals become deeply internalized.

One of the central symbols in the novel is Pecola's desire for blue eyes. Pecola believes that possessing blue eyes would transform her life and make her beautiful in the eyes of others. Within the cultural environment portrayed in the novel, blue eyes represent the highest standard of beauty and social value. Because this ideal is constantly reinforced through popular culture and everyday social attitudes, Pecola gradually accepts it as the natural definition of attractiveness. The narrative illustrates her desire as: "It had occurred to Pecola

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some time ago that if her eyes… were different, that is to say, beautiful, she herself would be different" (Morrison 46). Her wish for blue eyes therefore reflects more than a simple desire for physical change. It represents a deeper longing for love, recognition, and acceptance. Pecola believes that if she had blue eyes, people would treat her differently. She imagines that her parents would become kinder, her classmates would admire her, and the community would acknowledge her existence with respect. In her imagination, blue eyes symbolize the possibility of escaping rejection and invisibility.

Morrison presents this desire as the result of a cultural system that teaches individuals to measure beauty according to racialized standards. Pecola's internalization of these ideals is intensified by the social rejection she experiences in different aspects of her life. Within her family environment, Pecola grows up in a household marked by conflict, poverty, and emotional neglect. Instead of receiving care and affirmation, she often witnesses hostility and violence between her parents. This unstable environment prevents the development of a secure sense of identity and belonging. Without emotional support from her family, Pecola becomes increasingly vulnerable to the judgments of the outside world.

At school, Pecola also encounters ridicule and exclusion. Other children mock her appearance and treat her as inferior. As a result, Pecola begins to interpret these reactions as confirmation that she is inherently unworthy. Her sense of difference gradually transforms into a belief that her own identity is fundamentally flawed. The continuous exposure to rejection and the internalization of dominant beauty ideology led to severe psychological consequences for Pecola. As she increasingly accepts the belief that her appearance is undesirable, her self-esteem begins to deteriorate. She becomes withdrawn, silent, and emotionally isolated from others.

One of the most significant outcomes of this process is the development of self-hatred. Instead of recognizing that the beauty standards imposed by society are socially constructed, Pecola directs her frustration toward herself. She begins to believe that her suffering is the result of her own physical appearance. This internalized racism creates a deep sense of shame and inadequacy. Unable to reconcile her identity with the dominant beauty ideals surrounding her, she retreats into a fragmented psychological state in which she imagines that her wish for blue eyes has finally been fulfilled. This imagined transformation reflects both her desperate longing for acceptance and the tragic consequences of internalized cultural ideology. The imaginary friend repeatedly confirms her belief and strengthens her illusion. A brief passage from this exchange illustrates the moment:

They are bluer, aren't they?

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Oh, yes. Much bluer.

Bluer than Joanna's?

Much bluer than Joanna's.

And bluer than Michelena's?

Much bluer than Michelena's. (Morrison 195)

Later in the same conversation, Pecola anxiously asks whether anyone might have eyes more beautiful than hers, showing her continued insecurity and desire for confirmation:

Look. Look over there. At that girl. Look at her eyes. Are they bluer than mine?

No, I don't think so.

Did you look real good?

Yes.(Morrison 201)

This imagined dialogue demonstrates how Pecola retreats into a psychological fantasy in order to escape the painful reality of rejection and marginalization. Through Pecola's experience, Morrison reveals how powerful cultural representations can shape individual consciousness. The novel demonstrates that racialized beauty standards are not merely aesthetic preferences but ideological forces that influence how individuals perceive themselves and their place within society. By illustrating the destructive impact of these ideals, Morrison offers a profound critique of the social structures that marginalize Black identity and undermine the psychological well-being of vulnerable individuals.

Resistance and Alternative Perception:

While Pecola Breedlove represents the tragic internalization of dominant beauty ideology in *The Bluest Eye*, Toni Morrison also presents an alternative perspective through the character of Claudia MacTeer. Claudia's experiences and reflections reveal a different response to the cultural standards that define beauty and value within society. Unlike Pecola, who gradually accepts the belief that white physical features represent the ideal of beauty, Claudia initially questions and resists these cultural expectations. Through Claudia's perspective, Morrison demonstrates that dominant social values are not always accepted passively; individuals may also challenge and reinterpret them.

Claudia's early experiences reveal a sense of confusion and dissatisfaction with the beauty ideals that society promotes. As a young Black girl, she observes that many people

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admire white dolls and treat them as symbols of beauty and innocence. Instead of admiring it as a symbol of beauty, she feels a strong impulse to destroy it and understand why it is valued. As she recalls: “I had only one desire: to dismember it” (Morrison 20). Her reaction suggests an instinctive resistance to the cultural message that white physical features represent the highest form of beauty.

This response is significant because it reveals that the acceptance of beauty ideology is not inevitable. While many children gradually internalize the values promoted by society, Claudia’s perspective shows that these ideas can also be questioned. Her inability to admire the white dolls demonstrates a form of critical awareness, even though she is still very young. Her resistance to dominant beauty ideology becomes most visible through her symbolic actions toward the dolls she receives as gifts.

Through the contrast between Claudia and Pecola, the novel portrays two different responses to the same cultural environment. Pecola internalizes the beauty standards promoted by society and begins to measure her worth according to them. This internalization leads to emotional suffering and psychological fragmentation. Claudia, in contrast, demonstrates a capacity to question these standards and to resist their influence, at least during her early childhood. This contrast highlights Morrison’s broader message about the social construction of identity. Beauty standards and cultural values are not fixed or universal; they are produced through social institutions and repeated cultural representations. Individuals may internalize these values, but they may also challenge them through awareness and critical reflection.

Media, Gender, and Racial Power:

In *The Bluest Eye*, Toni Morrison presents a powerful critique of how media representation is closely connected with broader structures of social and racial power. The novel suggests that cultural images circulated through popular media are not neutral or harmless. Instead, they reflect and reinforce the dominant values of society. In particular, these representations often privilege whiteness while marginalizing Black identity, especially Black femininity.

Morrison presents several media and cultural images, such as the child star Shirley Temple, white dolls with blue eyes and blonde hair, Hollywood films, and advertising images, that promote whiteness as the dominant ideal of beauty. These images circulate through everyday life and repeatedly associate beauty, innocence, and happiness with white physical features. Because young Black girls are constantly exposed to these representations, they

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begin to measure their own appearance against these standards. This process influences their self-understanding by encouraging them to see their own physical features as inferior or undesirable. As a result, media imagery shapes self-identification by linking social acceptance and personal value to racialized ideals of beauty.

Media images frequently present white physical features as the ideal of beauty, innocence, and desirability. These images appear in films, advertisements, toys, and other forms of popular culture. Because such representations are repeated continuously, they gradually become accepted as normal and natural. As a result, society begins to associate beauty, success, and happiness with whiteness. At the same time, Black physical features are often excluded from these representations or portrayed as less desirable. This imbalance creates a cultural hierarchy in which whiteness is valued and Blackness is marginalized.

Young Black girls in the novel grow up surrounded by images that celebrate white beauty while ignoring or devaluing their own appearance. This environment encourages them to measure their self-worth according to standards that they cannot easily achieve. Consequently, media representation becomes a powerful force in shaping identity, self-perception, and social belonging. The novel also shows that these representations are connected to larger systems of racial and gender inequality. Beauty ideals are not simply aesthetic preferences; they reflect historical power relations in which white cultural norms dominate social life.

Conclusion:

The present analysis of *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison reflects that media representation plays a significant role in shaping individual identity and social perception. The novel reveals how dominant cultural images construct particular ideals of beauty. Through repeated representation in popular culture, these beauty standards become widely accepted and influence individual's self-understanding. Morrison's narrative therefore exposes the deep connection between media imagery, social ideology, and the formation of racialized and gendered identities.

The experiences of Pecola Breedlove illustrate the psychological consequences of internalizing these dominant cultural ideals. Surrounded by social attitudes that celebrate white beauty and devalue Black appearance, Pecola gradually comes to believe that her own identity is inherently flawed. Her desire for blue eyes represents a desperate attempt to conform to the cultural standard of beauty that promises acceptance and recognition. However, this desire ultimately leads to emotional isolation and psychological fragmentation.

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Through Pecola's tragic story, Morrison demonstrates how internalized beauty ideology can damage self-perception and undermine the psychological well-being of marginalized individuals. By presenting alternative perspectives of Cluadia within the narrative, Morrison highlights that individuals may resist or challenge the values, ideologies, and identities imposed by dominant cultural systems. The novel encourages readers to recognize how cultural representations influence perceptions of beauty and belonging.

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Work–Life Balance Challenges of Women Teachers in Higher Education

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Abstract

In recent decades, women have increasingly entered the field of higher education as teachers and researchers. While this progress reflects positive social change, women teachers often face significant challenges in maintaining a balance between their professional responsibilities and personal lives. Work–life balance has become an important concern, particularly for women who must manage teaching, research, administrative duties, and family responsibilities simultaneously. The purpose of this study is to examine the major work–life balance challenges faced by women teachers in higher education institutions.

This study is based on secondary data collected from research articles, government reports, academic publications, and policy documents related to gender equality and higher education. The paper highlights several factors that influence work–life balance, including workload pressure, family expectations, childcare responsibilities, and institutional policies. It also discusses the importance of supportive workplace environments, flexible work policies, and gender-sensitive institutional practices.

The findings suggest that despite increased participation of women in higher education, structural and social challenges still affect their professional growth and personal well-being. The study emphasizes the need for effective policies, supportive leadership, and institutional reforms to promote gender equality and improve work–life balance among women teachers. Creating a supportive academic environment will not only enhance the productivity and well-being of women teachers but also contribute to the overall development of higher education institutions.

Keywords : Work–Life Balance, Women Teachers, Higher Education, Gender Equality, Work Environment

Introduction

In recent years, the participation of women in higher education has increased significantly across the world. Women are now actively contributing as teachers, researchers, administrators, and academic leaders in universities and colleges. Their involvement has played an important role in improving the quality of education, promoting gender equality, and supporting institutional development. However, despite these positive developments, women teachers often face multiple challenges in balancing their professional responsibilities with their personal and family lives.

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Work–life balance refers to the ability of an individual to effectively manage the demands of work and personal life. For women teachers in higher education, maintaining this balance can be particularly challenging. Their professional responsibilities include teaching, preparing lectures, evaluating assignments, conducting research, publishing papers, attending conferences, and participating in administrative activities. At the same time, many women also carry significant family responsibilities such as childcare, household management, and caring for elderly family members. Managing these dual responsibilities can create stress and affect their personal well-being as well as professional productivity.

The issue of work–life balance has become an important topic of discussion in the field of higher education. Several studies have highlighted that women teachers often experience higher levels of workload and stress compared to their male counterparts due to social expectations and traditional gender roles. In many societies, women are still expected to take primary responsibility for household duties and family care. As a result, balancing academic work and personal responsibilities becomes more demanding for them.

Higher education institutions also play a crucial role in shaping the work environment for women teachers. Supportive institutional policies, flexible working conditions, maternity benefits, and a positive workplace culture can help women manage their responsibilities more effectively. However, in many cases, institutional support systems are either limited or not properly implemented. This can lead to difficulties in maintaining a healthy balance between professional and personal life.

Understanding the challenges related to work–life balance is essential for improving the working conditions of women teachers in higher education. When women are able to balance their work and personal life effectively, it can enhance their job satisfaction, productivity, and overall well-being. Moreover, promoting work–life balance can also contribute to gender equality and create a more inclusive academic environment.

Therefore, the present study aims to examine the major work–life balance challenges faced by women teachers in higher education institutions. The study is based on secondary data collected from academic articles, reports, and existing research studies. It also highlights the need for supportive institutional policies and practices that can help women teachers achieve a better balance between their professional and personal responsibilities.

In the context of India, the participation of women in higher education has gradually increased over the past few decades. Many universities and colleges now employ a significant number of women teachers who contribute actively to teaching, research, and academic development. According to reports such as the All India Survey on Higher Education, the representation of women in the teaching profession has shown steady growth in recent years. Despite this progress, women teachers continue to face several challenges that affect their ability to maintain a balance between their professional responsibilities and personal lives. Social expectations, traditional gender roles, and family responsibilities often place additional pressure on women compared to their male counterparts. In many cases, women teachers are expected to manage household duties along with their professional commitments, which can

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make it difficult for them to dedicate sufficient time to research, academic development, and career advancement. The issue of work–life balance has therefore become an important area of discussion in the field of higher education. Educational institutions are increasingly recognizing the need to create supportive and inclusive work environments that enable women teachers to perform their roles effectively. Policies related to maternity benefits, flexible work arrangements, and gender-sensitive workplace practices can play a significant role in improving the work–life balance of women teachers. Efforts by organizations such as the University Grants Commission to promote gender equality and safe working environments have also contributed to raising awareness about these issues in academic institutions. Understanding the challenges faced by women teachers is therefore essential for developing policies and institutional practices that support their professional growth and overall well-being.

Objectives of the Study

The present study focuses on understanding the challenges faced by women teachers in maintaining a balance between their professional and personal responsibilities. The main objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To examine the concept and importance of work–life balance in higher education.
2. To identify the major challenges faced by women teachers in maintaining work–life balance.
3. To analyse the factors affecting work–life balance among women teachers in higher education institutions.
4. To study the role of institutional policies in supporting women teachers.
5. To suggest possible measures for improving work–life balance for women teachers in higher education.

Scope of the Study

The present study focuses on understanding the work–life balance challenges faced by women teachers in higher education institutions. The study mainly examines the factors that influence the ability of women teachers to balance their professional responsibilities and personal life.

The scope of the study is limited to the analysis of existing literature, research articles, institutional reports, and policy documents related to gender equality and work–life balance in the education sector. The study also considers information from reports such as the All India Survey on Higher Education and policy guidelines issued by the University Grants Commission to understand the broader context of women's participation in higher education.

Since the study is based on secondary data, it does not involve primary data collection such as surveys or interviews with teachers. The analysis is therefore limited to the findings and observations available in existing research and institutional reports.

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Despite these limitations, the study provides useful insights into the challenges faced by women teachers in maintaining work–life balance and highlights the need for supportive institutional policies and workplace practices.

Research Methodology

The present study is based on secondary data. Secondary data refers to information that has already been collected, analysed, and published by researchers, institutions, and government organizations. For the purpose of this study, data has been collected from various sources such as research journals, academic books, conference papers, and institutional reports related to work–life balance and gender issues in higher education.

In addition to scholarly articles, several national and international reports have been consulted to understand the broader context of women's participation in higher education and the challenges related to work–life balance. Important reports such as the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) published by the Ministry of Education, policy documents from the University Grants Commission, and global education reports published by UNESCO have been used as key sources of information.

Furthermore, reports and studies related to workplace conditions and gender equality published by the International Labour Organization and the World Bank have also been referred to in order to analyse the broader work–life balance challenges faced by women professionals. These reports provide statistical data, policy perspectives, and analytical insights that help in understanding the experiences of women teachers in higher education institutions.

The collected information has been analysed using a descriptive and analytical approach to identify the major challenges affecting work–life balance among women teachers and to suggest possible measures for improvement.

Literature Review

Several researchers and organizations have studied the issue of work–life balance among working women, particularly in the education sector. The increasing participation of women in professional careers has brought greater attention to the challenges of managing work and family responsibilities simultaneously.

A study by **Jeffrey H. Greenhaus and Nicholas J. Beutell introduced the concept of work–family conflict and explained how professional demands and family responsibilities often compete with each other, leading to stress and reduced job satisfaction. Their work highlighted that maintaining balance between work and personal life is essential for overall well-being and productivity.

Research conducted by **Linda Duxbury and Chris Higgins examined the work–life balance of professionals and emphasized that heavy workloads and long working hours are major factors contributing to work–life conflict. Their findings suggested that supportive

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workplace policies and flexible working conditions can help employees manage their responsibilities more effectively.

In the context of higher education, several studies have focused specifically on women teachers. Research has indicated that women in academic professions often face unique challenges because they must balance teaching, research activities, administrative duties, and family responsibilities. These multiple roles can create pressure and affect both personal well-being and professional performance.

Reports published by UNESCO have highlighted that although women's participation in higher education has increased globally, gender inequalities still exist in many academic institutions. Women often encounter challenges such as limited leadership opportunities, unequal workload distribution, and difficulties in maintaining work–life balance.

Similarly, the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) report provides important data regarding the participation of women in higher education institutions in India. The report indicates that while the number of women teachers has increased in recent years, many still face professional and social challenges that affect their career development and personal lives.

Studies and reports from organizations such as the International Labour Organization also emphasize that work–life balance is an important factor in ensuring employee well-being and gender equality in workplaces. The organization highlights that supportive policies such as flexible work arrangements, maternity benefits, and institutional support systems can significantly improve the work–life balance of women professionals.

Overall, previous research studies and institutional reports indicate that work–life balance remains a significant challenge for women teachers in higher education. Understanding these challenges is important for developing effective institutional policies and creating supportive academic environments that promote gender equality and professional development.

Work–Life Balance Challenges Faced by Women Teachers in Higher Education

Women teachers in higher education institutions play a significant role in shaping the academic and intellectual development of students. However, maintaining a balance between professional duties and personal responsibilities often becomes a challenging task. Several social, institutional, and personal factors influence the work–life balance of women teachers.

Workload and Professional Responsibilities

One of the major challenges faced by women teachers is the increasing workload in higher education institutions. Teaching responsibilities include preparing lectures, evaluating assignments, guiding students, conducting examinations, and participating in academic meetings. In addition to teaching duties, teachers are also expected to engage in research activities such as publishing papers, attending conferences, and completing administrative tasks.

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These professional expectations often require additional time and effort beyond regular working hours. As a result, women teachers may find it difficult to allocate sufficient time for personal and family responsibilities.

Family Responsibilities

In many societies, women are traditionally expected to take primary responsibility for household duties and family care. Responsibilities such as childcare, cooking, managing household activities, and caring for elderly family members often fall on women. Balancing these responsibilities along with professional commitments can create stress and physical exhaustion.

For women teachers who are married or have young children, managing both academic work and family life becomes particularly demanding. The lack of adequate support systems at home can further increase the pressure.

Workplace Environment and Institutional Support

The work environment within educational institutions also plays an important role in determining the work–life balance of women teachers. In some cases, institutions may not provide adequate support mechanisms such as flexible working hours, childcare facilities, or effective maternity policies.

Although several guidelines and policies promoting gender equality have been introduced by institutions such as the University Grants Commission, the implementation of these policies may vary across institutions. Limited institutional support can make it difficult for women teachers to manage their professional and personal responsibilities effectively.

Career Development and Research Pressure

Academic careers require continuous professional development. Teachers are expected to participate in research activities, publish academic papers, and attend conferences to enhance their professional profile. While these activities are important for career advancement, they can also increase work pressure.

Women teachers who are balancing family responsibilities may find it challenging to devote sufficient time to research activities. This can sometimes affect their opportunities for promotions, leadership roles, and professional recognition.

Stress and Well-Being

The combination of professional workload and personal responsibilities can lead to stress and emotional pressure among women teachers. Continuous stress may affect their physical health, mental well-being, and overall job satisfaction. Maintaining a healthy work–life balance is therefore essential not only for professional success but also for personal well-being.

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Addressing these challenges requires supportive institutional policies, positive workplace culture, and greater awareness about gender equality. Creating an environment that supports women teachers can help them perform their roles effectively and contribute positively to the development of higher education institutions.

Suggestions and Recommendations

Based on the analysis of existing literature and reports related to work–life balance among women teachers, several measures can be suggested to improve their working conditions and support their professional and personal responsibilities.

Flexible Work Policies

Higher education institutions should consider introducing flexible work arrangements for women teachers. Flexible working hours, online teaching options, and supportive scheduling can help teachers manage both professional duties and family responsibilities more effectively. Such policies can significantly reduce work-related stress and improve job satisfaction.

Implementation of Gender-Sensitive Policies

Educational institutions should actively implement gender-sensitive policies that promote equality and support women employees. Guidelines issued by organizations such as the University Grants Commission emphasize the importance of creating safe and supportive work environments for women teachers. Proper implementation of these policies can help address gender-related challenges in academic institutions.

Maternity and Childcare Support

Providing maternity leave and childcare support is very important for helping women teachers maintain a proper work–life balance. Maternity leave allows women to take necessary time off during pregnancy and after childbirth, which is important for the health of both the mother and the child.

In India, the idea of providing maternity benefits to women workers was supported by B. R. Ambedkar, who worked for several labour welfare reforms during the 1940s. His efforts helped in recognizing the importance of maternity protection and improving working conditions for women employees.

Today, higher education institutions should ensure proper implementation of maternity leave policies and also consider providing childcare facilities or flexible work arrangements. Such support can help women teachers manage both their professional duties and family responsibilities more effectively.

Supportive Workplace Environment

A positive and supportive workplace culture is important for reducing stress and promoting work–life balance. Institutions should encourage cooperation among colleagues,

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provide mentoring opportunities, and ensure that women teachers have equal access to professional development and leadership opportunities.

Awareness and Institutional Initiatives

Educational institutions should organize workshops, seminars, and awareness programs related to work–life balance and gender equality. Such initiatives can help create a more inclusive academic environment and encourage institutional leaders to adopt policies that support women teachers.

Implementing these measures can contribute to improving the professional experiences of women teachers and help them maintain a healthier balance between their work and personal lives.

Limitations of the Study

The present study is based entirely on secondary data collected from research articles, institutional reports, policy documents, and academic publications related to work–life balance and gender issues in higher education. Since the study does not include primary data collection such as surveys or interviews with women teachers, the findings are limited to the analysis of existing literature and available reports. Another limitation of the study is that it does not focus on any specific region, institution, or category of higher education institutions. The challenges discussed in the study are therefore general in nature and may vary depending on institutional policies, socio-economic background, and cultural context. Future research may include primary data collection through questionnaires, interviews, or case studies in order to obtain more detailed insights into the experiences of women teachers in higher education institutions.

Conclusion

Work–life balance has become an important concern for women working in professional fields, particularly in higher education. Women teachers play a significant role in shaping students' academic development and contributing to the growth of educational institutions. However, balancing professional responsibilities with personal and family commitments often becomes a challenging task.

The present study examined the various challenges faced by women teachers in maintaining work–life balance in higher education institutions. Based on the analysis of secondary data from research articles, institutional reports, and policy documents, the study identified several key challenges such as heavy workload, family responsibilities, lack of institutional support, and pressure related to research and career development.

The study also highlighted the importance of supportive workplace policies and institutional initiatives in improving the working conditions of women teachers. Measures such as flexible working arrangements, proper implementation of maternity leave policies, childcare facilities, and gender-sensitive institutional practices can significantly help women teachers manage their professional and personal responsibilities.

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Creating a supportive and inclusive work environment is essential for promoting gender equality in higher education. When women teachers are able to maintain a healthy balance between work and personal life, it can lead to greater job satisfaction, improved productivity, and better overall well-being. Therefore, higher education institutions should actively work towards implementing policies and practices that support the professional growth and personal well-being of women teachers.

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Study on Water Quality Dynamics: A Comparative Analysis of Physico-Chemical Parameters of Khadakwasla Dam, Pune

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Abstract

Water quality assessment is essential for the sustainable management and conservation of freshwater resources, particularly in reservoirs that support domestic, agricultural, and ecological needs. The present study investigates the physico-chemical characteristics of water from the front and back regions of Khadakwasla Dam, located near Pune, Maharashtra, India. Water samples were collected during September–October 2025 from two distinct sampling zones representing the inflow (front water) and storage/outflow (back water) regions of the reservoir. The collected samples were analyzed for several important physico-chemical parameters, including colour, odour, temperature, pH, dissolved oxygen (DO), total dissolved solids (TDS), turbidity, chloride content, total hardness, biochemical oxygen demand (BOD), chemical oxygen demand (COD), and ammonia using standard analytical methods. The results revealed noticeable spatial variations in water quality between the two sites. The front water region exhibited comparatively better water quality with neutral pH, lower turbidity, and higher dissolved oxygen levels, indicating relatively cleaner and well-aerated conditions. In contrast, the back water region showed higher values of turbidity, chloride, hardness, BOD, COD, and ammonia, suggesting moderate organic and chemical contamination. These variations may be attributed to slower water circulation, accumulation of organic matter, and anthropogenic influences such as agricultural runoff and nearby human activities. Most of the observed parameters remained within the permissible limits recommended by national and international water quality standards, although certain indicators point toward localized deterioration in the back water zone. The study highlights the importance of continuous monitoring and effective management strategies to maintain water quality and ecological balance in the reservoir ecosystem.

Keywords: Khadakwasla Dam, TDS, Hardness, Dissolved oxygen, BOD, COD, Turbidity

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Introduction

Water is one of the most essential natural resources for the survival of living organisms. It supports ecological balance, human health, agriculture and industrial development. Although nearly two-thirds of the Earth's surface is covered by water, only a very small fraction is available as freshwater suitable for human consumption. Most of the water present on Earth occurs in oceans and seas and is saline in nature. Freshwater resources are therefore limited and require careful management and conservation.

Reservoirs and dams play an important role in storing freshwater and supplying it for domestic, agricultural and industrial purposes. They also contribute to irrigation, fisheries, hydroelectric power generation, and flood control. In recent decades rapid urbanization, industrialization, and agricultural expansion have led to increasing pressure on freshwater resources, making continuous monitoring of water quality imperative (Trivedy& Goel,1986).

Khadakwasla Dam is one of the major reservoirs supplying water to Pune City and nearby regions. Due to increasing urban expansion and human activity around the reservoir, there is growing concern regarding the quality of water in the dam. Periodic evaluation of its Physico-chemical characteristics is therefore essential for maintaining the sustainability of this vital water resources. Water quality is generally evaluated using Physico-chemical Parameters such temperature,pH, dissolved oxygen (DO), biochemical oxygen demand (BOD), chemical oxygen demand (COD), turbidity, total dissolved solids (TDS), hardness and nutrient levels. These parameters help determine the suitability of water for drinking, irrigation, aquatic life & other uses. Regular monitoring of these indicators is therefore essential for the sustainable management of freshwater ecosystems. The present study focuses to assess and compare the Physico-chemical Parameters of front and back water in Khadakwasla Dam to evaluate overall water quality and identify possible spatial variations.

Material and Methods

Study Area: Khadakwasla Dam is located approximately 20 km southwest of Pune City in Maharashtra, India, at geographic coordinates around 18°26'N latitude and 73°46'E longitude. The dam is constructed across the Mutha River and forms an important component of the water supply system for Pune City.

The dam plays a vital role in supplying drinking water, supporting irrigation in nearby agricultural lands and maintaining ecological balance in the surrounding region. The Catchment area around the reservoir consists of agricultural land, small settlements and recreational zones. Human activities such as tourism, farming and domestic waste.

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Sampling Sites: Two different locations within the reservoir were selected for the Spatial variation in water quality.

Front Water (Inflow Zone): This sampling sites was located near the inflow region where water enters the reservoir from the upstream river system. This region is influenced by river discharge and may contain suspended sediments and nutrients transported from upstream areas.

Back Water (Near Dam Wall / Outflow Zone): This site was located near the dam wall where water accumulates. This zone represents relatively stagnant water and influenced by waste of human activities and chemical processes.

Sampling Period: Water sample were collected during the months of September and October 2025. This period corresponds to the post – monsoon season when reservoir generally contain significant inflow water and suspended materials from catchment areas.

Sample Collection Method:

Manual water sampling: The water samples were collected manually using clean and sterilized polyethylene bottles. Before sampling, each bottle was thoroughly washed with distilled water to prevent contamination. Samples were collected approximately 10 cm below the water surface and about 5 cm away from the shore to avoid surface impurities.

Each sample bottle was properly labelled with the sampling location and date of collection. After collection, the samples were transported carefully to the laboratory for further analysis. Laboratory analysis was conducted at the Department of Zoology Laboratory at A.K.I's Poona College of Arts, Commerce and Science, Camp, Pune.

- **OBSERVATION TABLE**

Sr. No	Parameters	Front	Back waters	Permissible limits
1.	Colour	Clear	Dusky	True colour units
2.	Odour	No odour	Fishy smell	Unobjectionable/
3.	pH	7.0	8.0	6.5-8.5
4.	Temperature (°C)	19.4°C	22°C	Varies seasonally
5.	DO (mg/L)	4.8 mg/L	2.8 mg/L	6.5-8.5 mg/L
6.	TDS (mg/L)	133.0 mg/L	132.0 mg/L	Upto 500 mg/L

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7.	Turbidity (NTU)	0.2 NTU	2.5 NTU	Less than 5 NTU
8.	Chloride content	53 mg/L	138 mg/L	Upto 250 mg /L
9.	Total hardness (mg/L)	52.0 mg/L	160.0 mg/L	Upto 200 mg/L
10.	BOD (mg/L)	32 mg/L	45 mg /L	<5 (for drinking)
11.	COD (mg/L)	110 mg/L	130 mg/L	<10 (desirable)
12.	Ammonia (mg/L)	0.84 mg/L	1.40 mg/L	Upto 0.5 mg/L

Table 1: Physico-Chemical Parameters of Water sample.

Results

In the present study Physico-chemical parameters of front and back waters of Khadakwasla Dam in Pune district of Maharashtra were analysed .

Colour and odour are simple parameters studied, in which Colouration is a unique property of water on which we can determine the status and quality assessment well as roughly predicted the phytoplankton and zooplankton density . Colour and odour are considered indicator parameters . The volatile compounds produce odour. The odour is qualitatively described as medical (phenolic) and fishy (due to algae), earthy(decaying matter) or chemical (chlorine).

Odour is quality factor influencing acceptability of potable water. The colour and odour for Front waters is clear and no odour present but in Back waters, the colour appears to be dusky and occurrence of fishy smell, which indicates organic pollution or microbial activity in back waters.

pH is a indispensable physical parameter as most of biological process and biochemical reactions are pH dependent. pH is most indispensable in determining the corrosive nature of water, lower the pH value , higher is the corrosive nature of water. The pH is observed in the range from 7.0 (neutral) to 8.0 (slightly alkaline) that is pH for front waters is to be observed as 7.0 which is neutral and for back waters it is observed 8.0 which indicates slightly alkaline backwaters may be due to algal activity or contamination by organic matter.

Temperature of water is important for its effects on the chemistry and biochemical reaction in the organism. It is essential factor in the aerobic environment of the aquatic system, as it determines the succession of pre- dominant of algae, bacteria and other aquatic

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organisms. In the present investigation the temperature observed slightly higher in backwaters i.e 22°C than in front waters it is observed 19.4°C, may be due to reduced flow or sunlight exposure.

Dissolved oxygen is a relative measure of the amount of oxygen which is dissolved or carried in a water body. Dissolved oxygen levels are depending upon the physical, chemical, and biochemical activities prevailing in the water body. Here the observed values are in the range of 2.8 to 4.8 mg/L. Good water should have the dissolved oxygen. 6.5 -8 mg/L, but CPCB also recommends DO concentration of 5mg/L for outdoor bathing in rivers. The DO levels in the back waters of the dam suggests poor aeration and organic pollution leading to oxygen depletion.

The Total Dissolved Solids (TDS) measures all Dissolved substances smaller than 2 microns in water, typically expressed in milligrams per litre(mg/L). High TDS may make water unpalatable, increases corrosion and extremely high or low TDS levels can distrub osmotic balance in aquatic organisms. In the present study, the TDS for front water was 133mg/L and for back waters it was observed as 132mg/L, which is with the limits mentioned in the table according to the measure of BIS.

Total Hardness is the sum of calcium and Magnesium hardness. It is generally caused by calcium and magnesium salts which dissolve from rocks and minerals into water. Water having less than 75mg/L calcium carbonate is termed as soft water. The desirable limit of hardness in drinking water prescribed by ICMR is 120-170 mg/L. For the remaining parameters like hardness, the observed values are 52.0 mg/L and 160 mg/L, which is much higher in backwaters and suggests industrial contaminations.

Chlorides are present in all natural water sources contain chlorides ranging from 100 to 200 mg/L. Here, observed values are in the range of 53 to 138.3 mg/L. The amounts of chloride found in the sample did not exceed the maximum permissible limit i.e 500 mg/L for drinking water prescribed by WHO.

Turbidity is a measure of the light absorbing properties of the water samples. Turbidity is caused by suspended matter, it is caused by clay , slit, finely divided into organic and inorganic contents. Here, it is observed 0.2 NTU for front waters and 2.5 NTU for back waters, which is in the permissible limit.

BOD (Biochemical oxygen demand) is the amount of dissolved oxygen (DO) required by microorganisms to biologically decompose organic matter in water under aerobic conditions, over a specific time and temperature . It indicates the amount of biodegradable organic

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pollution in water . Higher BOD = higher organic pollution= lower water quality.

COD(Chemical oxygen demand) is the amount of oxygen required to chemically oxidize all organic (& some inorganic) matter in water using a strong chemical oxidant. It measures Total oxygen demand, including both biodegradable and non – biodegradable organics and here it indicates strong organic pollution and strong communication for both the water samples.

Ammonia exists in two forms in water:-

- NH4+ (ionized ammonia)- less harmful.
- NH3 (un- ionized ammonia)- highly toxic.

As pH and temperature increases, more NH3 forms high NH3 levels can damage – fish gills , cause stress on death in fish and reducing DO levels, Fueling algal blooms and making water harder and more expensive to treat . According to IS 10500:2021 , the limit for ammonia is 0.5 mg/L and here it is observed, in Front water – still elevated that is 0.84 mg/L but lower than the Back waters which is 1.40 mg/L , that is quite high compared to typical "natural" surface water ammonia levels. Back waters likely posses a risk to aquatic life and this level is above the guidelines.

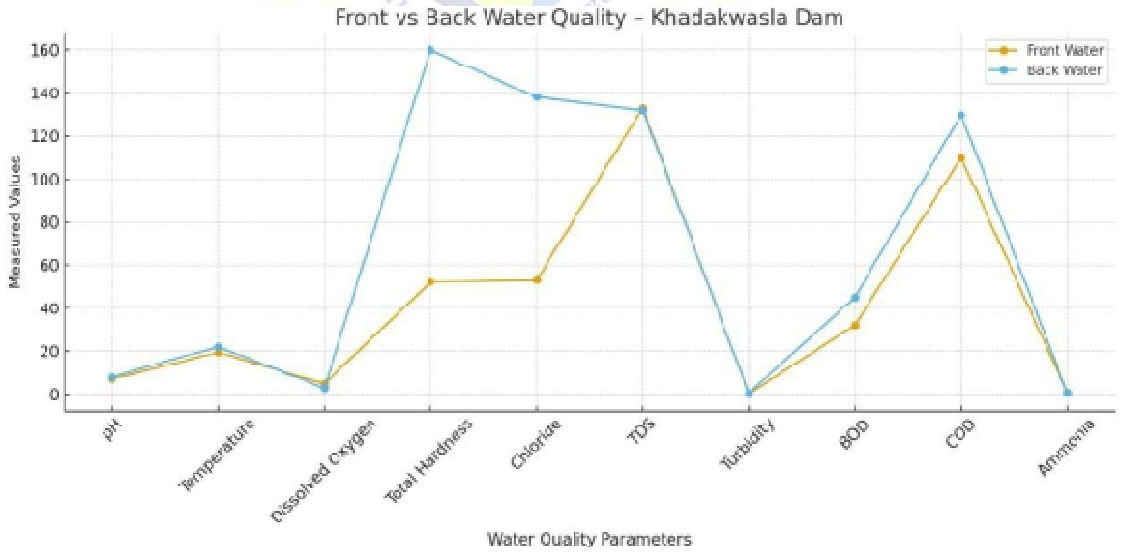


Figure: 1: Comparative Variations of Front and Back Water Parameters .

Discussion

The present study aimed to evaluate the physico-chemical characteristics of the front and

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back waters of Khadakwasla Dam in order to understand the influence of inflow conditions, human activities, and natural processes on water quality. The analyzed parameters and their obtained values were compared with the drinking water standards recommended by BIS and WHO (BIS, 2012; WHO, 2017).

The pH of the front water was recorded as 7.0, while the back waters showed a slightly higher value of 8.0. Both values fall within the desirable range of 6.5–8.5, indicating that the water is slightly alkaline but generally suitable for domestic and irrigation purposes (BIS, 2012; WHO, 2017). Slightly alkaline conditions in reservoir waters are common and may result from increased algal photosynthesis, which removes dissolved carbon dioxide and increases alkalinity (Chapman, 1996; Hem, 1985).

Water temperature ranged from 19.4°C in the front waters to 22°C in the back waters. This slight increase in the back water region may be attributed to relatively stagnant conditions, shallow depth, and greater exposure to sunlight. Temperature plays a crucial role in controlling chemical reactions and biological processes in aquatic systems and also influences dissolved oxygen solubility (Hem, 1985; Trivedy & Goel, 1986).

Turbidity values were recorded as 0.2 NTU in the front water and 2.5 NTU in the back water, which are well within the BIS permissible limit of 5 NTU (BIS, 2012). The slightly higher turbidity observed in the back water region may be due to the accumulation of suspended particles, organic matter, and sediments transported through inflowing water or local runoff (APHA, 1998; Patil et al., 2012).

Total dissolved solids (TDS) values were found to be 133 mg/L in front waters and 132 mg/L in back waters. These values are significantly below the permissible limit of 500 mg/L suggested by WHO and BIS standards (WHO, 2017; BIS, 2012). Lower TDS values generally indicate minimal contamination by dissolved salts and suggest that the water remains suitable for most domestic and agricultural uses .

Dissolved oxygen (DO) levels were recorded as 4.8 mg/L in front waters and 2.8 mg/L in back waters. Ideally, dissolved oxygen concentrations should be around 5 mg/L or higher for maintaining good water quality and supporting aquatic life (WHO, 2017). The comparatively lower DO level in the back waters may indicate mild organic pollution caused by the decomposition of organic matter, slower water circulation, and increased microbial activity (Trivedy & Goel, 1986; Tyagi et al., 2013).

Chloride concentrations ranged from 53 mg/L in the front water to 138 mg/L in the back water, which are within the permissible limit of 250 mg/L prescribed by BIS and WHO (BIS,

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2012; WHO, 2017). However, elevated chloride concentrations in the back waters could suggest contamination from anthropogenic activities such as domestic sewage discharge, agricultural runoff, or human settlements near the reservoir (Patil et al., 2012; Singh et al., 2020).

Total hardness values were recorded as 52 mg/L in the front waters and 160 mg/L in the back waters. Both values fall within the permissible limit of 200 mg/L recommended for drinking water (BIS, 2012). Increased hardness in the back waters may be attributed to the dissolution of calcium and magnesium salts from surrounding rocks and soil, as well as surface runoff entering the reservoir (Hem, 1985; Ramakrishnaiah et al., 2009).

Ammonia concentration is an important indicator of water pollution because elevated ammonia levels are often associated with organic waste decomposition, sewage discharge, and agricultural runoff (APHA, 1998). In the present study, ammonia concentration was higher in the back waters (1.40 mg/L) compared to the front waters (0.84 mg/L). Such elevated levels may adversely affect aquatic organisms and indicate nutrient enrichment within the reservoir ecosystem (Chapman, 1996; Tyagi et al., 2013).

Overall, the results suggest that Khadakwasla Dam water remains within acceptable quality standards; however, localized degradation is noticeable in the back water region. Elevated BOD and COD levels may lead to oxygen depletion and pose risks to aquatic organisms, while increased turbidity can reduce light penetration and affect photosynthetic activity (Tyagi et al., 2013; Kumar & Dua, 2009). Therefore, continuous monitoring and proper management practices are essential to prevent eutrophication and maintain the ecological balance of the reservoir, ensuring that it continues to serve as a reliable source of drinking and irrigation water for Pune and surrounding areas.

Conclusion

The Physico-chemical assessment of Front and Back waters of Khadakwasla Dam provides a comprehensive understanding of its present water quality status. The analyzed parameters generally fall within the BIS (IS 10500:2012) and WHO standards, indicating that the dam water is suitable for domestic, agricultural, aquatic uses with some precautionary measure. The Front waters exhibit better quality with higher DO and lower BOD, COD, and turbidity values. Suggesting relatively cleaner and well aerated condition near the dam well. In contrast, the Back water region showed slightly higher hardness, chloride, BOD and COD levels, indicating mild organic and chemical contamination possibly arising from surface

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runoff, agricultural activities and human interference around the inflow areas. Overall, the study reveals that Khadakwasla Dam water remains within acceptable quality standards through periodic monitoring is essential to track any gradual deterioration. Controlling waste water inflow, and promoting awareness among nearby residents and farmers can help maintain the ecological balance and ensure the dam continues to serve a sustainable source of drinking and irrigation water for the Pune region.

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A Study of Women's Participation in Academic Governance and Decision-Making in Higher Education with Reference to Pune City

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Abstract

Over the past few decades, there has been a notable growth in the participation of women in higher education. Despite these advancements, women are still underrepresented in positions of academic governance and decision-making, including institutional committees, academic councils, boards of studies, and university leadership. The degree to which women participate in academic governance and decision-making in Pune's higher education institutions is investigated in this study. The study investigates the obstacles that female academicians have while trying to gain leadership positions and take part in institutional governance procedures. Using primary and secondary data, the study employs a descriptive research methodology. Structured questionnaires were used to gather primary data from female faculty members at particular Pune colleges and universities. Research articles, policy studies, and scholarly literature about gender equality in higher education governance were the sources of secondary data.

The results show that while women are now more represented in teaching roles, institutional, cultural, and structural impediments still prevent them from participating fully in decision-making bodies. Women's involvement in academic governance is influenced by a number of factors, including gender stereotypes, a lack of mentorship, a lack of leadership chances, and work-family obligations. In order to encourage gender-inclusive leadership and fair participation of women in academic governance, the report makes institutional and policy recommendations.

Keywords: Pune city, gender equality, higher education, women's leadership, academic governance, and decision-making.

Introduction

Institutions of higher learning are vital hubs for innovation, knowledge production, and social change. In addition to disseminating knowledge, universities and colleges also mold governance, leadership, and policy frameworks that have an impact on society as a whole. The decision-making procedures that direct institutional operations, such as policy creation, curriculum development, academic planning, and administrative management, are referred to as academic governance. Academic councils, boards of studies, management councils, and

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executive committees are examples of institutional entities that usually oversee these governance procedures.

Globally, women's participation in higher education has significantly expanded in recent decades. In many colleges nowadays, women make up a sizable share of faculty, researchers, and students. Nevertheless, despite these advancements, women are still underrepresented in leadership and academic governance roles. The "leadership gender gap" in higher education refers to the discrepancy between women's engagement in the academic workforce and their presence in decision-making roles.

Despite making up a sizable portion of academic personnel worldwide, women are notably underrepresented in positions of senior leadership. Research shows that although women make up roughly 44% of academic staff globally, they are only about 35% of tenured academics and 30% of university administrators. This decrease is a reflection of the ongoing vertical gender segregation in academia, where women are disproportionately found in mid- and lower-level posts but infrequently in positions of top control.

Women's underrepresentation in academic leadership is a governance concern as well as a statistical mismatch. More inclusive academic policies, enhanced institutional culture, and better decision-making are all facilitated by diverse leadership. Institutions run the danger of ignoring viewpoints that are essential for establishing fair learning environments when women are excluded from decision-making bodies.

According to research, institutional, cultural, and structural hurdles frequently prevent women from taking on leadership posts. Perceptions of leadership abilities are sometimes influenced by gender stereotypes and implicit biases, which usually link leadership traits to attributes that are typically associated with men. Because of this, women academicians may face challenges in their pursuit of leadership or governance responsibilities in universities.

The academic career structure itself is a significant element influencing women's involvement in governance. Long work hours, high standards for research productivity, administrative duties, and professional networking are common in academic jobs. These pressures frequently align with important life phases that disproportionately impact women, such as marriage, parenting, and family caregiving duties.

Academic leadership studies frequently address the "glass ceiling" phenomena. This idea refers to imperceptible obstacles that keep women from rising to high leadership positions even when they possess the required training and expertise. According to research, these obstacles are caused by male-dominated leadership networks, unconscious bias, and a lack of mentorship opportunities.

Women's participation in governance is influenced by societal and personal variables in addition to institutional impediments. In many societies, women are still expected to be the major caregivers and members of the family. These obligations may restrict the amount of

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time available for leadership or administrative positions, which frequently call for extra activities outside of teaching and research.

In many regions of the world, the number of women in academic governance is steadily rising in spite of these obstacles. Universities have implemented policies to promote women's involvement in governance structures as they become more aware of the significance of gender equality in leadership. The goal of initiatives like diversity strategies, gender-inclusive policies, mentorship networks, and leadership development programs is to increase the representation of women in decision-making bodies.

Over the past few decades, higher education has grown significantly in India as well. Women now have more options to pursue careers in academia thanks to the growth of universities, colleges, and research facilities. Gender differences in leadership roles are still noticeable, though. Although they are underrepresented in administrative and governance posts like department chairs, deans, and vice-chancellors, female faculty members frequently hold teaching jobs.

Known as the "Oxford of the East," Pune is one of India's top centers for education. Numerous universities, independent colleges, and research facilities are located in the city, drawing scholars and students from all over the nation. Pune's dynamic academic climate makes it the perfect place to study women's involvement in academic governance and decision-making.

Creating institutional strategies that effectively advance gender equality in higher education requires an understanding of the factors influencing women's participation in governance. Increased female involvement in decision-making bodies can lead to better organizational culture, more inclusive governance, and greater policy outcomes. Therefore, the goal of the current study is to assess the level of women's involvement in academic governance in Pune city's higher education institutions, pinpoint the obstacles they encounter, and offer solutions to advance gender-inclusive leadership in academia.

Objectives of the Study

The study's primary goals are:

i. To assess how many women are involved in academic governance at universities.

ii. To examine how women are represented in groups that make decisions, such as institutional committees, boards of studies, and academic councils.

iii. To determine the obstacles that female academicians have while attempting to obtain leadership positions in higher education establishments.

iv. To research the variables affecting women's involvement in academic leadership.

v. To make recommendations for how to enhance gender parity in higher education institutions' leadership and governance.

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Review of Literature

The literature on higher education governance has extensively addressed the problem of gender imbalance in academic leadership. The institutional, cultural, and structural elements that affect women's involvement in leadership positions have been studied by academics.

The term "work-family conflict" was first used by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) to describe the difficulties faced by female professionals in juggling work and family obligations. This issue frequently hinders women's capacity to assume leadership positions in academics that call for more administrative duties.

There is a substantial discrepancy between women's participation in teaching and their presence in leadership roles, according to research on gender representation in academic leadership. Women make up about 39.7% of researchers globally, according to UNESCO data, but their presence in university leadership is still far lower.

Only a small percentage of universities are governed by women, according to studies on worldwide leadership in higher education. For instance, studies reveal that only roughly 24–25% of the world's best universities are led by women, underscoring the continued gender inequality in academic leadership.

The idea of vertical segregation in academics is another significant topic covered in the literature. Women are overrepresented in entry-level and mid-level academic roles, but at higher leadership levels, their participation sharply declines. This pattern implies that academic institutions have structural obstacles that prevent women from advancing in their careers.

Similar tendencies are also seen in research from universities in North America. Although a sizable percentage of assistant deans and mid-level administrative roles are held by women, their representation falls at higher executive levels, such as chancellors and university presidents.

The influence of institutional culture on leadership prospects has also been studied by academics. University hiring and promotion procedures are frequently impacted by informal power structures and male-dominated leadership networks. These networks may be difficult for women to enter, which may limit their possibilities for leadership.

The absence of mentorship and role models is another factor affecting women's involvement in governance. Research indicates that women who have access to mentors who offer support and guidance are more likely to pursue leadership roles. Women could be reluctant to apply for leadership positions or take part in governing organizations in the absence of such mentoring.

Psychological and social constraints have also been identified in research on academic decision-making. Research indicates that women may be less inclined to apply for leadership

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roles because of perceived male-dominated situations, lack of institutional support, or confidence issues.

Academic literature has also extensively addressed the idea of gender prejudice. Leadership traits like aggressiveness, authority, and decision-making are frequently associated with men due to gender stereotypes. These prejudices have the potential to affect leadership selection procedures and provide new difficulties for female candidates.

According to recent research, institutional changes are necessary to achieve gender equity in academic governance. Policies that support women in leadership positions, such as mentorship programs, leadership development courses, and gender-inclusive hiring procedures, must be implemented by universities.

Additionally, encouraging gender diversity in governing bodies can improve the effectiveness of institutions. According to research, diverse leadership teams are more likely to take into account a different viewpoint, which improves decision-making and results in more inclusive policies.

According to the literature, women are still underrepresented in governance and decision-making, despite an increase in their involvement in higher education. Both institutional assistance and cultural change inside academic institutions are needed to address this problem.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The study examines women's involvement in academic governance and decision-making using a descriptive research approach.

Sources of Data

Primary Data

Structured questionnaires were used to gather primary data from female faculty members employed by Pune city's colleges and institutions.

Secondary Data

Secondary data were gathered from:

- Scholarly publications
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- Official documents
- Documents containing policies
- Online databases for research

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Sample Size

One hundred female faculty members from different Pune higher education institutes are included in the project.

Sampling Method

Respondents were chosen using the convenience sampling technique.

Data Analysis Tools

The gathered information was examined using:

- Analysis of percentages
- A tabular depiction
- Interpretive analysis

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1:Respondent Designation

Designation	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Assistant Professor	55	55%
Associate Professor	25	25%
Professor	10	10%
Administrative roles	10	10%

Interpretation:
Women are more prevalent in entry-level and mid-level academic roles, as seen by the majority of responders being assistant professors.

Table 2:Academic Committee Participation

Type of Committee	Respondents	Percentage
Board of Studies	30	30%
Academic Council	15	15%
Committee for Examination	35	35%
Institutional Committees	20	20%

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Interpretation:

Women are underrepresented in important decision-making groups like academic councils, although they are more prevalent in operational committees.

Table 3:Obstacles to Women's Involvement in Governance

Obstacles	Respondents	Percentage
Gender bias	25	25%
Absence of opportunities for leadership	20	20%
Work-family obligations	30	30%
Absence of mentorship	15	15%
Institutional obstacles	10	10%

Interpretation:

The main obstacles preventing women from participating in governance are work-family obligations and gender bias.

Findings of the Study

The study's main conclusions are:

a) In Pune's higher education institutions, the proportion of women in teaching roles has considerably increased.

b) Despite these advancements, women are still underrepresented in positions of senior leadership and decision-making.

c) Compared to strategic governing bodies, women are more likely to serve on operational committees.

d) Institutional biases and gender preconceptions still have an impact on leadership selection procedures.

e) Women's capacity to assume leadership positions is impacted by work-family obligations.

f) Women's involvement in governance is restricted by a lack of mentorship and leadership development opportunities.

g) Many higher education institutions still lack adequate institutional procedures that support gender equality.

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Suggestions

The following recommendations are made in light of the findings:

Several actions might be suggested to increase women's involvement in academic governance and decision-making at higher education institutions based on the study's findings.

i. Institutions of higher learning should support gender-inclusive leadership practices that support women's equal representation in governing bodies. Women should be fairly represented in key decision-making committees at universities and colleges, including academic councils, boards of studies, research committees, and management councils. Gender diversity should be emphasized in institutional policy as a crucial element of efficient governance.

ii. Organizations ought to implement leadership development initiatives created especially for female professors. These courses can include instruction in decision-making, administrative administration, strategic planning, and leadership. Women faculty members can gain the confidence and abilities necessary for positions in governance by participating in leadership training workshops, seminars, and professional development programs.

iii. Women's involvement in academic governance can be greatly increased by creating networking and mentoring initiatives. Junior and mid-career female faculty members can be mentored by senior academic leaders, who can help them with leadership opportunities and professional advancement. Mentorship networks can also assist women in expanding their professional networks and learning about institutional governance procedures.

iv. Organizations ought to implement flexible work arrangements that assist women in juggling work and family obligations. Women faculty members can assume leadership roles without sacrificing their personal obligations if they have flexible work schedules, childcare assistance, and family-friendly workplace practices. Universities ought to make a concerted effort to eradicate gender prejudice and stereotypes from the hiring and advancement of leaders. To guarantee that all competent applicants, regardless of gender, have access to leadership opportunities, transparent and merit-based hiring practices should be put in place.

v. to encourage a culture of gender equality in academic institutions, awareness campaigns and workshops on gender sensitization should be held. The value of gender diversity in leadership and decision-making processes should be emphasized to administrators and faculty.

vi. Institutions should be encouraged to implement gender equality policies and keep an eye on the inclusion of women in academic governance structures by governmental organizations and regulatory entities like the University Grants Commission (UGC).

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Institutions can be encouraged to support gender-inclusive leadership through policy guidelines and incentives.

vii. Lastly, further studies should be done to look at how gender is represented in academic governance in various places and kinds of institutions. Comparative research can offer insightful information on the best ways to advance women's leadership in higher education.

Higher education institutions can foster an inclusive and encouraging climate that motivates women to actively engage in governance and decision-making processes by putting these strategies into practice. In addition to advancing gender equality, more women in academic leadership positions will improve institutional governance and advance the higher education sector as a whole.

Conclusion

Over the past few decades, women's participation in higher education has expanded dramatically. These days, women are essential to academic advancement, research, and teaching. They are becoming more prevalent at academic institutions, but their involvement in governance and decision-making processes is still quite small. The current study looked at how many women participate in academic governance at Pune's higher education institutions and examined the variables that affect their engagement in leadership and decision-making positions.

The study's conclusions show that while women are well-represented in teaching roles, their participation sharply declines at higher levels of academic leadership and governance. Though they are relatively underrepresented in important decision-making bodies like academic councils, boards of studies, and institutional policy committees, female faculty members are frequently involved in operational committees like examination committees, cultural committees, or student welfare committees. This implies that although women make significant contributions to the operation of academic institutions, their influence over institutional policies and strategic choices is still restricted.

The underrepresentation of women in academic governance is caused by a number of variables. The study found that the prevalence of unconscious biases and gender stereotypes in leadership selection procedures is one of the main obstacles. Perceptions of leadership abilities may be impacted by the fact that leadership positions are frequently still linked to characteristics that are typically associated with men. Because of this, even when they have the requisite training and expertise, female academicians may have trouble gaining leadership position.

The difficulty of juggling work obligations with family and caregiving commitments is another significant issue influencing women's involvement in governance. The time and flexibility needed to take on additional administrative or leadership duties may be limited because female faculty members frequently shoulder a greater portion of household and

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caregiving responsibilities. This work-family dilemma may deter women from aggressively seeking leadership roles in their organizations.

Another major factor restricting women's involvement in academic governance is the absence of mentorship and leadership development opportunities. Many female faculty members may feel less secure or equipped to pursue administrative positions if they lack access to professional networks, leadership development programs, and mentorship. Women can be encouraged to take part in governance and decision-making processes through mentoring from prominent academic leaders.

The report also emphasizes how crucial organizational culture and institutional policies are to advancing gender equality in academic leadership. Institutions are more likely to foster inclusive settings that promote women's participation in leadership roles if they actively support gender diversity in governance structures.

Promoting women's involvement in academic governance is especially crucial in the context of Pune, a significant educational center with a large number of higher education institutions. higher institutional governance, more equitable policies, and higher academic results can all result from more female representation in decision-making bodies.

In conclusion, even if the number of women enrolled in higher education has increased, the gender gap in academic leadership and governance still needs to be addressed. To guarantee that women have equal opportunity to participate in decision-making processes and contribute to institutional growth, institutions must take proactive steps.

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A Study on Work–Life Balance of Women Leaders in Academic Libraries

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Abstract

For working professionals, particularly women in leadership positions, work-life balance has grown in importance. Women are becoming more prevalent in leadership roles in academic libraries, including information managers, chief librarians, and library directors. These jobs include user services, staff management, administrative duties, and the use of contemporary information technologies. Even while female leaders make a substantial contribution to the growth of academic libraries, it can be difficult to strike a balance between work and personal obligations.

This research paper examines the work–life balance of women leaders in academic libraries and identifies the major challenges they face in managing professional and personal responsibilities. The study also explores factors such as workload, organizational support, family commitments, stress management, and institutional policies that influence work–life balance. The research is based on both primary and secondary data collected from academic sources, journals, and related studies in the field of library and information science and management.

The findings suggest that women leaders in academic libraries often experience stress due to multiple responsibilities at work and home. Lack of flexible work policies, limited institutional support, and increasing professional expectations can further affect their work–life balance. The study highlights that supportive work environments, flexible work arrangements, professional development opportunities, and strong family support systems can help women leaders manage their responsibilities more effectively. The research concludes that academic institutions should develop gender-sensitive policies and supportive organizational cultures to promote better work–life balance among women leaders. Improving work–life balance will not only enhance the well-being of women professionals but also improve institutional productivity and service quality in academic libraries.

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Keywords: Work–Life Balance, Women Leaders, Academic Libraries, Leadership, Organizational Support, Work Stress.

Introduction

Academic libraries are essential to education, research, and innovation in today's knowledge-based society. They are crucial hubs for academic support, digital knowledge services, and information resources in colleges and universities. Academic libraries are becoming dynamic information centres that offer access to electronic resources, research databases, digital repositories, and information literacy initiatives, rather than just being places to store books and journals.

Due to changes in higher education systems and the quick advancement of technology, librarians' roles have grown dramatically over the past few decades. Today's librarians must oversee digital resources, assist with research projects, teach students information literacy, and work with academics to advance their careers. Leadership positions in academic libraries are much more difficult and complex as a result.

Traditionally, women have made up a sizable portion of the library workforce. Librarianship is seen as a career dominated by women in several nations. Despite this significant presence, women have traditionally held more technical or supportive jobs than leadership ones. Nonetheless, the proportion of women in leadership roles, such as information resource coordinators, knowledge managers, chief librarians, and library directors, has significantly increased in recent years.

Through efficient administration, creative information services, and the use of new technology, female leaders in academic libraries make a substantial contribution to the growth of their institutions. Their leadership aids academic institutions in raising the calibre of instruction and research while facilitating better access to information resources. Leadership positions do, however, also come with more obligations and demands from the workplace. It is necessary for female executives to supervise budgets, organize library services, manage personnel, introduce new technologies, and take part in institutional decision-making. Strong leadership abilities, ongoing professional growth, and effective time management are necessary for these duties.

Women leaders must manage their personal and familial commitments in addition to their professional obligations. Women still bear a significant portion of the burden in many communities when it comes to childcare, elder care, household administration, and family

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care. Maintaining a work-life balance can be difficult when juggling these obligations with demanding professional employment.

The ability of people to successfully manage their personal and family obligations in addition to their professional commitments is referred to as work-life balance. Maintaining mental health, job satisfaction, and general productivity all depend on a good work-life balance.

Because of their demanding workloads, institutional requirements, and familial responsibilities, female executives in academic libraries frequently face stress. These difficulties may be exacerbated by a lack of organizational support and flexible work practices. Therefore, increasing both professional performance and personal well-being requires an understanding of the work-life balance challenges experienced by female leaders in academic libraries. This study aims to investigate these issues and offer potential solutions to encourage improved work-life balance among female leaders in academic libraries.

Review of Literature

Work–life balance has been widely studied in fields such as management, sociology, psychology, and organizational behaviour. Several researchers have examined the challenges faced by working women, especially those in leadership roles.

Arlie Russell Hochschild (1989) introduced the concept of the **"Second Shift,"** which explains how working women often perform professional duties during the day and household responsibilities after work. According to Hochschild, this dual role increases physical and emotional stress among women and creates difficulties in maintaining work–life balance.

Sue B. Franklin (2008) conducted research on women leadership in academic libraries and observed that although women represent a majority of the library workforce, they often face barriers in attaining and sustaining leadership positions. These barriers include organizational culture, lack of mentoring opportunities, and work–life balance challenges.

Maura A. Smale (2014) discussed the changing role of academic libraries in the digital age. The study emphasized that technological advancements require librarians to constantly update their knowledge and skills. This increasing professional demand may affect the personal lives of librarians, particularly those in leadership positions.

Deborah Lee (2017) examined the importance of organizational support in promoting work–life balance among women leaders. The study suggested that mentoring programs,

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professional networks, and supportive workplace policies can help women leaders manage their responsibilities more effectively.

In the Indian context, Shashi Bala (2020) studied work–life balance among women librarians working in academic institutions. The research found that many women librarians face stress due to administrative workload, long working hours, and family responsibilities. The study also highlighted the importance of institutional support in reducing stress and improving job satisfaction.

Another study by Rani and Kumari (2019) focused on the professional challenges faced by women librarians in higher education institutions. The study revealed that women often struggle to balance professional duties with family responsibilities due to social expectations and limited institutional support.

Similarly, Gupta (2021) examined the role of organizational culture in influencing work–life balance among women professionals. The research emphasized that supportive leadership, flexible work policies, and positive workplace environments can significantly improve work–life balance.

These studies indicate that although women have made significant progress in academic library leadership, challenges related to work–life balance continue to exist. Therefore, further research is needed to understand these issues and develop strategies to support women leaders in academic libraries.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this research study are:

1. To understand the concept of work–life balance among women leaders in academic libraries.
2. To identify the major challenges faced by women leaders in balancing professional and personal responsibilities.
3. To examine the impact of work–life balance on the professional performance of women library leaders.
4. To analyse the role of organizational support in maintaining work–life balance.
5. To suggest strategies for improving work–life balance among women leaders in academic libraries.

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Research Methodology

Research methodology is an important part of any study as it explains the methods used to collect and analyse data.

Research Design

A descriptive and analytical research design is used in this study. It focuses on comprehending the difficulties women executives in academic libraries experience in striking a work-life balance.

Sources of Data:

Primary Data

Primary data is collected through structured questionnaires and personal interactions with women librarians working in leadership positions such as chief librarians, deputy librarians, and library directors in academic institutions.

Secondary Data

Secondary data is collected from books, research journals, conference proceedings, research reports, and online academic databases related to library science, management studies, and gender studies.

Sampling Method

The study uses a purposive sampling method to select women leaders working in academic libraries of universities and colleges.

Sample Size

The study includes responses from 30 women librarians working in leadership positions in selected academic institutions.

Data Analysis

The collected data is analysed using descriptive statistical techniques such as percentages, tables, and graphical representation. Observations and interpretations are used to identify patterns related to work–life balance challenges.

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Results and Discussion

Based on the responses collected from women leaders in academic libraries, several key findings were observed.

Table : Major Work–Life Balance Challenges Faced by Women Leaders

Challenges	Percentage of Respondents
Heavy Workload	70%
Family Responsibilities	65%
Time Management Issues	60%
Organizational Expectations	55%
Stress and Mental Pressure	50%

The above table shows that heavy workload and family responsibilities are the most significant challenges affecting work–life balance.

Interpretation

The results indicate that women leaders often struggle to manage professional responsibilities along with personal obligations. Administrative tasks, meetings, digital resource management, and staff supervision require considerable time and energy. At the same time, family responsibilities such as childcare and household duties create additional pressure.

Many respondents also mentioned that institutional expectations related to innovation, research support, and technological development increase professional demands. As a result, maintaining a healthy balance between work and personal life becomes difficult.

Work–Life Balance Issues Faced by Women Leaders in Academic Libraries

Women leaders in academic libraries face several challenges while managing professional and personal responsibilities.

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Heavy Workload

- Leadership roles involve administrative planning, policy development, budgeting, staff supervision, and service innovation. These responsibilities increase workload and reduce personal time.

Family Responsibilities

- Women often carry major responsibilities related to childcare, elder care, and household management. Balancing these duties with professional leadership roles can create stress.

Time Management Challenges

- Library leaders frequently attend meetings, coordinate projects, and manage daily operations. Lack of sufficient time for personal activities may lead to fatigue and burnout.

Organizational Expectations

- Academic institutions expect library leaders to adopt new technologies, improve digital services, and contribute to institutional planning. These expectations increase professional pressure.

Stress and Mental Pressure

- Continuous workload and multiple responsibilities can lead to mental stress, which may affect both personal well-being and professional efficiency.

Strategies for Improving Work–Life Balance

Several strategies can help women leaders maintain better work–life balance.

Flexible Work Policies

- Institutions should introduce flexible working hours, remote work options, and supportive policies to help employees manage personal responsibilities.

Supportive Organizational Environment

- A positive workplace culture that encourages teamwork, collaboration, and mutual respect can reduce stress among employees.

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Professional Development Programs

- Training programs on leadership skills, stress management, and time management can help women leaders handle responsibilities effectively.

Time Management Skills

- Effective planning and prioritization of tasks can help leaders manage both professional and personal responsibilities efficiently.

Family and Social Support

- Support from family members and social networks plays an important role in reducing stress and maintaining balance.

Recommendations

The following suggestions are made in light of the study's findings:

1. Gender-sensitive working rules should be implemented by academic institutions.
2. It is necessary to provide library personnel with flexible work schedules.
3. To assist female leaders, mentorship programs had to be created.
4. Organizations ought to set up leadership and stress management training courses.
5. Workplace policies that are family-friendly ought to be promoted.

Conclusion

In the creation and administration of academic libraries, female leaders are essential. Their leadership helps educational institutions implement cutting-edge information systems, support research, and enhance library services.

But juggling work obligations with personal and family obligations is still very difficult. Stress and work-life balance are frequently impacted by heavy workloads, institutional demands, and family obligations.

This study emphasizes the value of professional development opportunities, flexible work schedules, and organizational support in assisting female leaders in striking a healthy balance between their personal and professional lives. Institutions should encourage gender equality and establish encouraging workplaces so that female leaders may carry out their responsibilities successfully.

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Enhancing work-life balance promotes academic libraries' overall productivity, effectiveness, and service quality in addition to women leaders.

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Women in Indian Higher Education and Constitutional Provisions

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Abstract

The position of women in Indian higher education has improved significantly over the past few decades. Along with social, economic, and political changes, the provisions of equality, justice, and affirmative action in the Indian Constitution have promoted women's education. This research paper examines women's participation in higher education, the challenges they face, government policies, and constitutional provisions. The paper makes it clear that although the proportion of women in higher education has increased, issues such as rural-urban disparity, social constraints, and economic difficulties persist. Therefore, there is a need for more robust policies in the future.

Introduction

Education is an effective instrument of social transformation. Women's education is essential not only for individual development but also for the overall progress of the nation. Traditionally, women in India were deprived of education. However, after independence, the Indian Constitution granted the right to equality, leading to progress in women's education. Today, women's participation in higher education in India has increased. According to the AISHE report 2022–23, approximately 21.8 million women are participating in higher education, and the Gender Parity Index is more than 1, which means that the proportion of women is higher than that of men.

Structure of the Indian Higher Education System

While studying the Indian higher education system, it becomes clear that it is not only large in terms of numbers but also structurally diverse. India is counted among the major education systems in the world, as thousands of universities, millions of students, and various types of educational institutions operate here. This system includes traditional universities, engineering and medical colleges, management institutions, open universities, as well as research centres. This vast expansion of higher education is not limited to knowledge creation but is also important for economic development, social transformation, and human capital formation.

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The structure of the Indian higher education system is multi-layered. It involves the central government, state governments, the private sector, and autonomous institutions. The University Grants Commission (UGC) plays a major role in regulating higher education, distributing funds, and ensuring quality control. In addition, the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) regulates technical education institutions. Through these bodies, standards of quality in education are determined, which are essential for maintaining the standard of higher education.

Historical and policy factors have also been important in the expansion of Indian higher education. After independence, the country considered education as a tool for nation-building and accordingly established many universities and institutions. In the later period, due to globalization and economic liberalization, the need for skill-based education increased, leading to the rapid expansion of professional and technical institutions. As a result, today the availability and accessibility of higher education in India have increased significantly.

In this broad education system, inclusivity has become an important element. Various policies have been implemented to ensure that education reaches all sections of society rather than being limited to certain classes. These include special measures for socially backward groups, economically weaker sections, and especially women. The government has made long-term efforts to reduce gender inequality in education. In this context, the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) is extremely important. This policy has been designed to bring comprehensive reforms to the Indian education system. NEP 2020 emphasizes the principle of “Education for All” and aims to develop an inclusive, flexible, and quality-oriented education system. Special emphasis has been placed on increasing access to higher education, improving the quality of education, and promoting research.

From the perspective of women’s education, NEP 2020 includes several important provisions. First, the concept of a “Gender Inclusion Fund” has been introduced to remove barriers to women’s education. Through this fund, efforts are made to provide necessary infrastructure, scholarships, and a safe educational environment for girls. Secondly, emphasis has been placed on providing special educational facilities for girls in rural and remote areas, so that geographical disparities in education can be reduced. Scholarships and financial assistance are extremely important measures for women’s education. Many girls are unable to pursue higher education due to financial difficulties. Therefore, the government has introduced various scholarship schemes that encourage girls to continue their education. Fee concessions and free education schemes are also implemented. These measures reduce financial barriers and increase access to education.

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Institutional expansion is also an important factor. Separate colleges, hostels, and safe campuses for women have been established. This increases parental confidence and provides a conducive environment for girls to pursue education. Such facilities are especially needed in rural areas, where social and cultural constraints are stronger.In addition, increasing flexibility in higher education is another important aspect of NEP 2020. Multi-disciplinary education, credit transfer systems, and online learning facilities enable students to pursue education according to their needs. This is particularly useful for women, as they have to balance family responsibilities and education.

However, despite all this progress, some challenges remain. Social norms, gender discrimination, economic inequality, and the digital divide create barriers in women's education. Particularly in rural areas, girls' education is still not given priority. Therefore, along with policy measures, a change in social mindset is necessary. Overall, the Indian higher education system is broad, multidimensional, and continuously evolving. Policies like NEP 2020 aim to make education more inclusive, equitable, and quality-oriented. The measures taken for women's education are increasing their participation, which has a positive impact on overall social development. In the future, policy continuity, effective implementation, and social awareness will be necessary to strengthen these efforts further.

Position of Women in Higher Education

Increasing Participation

In the past decade, the increase in women's participation in higher education in India has been considered an important indicator of social and educational transformation. Around 2011–12, gender inequality in higher education was clearly visible, with a higher proportion of men than women. However, by 2019–20, this gap had significantly reduced, and in some fields, women's participation has equalled or exceeded that of men.For example, in medical education today, the proportion of girls exceeds 50% in many states. Similarly, in some central universities, women's enrolment in postgraduate courses is equal to or higher than that of men.

Several factors are responsible for this change. Government scholarship schemes and incentive-based policies have made it easier for girls to pursue education. For example, post-matric scholarships or special fee concessions for girls in engineering education have encouraged girls from rural and middle-class families to move towards higher education. Scholarships for the "Single Girl Child" have also increased enrolment. Social attitudes have also changed positively. For instance, earlier in rural areas, girls' education was often

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discontinued after the 12th grade, but now many families send them to cities for undergraduate and postgraduate studies.

However, this progress is not uniform at all levels. In some remote areas, financial difficulties, safety issues, and social constraints persist. Therefore, to sustain the growth in women's participation, more effective and locally focused policies are required.

Participation across Fields

Earlier, women's participation in higher education was mainly limited to arts and commerce, but in recent times, they have made significant progress in fields such as science, technology, and management. This changing trend can be attributed to modern social perspectives, the expansion of educational opportunities, and government policies.The increasing enrolment of women in engineering is a major example. In this field, which was earlier considered male-dominated, today many technical institutions report 25–35% participation of girls. This growth has been possible due to special admission concessions and scholarships for girls in prestigious engineering colleges.In medical education, the dominance of women is clearly visible. In many medical colleges, the proportion of girls in MBBS and other courses exceeds 50%. For example, states like Maharashtra and Kerala have seen a significant increase in female enrolment.Women's presence in the research field is also increasing. In science and technology, women are actively participating in research projects, Ph.D. programs, and innovation. Overall, women's increasing participation across various fields is not just an educational change but an important indicator of social empowerment.

Economic and Social Impact

Women's higher education brings significant changes to their personal and social lives. First, education greatly increases employment opportunities for women. Educated women work across sectors—education, healthcare, administration, and industry—thereby improving their economic conditions.Second, economic independence increases women's confidence and self-respect. They can fulfil their own needs and actively participate in family financial decisions.Third, education enhances women's decision-making ability. They can make important decisions related to family, society, and career more effectively.Overall, women's higher education is not limited to individual progress but is essential for social empowerment and economic development.

Challenges in Women's Education

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In India, the biggest barriers to women's education are social in nature. Due to the patriarchal system, women are still given a secondary status, which directly affects their education. In many families, priority is given to boys' education, while girls' education is considered secondary. Early marriage is also a serious issue, due to which many girls drop out before completing higher education. Similarly, traditional social roles—such as household responsibilities and family care—limit the time and opportunities available for women's education.On the other hand, economic difficulties and educational inequality are also significant challenges. The rising cost of education, especially in higher education, is unaffordable for many families, leading to the discontinuation of girls' education. In rural areas, a lack of infrastructure, technological resources, and quality institutions creates additional difficulties. The digital divide further limits women's participation in online education. During the COVID-19 period, these issues became more severe, as many girls were deprived of education due to a lack of digital resources.

Therefore, coordinated efforts at social, economic, and technological levels are necessary to address these challenges.

Constitutional Provisions for Women's Education in India

The Indian Constitution provides a strong legal foundation for women's education and empowerment. The right to equality is a fundamental component, ensuring equal treatment before the law. Article 14 guarantees equality to all citizens, while Article 15(1) prohibits discrimination based on gender. At the same time, Article 15(3) empowers the state to make special provisions for women, enabling the implementation of affirmative policies for their advancement.From these provisions, the concept of positive discrimination has developed. Under Article 15(3), measures such as reservations, scholarship schemes, and the establishment of women's colleges are implemented. These help in providing equal opportunities and increasing women's participation in education.In terms of employment and opportunities, Article 16 ensures equal opportunity, while Article 39(d) emphasizes equal pay for equal work. Directive Principles also give special attention to women's welfare. Article 39 promotes equal opportunities for men and women, while Article 42 ensures maternity protection, which is important for women's health and safety. Education falls under the concurrent list, making both the central and state governments responsible. This enables the effective implementation of policies and better promotion of women's education.

Reservation Policy and Women's Education

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India's reservation system is considered crucial for achieving social justice and balanced development. Provisions have been made for Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBC) to ensure opportunities in education and employment. Additionally, reservations for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) reduce financial barriers in education.Along with vertical reservation, horizontal reservation for women is implemented, providing additional opportunities across all categories. This system facilitates easier access to higher education and significantly increases women's participation. It is especially beneficial for women from socially and economically backward groups, as it helps integrate them into the mainstream education system.Thus, the reservation system is not only a mechanism for ensuring equality but also an effective tool for women's empowerment and increased participation in higher education.

Government Policies and Schemes

Various schemes and policy measures have been implemented in India to promote women's education. Scholarship schemes are particularly important as they provide financial support and encourage girls to pursue higher education. Separate scholarships and financial assistance programs for girls have made it possible for many families to afford education.At the institutional level, women's universities and hostels have been established to provide a safe and supportive educational environment. In recent times, innovative initiatives have also been introduced, such as fee concessions for girls in engineering education and special scholarships to promote their participation in STEM fields. Provisions like reservation for the "Single Girl Child" have also proven effective.As a result of these initiatives, female enrolment in higher education has increased significantly, with some states recording growth of up to 30–35%. These measures not only promote education but also contribute to women's empowerment.

Future Directions

For the holistic development of women's higher education, certain fundamental and long-term measures are essential. First, expanding educational facilities in rural areas is necessary, as there is still a lack of institutions and infrastructure. Second, the expansion of digital education is required to ensure access to online learning opportunities for all students.

Third, creating safe and inclusive campuses is crucial, as safety assurance increases parental confidence and female enrolment. Additionally, focusing on skill-based education can enhance employability and economic independence.Finally, widespread awareness regarding gender equality is necessary, as true educational equality cannot be achieved

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without a change in social mindset. Coordinated implementation of these measures can lead to sustainable progress in women's higher education.

Conclusion

The position of women in Indian higher education has become significantly stronger and more influential. Constitutional provisions of equality, affirmative action, and various educational policies have expanded opportunities for women. As a result, women have not only increased their participation but have also demonstrated their capabilities across academic and professional fields.Education has positively impacted women's confidence, economic independence, and social status, contributing to the development of family, society, and the nation. However, fundamental challenges such as social norms, patriarchal mindset, economic inequality, rural-urban disparity, and digital inequality persist.Therefore, effective implementation of policies, context-based planning, and continuous evaluation are essential. Future strategies must focus on inclusivity, technology-based learning, and skill development. Expanding digital education, ensuring safe and gender-sensitive environments, and promoting social awareness are crucial.Overall, women's education is not merely a question of gender equality but a foundation for national development. An educated woman not only transforms her own life but also becomes a driving force for positive social change. Hence, prioritizing women's higher education is essential for building a progressive and balanced society.

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Analytical study on Work–Life Balance among Women Academicians: The Role of Maternity Policies and Care giving Responsibilities

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Abstract

Academic advancement, research output, and information sharing have all benefited greatly from the growing number of women enrolled in higher education institutions. However, juggling work and home responsibilities like childcare and elder care can be difficult for female academicians. As a result, work-life balance has emerged as a crucial factor affecting female faculty members' job happiness, productivity, and career advancement. This study looks at how maternity rules and care giving obligations affect women academicians' work-life balance in higher education. Using both primary and secondary data, the study uses a descriptive methodology. A systematic questionnaire was used to gather primary data from female faculty members employed by colleges and universities. Research journals, policy studies, and scholarly publications from 2020 to 2024 were the sources of secondary data.

The results show that teaching workload, research expectations, administrative obligations, and household responsibilities cause serious work-family conflicts for female academicians. Key elements that enhance work-life balance and professional satisfaction include daycare facilities, flexible work schedules, supportive maternity policies, and institutional support systems. According to the study's findings, universities need to implement gender-sensitive policies and foster inclusive workplaces that assist female faculty members during the stages of pregnancy and child caring. Gender equity in academia, increased productivity, and better well-being will all benefit from such programs.

Keywords: Gender equality, higher education, maternity regulations, work-life balance, women academicians, and caregiving duties.

Introduction

Women's participation in higher education has increased significantly in recent decades. In the fields of teaching, research, student mentorship, and institutional development, women academicians are essential. Despite these successes, female faculty members frequently face substantial obstacles in juggling their work and personal obligations. The COVID-19

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epidemic also brought attention to the difficulties experienced by female academicians, since the demands of remote instruction and increased household obligations exacerbated work-family tensions. According to studies, women faculty members had to juggle extra household obligations in addition to their academic responsibilities, which had an impact on their career progression and research productivity.

The ability of people to successfully manage their personal and professional commitments without incurring undue stress or conflict is referred to as work-life balance. Maintaining a work-life balance is especially challenging in the academic field because of the rigorous teaching schedules, research requirements, administrative duties, and ongoing professional development obligations.

Maintaining a work-life balance can be especially difficult for female academicians because of the extra duties involved in managing the home and family. Women are typically expected to do childcare, elder care, and home chores in many nations, including India. These obligations frequently coincide with their work obligations, which increases stress and role conflict.

According to recent studies, work-life balance among female faculty members can be greatly enhanced by institutional policies including maternity leave, flexible work schedules, and childcare assistance. During crucial times in their personal lives, women can continue to be productive in the classroom and experience less stress because to supportive policies. Recent research indicates that female faculty members frequently struggle to balance teaching responsibilities, research obligations, and family obligations, which can have an impact on career advancement and work satisfaction.

Examining how maternity regulations and caring obligations affect women academicians' work-life balance is crucial. Educational institutions can create policies that support female faculty members and advance gender equality in academic settings by having a better understanding of these challenges. The goal of the current study is to investigate these variables and offer solutions for establishing institutional settings that are encouraging to female academicians.

For female academicians, becoming pregnant and taking care of others is a crucial phase in their career. Work performance and career advancement may be momentarily impacted by the physical, emotional, and time responsibilities associated with pregnancy, childbirth, and childcare. Women may find it challenging to balance work and family obligations in the absence of supportive institutional regulations. Reduced research output, postponed promotions, or even quitting academic careers can result from this circumstance. Many nations and organizations have implemented work-life balance regulations and maternity benefits in order to support working women after realizing these difficulties. The Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017 increased paid maternity leave for female employees in India from 12 weeks to 26 weeks. These regulations aim to guarantee that women can fulfill their maternity obligations without jeopardizing their work and professional

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prospects. However, different universities apply these regulations differently, and many female academicians continue to have trouble finding supportive work settings.

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives are the focus of this study:

i. To investigate how women academicians view and value work-life balance.

ii. To examine how maternity policies assist female instructors in universities.

iii. To investigate how women academicians' professional performance is affected by caregiving obligations.

iv. To determine the primary obstacles that female academicians must overcome in order to preserve a work-life balance.

v. To make recommendations for ways to enhance institutional policies and support networks for female faculty members.

Review of Literature

The term "work-family conflict" was first used by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), who defined it as a scenario in which the demands of work and family roles are irreconcilable. Their study laid the theoretical groundwork for further research on work-life balance.

Work-life balance is essential for enhancing job performance and lowering stress levels, according to another study on Indian women faculty members. According to the study, the work environment for female faculty members can be greatly enhanced by supportive institutional policies including flexible schedules and childcare facilities.
The significance of parental leave laws and maternity rights in assisting female professionals has also been highlighted by academics. Good maternity policies support gender equality in the workplace and create a healthy work environment.

Furthermore, research from around the world shows that childcare obligations have a big impact on women's academic career advancement. Women typically take on more caregiving responsibilities, which may have an impact on their ability to do research and advance in their careers.
Overall, research indicates that institutional support networks and maternity policies are essential for enhancing women academicians' work-life balance.

Researchers from a variety of fields, including management, sociology, psychology, and education, have given the idea of work-life balance a lot of attention. The link between work obligations and personal commitments has been the subject of numerous studies, especially with regard to working women.

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One of the first academics to define work-family conflict was Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), who described it as a scenario in which the demands of work and family roles are irreconcilable. According to their research, people frequently find it difficult to balance work and family obligations at the same time, which causes stress and lowers performance in one or both areas.

The term "second shift" was first used by Hochschild (1997) to describe the extra caregiving and home work that women do after finishing their job responsibilities. This idea is especially pertinent to female academicians who frequently balance teaching, research, and administrative duties at work with household duties at home.

A seminal study on the influence of family formation on academic careers was carried out by Mason and Goulden (2004). According to their findings, women who had children had a far lower chance than their male counterparts of obtaining tenure posts. The study made clear how caregiving obligations can affect academic career development and research productivity.

According to Ward and Wolf-Wendel's (2012) analysis of academic moms' experiences, juggling work and childcare obligations frequently results in time limits and career difficulties. The necessity of institutional policies that assist female faculty members during the parenting stages was highlighted by their research.

The work-life balance of female academicians in the context of contemporary higher education systems has been the subject of more recent studies. Flexible work schedules, encouraging coworkers, and institutional norms greatly enhanced work-life balance, according to Gupta and Sharma's (2018) study of female faculty members in Indian colleges. Numerous research brought attention to the greater difficulties faced by female academicians during the COVID-19 epidemic. According to research by Myers et al. (2020), women researchers' productivity decreased during the pandemic as a result of taking on more childcare and domestic duties. This study highlighted how gender disparities in academics can worsen due to crises and unforeseen disruptions.

The combined obligations of remote teaching and domestic responsibilities put women academicians under more stress, according to research done during the COVID-19 pandemic. Numerous participants reported higher levels of stress and decreased productivity in their research.

According to a different study by Minello (2020), women academics with small children have trouble staying productive during lockdowns. The study highlighted how work-life balance is more challenging in remote work settings since the lines between personal and professional life are frequently blurred.

The significance of maternity policies in assisting female professionals has also been the subject of recent research. According to Jamunarani and Syed (2024), flexible work

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schedules, maternity leave policies, and childcare assistance greatly increased the job satisfaction of female faculty members in higher education institutions.

In a similar vein, Saravana Kumar and Lalitha (2024) noted that extended work hours and household duties frequently result in work-family conflict for female instructors in higher education institutions. The study suggested institutional support mechanisms like counseling services, childcare centers, and a lighter workload during pregnancy.

In their study of work-family imbalance among female administrators in higher education, Begum et al. (2024) discovered that supportive organizational cultures are essential for assisting women in juggling a variety of obligations.

Overall, research shows that a variety of factors, including as institutional policies, workplace culture, family support, and societal expectations, has an impact on women academician's work-life balance. Although flexible work schedules and maternity benefits can greatly enhance work-life balance, many universities currently lack extensive support networks for female faculty members.

Therefore, further study is needed to understand how maternity policies and caregiving obligations affect women academicians' professional experiences and how institutions might create strategies that effectively assist them.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The current study examines work-life balance among female academicians using a descriptive research design.

Sources of Data

Both primary and secondary data are used in the investigation.

Primary Data

A systematic questionnaire was used to gather primary data from female faculty members employed by higher education institutions.

Secondary Data

Secondary data gathered from:

- Scholarly publications
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- Official documents
- Online databases for research
- Documents containing institutional policies

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Sample Size

Fifty female academicians from colleges and universities participated in the survey.

Sampling Technique

Respondents were chosen using the convenience sampling approach. Tools for Data Analysis

Data Analysis Tools

Data analysis was done using:

- Analysis of percentages
- A tabular depiction
- Interpretive analysis

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Group	Number of Respondents	Percentage
25–30	12	24%
31–40	18	36%
41–50	14	28%
Above 50	6	12%

Interpretation:

The majority of respondents are between the ages of 31 and 40, suggesting that mid-career female academicians have serious issues with work-life balance.

Table 2: Key Elements Influencing Work-Life Harmony

Elements	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Workload for teachers	14	28%
Expectations for research	8	16%
childcare duties	16	32%
Household duties	7	14%
Administrative tasks	5	10%

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Interpretation:
Among female academicians, childcare obligations have the biggest impact on work-life balance.

Table 3: Maternity PoliciesAwarness

Feedback	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Completely conscious	30	60%
just somewhat aware	12	24%
Unaware	8	16%

Interpretation:

While the majority of respondents are aware of maternity regulations, some faculty members are still unaware of them.

Findings of the Study

The study produced a number of significant conclusions:

a) **Because of their professional and household commitments, women academicians frequently experience work-family conflicts:** Women in higher education frequently have to juggle several responsibilities at once. Teaching, research, meeting attendance, student guidance, and administrative tasks are all part of their professional obligations. In addition, they are expected to run the home, take care of the kids, and assist other family members. There is a tension between work and family life because these duties overlap. Many female academicians experience pressure to perform well in both professions, which can occasionally result in stress, exhaustion, and less time for personal activities. They struggle to keep a healthy balance between their personal and work lives because of this tension.

b) **The main element affecting work-life balance is childcare obligations**: One of the key elements influencing women academicians' work-life balance has been identified as childcare. It takes time, focus, and emotional engagement to care for young children. It might be challenging for female academics to attend conferences, carry out fieldwork, or dedicate additional time to research and academic pursuits when they have small children. Additionally, they could have trouble with unforeseen academic obligations like meetings or long teaching hours. Because of this, childcare responsibilities frequently reduce the amount of time and energy available for academic and professional development.

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c) **Maternity policies are crucial in helping female faculty members with their pregnancies and early childrearing:** Educational institutions' maternity policies assist women in juggling their work obligations both during and after motherhood. Women faculty members can take care of their health and their newborn child without worrying about their job security when they have adequate maternity leave. Women can return to the workforce with more assurance and stability when organizations offer paid maternity leave, health benefits, and helpful reintegration policies. These regulations also show the institution's dedication to employee welfare and gender equality, which boosts the loyalty and morale of female academicians.

d) **Flexible work schedules increase productivity and job satisfaction:** Women academicians are greatly assisted in managing their obligations by flexible working arrangements, such as flexible work schedules, fewer teaching hours during specific times, or the ability to complete academic chores from home. They can schedule their work in accordance with personal obligations and family needs thanks to flexibility. Women faculty members feel less stressed and are more satisfied with their jobs when colleges offer such supportive work environments. They can also carry out their academic responsibilities more effectively and continue to be consistently productive in their teaching and research endeavors because to this flexibility.

e) **Women are assisted in maintaining a work-life balance by institutional support, such as childcare facilities and a lighter workload during pregnancy:** In order to help women academicians attain a better work-life balance, institutional support is essential. It is easier for women to handle childcare while continuing their professional employment thanks to facilities like on-campus childcare centers. Additionally, organizations that offer short-term task modifications during pregnancy periods assist women in better managing their obligations. An inclusive workplace where women feel appreciated and encouraged in both their personal and professional responsibilities is facilitated by understanding management and supportive policies.

f) **The strain of juggling research productivity with family obligations causes stress for many female academicians:** Research papers, project work, and professional advancement are frequently prioritized in academic careers. It is expected of female academicians to balance family responsibilities with high levels of research production. It can be difficult to live up to these expectations, particularly for people who have small children or a lot of family obligations. Stress levels are frequently raised by the pressure to satisfy institutional performance requirements, attend academic conferences, and publish research papers. In order to meet these demands, some female academicians might have to give up personal time or put in more hours, which could be detrimental to their general wellbeing.

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Suggestions

The following recommendations are made in light of the findings:

a) **Strengthening maternity policy at universities:** To protect the health of female faculty members during pregnancy and the early stages of parenting, higher education institutions should create comprehensive and encouraging maternity policies. Women academicians can concentrate on their health and childcare without worrying about losing their jobs or experiencing professional losses when they have access to adequate maternity leave and financial security. Additionally, organizations should guarantee a seamless reintegration following maternity leave by providing supportive measures including opportunities for career advancement and a phased return to work. Strengthening these regulations will motivate women to pursue higher education while successfully juggling family obligations.

b) **Remote work choices and flexible work schedules for female faculty members during pregnancy and childcare:** Offering flexible work schedules can greatly assist female academicians in juggling their obligations to their families and their careers. During maternity and early childcare periods, institutions can provide flexible teaching schedules, online academic meetings, and remote employment possibilities for administrative and research responsibilities. Women faculty members can continue to be productive without sacrificing their family responsibilities because to this flexibility, which also lowers stress. Additionally, this strategy fosters a welcoming workplace that recognizes the special requirements of female employees.

c) **Setting up daycare centers in colleges and institutions:** Offering childcare services inside or close to educational institutions is one of the best methods to empower female academicians. Women faculty members can concentrate on teaching, research, and administrative tasks while taking care of their children's safety and wellbeing thanks to on-campus childcare facilities. Additionally, having access to trustworthy childcare services lowers absenteeism and boosts productivity. Businesses that make such investments show a strong dedication to gender-inclusive workplace policies and employee welfare.

d) **Developing institutional policies that are gender-sensitive to support work-life balance:** Gender-sensitive policies that acknowledge the difficulties experienced by female academicians in juggling work and personal obligations should be adopted by educational institutions. These regulations might include methods to address gender-related issues in the workplace, supportive leadership, and equitable opportunities for professional growth. Institutions should encourage female faculty members to actively participate in academic and administrative activities while maintaining a healthy work-life balance by fostering an inclusive and courteous work environment.

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e) **Offering mentorship programs to help women academicians advance their careers:** The professional development of female faculty members can be greatly aided by mentoring programs. Academicians with experience can help younger female scholars with academic networking, career planning, and research activity management. Women who receive this kind of mentoring are better able to overcome obstacles in the workplace, develop their confidence, and progress in their careers. Additionally, it cultivates a collaborative and supportive culture in academic institutions.

f) **Encouraging work-life balance and gender equality awareness initiatives:** Workshops, seminars, and awareness campaigns on work-life balance and gender equality should be held at universities and colleges. By teaching administrators and professors on gender-related issues, these programs can contribute to the development of a more compassionate and encouraging work environment. Raising awareness creates shared responsibility for upholding a balanced workplace, lessens gender bias, and fosters respect for one another.

g) **Lessening the administrative burden on female faculty members during pregnancy:** Institutions should think about temporarily limiting the administrative duties given to female faculty members during maternity and early childcare periods. This change enables them to concentrate on crucial teaching and research tasks without feeling overly stressed. By offering this kind of assistance, organizations enable female academicians to successfully balance their personal obligations with their professional involvement.

Conclusion

For female academicians in higher education institutions, work-life balance is still a major concern. Career advancement, productivity, and job happiness can all be negatively impacted by the conflicting demands of professional work and family caregiving. The study emphasizes the significance of flexible work schedules, institutional support networks, and maternity policies in enhancing the work-life balance of female faculty members.

Institutions of higher learning must implement comprehensive gender-sensitive policies that acknowledge the particular difficulties experienced by female academicians. In addition to enhancing the wellbeing of female faculty members, offering flexible work schedules, maternity benefits, and childcare assistance will advance academic institutions as a whole.

Ensuring gender equality and empowering women academicians to realize their full potential in teaching, research, and leadership requires fostering inclusive academic settings.

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Beyond Silence: Preventing Workplace Harassment and Building Safer Campuses

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Abstract

Harassment at the workplace is a major issue for universities, which affects students, teachers, and employees. It can be categorized as sexual harassment, bullying, discrimination, and misuse of authority. The effects of harassment are long-lasting for both the victim and the academic institution. The victim suffers from mental trauma, loss of confidence, and an impact on their academic or professional growth. Similarly, academic institutions also suffer due to loss of trust, productivity, and their reputation.The paper aims to discuss the measures that can be taken by universities to prevent harassment at their institutions. The paper also aims to discuss the role of power relations and social hierarchies in the context of harassment. By taking appropriate measures to prevent harassment, academic institutions can not only protect their students or employees but also strengthen their academic community as a whole. The academic community can be made better by addressing the issue of harassment openly and taking appropriate measures to prevent it.

Keywords: workplace harassment, safe campuses, higher education policy, institutional accountability, gender equality, counselling support, university culture, discrimination prevention, reporting mechanisms, academic environment

Introduction

Universities are supposed to be learning, research, and growth institutions where people of diverse social, cultural, and academic backgrounds come together. Ideally, universities are supposed to be environments that promote learning, intellectual growth, creativity, and critical thinking. Despite all the positive ideals surrounding universities, the issue of harassment remains a serious concern in the context of higher learning institutions. Not only does harassment compromise the security of the student body, the teaching staff, and the non-academic staff, but it also impacts the quality of their performance.

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What is Workplace Harassment?

Generally, workplace harassment refers to unwelcome behaviours in the workplace that cause a hostile, intimidating, or offensive environment. Workplace harassment may include sexual harassment, bullying, discrimination based on social identity factors, and abuse of hierarchical power. Harassment victims may suffer from increased levels of stress, anxiety, decreased productivity, and in severe cases, complete withdrawal from academic or professional life.

The international debate on gender equality, the growing international movement against sexual harassment, and international law have all pointed to the need for higher education institutions to address the problem of harassment in universities in a more effective manner. It is not enough to have policies in place; rather, a comprehensive approach is necessary. This paper seeks to discuss institutional policies and strategies in the context of preventing workplace harassment in universities.

Literature Review

Research carried out on workplace harassment has shown that mobbing and bullying are common issues in many organizations that can lead to a hostile environment. Such practices in organizations can be a result of power imbalances in the institution. The practices can include repeated intimidation and abuse. Such practices have negative effects on individuals and the organization. Hence, the importance of effective preventive measures in organizations (Branch et al., 2007).Sexual harassment in academic environments is a common phenomenon in academic environments. Sexual harassment in academic environments mainly takes place in environments where there is a hierarchical relationship between individuals. Research carried out by Clancy and colleagues revealed that many students and junior researchers were subjected to harassment and assault during academic fieldwork. The perpetrators were mainly individuals in authority. The perpetrators dissuaded the victims from reporting the abuse (Clancy et al., 2014).

The policies in institutions also play a crucial part in the prevention of harassment. In the context of India's higher learning institutions, policies against sexual harassment in the form of internal complaints committees have been put in place to address such issues and raise awareness. The implementation of these policies remains a challenge in many institutions that lack enforcement and awareness among their staff and students (Biswal, 2016).

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Overall, the literature indicates that for successful prevention of workplace harassment, a number of factors are involved, including cultural change, policies, and awareness, among others. In addition, universities must go beyond symbolic commitments and ensure that they have effective mechanisms in place for the protection of their entire academic community.

Understanding Workplace Harassment in Academia

Workplace harassment in academia is a complex phenomenon with social, cultural, and hierarchical determinants. Workplace harassment in academia can take many forms, such as verbal abuse, intimidation, discrimination, and microaggressions, among others. Understanding different types of harassment, such as gender-based, racial, and identity-based harassment, among others, is a fundamental concept in developing effective prevention strategies for workplace harassment in academia. Understanding power relationships in a university setting is a fundamental concept in developing effective prevention strategies for workplace harassment in academia.

Sexual Harassment

One of the most prevalent cases of misconduct in the university setting is sexual harassment. This is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, comments, coercion, or the abuse of power or authority. The power relationship that exists in the academic setting, such as the relationship between a professor and a student or a senior and a junior, may make the victim more vulnerable to sexual harassment. This is the situation that makes it difficult for the victim to report the case of sexual harassment that he or she is subjected to.

The effect of sexual harassment on the victim is a multifaceted one. The victim may experience emotional distress that may result in a loss of self-confidence. This may affect the academic performance of the victim.

Bullying and Psychological Harassment

Bullying is a series of actions or behaviour that is intended to intimidate, belittle, or humiliate another individual. In a university setting, bullying may manifest itself in a number of different ways. Unlike other forms of misconduct that can easily be identified and reported, such as sexual harassment, bullying can sometimes pass unnoticed since it can happen in daily interactions and practices. Bullying can affect a person's confidence and academic performance. Over time, it can lead to a hostile environment that can affect one's participation and development in a professional setting. Therefore, in this regard, the need to address the issue of bullying in a university setting cannot be overstated

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Discrimination and Identity-Based Harassment

There are many issues, for instance, gender discrimination, caste, race, ethnicity, religion, or disabilities, which still exist. Faculty, students, or staff from a minority group can face microaggressions, discriminatory assessment, or lack of opportunities. The theory of intersectionality refers to the effect of harassment due to aspects of social identity, which are unique for every marginalized social group. This is a negative influence on the individuals' sense of belonging, psychological well-being, and growth as a person. This can hinder the growth of the individuals' professional lives, thereby promoting inequalities within the system.

Consequences of Harassment

There are major consequences of harassment, both for the individual and the academic institution. The individual may suffer from a high level of stress, anxiety, as well as decreased productivity in academic or professional work. Harassment can lead to a negative reputation for the academic institution, legal action, as well as the erosion of trust within the academic community. It can also lead to a hostile academic environment, which can undermine academic excellence, talent, as well as innovation. Thus, the issue of harassment is not only a moral imperative, but it is also essential for the creation of a positive academic culture**.**

Importance of Institutional Policy Frameworks

Institutional policies are a major contributing factor to the prevention of incidents of harassment, as they create a framework that guides the behaviour of all members of the university community. The policies also outline the procedures to be followed when a case of harassment is reported, which ensures that the case is handled fairly, transparently, and expeditiously. Thiscontributes to the creation of a safe working environment for all, as individuals can concentrate on their growth without the fear of being harassed. Institutional policy frameworks are essential, as they demonstrate the commitment of the university to the protection of women, as well as vulnerable members of the community, from the vice of harassment. The policies are a foundation for the creation of awareness, which is essential for the prevention of the vice, as opposed to a reactive approach. The culture of respect, equality, and inclusivity is essential for the achievement of excellence within the higher learning institutions.

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Clarity and Scope

Policies that are clear in their writing include clear explanations and examples of harassment. It is essential that policies include all individuals in the institution, from faculty to staff and students. There is a need for policies that address all issues, both direct and indirect harassment, including any power imbalances that may exist in the institution. A clear policy helps individuals understand their rights and the institution's responsibilities in dealing with harassment. In addition, clear policies help create a framework for accountability, fair investigation procedures, and trust among individuals that the institution is working towards a safe and respectful academic environment.

Accessibility and Awareness

The policies must be accessible and effectively communicated to the entire academic community. This can be done by incorporating these awareness initiatives into orientation programs, workshops, university websites, and ongoing training activities. This is a critical component since it ensures that all individuals in the academic community are able to clearly understand their rights and responsibilities. Moreover, periodic awareness campaigns, seminars, and educational activities may be used to normalize these policies among the individuals in the academic community without any stigma attached to them. This will help individuals feel free to report any cases without any fear of retaliation or victimization. This promotes a culture of transparency and understanding among individuals in the academic community, where everyone feels empowered to contributeto a safe and supportive academic environment. This will be reinforced by periodic reviews and updates on the information pertaining to the policies.

Reporting Mechanisms and Confidentiality

Confidentiality is another crucial issue that motivates victims of bullying to report bullying without any fear of reprisal or embarrassment. This is because when individuals are aware that their information will be kept confidential, they will be encouraged to report bullying and seek assistance accordingly.

Additionally, it is also important that the policy outlines clear reporting procedures that are easy for individuals to follow when filing a complaint. This is crucial in helping victims of bullying understand where they can report bullying, thus creating a safer environment within the university.

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Alignment with Legal Standards

The policies of institutions need to be aligned with national labour laws, anti-harassment acts, and human rights legislation. Such an alignment is important to ensure the accountability of institutions while also providing an additional layer of protection to the victims of harassment. Moreover, such an alignment would enable institutions to adopt standardized legal procedures while dealing with complaints of harassment. Additionally, adherence to legal standards would also enhance the credibility of the policies adopted by institutions while also ensuring that victims have access to legal remedies

Institutional Mechanisms for Prevention and Response

In addition to these policies that a university has in place for dealing with harassment cases, it is also important that the university ensures that it has in place mechanisms that are effective for the implementation of these policies. This may include the creation of offices or cells for dealing with harassment cases or the creation of posts for officers that deal with these issues. It is also important that the university organizes regular training sessions for creating awareness among students, faculty, and staff about their rights and responsibilities in dealing with these issues. Such mechanisms not only help in the implementation of these policies effectively, but they also help in creating a culture of accountability and transparency. By creating mechanisms that provide avenues for reporting harassment cases, investigation mechanisms, and support for victims of harassment, universities can help create a culture where individuals feel safe, heard, and respected.

Grievance and Complaints Committees

Grievance committees are the main bodies charged with handling cases of grievances within the university. These are usually made up of different members who are trained in a way that they can resolve cases of grievances in a sensitive manner. This shows that the university is committed to ensuring that its members are accountable for their actions, and for the victims, they have a platform where they can report their cases without fear of reprisal. In addition, grievance committees are important in ensuring that they recommend measures that will ensure a culture of trust within the academic community, thus showing their dedication to a respectful environment within the university.

Awareness and Training Programs

It is imperative that workshops and seminars be held at regular intervals to spread awareness about issues like harassment and consent. This will help prevent the normalization

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of any kind of inappropriate or harmful behaviour. It will also help in building a culture that is respectful and considerate. This will help in building a safe and enabling environment in the university, where individuals are aware of their rights and responsibilities. It will help in creating a community that is considerate and respectful. This will be achieved over a period of time by holding workshops and seminars on these issues. It will help in building a culture that is safe for all.

Counselling and Support Services

Emotional support is also very important for the victims of harassment. The institutions need to provide access to professional counsellors and legal advice in a very confidential manner. These services are very helpful for coping with the emotional consequences of harassment and helping the victims heal from these experiences. Besides that, universities also need to offer safe spaces, peer support groups, and access to external mental health practitioners if needed. The enhancement of these support services is also a demonstration of commitment to the dignity, empowerment, and well-being of individuals who are harassed.

Challenges in Implementing Policies

Despite the effectiveness of the policies, there are a number of challenges that have to be overcome for the policies to work:

- Underreporting: There is a fear of retaliation, social stigmatization, or hierarchical pressures that may cause victims not to report the harassment.
- Cultural Norms: There are certain behaviours SS that are normalized within the academic environment, which may not necessarily lend themselves to the effectiveness of the policies.
- Institutional Bias: The hierarchical structure of the academic environment, as well as relationships, may not always favour a fair hearing.
- Resource Limitations: There are resource limitations, as some institutions are too small to have the resources needed for the implementation of the policies.
- Intersectional Vulnerabilities: There are individuals who are more vulnerable due to their intersectional identities, which may cause them challenges when reporting the harassment.

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- Lack of Awareness: There may not be full awareness of the policies, which may cause the policies to fail.
- Resistance to Change: There may be a lack of willingness to change, which may cause the policies to fail.
- Monitoring and Evaluation Gaps: There may not be a system for tracking the effectiveness of the policies, which may cause them to fail.

Best Practices and Global Perspective

Universities all over the world are implementing new and unique strategies to address and curb the menace of harassment and create a safer and more inclusive environment for all students and staff.

- Mandatory Training: Many universities make training a part of their policy and require all students and staff to undergo training in sexual harassment and gender issues. This ensures that everyone in the academic community is aware and sensitive to the issues and behaves in a manner that is conducive and respectful to all.
- Confidential Reporting Tools: Harassed students can use these tools to report the incident in a secure and anonymous manner. This ensures that the victims do not fear backlash and can report the incidents in a timely manner.
- Bystander Intervention Programs: Such programs empower students and staff to take an active part in curbing the menace instead of just being bystanders and witnesses. The students and staff can intervene in a safe and secure manner in cases of harassment that they witness.
- Intersectional Policies: The policies and regulations in some universities address issues such as gender, caste, disability, ethnicity, and other factors that affect individuals differently.

Strategies for Creating Safer Campuses

Ensuring a safe campus does not only mean the formulation of policies; it requires a continuous institutional commitment and active efforts:

- Policy Review: It is imperative that policies are reviewed from time to time based on the changing values of society, research outcomes, and legal requirements.

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- Training and Awareness: It is important that awareness programs are integrated into staff and student orientation programs and staff development programs.
- Transparent Reporting: It is Imperative that reporting mechanisms are easily accessible, confidential, and free from retaliation.
- Support Services: Universities must provide support services for victims.
- Leadership Engagement: It is imperative that the leadership actively endorses anti-harassment programs.
- Cultural Change: It is imperative that a culture of respect, equality, and inclusiveness is promoted in academic and social activities.
- Use of Digital Reporting and Monitoring Systems: Many universities are now using online complaint systems for efficient reporting.
- Gender Sensitization and Bystander Programs: Many universities are now using gender sensitization programs that empower students and staff to identify harassment incidents and intervene safely.

The implementation of these strategies enhances the integrity of the institution and provides a safe environment for all members of the campus.

Conclusion

The impact of harassment in the workplace reduces the value and significance of human dignity, equity, and productivity in higher education institutions. While policies are relevant, these need to be supplemented by awareness programs, counselling services, and training programs. In addition, there needs to be a strong commitment from the leadership of higher education institutions. In order to “go beyond silence,” active listening and action are required in supporting victims of harassment. Various approaches need to be employed that not only protect individuals but also benefit the overall higher education institutions in terms of excellence. A safe environment is required for higher education institutions to foster creativity, innovation, and social justice. Moreover, monitoring, feedback, and research on various instances of harassment can also help higher education institutions strengthen their policies and adapt accordingly. This way, higher education institutions can ensure that all individuals, especially women and other marginalized groups, are provided with equitable, empowering, and supportive academic environments.

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Intersectionality: Caste, Class, Race, Disability, and Higher Education Access: Special reference to Botany Field

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Abstract

Globally, women's representation in higher education has increased rapidly, leading to a dramatic rise in female labor force participation. In India, despite achieving gender parity in access to higher education, progress in closing gender gaps in the labor force remains unsatisfactory. Similar to enrollments in higher education, the percentage of women who pursue careers in higher education as faculty also reflects gender parity within faculty compositions. Women's representation in senior academic positions, however, is negligible, with less than 10% of institutions led by women and fewer than 30% holding professor positions. This paper reviews the Intersectionality in higher education access, particularly within biological sciences like botany, involves the overlapping, simultaneous effects of caste, class, race, and disability that create unique, often hidden barriers for marginalized students and faculty. In the Indian context, botanyas a field involving both theoretical studies and intensive field-based workexhibits specific structural challenges where caste, socio-economic class, and ability intersect to impact participation. Intersectionality provides a critical framework for understanding that women's experiences in higher education leadership are not uniform but are shaped by the compounding effects of caste, class, race, and disability. In the context of India, for instance, a Dalit woman faces unique, layered discrimination that differs from that of an upper-caste woman, combining gender-based oppression with caste-based systemic exclusion. These overlapping identities create distinct barriers to accessing higher education and reaching decision-making positions

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Intersectionality in botany and higher education reveals that women's leadership is not hindered by gender alone, but by compounding structural inequalities based on caste, class, race, and disability. In the Indian academic context, women from marginalized communities—such as Dalit or Adivasi backgrounds—or those with disabilities face "360-degree Intersectionality spheres," where multiple identities create unique, often overlapping, barriers that prevent access to leadership roles.

Overview:

Higher education in India has witnessed significant expansion, yet marginalized groups, particularly women, continue to face barriers to access and success. Botany, a field with significant implications for food security, climate change, and human well-being, is no exception. This paper explores the intersectional dynamics of caste, class, race, and disability in shaping access to higher education and women leadership in Botany.

Globally, women today enjoy access to higher education that their mothersand grandmothers could only dream about. Over the past few decades,women's higher education attainment has rapidly increased worldwide. Therepresentation of women in higher education has tripled globally between1995 and 2018 (UNESCO, 2020). Since the beginning of the twentieth century, in the USA and several developed countries, women have benefitted from educational attainment, leading to a dramatic increase in female laborforce participation in their countries.

This paper examines the intersectional barriers to higher education access and women leadership in Botany, focusing on caste, class, race, and disability. Using a qualitative approach, we analyze the experiences of marginalized women in Botany departments across India. Our findings highlight the compounding effects of intersectional identities on educational outcomes, career advancement, and leadership opportunities. We argue that addressing these barriers requires a nuanced understanding of intersectionality and a commitment to inclusive policies.

The term Intersectionality has been recently imported into Indianacademia. The application of an intersectional theoretical framework within studies of Indian higher

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education is still in its early stages of development (Gaikwad & Pandey, 2022; Dhawan et al., 2023).

Theoretical Framework:

Intersectionality Conceptualizing Intersectionality: Intersectionality recognizes that individuals' experiences are shaped by multiple, intersecting social identities (Crenshaw, 1989).Caste, Class, Race, and Disability: These categories intersect to produce unique experiences of marginalization (Gupta, 2014; Ghosh, 2015).

Key Intersectionality Dimensions in Botany Higher Education:

- **Caste and Class (Socio-economic Status):** Socially disadvantaged groups, particularly Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST), are underrepresented in science, facing gaps of 12-18% compared to general category students. Many upper-caste students and faculty dominate prestigious research institutions, creating "upper-caste only" lab environments. This is compounded by class: students from lower economic backgrounds often lack access to the coaching or English-language skills needed for premier institutions.
- **Intersection of Caste, Gender, and Fieldwork:** Female students from lower-caste and lower-class backgrounds face "double jeopardy," experiencing reduced participation in higher education despite affirmative action policies. In botany, which heavily relies on field trips and rural exploration, gendered safety concerns combine with caste-based vulnerabilities, restricting the mobility of female students from marginalized communities.
- **Disability and Caste:** The combination of caste-based discrimination and disability creates aggravated forms of exclusion. In science education, disabled individuals often face systemic barriers, including a lack of accessible infrastructure, non-

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inclusive field methods, and lack of awareness about assistive technologies, which are rarely addressed in combination with social identity.

- **Race and Nationality (Global Context):** In global botany and life sciences, students of color and those from marginalized backgrounds often face a chilly climate, reducing their sense of belonging, which contributes to lower retention in STEM fields.

Impact on Higher Education Access:

- **"Merit" and Institutional Culture:** In many Indian science institutions, upper-caste dominance is often protected by narrow definitions of "merit". Dalit and SC/ST students may face discrimination in interviews, with their intellectual competence questioned, leading to lower enrollment and higher attrition rates.
- **Language and Social Capital:** The emphasis on English proficiency can alienate students from vernacular backgrounds, who often intersect with lower socioeconomic status and rural caste backgrounds.
- **The "Hidden" Lab Culture:** The lack of representation among faculty—with very few SC/ST professors in top research institutes—means that minority students often lack mentors who understand their unique challenges.

Botany Field and STEM Challenges

Disability and Caste: The combination of caste-based discrimination and disability creates severe hurdles, as intersectional studies in South India show. Disabled women often face greater isolation in science fields where access to field research or laboratory infrastructure is not always inclusive.

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Leadership and Authority: Women from marginalized backgrounds in academic leadership, including botany, often face "360-degree intersectionality spheres" that challenge their expertise and authority.

"Cultural Taxation": Women from marginalized backgrounds often bear a higher burden of service-related tasks (mentorship, committee work) than their counterparts, known as "identity taxation," which limits their time for research and promotion.

Access to Higher Education and Leadership

Rural-Urban Divide: Rural-based, first-generation learners face profound inequalities due to economic and social constraints in accessing higher education.

Invisibilization: Despite their potential, women with marginalized identities are often invisible in senior leadership roles.

Resilience and Leadership Development: Intersectional challenges compel some women to develop key leadership skills (negotiation, coalition-building, and empathy) earlier in their careers as they navigate hostile environments.

Addressing these inequities requires transforming higher education environments into more inclusive spaces that recognize the unique, compounded hurdles faced by women of color, lower-caste, and disabled researchers.

The study also highlights the importance of inclusive policies in promoting diversity and inclusion in higher education. This includes policies addressing intersectional identities, providing mentorship and support programs, and improving infrastructure to support women with disabilities.

Policy Implications:

Develop and implement inclusive policies addressing intersectional identities.

Establish mentorship programs for marginalized women in Botany.

Improve infrastructure to support women with disabilities.

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Provide sensitization programs for faculty and staff on intersectionality and inclusive practices.

- **Recommendations**

Mentorship Programs: Establish mentorship programs for marginalized women in Botany. Inclusive Policies. Develop policies addressing intersectional identities and promoting diversity.

Infrastructure Development: Improve infrastructure to support women with disabilities.

Future Research Directions:

Conduct quantitative studies to examine the prevalence of intersectional barriers in higher education.

Explore the experiences of women in other STEM fields.

Develop and evaluate interventions aimed at promoting diversity and inclusion in higher education.

Conclusion:

An intersectional approach in botanical education is necessary to move beyond treating marginalized identities as separate, allowing for policies that address the specific, compound, and often contradictory barriers faced by individuals holding multiple marginalized identities (e.g., a disabled, female, lower-caste student).We recommend inclusive policies, sensitization programs, and infrastructure development to promote diversity and inclusion, particularly for women leadership.

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From Margins to Academia: Narratives of Womanhood and Educational Access with Reference to Bama's *Karukku*

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Women in Higher Education: Access, Equity, and Academic Leadership

Abstract

This paper examines the complex relationship between womanhood, marginality, and access to education through a detailed analysis of Bama's autobiographical work *Karukku*. Within the frameworks of Dalit feminism and intersectionality, the study explores how caste and gender intersect to shape the educational experiences of marginalised women in India. The paper argues that *Karukku* not only documents systemic discrimination within educational and religious institutions but also presents education as a transformative force that fosters resistance, self-realisation, and identity formation. Through a close textual analysis, the study highlights how narratives of marginalised women challenge dominant discourses and demand inclusivity in academic spaces. Ultimately, the paper underscores the importance of integrating such narratives into mainstream academic discourse to create a more equitable educational system.

Keywords: Bama, Karukku, Womanhood, Educational Access, Dalit Feminism, Intersectionality, Marginality, Resistance, Identity

Introduction

Education is widely recognised as a powerful instrument of social transformation, offering individuals the opportunity to transcend socio-economic limitations and achieve empowerment. However, access to education is not equally distributed across different social groups. In India, deeply entrenched structures of caste and patriarchy continue to restrict educational opportunities for marginalised communities, particularly women. The intersection of caste and gender creates a unique set of challenges that shape the experiences of Dalit women in profound ways.

Stories from marginalized women help reveal these problems. They show what it's really like to face exclusion, discrimination, and to be resilient—things often missing from mainstream discussions. Karukku by Bama is an important example. First published in Tamil in 1992, it is a key work in Dalit literature and gives a direct, honest look at the author's life as a Dalit Christian woman.

The title *Karukku*, which refers to the serrated edges of palm leaves, symbolises both pain and resilience. The narrative is characterised by its fragmented structure, reflecting the

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complexities of lived experience. Through her autobiographical account, Bama critiques social, educational, and religious institutions that perpetuate inequality and marginalisation.

This paper analyses how *Karukku* represents the journey of a marginalised woman navigating the challenges of educational access. It examines how education functions as both a site of oppression and a means of empowerment, and how Bama's narrative contributes to a broader understanding of womanhood and marginality. By situating the text within the frameworks of intersectionality and Dalit feminism, the study aims to highlight the transformative potential of education while also exposing its limitations within an unequal society.

Objectives of the Study

1. To critically analyse the representation of education in *Karukku*.
2. To examine the intersection of caste and gender in shaping the protagonist's experiences.
3. To explore the role of education in fostering resistance and self-awareness.
4. To understand narrative as a tool for articulating marginalised womanhood.
5. To evaluate the implications of Bama's narrative for inclusive educational practices.

Theoretical Framework

This study uses the ideas of **intersectionality** and **Dalit feminism**. Intersectionality, introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw, shows how social categories like race, class, and gender connect and create overlapping discrimination. In India, caste is a key part of identity that, along with gender, shapes the lives of Dalit women.

Dalit feminism questions both mainstream feminism and dominant caste views by focusing on the unique experiences of Dalit women. Scholars like Sharmila Rege highlight how important Dalit women's stories are for understanding caste and gender oppression. This approach fits well for studying Karukku, since it centers on a Dalit woman facing many kinds of marginalization.

Paulo Freire's idea of education as a way to achieve freedom also helps us see how education can be transformative in this story. Freire believes education should help people understand their society and question unfair systems.

Analysis

1. Education as a Site of Exclusion and Discrimination

In *Karukku,* education is shown as both promising and problematic. It offers hope for empowerment, but is also a place where caste discrimination happens again and again. Bama shares her school experiences, where she becomes very aware of her caste and the stigma that comes with it.

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Teachers and peers often treat her differently, reinforcing a sense of inferiority. The curriculum itself is disconnected from the realities of marginalised communities, further alienating students like Bama. These experiences highlight how educational institutions, rather than being neutral spaces, are embedded within broader social hierarchies.

The story shows that just having access to education does not mean everyone is treated equally. Even in the classroom, Dalit students face both obvious and hidden discrimination, which makes it hard for them to take part fully in learning.

2. Intersection of Caste and Gender

One of the central themes of *Karukku* is the intersection of caste and gender. As a Dalit woman, Bama faces a dual burden of oppression. While caste determines her social position, gender shapes the expectations placed upon her behaviour and aspirations.

The narrative represents how patriarchal norms restrict women's access to education, often prioritising domestic responsibilities over academic pursuits. At the same time, caste-based discrimination limits opportunities and reinforces social boundaries. This intersectional perspective highlights the inadequacy of analysing gender or caste in isolation.

Bama's experiences demonstrate that educational access is not merely a matter of institutional availability but is deeply influenced by social and cultural factors. The interplay of caste and gender creates barriers that are both structural and psychological, affecting the confidence and self-perception of marginalised women.

3. Awakening and Critical Consciousness

Despite the challenges she faces, education plays a crucial role in Bama's intellectual and emotional development. Through her engagement with literature and learning, she begins to question the injustices she encounters—this process of questioning marks the emergence of critical consciousness.

Education helps Bama see that what she goes through is not just her own problem but part of a bigger system of oppression. This realisation changes her, moving her from just accepting things to actively resisting them. The narrative thus shows how important education is for building awareness and critical thinking.

However, this awakening is not without conflict. As Bama becomes more aware of social injustices, she also becomes more disillusioned with the institutions that perpetuate them. This tension between awareness and disillusionment recurs throughout the narrative.

4. Narrative as a Form of Resistance

The act of writing *Karukku* itself is a powerful form of resistance. By sharing her experiences, Bama challenges dominant narratives that marginalise Dalit voices. The text disrupts conventional literary forms, employing a fragmented, nonlinear structure that reflects the complexities of lived experience.

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Through her narrative, Bama reclaims her identity and asserts her agency. She refuses to conform to societal expectations and instead creates a space for her voice within the literary and academic landscape. This act of storytelling is both personal and political, highlighting the transformative power of narrative.

The text also serves as a collective voice for marginalised communities, bringing attention to issues that are often ignored or silenced. In this sense, *Karukku* transcends individual experience and becomes a broader commentary on social inequality.

5. Transformative Potential of Education

While *Karukku* critiques the limitations of educational institutions, it also highlights the transformative potential of education. For Bama, education becomes a means of achieving self-respect and independence. It enables her to challenge oppressive norms and assert her identity.

The narrative suggests that education, when combined with critical awareness, can serve as a powerful tool for social change. It allows individuals to question authority, resist injustice, and envision alternative possibilities. Bama's journey from a marginalised background to becoming a writer and intellectual exemplifies this transformative potential.

However, the narrative also emphasises that education alone is not sufficient to dismantle systemic inequalities. Structural changes are necessary to create a truly inclusive and equitable educational system.

6. Critique of Religious and Academic Institutions

An important aspect of *Karukku* is its critique of religious institutions, particularly the Church. Despite its emphasis on equality and compassion, the Church is depicted as perpetuating caste hierarchies. Bama's disillusionment with the Church reflects a broader critique of institutions that fail to uphold their professed values.

Similarly, academic institutions are criticised for their lack of inclusivity. The absence of representation and the persistence of discriminatory practices create an environment that is often hostile to marginalised individuals. These critiques highlight the need for systemic reform in both religious and educational institutions.

7. From Margins to Academia: A Journey of Resilience

The central theme of this paper, 'the journey from margins to academia', is vividly illustrated in *Karukku*. Bama's life story is one of resilience and determination. Despite facing numerous obstacles, she perseveres and uses education as a means of transformation.

Her journey is not linear but is marked by संघर्ष, disillusionment, and self-discovery. It reflects the broader experiences of marginalised women who navigate complex social realities in their pursuit of education. This journey underscores the importance of support systems, representation, and inclusive practices in facilitating access to education.

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Conclusion

Karukku is an important book that gives deep insights into how womanhood, marginalization, and access to education connect. Through her story, Bama reveals the deep inequalities faced by marginalized women and also shows how education can help bring change.

The study demonstrates that education is both a site of oppression and a means of empowerment. While it can reproduce social hierarchies, it can also challenge and transform them. The key lies in creating educational environments that are inclusive, equitable, and responsive to the needs of marginalised communities.

Incorporating narratives like *Karukku* into academic discourse is essential for fostering a more nuanced understanding of social inequality. Such narratives not only enrich literary studies but also contribute to broader discussions on education, policy, and social justice. Ultimately, the journey from margins to academia is not just about access but about recognition, dignity, and the right to be heard.

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Work-Life Balance of Women in Higher Education: Challenges, Determinants, and Impacts

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Abstract:

Work-life balance (WLB) has emerged as a critical concern for women professionals in the 21st century, particularly those serving in the higher education sector. Historically, women's roles were largely confined to domestic spheres, with employment limited to factories, farms, or shops for those who were hired. Access to higher education was a luxury often dependent on the attitudes of fathers or husbands. However, the emergence of the fast-growing knowledge economy has fundamentally shifted this paradigm, empowering women through higher instruction and providing them with robust career opportunities. In this modern era, brainpower is the requisite skill rather than physical force, allowing women to enter every industry on par with their male counterparts. Despite these advancements, the "nurturing" or "care-giving" roles remain deeply entrenched as feminine responsibilities. Women are now "wearing multiple hats," attempting to manage high-pressure careers while fulfilling traditional household duties. This "double burden" creates significant pressure, as the workload from both domains often overlaps, leading to a "time-squeeze" where personal well-being is often sacrificed.

This paper examines the dimensions, challenges, and implications of work-life balance for women academics, drawing on empirical studies conducted in various Indian regions. The research identifies that while teaching is often viewed as a preferred profession for women, it carries significant stressors, including heavy workloads, research pressures, and the dual burden of domestic responsibilities.

Keywords: Work Life Balance, Women in Higher Education, Components, Challenges, Consequences

Introduction:

Work life balance means balancing the personal life and work life. It is the equilibrium in between work life and professional life. Work life balance is the interaction between work and

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other activities that include family, community, leisure, social obligations, health and personal development. Work-life balance is a state where the tensions between the work-life and personal life is minimized by having proper policies, supportive management, provisions at work place and good relations in personal life. Performance and job satisfaction of the employees are said to be affected by work-life balance. Work-life balance of employees helps in reducing the stress level at work and increases job satisfaction.

Organizations have realized the importance of work-life balance with respect to the productivity and the creativity of the employees. Employers are now offering flexible working hours, team outing health care centres, day care centres to motivate the employees to work efficiently. As a result employees feel motivated and become loyal and committed towards the organization as it puts an extra effort to strike a healthy balance between work and life.

Objectives of Study:

1) To study the work life balance of women in higher education.
2) To study the challenges that the women faces in higher education to maintain WLB.
3) To study the work life balance components and consequences of Work life balance
4) To study the strategies to improve a good work life balance among women in higher education.

Literature Review:

1. Dr. Veenalatha K. (2019) focused in her research paper that when someone is spending more energy in one life that is work life than the personal life then stress occurs in their life. Here author described the work stress among the employees and how they face the problem of work life balance in their life and also how they overcome it also by adopting various work stress related coping strategies and work life balance initiatives.
2. Payal Mahendrasinh Mahida & Ms. Suchita Chauhan (2023) focused in their study that women face various problems in their personal life as well as professional life and she has to handle it efficiently and Work-life balance is one of the most challenging issues being faced by the women employees in the 21st century. This problem is more for women employees because of the type of roles they play at home and the spillover of personal life over work life and vice-versa. Work life balance for women employees is highly desirable, if there is no job satisfaction & consistency in life, it can create a dilemma to them.

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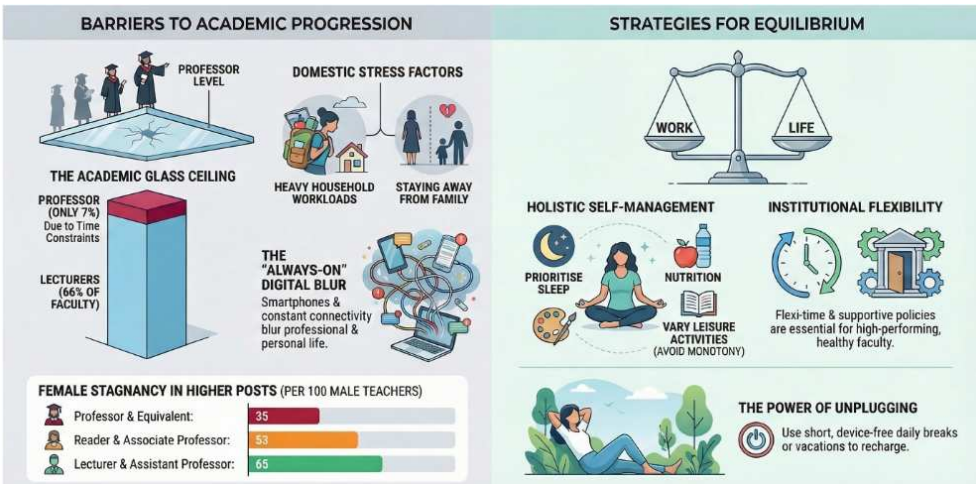
3. Vanitha, A. (2022) studied in her study that Women working in service industries are expected to make greater sacrifices and contributions at work, which can lead to problems in their personal, family, and social lives, as well as challenges with work-life balance.

Research Methodology:

The data for this research purpose is collected by using secondary data sources such as books, magazines, research papers, newspapers, shodhaganga website, internet, thesis, articles etc. The method for this research paper is used qualitative research method and all the data is collected with help of secondary sources.

Work Life Balance:

Work-life balance is one of the most challenging issues being faced by the women employees in the 21st century. This problem is more for women employees because of the type of roles they play at home and the spillover of personal life over work life and vice-versa. consistency in life, it can create a dilemma to them. Work life balance requires attaining equilibrium between professional work and personal work, so that it reduces friction between professional life and domestic life.Work-life balance is a central issue in all types of employment as dual-career families have become coarse and high work demands with long working hours have become the norm. The importance of helping employees achieve a symmetry between the demands of their workplace and their home lives has been stressed. Demographic changes as seen in the increasing number of women in the workplace and dual career families have generated an increasingly diverse workforce and a greater need for employees to balance their work and non-work lives



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Women of the early centuries were largely limited to their kitchens and those who were hired to figure out in factories, farms or shop works. Very few women received the access to higher education and they were driven to be at the clemency of their fathers' or husbands' attitudes towards women and employment. The fast growing knowledge economy has given space for a number of women to be enlightened by higher instruction. Education has not only authorized them, but likewise has made them. robust careers. With brain power being the requisite skill in this knowledge era, rather than endurance or physical force, the women workers look to flood into every industry on par with humans. Only this has indeed become a hard challenge for women as they have to perform a bunch of duties in the home and office as comfortably. As working women get married, they have additional responsibilities and when they become mothers, they bear to manage the principal attention of children and extended household and are thus, under heavier pressure to continue along a career track. Working mothers of today fulfill family duties and also prove to stay fully involved in their careers coping up with the competing demands of their multiple uses. The caring responsibilities that working mothers have put down a great accent on them when it is united with their professional obligations.

Components of Work-Life Balance

Effective management of work-life balance is channeled by several key disciplines that individuals must master:

- **Self-Management:** This involves the recognition that personal resources like time and energy are finite, necessitating proper sleep, exercise, and nutrition.
- **Time Management:** Making optimal use of the day by discerning between tasks that are urgent versus those that are important.
- **Stress Management:** Maintaining tranquillity amidst increasing societal complexity and noise, avoiding the pitfalls of multitasking which often increases pressure.
- **Change Management:** Continually adapting to new methods in both professional and home life to ensure the rate of change does not become overwhelming.
- **Technology Management:** Ensuring that technology serves the individual rather than abusing them, particularly in an era of constant connectivity.
- **Leisure Management:** Recognizing that "time off" is vital to the human experience and varying activities to avoid monotony.

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Challenges or problems faced by Women in Higher Education that imbalances the work life:

In Educational sector female teachers are playing vital role and contributing highest in education workforce. Female teachers in India contribute 53.3% of workforce in India's school education sector, their highest recorded proportion. Globally, 67% of teachers in pre-primary through secondary education are women. working in education professions are facing many challenges and problems this includes gender bias, societal expectations, limited access to resources and the burden balancing work and family responsibilities, which can impact their careers and overall well-being. Gender bias and discrimination playing vital role in educational sectors in hiring, promotions and leadership positions within educational institutions. Traditional gender roles can lead to women being undervalued and underpaid in the education sector, gender stereotypes can affect women ambitions. Indian society expectations and family responsibilities play an important role in the life of women in educational sector. Women are often expected to prioritize family and household responsibilities over their careers. Balancing work and family can be particularly challenging for women in rural areas, where access to childcare and other support services may be limited. Women may face difficulties accessing adequate resources, such as funding for research, professional development, and technology, which can hinder their career growth. Lack of female role models in leadership positions can discourage young women from pursuing careers in education. Inadequate infrastructure and facilities, such as lack of transportation, toilets, and staff rooms, can create challenges for women teachers, especially in rural areas. Women teachers in rural areas may face challenges related to safety, transportation, and lack of access to basic amenities. They may also be assigned duties beyond teaching, such as population surveys and voter card preparation, which can further impact their workload. Women teachers may struggle to balance their work and family responsibilities, leading to stress and burnout. The demands of the teaching profession, combined with the expectations of family life, can create a difficult situation for women.

Consequences of Imbalance

Failure to maintain balance leads to several "grave implications":

1. **Physical Health:** Increased reports of headaches, muscle stress, weight gain, and lack of exercise.
2. **Mental Health:** High levels of stress, depression, and general anxiety.

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3. **Professional Productivity:** Health problems and stress likely lead to lower productivity and strength at work.
4. **Relationship Strain:** Long hours and fatigue lead to suffering relationships with partners and children missing out on maternal input.

Recommendations and Strategies

For Organizations and Educational Institutions

- **Work-Life Balance Programs (WLBPs):** Institutions should develop employee-friendly programs that increase worker control over the time and place of work.
- **Statutory Benefits:** Introducing statutory benefits and wellness programs is essential for helping women navigate professional obligations.
- **Organizational Culture:** Institutions must foster a culture that respects WLB for all, acknowledging that individuals have different demands at various stages of their life cycle.
- **Infrastructure:** Providing basic amenities such as transportation and adequate staff rooms, especially in rural areas, can alleviate daily stressors.
- **Integrated HR Strategy:** WLB should not be a standalone policy but integrated into the core HR strategy of the organization.
- **Supportive Management:** Management should recognize that stressed employees are less productive and more prone to errors. Sympathy must be converted into action through flexible policies.
- **Flexible Working Conditions:** Implementing flexi-time, reduced working hours, and equitable rewards can significantly enhance job satisfaction.
- **Structured Breaks:** Providing sufficient free time between working hours allows faculty to prepare for classes and focus on professional growth without taking work home.

For Individual Professionals

- **Prioritization:** Women should be encouraged to set their own priorities and seek a "yardstick of control" over how they work.

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- **Communication:** It is vital for teaching staff to express their expectations and needs to management, rather than expecting institutions to resolve issues on their own initiative.
- **Identify Time Wasters:** Eliminate activities that do not add value to career or personal life.
- **Build Relaxation Time:** Dedicate 10-15 minutes daily to a hobby or activity that recharges the spirit, such as reading or music.
- **Unplug:** Deliberately turn off technology to recover from weekly stress and allow new ideas to surface.
- **Honesty:** Be honest with oneself about what is needed and wanted from life as a whole, not just work.

Conclusion

Work-life balance is defined as an employee's perception that multiple domains of personal time, family care, and the workplace are maintained with minimum role conflict. It is an inter-role phenomenon reflecting how an individual manages different orientations across various life roles.

In the academic sector, WLB is a critical issue because of the high demands of the profession. Female teachers in India constitute a significant 53.3% of the school education workforce, and globally, women make up 67% of teachers from pre-primary to secondary levels. Attaining balance is not merely a personal desire but a necessity for experiencing a respectable quality of life.

The study of work-life balance among women in higher education reveals that the "best" balance is subjective and varies from person to person. While teaching remains a vital profession for women, the increasing pressures of the modern academic environment necessitate a shift in organizational culture. Effective work-life balance is imperative for staying healthy, gaining job satisfaction, and strengthening family bonds.Ultimately, the performance of an educational institution is intrinsically linked to the performance of its employees. By fostering a congenial environment that respects the personal commitments of women academics, institutions can reduce career stagnancy and ensure their greatest assets—their faculty—can perform par excellence. Achieving this equilibrium is not merely a personal goal for women but a strategic necessity for the advancement of the higher education sector.

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An In-depth Analysis of Women's Leadership in the Indian Higher Education Sector

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Abstract

The representation of women in senior leadership positions within the Indian higher education system presents a significant socio-institutional paradox. Despite India maintaining the world's third-largest higher education network and women achieving high academic milestones—including earning 42% of all doctoral degrees—their presence in top-tier administrative roles remains minimal. This research paper examines the disconnect between academic success and leadership attainment, identifying critical barriers such as inadequate mentoring, networking limitations, entrenched gender stereotypes, and the "pipeline problem". By synthesizing institutional data and theoretical frameworks, this paper argues that bridging the gender leadership gap is essential for fostering inclusive, empathetic, and forward-thinking educational environments.

Keywords: Leadership, Women Leadership, challenges, benefits and strategies

Introduction:

India currently possesses the third-largest higher education system globally, following only China and the United States. As the nation moves towards becoming a pre-eminent global education hub, its infrastructure has expanded to include a total of 1,074 universities. This network comprises 460 State Universities, 128 Deemed Universities, 56 Central Universities, and 430 Private Universities. Within this vast system, there is a striking contrast between the number of women participating in teaching and research versus those holding authority. While women constitute approximately 42% of the teaching staff according to the All India Survey on Higher Education, their representation in senior leadership roles—such as

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Vice-Chancellor, Registrar, Dean, and Head of Department (HOD)—is disproportionately low. Data indicates that while 66.22% of women are represented in middle-level leadership, they occupy only 6.67% of senior academic leadership roles. Furthermore, geographical trends suggest that universities in **metropolitan areas** generally exhibit slightly higher percentages of women in leadership than those in rural or semi-urban contexts.

Objectives of Study:

1) To study the leadership of women in higher education sector
2) To study the challenges of women relating to leadership in education sector
3) To study the benefits and strategies to improve the leadership in education sector

Institutional and Sociocultural Barriers to Advancement

The sources identify a complex web of internal and external hurdles that prevent qualified women from advancing. These barriers are often systemic rather than a reflection of individual skill or experience.

The Mentoring Deficit

Mentoring is identified as a cornerstone for career advancement, providing guidance on organisational politics, skill development, and work-life balance. In the Indian context, the lack of formal mentoring systems is particularly detrimental due to the country's patriarchal social structure and traditional gender roles. Aspiring women leaders often lack access to mentors who can help them navigate male-dominated professional norms and increase their professional visibility. Women in higher education leadership—spanning deans, department heads, and vice-chancellors—are crucial for driving innovation and fostering collaborative, student-centered environments. Despite their positive impact on institutional culture, women remain underrepresented in top, positions, holding only 9.55% of leadership roles in some regions. Key challenges include systemic biases and lack of mentorship, while solutions focus on targeted development programs and active sponsorship.

- **Low Representation:** In many regions, particularly in India, women's representation in top academic leadership lags significantly behind men. For instance, only 9.55% of 1151 Indian higher education institutions are led by women.

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- **Disparities:** A study in Bangladesh found 25.61% of public university leadership roles are held by women, compared to 38.08% in private universities, indicating, that private institutions may offer more gender balance.
- **Roles Held:** Women often serve in crucial, albeit sometimes undervalued, roles like Deans, Program Heads, and Directors, acting as a bridge between faculty and administration.

Benefits of Women in Leadership

- **Institutional Transformation:** Female leaders foster more resilient, collaborative, and student-centered environments.
- **Diverse Perspectives:** Their leadership styles often bring increased transparency, innovation, and adaptability to institutions, which are essential for navigating current crises in higher education.

Strategies for Advancement

- **Leadership Development Programs:** Specialized programs, such as those focusing on strategic, interpersonal, and leadership skills, are vital for empowering women.
- **Active Sponsorship:** Beyond mentorship, senior leaders should actively advocate for talented women to receive high-profile assignments and promotions.
- **Networking Opportunities:** Development programs that facilitate networking help women access information about job opportunities and conferences

Women leadership:

1. The lack of mentoring for women in leadership positions is a significant issue in India, as it is globally. This problem is particularly pronounced in educational institutions and contributes to the underrepresentation of women in top leadership roles. In the Indian context, mentoring is crucial for women's career advancement, especially given the country's patriarchal social structure and traditional gender roles (Buddhapriya, 2009).

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Mentoring relationships provide aspiring women leaders with guidance on navigating organizational politics, developing leadership skills, and balancing work-life responsibilities - all of which are particularly challenging in the Indian cultural context (Khanna, 2012). Pipeline problem – The "pipeline problem in women leadership positions" refers to the decreasing representation of women at higher organizational levels, particularly in leadership roles. Educational and early career disparities, especially in STEM fields, can set the stage for future imbalances (Blickenstaff, 2005). As women progress professionally, they often encounter barriers to advancement, including gender bias and stereotypes (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Work-life balance challenges disproportionately affect women (Hewlett, 2002), while a lack of mentorship and sponsorship opportunities hinder their career progression (Ibarra et al., 2010).Organizational cultures favouring masculine leadership styles (Ely & Meyerson, 2000) and self-selection out of leadership roles due to perceived barriers (Sandberg, 2013) further exacerbate the issue. Lack of networking – Networking is crucial for career development, but women are faced unique challenges: 1.Access to informal networks: Women have less access to informal networking opportunities, which can be critical for career advancement (van den Brink & Benschop, 2014). 2. Balancing professional and personal obligations: Work-life balance issues can make it challenging for women to participate in networking events, particularly those occurring outside of regular work hours (Mason et al., 2013). Lack of role model – Women leaders often face a significant challenge in the lack of female role models in top leadership positions (Connie, 1988; Hawkins, 1991). This scarcity of successful women in administration leads aspiring female leaders to emulate their male counterparts, potentially adopting masculine qualities in the belief that these traits are essential for success. The absence of mentors who can guide women through professional norms, work activities, and networking relationships further compounds this issue (Noe, 1988). Mentors play a crucial role in advancing women's careers by increasing their professional visibility,clarifying career aspirations, and helping them navigate the realities of male-dominated work

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environments. Gender stereotypes – Women face stereotypes or biases that affect their ability to network effectively in male-dominated environments (Ibarra et al., 2010).Gender stereotypes often portray women as nurturing and intuitive, but less capable in quantitative analysis and decision-making (Castro, 1990; Asthana, 1992). These stereotypes, along with discriminatory practices, hinder qualified women from attaining leadership positions (Asthana, 1992; Pyke, 2001). Whisker (1996) argues that sex role stereotyping, which favors males, is a fundamental obstacle to women's advancement in management. The perception that women lack the necessary qualities for successful administration persists, with some believing women are too emotional or illogical for such roles (Hammound, 1993). This stereotyping has led institutions to resist appointing women to administrative positions. Lack of support system, Women have historically faced a significant lack of support and encouragement in pursuing professional careers, as identified by several researchers (Connie, 1988; Pyke, 2001). This deficit of support extends across various spheres of their lives, including friends, family, and academic mentors. The challenge is compounded by the dual responsibilities women often bear, balancing work and family obligations (Cahalan, 2007; Cook, 2007). Multiple studies have highlighted that a majority of women administrators report insufficient support systems as a significant barrier to their career advancement (Cahalan, 2007; Cook, 2007; Santee, 2006; Wilbanks, 2005).This underscores the critical role that comprehensive support plays in women's ability to achieve and maintain leadership roles in their careers.

Challenges and Barriers

- **Systemic Biases:** Women face institutional obstacles, including gendered expectations and limited policy-level support for career advancement.
- **Mentorship Deficits:** Women often find it harder to secure mentors compared to their male counterparts, with only 37% of women finding it easy to find a mentor compared to 50% of men.

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- **Work-Life Conflict:** Limited support systems, such as childcare, hamper women's potential in leadership positions.

- **The "Pipeline Problem" and Leaky Pipeline**: The "pipeline problem" describes the phenomenon where women's representation decreases at each higher organisational level. This is often referred to as a "leaky pipeline," where structural inequalities, such as bias in recruitment and performance evaluation, cause women to abandon their career aspirations. In India, early career disparities in STEM fields often set the stage for these future leadership imbalances

- **Networking and the "Informal Exchange"**

  Networking is critical for career development, yet women face unique challenges in accessing informal networks. Because many professional networking opportunities occur outside of regular work hours, they often conflict with women's personal and family obligations. Without inclusion in these "dominant groups," women are excluded from critical information, resources, and opportunities for upward mobility.

- **Gender Stereotypes and the "Glass Ceiling"**

The "glass ceiling" refers to invisible barriers that prevent women from achieving managerial positions. These barriers are reinforced by persistent gender stereotypes that portray women as nurturing but less capable in quantitative analysis and decision-making. Some institutional cultures still perceive women as "too emotional" or "illogical" for administrative roles, leading to resistance in appointing them to senior positions.

- **The Burden of Dual Responsibilities**

Women in India frequently bear the primary responsibility for family care, including children and elderly relatives. This results in "role-strain" or "role-overload," where the competing demands of professional excellence and domestic obligations overwhelm the individual. Unlike their male counterparts, women often experience interrupted career paths to

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accommodate these needs, which can significantly hinder their trajectory toward tenure and senior leadership.

The Unique Value of Women's Leadership

Increasing women's participation in higher education governance is not merely a matter of social justice; it is essential for institutional effectiveness. Women leaders bring distinct qualities that align with modern organisational needs:

- **Relationship-Based Approaches:** Women often lead with an "ethic of care" that prioritises relationships over rigid, impersonal rules.
- **Empathetic Decision-Making:** High levels of emotional intelligence and intuitive skills allow women to navigate complex educational challenges with compassion.
- **Focus on Well-being:** Research suggests that women in leadership positions tend to pay greater attention to teaching quality, student well-being, and the needs of teachers.
- **Resilience and Stress Management:** Scientific evidence suggests women may be better prepared for certain types of leadership stress; for instance, higher levels of the enzyme **aromatase** in the prefrontal cortex may contribute to greater resilience in the face of chronic stress.

Strategies for Overcoming Obstacles

For women to achieve sustained career growth in the Indian higher education sector, the sources propose several multi-layered strategies:

1. **Strategic Mentoring and Sponsorship**

Developing formal mentoring relationships is vital to help women navigate workplace dynamics. Beyond mentoring, sponsorship is crucial—where individuals with power and authority use their influence to "vouch" for a woman's competence and legitimise her identity as a high-potential leader.

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2. Robust Support Systems

Institutional excellence must be supported by domestic and workplace flexibility. The combination of technology-enabled domestic solutions and flexible workplace policies creates an environment where women can balance professional goals with personal responsibilities.

3. Institutional Reform and Training

There is an urgent need for comprehensive data collection to address administrative vacancies and disparities. Furthermore, implementing unconscious bias training for hiring panels can help ensure that qualitative and quantitative measures are assessed fairly during recruitment and promotion processes.

4. Creating a Healthy Reporting Culture

To retain women in leadership, institutions must ensure a safe working environment. This involves creating a healthy reporting culture for sexual harassment, ensuring no-retaliation policies are enforced, and providing Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) to support family needs.

Conclusion:

The landscape of women's leadership in Indian higher education remains a "compelling paradox". While women have mastered the academic requirements for leadership, the institutional gates remain largely closed.

Achieving gender parity is not merely a matter of equality; it is fundamental to creating forward-thinking educational institutions capable of meeting the challenges of the 21st century. As India expands its global footprint in education, it must ensure that women are not just participants in the classroom but architects of institutional policy. Systemic change—ranging from legislative enforcement to cultural shifts in the workplace—is required to ensure that the "leaky pipeline" is repaired and that women leaders can thrive, contribute, and be valued for their unique authority

The landscape of women's leadership in Indian higher education presents a compelling paradox. The research identifies several critical barriers impeding women's advancement to leadership positions. The importance of increasing women's representation in educational

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leadership cannot be overstated. Women leaders bring unique qualities to administrative roles, including empathetic decision-making, relationship-based leadership approaches, and attention to teaching and student well-being. Their presence in leadership positions is crucial for addressing gender-specific issues in education and ensuring diverse perspectives in institutional decision-making processes. The transformation of Indian higher education leadership to achieve gender parity is not merely a matter of equality; it is crucial for creating more balanced, effective, and forward-thinking educational institutions capable of meeting the challenges of modern education. As India continues to expand its role as a global education hub, ensuring women's equal participation in leadership positions becomes increasingly vital for sustaining academic excellence and fostering institutionalgrowth.

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Political Approaches and the Restructuring of International Order in the Twenty-First Century

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Abstract

In International relations, territoriality is the expression of a common sense of identity and goals combined with the creation and implementation of institutions that express a particular identity in a geographic region and shape collective action. The idea of regional dialogue engendered by regional cooperation is at the forefront of the contemporary global political environment. Regional organizations are international organizations in a sense, as they include international membership and geopolitical entities that operationally transcend a single nation-state. They are established to promote cooperation, political and economic integration and dialogue between states or entities within restrictive geographical boundaries. One of the important regional organizations is SAARC. SAARC is an economic and political regional association of South Asian countries established in 1985. It aims to accelerate the process of economic and social development among member states by enhancing inter-regional cooperation. Right now, the world is going through a phase of transition. The international order largely created by the United States after World War II still exists, but at the same time new powers are emerging and old ones are declining, and the rise of influential non-state actors is irrevocably changing the global distribution of power. Despite this unstable situation, the active participation of SAARC in the changing global system is increasing qualitatively and the importance of SAARC in creating strong international relations among the countries located in the region of South Asia is unique. And SAARC is doing it vigorously through mutual dialogue, that's for sure!

Keywords: SAARC, Dialogue, Territoriality, Cooperation, Geopolitical entities

Introduction

In the 21st century, the world order is changing rapidly and different perspectives are emerging. Uncertainty and volatility have increased in world affairs. Therefore, recently the world has seen the rise of authoritarian rulers in many countries. A world order is a preferred

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arrangement of power and authority that is concerned with the realization of values such as peace, economic growth, equality, human rights, environmental quality and sustainability. A world order based on the principles of sovereign equality and national self-determination is international and state-led. This means that national governments are responsible for making and implementing international rules and policies. We are currently in the midst of a geopolitical transition. As a result, competition between countries is very intense. Since the late 1980s, globalization has changed the international economic environment for regionalism. Regional political approaches have acquired new dimensions in the changing situation. New forms of cooperation and interaction between regions are expected in the new multilateral world order. Also, there is a need for collective action and shared solutions to overcome the challenges posed by other issues. India is actively engaged as an emerging factor in the changing global order. It would not be wrong to say that India is a country capable of leading the world on challenging fronts.

Objectives

1) To study India's relations with other countries.
2) Rethinking the commitment to developing mutual relations by way of regional cooperation.
3) To review the exchange and dialogue between India and SAARC countries.
4) To study the role of India in improving its position in the contemporary world order.
5) To study the correlation between regional organizations and foreign policy.

Methodology

1) Information about India's regional political approach was obtained through discussion.
2) According to the discussion, meaningful information was obtained from the experts through informal chats by asking sub-questions and it has been used in the places where the information was needed.
3) Information was collected through meetings and discussions with practitioners in colleges, universities, research centres and embassies.
4) Reference texts were used.

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Research Questions

1) To what extent do traditional theories of international order remain relevant in explaining current global power shifts?
2) Is the contemporary international system transitioning from unipolarity to multipolarity, and what political approaches explain this shift?
3) What political approaches are most effective for managing global order in an era of uncertainty and fragmentation?
4) What role do regional organizations (EU, ASEAN, African Union) play in restructuring global governance?

Regional Political Approach: Role and Status

In world politics, many nations inevitably have relations and conflicts with each other. It is not possible for any nation to live a happy and prosperous life in isolation only by living within its own geographical limits. Every nation determines its position in world politics on the basis of its national power. Also, the regional political approach of each nation is also different. A country like India which follows an egalitarian approach has a friendly attitude towards other regional organizations. Even though there are political relations between India and regional organizations, efforts are being made to establish peace in the world through cooperation and negotiations. The United Nations, established after World War II, is an international organization that strives to bring stability and harmony to international relations through exchange of ideas. It is very important to end the current malaise in global politics. The role of leading regional organizations like SAARC, European Union, ASEAN, African Union is important in this. Because their place in the world system is being clearly highlighted day by day.

Foreign Policy of India

After India's independence in 1947, Nehru is certainly credited with shaping Indian foreign policy. His foreign policy was based on the four principles of peace, development, disarmament and interdependence. He emphasized four things in his foreign policy: non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations, non-imposition of our will on other nations, abolition of colonialism and establishment of social sentiment. India's Cold War era foreign policy in the post-independence era mainly included opposition to neo-colonialism, opposition to racism, opposition to arms race, opposition to nuclear weapons, and opposition

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to nuclear testing. At the same time, peaceful coexistence, achieving economic and social development through international cooperation were important principles. It also includes assisting the United Nations in its work. After Narendra Modi became Prime Minister in 2014, there was a radical change in the implementation of foreign policy. It mainly focused on improving relations in South Asia. At the same time, steps were taken to strengthen friendly relations with neighbouring countries. Also, the Modi government had decided to develop relations with developed countries like USA. Under these policies, efforts were made to give priority to economic development, efforts to attract foreign investment, emphasis on foreign capital and technology, emphasis on health sector, protection of national security and interests.

India-SAARC Bilateral Relations

India considers regional cooperation under SAARC important to promote economic growth, social progress, cultural development and security in South Asia. India has supported various SAARC initiatives focused on connectivity, trade, agriculture, poverty alleviation, energy, tourism. SAARC is a game changer for India's Act East Policy. It connects South Asian economies with Southeast Asia which will boost India's economic integration and prosperity mainly in the services sector.



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The idea of a regional dialogue engaged through regional cooperation is foregrounded in the contemporary global political milieu. Undoubtedly, rapid globalisation has prompted the world powers and their neighbouring countries to reap the benefits of the collective aspirations and endorse reciprocal transregional and solidarity. Situated at the heart of the Indian Ocean, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is one such proactive transregional organisation, which is constantly negotiating closer regional cooperation in situating its accomplished citizenry globally. Demographically speaking, many of these accomplished individuals are settled in the globalised East and West and have played a phenomenal role in the growth story. Of course, the presence of a tacit populace is too ubiquitous in the developed world. However, their integration into the member countries of South Asia has been little negotiated. SAARC can consider diasporic participation in the subcontinent's policy-making and approaches. They also need a regional platform where the member countries can address their shared vulnerabilities and risks. Therefore, it has become imperative that SAARC brings them together and emerges as a backup body when these migrants are challenged outside their regions. It naturally becomes a current regional onus that this matter is sensitised and in turn advantages of forming a regional-diasporic alliance are comprehended and forged. Historical, geographical, literary, and political research repository on the South-Asian diaspora suggests that they have been most adaptive and harmonious in their settlements in a transoceanic setting.

The Rise of India as a Global Soft Power

India is an enlightened nation with a vibrant soft power heritage. The country is aware of the weightage of its cultural investment and has to put in a little more effort to present its culture attractively to the nooks and crannies of the world. India's concept of soft power is original and inherently natural, consistent with India's rich history and associated with harmonious cultural transmission. Soft power left with it an image of upright hovering spheres and credibility, which inspired developing nations around the world after seeing India's position. Over the centuries India has provided shelter, religious and cultural freedom to Jews, Christians, Muslims and many other religions. India's history and culture is her heritage to the world which shows the evolution of India's history. How India assimilated various religions in harmony and yet never lost its own culture and history. India's ability to add soft power, strengthen ties and bridge the gap created by history and politics has increased. In the 1990s, India advocated peaceful progress and a friendly policy towards its neighbours and soft power to support its legitimacy in South Asia and complement India's foreign policy.

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Limitations of Study

It will be impossible to get information by visiting the embassies of each country related to India and regional political approach and discussing with them. So, information was obtained by visiting the nearby embassies in Mumbai. So, it is safe to say that the context generated by this study cannot be applied to the regional political approach, which will be the biggest limitation of this study.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

In the era of globalization, as the world has become closer due to technology, the importance of cultural exchange has also increased. SAARC is an economic and political cooperation organization of 8 countries in South Asia namely Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The combined economy of the SAARC member states is the third largest in the world after the US and China and 21% of the world's population lives in the SAARC region. The importance of each country in the changing global system is unique. The changing nature of political attitudes and regional organizations is giving a different turn to world politics. The geopolitical position of South Asia is developing rapidly and the Indian Ocean is contributing to it. SAARC has the capacity to respond forcefully to a strong power like China. SAARC can be seen not only as a group of developing countries but as an all-round developing organization. There is no doubt that India, as a superpower in SAARC, is capable of leading not only South Asia but the entire global system.

1) Reform and Strengthen Global Governance Institutions
2) Promote Inclusive Multilateralism
3) Enhance the Role of Regional Organizations
4) Encourage Adaptive and Flexible Foreign Policy Strategies
5) Integrate Emerging Powers into Decision-Making Processes

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The Impact of Psychological Factors on Women Leadership in Emerging Technologies of Higher Education

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Abstract

Women's leadership in emerging technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), blockchain, and hybrid intelligence is increasingly shaped by psychological factors that influence career trajectory, technology adoption, and leadership style. While underrepresented, women in emerging technology leadership are redefining roles through transformational, empathetic, and collaborative approaches. However, they face significant internal and external psychological barriers, including impostor syndrome, high anxiety regarding AI, and the "double bind" of needing to be both assertive and communal.In the emerging era of hybrid intelligence, the synthesis of natural and artificial intelligences effective leadership requires blending empathy, ethics, and efficiency in handling technology and an inspiring ethos to string those four together.This three-part series explores how neuroscience and evolutionary biology shed light on women's potential to lead in a hybrid intelligence framework, highlights real-world examples of women at the forefront of AI and tech ethics, and offers practical takeaways to cultivate hybrid intelligence for everyone, regardless of gender.This paper explores the psychological underpinnings of women's role in higher education in emerging technologies like data science, hybrid intelligence, neuroscience, etc. It also highlights the impact of psychological factors in predicting women leadership in emerging technologies of higher education. Through the lens of psychological theories and empirical research, this paper outlines the relationship between women's leadership in emerging technologies and psychological attributes that intervene between these factors. Psychological factors like personality, emotional intelligence, resilience, adaptability, self-efficacy, and confidence plays a crucial role in predicting women leadership in emerging technology. Digital transformation through its related technologies has reformed processes, procedures, policies, and strategies of organizations. This entails the transfiguration of

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leadership, human behaviors, and their interactions with digital technologies. There are few studies conducted about leadership in general and human behaviors in organizations during digital era. In present study the research discussed attempts to explore the women leadership during digital era. The issue of women leadership is not fully investigated in general and in digital era specifically. In this study qualitative methodology is applied.

Keywords: *Women Leadership, Decision-Making, Power, Personality, bigfive factors , Technologies, Cognitive Biases, Emotional Intelligence, self-efficacy , resilience , adaptability, confidence*

Overview

Digital transformation through its related technologies has reformed processes, procedures, policies, and strategies of organizations in higher education. This entails the transfiguration of leadership, human behaviors, and their interactions with digital technologies. There are few studies conducted about leadership in general and human behaviors in organizations during digital era and the edges of emerging technologies. The research discussed in this study attempts to explore the women leadership in emerging technologies during digital era. The issue of women leadership is not fully investigated in general and in digital era specifically.

The rapid development of emerging technologies is not merely a technical evolution but a structural transformation of society. The leadership guiding this transformation largely dictates the ethics, inclusivity, and direction of these new tools. Despite evidence showing that gender diversity drives innovation and improves decision-making, the technology sector remains male-dominated. This paper analyzes the "why" behind this, exploring the psychological barriers that impede women's advancement and the unique psychological competencies women bring to leadership in emerging technology.

Psychological factors play a critical role in the advancement, performance, and experiences of women in leadership positions within emerging technologies (such as AI, software development, and digital transformation). While technical skill is essential, psychological at tributesincluding leadership self-efficacy, resilience, emotional intelligence, adaptability, confidence and a growth mindsetare major determinants of success, often serving

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as both key drivers of success and, when lacking, significant barriers due to systemic biases and stereotypes.

Specifically, in women, individual factors such as personality-related elements significantly affect women's entrepreneurial intention, and technology leadership. A few significant investigations have shown that psychological and character-related components are determinants of role of women's leadership in emerging technology. A complete understanding of the impacts of significant psychological elements on the attitude of women toward emerging technology in the field of higher education would benefit national and international technology relatedto education.

Psychological attributes play a critical, often transformative role in enabling women to lead in emerging technology sectors like AI, machine learning, and cybersecurity, helping them navigate a male-dominated, fast-paced environment. Key attributes such as resilience, high emotional intelligence (EI), growth mindsets, and self-efficacy are not just personal traits but strategic assets that enhance team collaboration, innovation, and long-term sustainability. Psychological attributes such as intelligence, personality, motivation, and emotionsact as internal drivers that determine how individuals perceive, react, and behave in different situations. These traits shape behavior through a dynamic interaction with environmental factors, influencing everything from daily decision-making to, high-level performance.

- **Factors affecting women's leadership in emerging technologies of higher education.**

1. Resilience and Adaptability:

Resilience and adaptability are critical competencies for women in leadership within emerging technology sectors, enabling them to navigate rapid technological shifts, overcome pervasive industry challenges, and foster innovation. In an era characterized by continuous transformation, these traits are not merely survival skills but strategic advantages that allow female leaders to turn setbacks into growth opportunities and drive sustainable, ethical technological progress.

Resilience involves adapting to change, not just reacting to it, and navigating uncertainty with clarity. In AI and fast-paced tech environments, this enables leaders to stay steady, confident, and committed to their vision.

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Adaptability serves as a critical component of innovation, allowing leaders to pivot strategies as needed. This flexibility helps in developing technology products that resonate with a diverse user base, enhancing market growth.

- **Navigating High-Stakes Environments:**

Women in tech often operate under intense pressure and biases. Resiliencethe ability to bounce back from set backsenables them to manage stress and persist where others might leave.

- **Embracing Change:**

Emerging technologies evolve rapidly. A resilient, flexible mindset allows leaders to treat failures not as endpoints but as opportunities to learn, adapt, and refine their strategies.

2. Emotional Intelligence (EI) as a Strategic Advantage:

Emotional intelligence (EI) is a critical leadership superpower for women in emerging technologies, enabling them to build trust, foster innovation, and navigate high-pressure environments. By leveraging empathy, effective communication, and relationship-building, women leaders create inclusive teams, manage rapid change, and bridge technical gaps, ultimately enhancing organizational success and driving AI ethics.

Key Roles of EI in Technology Leadership:

- **Driving Innovation through Collaboration:** Women with high EQ encourage inclusive, psychologically safe spaces where diverse perspectives on AI and tech development are heard, boosting team creativity and innovation.
- **Managing Change and Complexity:** In fast-paced tech sectors, leaders use EI to understand team anxiety, address resistance, and motivate employees through transitions.

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- **Building Resilient Teams:** Empathy allows female leaders to address burnout, support emotional well-being, and maintain high performance during challenging technological projects.
- **Better Decision-Making:** Emotional awareness helps women make balanced decisions by processing technical data alongside team dynamics, reducing biased or impulsive choices.
- **Ethical Leadership in AI:** High EQ ensures that emerging technologies (e.g., AI) are developed with humanity, inclusion, and a focus on minimizing algorithmic bias.
- **Human-Centric Innovation:** Women often demonstrate higher EI, including empathy and social awareness, which is crucial for building trust, resolving conflicts, and guiding teams through disruptive technological shifts.
- **Fostering Collaboration:** EI-driven leadership encourages a "we" rather than "me" approach, improving team cohesion and enabling better communication across technical and non-technical stakeholders.
- **Creating Inclusive Workspaces:** Women leaders often use their empathy to create psychologically safe environments that support diversity, allowing a broader range of ideas to flourish, which is essential for innovation.
- **Empathy and Emotional Intelligence:** Women tend to lead with empathy, which aids in fostering trust, improving team cohesion, and understanding the human impact of technology.
- **Collaborative and Holistic Approach:** Women leaders often champion collaborative environments, focusing on long-term sustainability and collective well-being rather than just short-term gains.

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- **Resilience and Adaptability:** Navigating male-dominated environments and breaking barriers requires high resilience and persistence, which are key traits of successful female tech leaders.

- **Ethical Focus:** Women leaders in AI frequently emphasize ethical behavior, ensuring AI systems are unbiased, transparent, and fair.

3. Self-Efficacy and Confidence:

Self-efficacy (the belief in one's capability to execute tasks) and confidence are critical determinants of success for women leading in emerging technology sectors (e.g., AI, cyber security, CP), where male-dominated cultures often foster imposter syndrome and systemic biases. High self-efficacy enables women to assume leadership roles, persist through challenges, and manage complex, high-stakes projects. Gender self-efficacy beliefs mediate the relationship between gender stereotypes and leadership emergence, with higher confidence directly predicting higher technology entrepreneurship intentions.Studies show a significant confidence gap where women in tech often rate their skills lower than men until after roughly eight years of experience, making conscious confidence-building necessary for earlier promotion. Self-efficacy is fortified by "mastery experiences" consistently completing technical tasks and projects which allow women to challenge traditional masculine prototypes of leadership. Confident leaders with strong self-efficacy are more likely to view challenging situations (such as cyber security breaches or project failures) as opportunities for growth rather than insurmountable obstacles, fostering resilience.

- **Proactive Career Management:**

A strong sense of self-efficacy belief in one's capacity to succeed empowers women to seek high-stakes roles, volunteer for AI-related initiatives, and take on complex leadership tasks.

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- **Overcoming Imposter Syndrome:**

By cultivating confidence and focusing on their technical merit, women leaders in emerging tech break down barriers and, as senior women in tech, are actively outpacing their male counterparts in adopting generative AI.

Growth Mindset and Continuous Learning

- **Lifelong Learning:**

Successful women in tech tend to possess a "growth mindset," viewing intelligence and skills as malleable rather than fixed. This drives them to relentlessly build technical competence and stay updated with evolving AI/ML advancements.

- **Reimagining Leadership:**

A growth mindset helps women challenge traditional stereotypes and "rule the day" by pioneering new ways of leading, such as mentoring others and encouraging "give to gain" cultures.

Risk-Taking and Assertiveness:

- **Calculated Risk-Taking:**

Contrary to the stereotype of being risk-averse, successful women leaders in tech balance caution with boldness, analysing risks to seize opportunities that others might miss.

- **Assertiveness and Advocacy:**

Cultivating assertiveness allows women to defend their ideas, negotiate resources, and ensure their voices are heard in key discussions, turning the "barrier" of being a minority into a "platform" for leadership.

Personality:

Women in emerging technology leadership are characterized by a blend of high adaptability, resilience, empathy, and collaborative skills, which enable them to thrive in fast-

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paced, high-stakes environments. As they navigate a sector often dominated by traditional, male-centric leadership models, women are redefining success by merging technical expertise with a "person-oriented" approach, fostering team cohesion and driving ethical AI innovation.

Women's leadership in emerging technologiessuch as Artificial Intelligence (AI), data science, cybersecurity, and cloud computingis increasingly recognized as a critical driver of innovation, ethical development, and financial performance. While women bring unique, often collaborative and empathetic, personality traits to tech leadership, they continue to face significant barriers, including underrepresentation in executive roles, the "glass ceiling," and gender biases.

Research on The Big Five personality traitsOpenness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism shows that these traitsare significant predictors of leadership effectiveness and innovation, with specific combinations enabling women to thrive in emerging technology sectors like AI, cloud computing, and cybersecurity. Women leaders in these fields often leverage high emotional intelligence and adaptability, combining high openness and conscientiousness with collaborative, agreeable approaches.

The Big Five traits influence the leadership styles often adopted by women in technology:

Democratic Leadership: High agreeableness and openness allow women to lead in a participatory manner, drawing in diverse perspectives for better AI-driven or technical solutions.

Facilitative Leadership: High conscientiousness and openness allow leaders to empower their teams by providing resources, mentoring, and guidance, critical for mentoring the next generation of tech talent.

In summarizing personality traits, for women in emerging technology leadership, a profile high in openness, conscientiousness, and emotional intelligence (low neuroticism), balanced with collaborative agreeableness appears to be most effective in fostering leadership, innovation, and managing technical complexity.Women in technology leadership often

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exhibit distinct personality traits and approaches that differentiate them from traditional top-down leadership, favouring a more inclusive and effective style.

Summary of Impact

Psychological factors like self-leadership (self-awareness, goal setting) mediate the relationship between personality and success, helping women turn entrepreneurial intentions into daily, impactful actions. By leveraging these psychological strengths, women are transforming the technology sector, making it more inclusive and human-centered.

Leadership and decision-making are two interrelated constructs that significantly impact in higher education sector. Power, a critical dimension of leadership, influences how leaders make decisions and how they are perceived by followers. This paper explores the psychological underpinnings of leadership, decision-making, emphasizing the role of power in shaping decision-making processes. Through the lens of psychological theories and empirical research, this paper outlines the relationship between leadership styles, decision-making strategies, and power dynamics. It discusses how different power bases (legitimate, referent, expert, reward, and coercive power) interact with leadership behavior and decision-making outcomes. The paper also examines how personality factors, cognitive biases, emotional intelligence, and social influence impact decision-making in leadership contexts in higher education. This paper explores the intricate psychological relationship between leadership, decision-making, and the exercise of power. It examines how specific Leadership Styles (e.g., transformational, autocratic) correspond with distinct Decision-Making Models (rational, intuitive, directive). Furthermore, the paper analyzes the "double-edged sword" of power, detailing how it can either enhance organizational effectiveness or lead to Cognitive Distortions and unethical behavior in higher education.

Conclusion:

Women leadership in emerging technologies of higher education is not merely a matter of equity; it is a strategic imperative for developing ethical, user-centric, and sustainable technologies. A psychological investigation on women leadership, decision-making, and power explores how leaders' minds, emotions, and influence shape choices, organizational

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dynamics, and outcomes, focusing on traits like emotional intelligence, personality , resilience , adaptability , self-awareness, power's effects , and cognitive biases to understand effective strategies, manage stress, avoid groupthink, and develop styles like transformational or autocratic leadership for better performance.By understanding the psychological barrierssuch as imposter syndrome and the "masculine default" and fostering the inherent strengths women bring to leadershipsuch as high EQ and transformational, collaborative approachesthe technology industry can create a more inclusive future.

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Promoting Inclusive Academic Environments for Women Scholars in Higher Education

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Abstract

Over the past few decades, women's participation in higher education has expanded dramatically. However, despite increases in enrolment and representation, women scholars still encounter a variety of institutional, social, and structural obstacles that hinder their ability to advance academically, develop professionally, and pursue research opportunities. In order to provide equitable opportunities, gender equity, and supportive institutional frameworks that allow women academics to succeed in higher education institutions, an inclusive academic atmosphere is essential. In order to support women academics' academic achievement and professional growth, this research study explores the idea of inclusive academic environments. It examines the difficulties experienced by female academics and researchers, such as work-life balance concerns, a lack of institutional support, gender bias, and a lack of leadership chances. The importance of gender-sensitive policies, mentorship programs, equal access to research resources, and encouraging academic cultures in fostering inclusive learning and research environments is also covered in the paper. Based on secondary data gathered from books, journals, papers, and research articles, the study uses a descriptive and analytical methodology. The results demonstrate that inclusive academic settings support institutional quality, creativity, and sustainable growth in higher education in addition to empowering female scholars. The study comes to the conclusion that in order to guarantee equitable participation, acknowledgment, and progress of women scholars in academia, universities and policymakers must put in place gender-inclusive policies and effective tactics.

Keywords : Inclusive academic environment, women scholars, higher education, gender equality, academic empowerment.

Introduction

Economic growth, social advancement, and intellectual development are all significantly influenced by higher education. Universities and research facilities are hubs for innovation, skill development, and knowledge production. Globally, women's participation in higher

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education has significantly expanded in recent decades. These days, a large number of women are earning higher degrees, conducting research, and making substantial contributions to academic study.

Women researchers still face a number of obstacles in academic institutions despite these developments. Gender discrimination, unequal access to research funding, under representation in leadership roles, and trouble juggling work and personal obligations are some of these issues. These obstacles frequently impede their ability to succeed academically and flourish in their careers. To address these issues and advance gender equity in higher education, an inclusive academic atmosphere is crucial. All scholars, regardless of gender, will have equal access to opportunities, resources, and recognition in an inclusive setting. It encourages academic institutions to be diverse, respectful, cooperative, and equitable.

It takes institutional dedication, supportive policies, and cultural change at universities to foster inclusive academic settings for female academics. The engagement and retention of female academics in academia can be greatly increased by initiatives including mentorship programs, flexible work schedules, support for gender-sensitive research, and leadership development. The purpose of this study is to investigate the significance of inclusive learning settings for female academics in higher education. In addition to reviewing current literature and recommending tactics to support gender-inclusive academic institutions, it looks at important ideas about academic environments, women scholars, and higher education.

Concept of Academic Environment

The general climate, culture, policies, and institutional practices that affect teaching, learning, research, and scholarly activities within educational institutions are collectively referred to as the academic environment. It encompasses both psychological and physical elements that influence students', teachers', and researchers' experiences.Collaboration, creativity, academic independence, and intellectual curiosity are all fostered by a supportive learning environment. It offers sufficient facilities for research, professional development possibilities, and infrastructure. Additionally, it promotes equality, respect for one another, and moral conduct among academics. By guaranteeing that people from various backgrounds feel accepted, respected, and encouraged, an inclusive academic atmosphere goes beyond conventional educational settings. Diversity in terms of gender, culture, socioeconomic status, and academic fields is encouraged in such settings.

An inclusive academic atmosphere is especially crucial for female researchers since it helps eradicate any potential gender bias and discrimination within organizations. It guarantees equal access to leadership roles, research opportunities, and academic resources.

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Additionally, inclusive settings promote involvement in academic collaborations and decision-making processes. Therefore, improving research productivity, academic quality, and professional development requires a well-structured academic environment. Institutions that place a high priority on inclusion give all scholars the chance to effectively contribute to the advancement of society and the discovery of new knowledge.

Concept of Women Scholars

Women who actively participate in higher education, research, and academic pursuits are known as women academics. They comprise academic members, independent researchers who contribute to a variety of disciplines of knowledge, doctorate researchers, postdoctoral fellows, and undergraduate and graduate students. Research, innovation, and intellectual growth are all advanced by female scholars. Their contributions can be seen in a variety of fields, including education, science, technology, the humanities, social sciences, and medicine. Women scholars contribute to the solution of difficult social, economic, and scientific problems through their academic labour.

However, despite their increasing enrolment in higher education, women academics frequently encounter structural obstacles that hinder their academic progress. Gender stereotypes, a lack of mentorship, a lack of networking opportunities, and an uneven distribution of responsibility within academic institutions are some examples of these obstacles.

Women academics frequently face difficulties juggling their obligations to their families and caregivers with their academic obligations. These difficulties may have an impact on their leadership prospects, professional advancement, and research output. Furthermore, their representation in top academic roles may be restricted by institutional frameworks and subconscious biases. Achieving gender equality and long-term academic growth requires acknowledging and assisting female scholars. Policies that encourage fair evaluation procedures, equal opportunities, and encouraging work conditions for female researchers must be put into place by universities and legislators.

Concept of Higher Education

The term "higher education" describes the educational phase that follows secondary school graduation. Undergraduate, graduate, doctoral, and professional education offered by colleges, universities, and specialized institutions are all included. Developing students' advanced knowledge, critical thinking, research abilities, and professional competencies are the main goals of higher education. Through research, innovation, and intellectual end eavors, higher education institutions are essential to the creation of new knowledge. Higher education

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is a major force behind social mobility, economic growth, and technical improvement in contemporary nations. It gives people the chance to participate in international knowledge networks, advance their careers, and grow intellectually.

Promoting ideals like inclusiveness, diversity, and equality is another duty of higher education institutions. Universities may foster environments where people from diverse backgrounds can thrive and contribute to academic advancement by guaranteeing equal access to education and research opportunities. Higher education is a route to leadership chances, professional recognition, and empowerment for female scholars. However, ongoing efforts to eliminate structural obstacles and establish institutional frameworks that encourage gender equality in higher education are necessary.

Objectives

The main objectives of this research paper are:

1. To understand the concept of inclusive academic environments in higher education.
2. To examine the role and contribution of women scholars in academic institutions.
3. To identify the challenges faced by women scholars in higher education.
4. To analyze the importance of inclusive policies and institutional support for women scholars.
5. To suggest measures for promoting inclusive academic environments in higher education institutions.

Research Methodology

This research paper is based on a descriptive and analytical research methodology. The study primarily relies on secondary data sources to examine the issues related to inclusive academic environments for women scholars.

Secondary data has been collected from various sources such as:

- Research journals and academic publications
- Books related to higher education and gender studies
- Government reports and policy documents
- International organization reports

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- Online academic databases and scholarly articles

The collected information was carefully analyzed to understand the challenges faced by women scholars and the importance of inclusive academic environments in higher education institutions.

The research approach focuses on reviewing existing literature, identifying key themes, and providing recommendations for improving gender inclusivity within academic institutions.

Review of literature

Several scholars have examined the participation of women in higher education and the importance of inclusive academic environments.

1. A study by Morley (2013) highlighted that women scholars often face structural inequalities within universities, including limited access to leadership positions and research funding. The study emphasized the need for institutional reforms to promote gender equality in academia.
2. UNESCO (2021) reported that although women represent a significant proportion of students in higher education globally, their representation decreases at higher academic ranks. The report stresses the importance of inclusive policies, mentorship programs, and supportive research environments.
3. O'Connor (2020) examined gender inequality in academic institutions and found that implicit biases and traditional institutional cultures continue to influence career progression for women scholars. The study suggests that universities must adopt gender-sensitive policies and transparent promotion systems.
4. Research conducted by Benschop and Brouns (2003) highlighted that gender bias in recruitment and evaluation processes often limits opportunities for women scholars. The authors recommend implementing fair recruitment practices and diversity-focused institutional policies.
5. Another study by Etzkowitz et al. (2000) explored the role of women in scientific research and emphasized the importance of supportive institutional environments that encourage collaboration, networking, and leadership development for women researchers.
6. Mason and Goulden (2002) examined gender differences in academic career progression and found that women scholars often experience slower career advancement compared to

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men due to family responsibilities and institutional expectations. Their study highlighted that women in academia frequently face challenges related to work–life balance, particularly during the early stages of their careers. The research emphasized the importance of family-friendly policies and institutional support systems to retain talented women scholars in higher education.

7. Bagilhole and Goode (2001) investigated gender inequality in academic institutions and found that women academics often encounter subtle forms of discrimination, including limited access to professional networks and leadership opportunities. Their research demonstrated that organizational culture within universities often favors traditional male-dominated structures, which can hinder women's career growth. The authors recommended structural reforms and gender equality policies to create a more inclusive academic environment.

8. Acker (1990) introduced the concept of gendered organizations, explaining how institutional structures and practices often reflect male-dominated norms. In the context of higher education, the study revealed that evaluation criteria, promotion policies, and academic expectations can unintentionally disadvantage women scholars. The author suggested that institutions must critically examine their organizational structures to ensure fair and equitable treatment of all academics.

9. Fox (2001) explored gender differences in research productivity and academic recognition. The study found that women scholars often receive fewer research grants and publication opportunities compared to their male counterparts. This disparity is often influenced by unequal access to resources, mentoring, and collaborative networks. The research stressed the need for equitable distribution of research opportunities and institutional support to enhance women's participation in academic research.

10. Airini et al. (2011) focused on strategies for improving the representation of women in higher education leadership positions. Their research highlighted that mentorship programs, leadership development initiatives, and supportive institutional policies play a significant role in advancing women scholars' careers. The study concluded that universities must actively promote inclusive leadership structures to ensure equal participation of women in academic decision-making processes.

These studies collectively indicate that promoting inclusive academic environments is essential for improving the participation, retention, and success of women scholars in higher education.

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Conclusion

In order to achieve gender equality and advance knowledge in higher education, it is crucial to provide inclusive academic environments for female academics. Even though women's enrolment in universities has increased significantly, there are still a lot of obstacles to overcome. Women researchers' academic careers are still impacted by structural obstacles, gender bias, a lack of leadership chances, and problems with work-life balance. Women scholars are guaranteed equal access to professional development programs, research funding, mentorship opportunities, and educational resources in an inclusive academic setting. Policies that support inclusion, equity, and diversity in academic settings must be actively promoted by universities.

The engagement and retention of female scholars can be greatly increased by institutional initiatives like mentorship networks, flexible work schedules, leadership training programs, and gender-sensitive recruitment procedures. Supporting female researchers also requires academic institutions to cultivate a culture of respect, cooperation, and equity.In addition to helping female academics, inclusive academic settings improve the standard of instruction and research in general. Diverse viewpoints foster creative thinking, multidisciplinary research, and more thorough answers to societal problems.Therefore, in order to establish inclusive and supportive settings that enable women academics to realize their full potential, policymakers, academic communities, and educational institutions must collaborate. In the end, these initiatives will help create vibrant, equitable, and internationally competitive higher education systems.

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A Study of Women Entrepreneurship Development in India

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Abstract

The economic and social contributions made by women entrepreneurs, the obstacles they encounter, and the importance of government policies and institutional frameworks in enabling their progress. The study stresses that fostering women's entrepreneurial participation is vital for achieving inclusive and sustainable growth.Women-led enterprises have become a significant element of India's economic advancement and social change. Over recent decades, women have increasingly engaged in entrepreneurial ventures, thereby strengthening national growth. To bridge gender gaps in business ownership, various initiatives have been introduced by the government, financial institutions, and support organizations. Key institutions such as the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, along with schemes like the Stand-Up India initiative and the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme, have played a pivotal role in empowering women entrepreneurs. This research examines the trajectory of women entrepreneurship in India, highlighting the opportunities available to women in diverse sectors while also addressing the challenges that continue to hinder their full participation and success.

Keywords : Women Entrepreneurship, India, Economic Development, Social Transformation, Inclusive Growth, Sustainable Development, Government Initiatives, Institutional Support, Business Ownership, Opportunities and Challenges, Women Empowerment

Introduction :

Entrepreneurship is widely acknowledged as a catalyst for innovation, competitiveness, and economic growth. It stimulates the creation of new ventures, drives efficiency in resource utilization, and generates employment opportunities. In India, entrepreneurship has become a vital tool for addressing developmental challenges and promoting inclusive progress. Within this context, women entrepreneurs are increasingly shaping the socio-economic fabric of the nation. Their involvement not only strengthens household income but also contributes to

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community development and challenges traditional gender norms. Women-led enterprises are emerging across diverse sectors, ranging from handicrafts and textiles to modern industries such as IT services, healthcare, and education. Women entrepreneurship refers to the initiative taken by women to establish, organize, and manage business enterprises independently or in partnership. Over the past few decades, their participation has grown steadily, reflecting rising education levels, greater awareness, and expanding opportunities. This trend has enhanced both economic productivity and social empowerment. By venturing into areas such as retail trade, service industries, food processing, manufacturing, and technology-driven businesses, women entrepreneurs are creating jobs and fostering innovation. Their contribution is not limited to economic growth but extends to building confidence, self-reliance, and decision-making capacity among women.

Government policies and institutional support have played a crucial role in nurturing this growth. The Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises has introduced training programs, financial schemes, and business development services to encourage women entrepreneurs. Initiatives such as the Stand-Up India Scheme and the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme provide financial assistance and motivate women to establish enterprises. These measures have helped reduce gender disparities in business ownership and created pathways for women to participate more actively in the entrepreneurial ecosystem. Women entrepreneurship also contributes significantly to improving family welfare and elevating the social status of women. As women gain financial independence, they enhance household income and play a stronger role in community development. This empowerment fosters social transformation by breaking stereotypes and promoting equality. Overall, the rise of women entrepreneurs in India is a key driver of national progress. Their participation strengthens the economy, promotes innovation, and ensures inclusive growth. By providing adequate resources, training, and opportunities, India can harness the full potential of women entrepreneurship to achieve sustainable development.

Research Methodology

The research is based on existing data which is available on the internet, magazines, journals and books.

Literature Review

1. Mrs. Bharathy, Dr. Narayan Kayarkatte. "Women Entrepreneurship In India- A Review Of Related Literature".International Journal Of Creative Research Thoughts ISSN:2320-2882, Vol.9, Issue 7. The researcher reviewed Women entrepreneurship in India has

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gained prominence over the past three decades, contributing to both economic growth and social empowerment. Studies highlight that women entrepreneurs face persistent challenges such as limited access to finance, socio-cultural barriers, and inadequate institutional support. Government initiatives like Stand-Up India and PMEGP have provided financial and training opportunities, yet gaps remain in implementation and long-term impact. Existing literature between 2011 and 2020 shows progress but lacks systematic evaluation of women's entrepreneurial development. This opens avenues for future research to build conceptual frameworks and address unexplored aspects of women entrepreneurship in India.

2. Lavanya, E., & Singh, C. B. (2021). A systematic study of women entrepreneurship and its role in promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth.International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research -ISSN: 2582-2160, Volume 8,Issue 2. This Paper examines women entrepreneurship plays a vital role in driving inclusive and sustainable growth in developing economies. While women-led enterprises contribute to innovation, job creation, and community resilience, persistent barriers such as limited finance, gender bias, and inadequate institutional support highlight the need for stronger policies and supportive ecosystems.

3. Singh, Y., Dubey, S., & Dwivedi, A. (2020). Exploring women entrepreneurial ecosystem with factors affecting startup and growth: A special emphasis on entrepreneurship development programs. International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts (IJCRT) ISSN: 2320-2882 Volume 14, Issue 2 .The study reflected Women entrepreneurship in India drives inclusive growth and innovation but continues to face socio-cultural, financial, and institutional barriers. Strengthening ecosystem elements like funding, mentorship, policy support, and EDPs is crucial for enhancing startup performance and women's entrepreneurial success.

Objectives of The Study :

1. To understand the concept and significance of women entrepreneurship in India.
2. To evaluate the impact of government programs and policies in encouraging women entrepreneurs.
3. To explore the major difficulties and barriers faced by women entrepreneurs.
4. To assess the role of women entrepreneurs in contributing to economic growth and development.

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5. To recommend effective strategies for promoting and strengthening women entrepreneurship in India.

Concept and Significance of Women Entrepreneurship In India

1.1 Concept of Women Entrepreneurship

Women entrepreneurship refers to the process in which women initiate, organize, and manage business enterprises by taking financial risks and responsibilities. It involves women identifying business opportunities, mobilizing resources, and running enterprises independently or in partnership.

In India, women entrepreneurship has gained importance due to rising education levels, government support, access to finance, and growing awareness about women's economic empowerment. Women entrepreneurs operate in various sectors such as small-scale manufacturing, retail trade, handicrafts, agriculture-based industries, food processing, services, and technology.

Women entrepreneurship not only creates self-employment opportunities but also contributes to innovation, productivity, and economic progress. Many women-led enterprises are part of the small business ecosystem supported by institutions like the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises.

1.2 Significance of Women Entrepreneurship In India

Women entrepreneurship has multiple economic and social benefits. It plays an important role in strengthening the national economy and improving gender equality.

Major Significance:

1. **Economic Growth** : Women entrepreneurs contribute to national income and increase overall economic productivity.

2. **Employment Generation** : Women-owned businesses create job opportunities for others, especially in small and medium enterprises.

3. **Women Empowerment** : Entrepreneurship helps women become financially independent and improves their decision-making power.

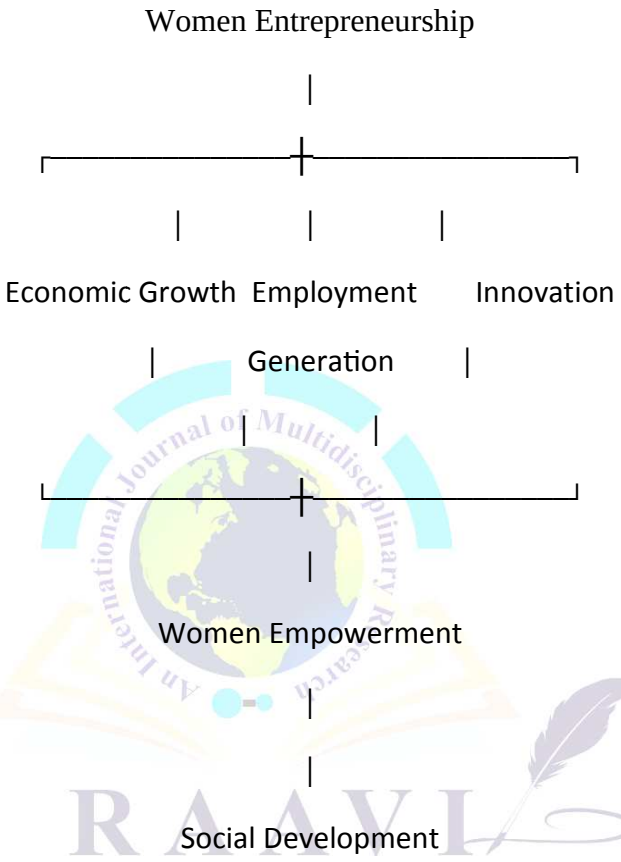
4. **Poverty Reduction** : Women-led enterprises help increase household income and improve living standards.

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5. **Regional and Rural Development** : Many women entrepreneurs operate in rural areas, promoting local industries such as handicrafts and food processing.

Diagram : Role of Women Entrepreneurship In Economic Development



Evaluation of The Impact of Government Programs and Policies in Encouraging Women Entrepreneurship

Government programs and policies in India have played a significant role in promoting women entrepreneurship by providing financial support, training opportunities, and institutional assistance. Various initiatives launched by the government aim to reduce barriers faced by women and encourage them to participate actively in business and economic activities.

One of the major institutions supporting entrepreneurship development is the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, which provides training programs, skill development initiatives, and financial assistance to women entrepreneurs. These programs help women

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develop managerial skills, gain business knowledge, and access resources necessary for starting and expanding enterprises.

Several government schemes have also been introduced to encourage women entrepreneurs. For example, the Stand-Up India Scheme provides financial assistance and bank loans to women to establish new enterprises in manufacturing, services, or trading sectors. Similarly, the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme offers financial subsidies and support for setting up micro-enterprises, which benefits many women entrepreneurs, especially in rural and semi-urban areas.

The impact of these programs can be seen in the increasing number of women-owned enterprises across different sectors such as retail, handicrafts, food processing, and service industries. Government initiatives have helped women gain access to credit facilities, develop entrepreneurial skills, and build confidence in managing businesses. These programs also contribute to employment generation and economic growth.

However, despite the positive impact, some challenges still exist. Many women entrepreneurs are not fully aware of the available schemes, and difficulties in accessing financial institutions and bureaucratic procedures sometimes limit the effectiveness of these policies. In addition, social and cultural barriers may still discourage women from pursuing entrepreneurship.

Overall, government programs and policies have made a significant contribution to encouraging women entrepreneurship in India. With improved awareness, simplified procedures, and better implementation of these initiatives, women entrepreneurs can further strengthen their role in economic development and social empowerment

Major Barriers Faced By Women Entrepreneurs

Women entrepreneurs in India contribute significantly to economic development, employment generation, and social progress. However, many women face several obstacles while starting and managing their businesses. These barriers may arise due to financial limitations, social norms, lack of training, and restricted access to markets and technology.

Barrier	**Explanation**
Financial Constraints	Difficulty in obtaining loans and investment capital

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Barrier	Explanation
Lack of Training	Limited knowledge of management, marketing, and technology
Social and Cultural Barriers	Traditional roles and family expectations
Limited Market Access	Difficulty in reaching customers and expanding markets
Work–Life Balance	Managing family responsibilities along with business
Limited Networking	Fewer professional contacts and business support systems

Despite significant progress in women entrepreneurship, various financial, social, and institutional barriers continue to restrict women's full participation in business activities. Addressing these challenges through better policies, training programs, and financial support can significantly improve the growth of women-led enterprises.

Role of Women Entrepreneurs In Economic Growth And Development

Key Role	Description	Impact on Economy and Society
Employment Generation	Women entrepreneurs establish businesses that provide jobs to skilled and unskilled workers.	Reduces unemployment and increases income opportunities.
Economic Growth	Women-led enterprises contribute to production, trade, and service activities.	Increases national income and strengthens the economy.
Innovation and Creativity	Women introduce new ideas, products, and business models in the market.	Encourages competition and improves product quality.
Industrial Diversification	Women entrepreneurs participate in sectors such as manufacturing, retail, food processing, handicrafts, and services.	Expands different industries and supports balanced economic development.

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Key Role	Description	Impact on Economy and Society
Rural and Regional Development	Many women start enterprises in rural areas using local resources and traditional skills.	Promotes rural development and reduces migration to cities.
Social Empowerment	Entrepreneurship helps women achieve financial independence and confidence.	Improves decision-making power and gender equality in society.
Poverty Reduction	Income generated from women-owned businesses supports family welfare.	Improves education, healthcare, and living standards.
Community Development	Women entrepreneurs contribute to local economic activities and social progress.	Strengthens community growth and sustainable development.

Women entrepreneurs contribute significantly to economic growth and development through employment generation, innovation, rural development, social empowerment, and poverty reduction. Their active participation in entrepreneurship strengthens both the economy and society.

Strategies For Promoting and Strengthening Women Entrepreneurship In India

1. **Improved Access to Finance**

Women entrepreneurs should be provided with easier access to loans, subsidies, and financial assistance. Banks and financial institutions should simplify loan procedures and offer special credit schemes for women entrepreneurs.

2. **Entrepreneurship Training and Skill Development**

Training programs should be organized to develop managerial, technical, and marketing skills among women. Skill development initiatives supported by institutions such as the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises can help women gain the knowledge required to run successful businesses.

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3. **Awareness of Government Schemes**

Many women are not aware of the government programs designed to support them. Awareness campaigns and workshops should be conducted to inform women about schemes like the Stand-Up India Scheme and the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme.

4. **Access to Technology and Digital Skills**

Women entrepreneurs should be encouraged to adopt digital tools, e-commerce platforms, and modern technologies. Digital literacy programs can help them expand their businesses and reach wider markets.

5. **Mentorship and Networking Opportunities**

Creating mentorship programs and business networks can help women entrepreneurs share experiences, gain guidance, and build professional relationships that support business growth.

6. **Market Access and Marketing Support**

Government and private organizations should provide marketing support, trade fairs, and online platforms to help women entrepreneurs promote their products and services effectively.

7. **Supportive Infrastructure**

Providing common workspaces, business incubators, and industrial clusters can help women entrepreneurs establish and grow their enterprises.

8. **Social Support and Work–Life Balance**

Encouraging family and community support for women entrepreneurs can help them balance business responsibilities with family duties, thereby increasing their participation in entrepreneurship.

Conclusion

Women entrepreneurship development in India plays a vital role in promoting economic growth, employment generation, and social empowerment .Women entrepreneurs create job opportunities for many individuals, especially in small-scale industries, service sectors, and rural enterprises. Their businesses help increase productivity, innovation, and competitiveness in various industries.

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With proper policy support, financial assistance, and skill development programs, women entrepreneurs can overcome the challenges they face and successfully establish and expand their enterprises. Government initiatives and institutional support from organizations such as the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises provide training, financial aid, and guidance to help women develop their entrepreneurial capabilities.

Furthermore, women entrepreneurship promotes financial independence and improves the social status of women in society. It also contributes to poverty reduction and enhances the living standards of families and communities. Encouraging women to participate in entrepreneurship will not only empower them but also lead to balanced and sustainable economic development. Therefore, strengthening women entrepreneurship is essential for building a more inclusive, innovative, and prosperous economy in India.

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7. https://restpublisher.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/A-Study-On-Women-Entrepreneurship-In-India.pdf
8. https://www.startupindia.gov.in/content/sih/en/women_entrepreneurs.html
9. https://mospi.gov.in/sites/default/files/publication_reports/Women%20Entrepreneuship_Paper_Tomar%20%20Ellina.pdf

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Gender Sensitive Policies in Higher Education Institutions in India

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Abstract

In higher education institutions, fostering gender sensitivity is vital for promoting equality, inclusiveness, and social justice within academic settings. In India, these institutions have progressively adopted gender-sensitive policies to combat gender discrimination, harassment, unequal opportunities, and the structural obstacles encountered by women and other marginalised gender groups. This study explores the implementation, effectiveness, and challenges associated with gender-sensitive policies in Indian higher education institutions. It evaluates institutional frameworks, such as internal complaints committees, gender sensitisation initiatives, equal opportunity cells, and policies that encourage women's involvement in leadership and academic roles. A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods was employed to assess policy implementation across selected universities and colleges. The results reveal that despite the existence of policy frameworks, their practical application is inconsistent due to limited awareness, cultural norms, administrative hurdles, and insufficient monitoring mechanisms. The study concludes that to achieve gender equity in higher education, it is crucial to enhance institutional commitment, conduct regular training programs, establish transparent grievance mechanisms, and integrate policies into institutional governance.

Keywords: Gender Sensitivity, Higher Education, Gender Equality, Policy Implementation, Women Empowerment, Inclusive Education, India

Introduction

Achieving gender equality is a basic human right and a crucial element of sustainable development. Within the realm of higher education, policies that are sensitive to gender issues strive to foster an academic setting in which everyone is treated equally, irrespective of their

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gender. In the past, educational institutions in India mirrored societal inequalities, which restricted women's involvement in academic and leadership positions.

In recent decades, the Indian government and regulatory bodies, such as the University Grants Commission (UGC), have launched numerous policy measures to advance gender equality in higher education institutions. These policies, which address issues such as sexual harassment, gender discrimination, and equal opportunities, aim to create secure and supportive educational environments. For instance, the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act requires educational institutions to set up internal complaints committees (ICC). Additionally, gender sensitisation workshops, women's development cells, and equal opportunity centres are increasingly being integrated into institutional frameworks. Despite these efforts, gender imbalances persist in areas such as academic participation, leadership roles, and access to opportunities. Thus, assessing the effectiveness of gender-sensitive policies is crucial to pinpoint shortcomings and propose enhancements.

Study Area

This study examines higher education institutions in India, encompassing central universities, state universities, and affiliated colleges in specific regions. India has one of the world's largest higher education systems, overseen by entities such as the University Grants Commission and the Ministry of Education. The study area includes institutions situated in both urban and semi-urban areas to explore variations in policy execution. These institutions reflect a range of socio-cultural settings in which gender norms and institutional policies converge to influence the experiences of students, faculty, and administrative personnel.

Aim and Objectives

Aim

To analyse the implementation and effectiveness of sex-sensitive policies in higher education institutions in India

Objectives

1. To examine existing gender-sensitive policies in higher education institutions.
2. To assess the level of awareness and perception of gender-related policies among students and faculty members.

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3. To evaluate the effectiveness of institutional mechanisms, such as internal complaints committees and gender sensitisation cells.
4. To identify challenges and gaps in policy implementation.
5. Suggest measures for strengthening gender equality in higher education institutions.

Database and Methodology

Data Sources

This study is based on both primary and secondary data.

Primary Data:

Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions with students, faculty members, and administrative staff from the selected higher education institutions.

Secondary Data:

Secondary data were obtained from policy documents, institutional reports, government publications, and research articles related to sex policies in higher education.

Methodology

A mixed-method research approach was adopted in this study.

1. **Survey Method:** Questionnaires were distributed to students and faculty members to assess their awareness and perceptions regarding gender-sensitive policies.
2. **Interview Method:** Semi-structured interviews were conducted with institutional administrators and members of internal complaints committees.
3. **Statistical Analysis:** Descriptive statistics, such as percentage analysis and mean values, were used to analyse survey data.
4. **Policy Analysis:** Institutional policies were reviewed to understand their structure and scope.

A sample of approximately 200 respondents from selected institutions was considered for this study.

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5. Hypothesis

H1: Gender-sensitive policies positively influence women's academic environments and safety in higher education institutions.

H2: Awareness of gender-sensitive policies among students and faculty significantly affects their effectiveness.

H3: Institutions with active gender sensitisation programs demonstrate better sex equality outcomes.

Results and Discussion

The findings of the research suggest that most higher education institutions in India have established formal systems to address gender-related concerns. Approximately 80% of the institutions surveyed confirmed the presence of internal complaints committees and gender sensitisation initiatives. However, the level of awareness regarding these policies among students and faculty members varies widely. Faculty members tend to be more informed, whereas many students lack knowledge about the procedures for lodging complaints and the support systems available to them. The study further highlights that gender-sensitive policies play a role in fostering safer and more inclusive campus environments. Institutions that regularly conduct gender awareness programs show enhanced reporting mechanisms and increased trust in institutional processes. Despite these advancements, several obstacles persist, such as limited institutional resources, inadequate training for committee members, and societal attitudes that deter the reporting of gender-related grievances. The discussion emphasises that for policies to be effective, they must be supported by ongoing awareness campaigns, administrative accountability, and regular monitoring.

Conclusions

Policies that are sensitive to gender issues play a crucial role in fostering equality and inclusivity within higher education institutions. In India, both regulatory frameworks and institutional initiatives have made notable strides in tackling gender discrimination and harassment. However, the effectiveness of these policies is heavily reliant on their execution, the level of awareness, and the commitment of the institutions involved. This study concludes that enhancing gender sensitisation programs, refining grievance redressal systems, and incorporating gender perspectives into institutional governance are vital steps toward achieving gender equity in higher education. Universities and colleges need to adopt a

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proactive stance to ensure that gender-sensitive policies lead to substantial changes in academic settings.

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Study of Barriers and Challenges Faced by Women in Leadership Role

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Abstract:

This literature review analyzes the literature on female librarians, focusing on the workplace challenges and issues they face and how they overcome and seizing leadership opportunities.Role of women is increasing day by day due to women education and their capabilities. It also revealed The challenges for female library professionals in administrative, financial and skills issues, gender discrimination, societal and cultural norms and harassment in the workplace.

The skills and strategies needed to create a better and congenial workplace for the female library professionals were a positive workplace culture, financial benefits, empowerment and gender equality, mentoring and skills development, work-life balance, and active involvement in research and scholarship.

This paper offers a thorough analysis of the numerous difficulties faced by women in leadership roles. This report's thorough study reveals a number of significant obstacles, such as the influence of intersectionality, organizational discrimination, work-life balance concerns, and societal preconception The report emphasizes how important it is to take proactive steps to solve these issues and create cultures that support gender-inclusive leadership, such as diversity initiatives and mentorship programs.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, work life balance, workplace challenges, gender discrimination

Introduction:

Women have now worked in organizations for over five decades. They have contributed to the growth, culture and performance of organizations. As women have risen up the corporate ladder they have acquired leadership roles and have been assigned higher organizational responsibilities. Organizations which design career paths for their female

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employees face issues of promotion, appraisal, competition between men and women colleagues, stereotypes about women in leadership roles and positions, and the personality traits of women leaders.

Gender diversity in leadership continues to be a crucial concern, as women have historically been underrepresented in leadership positions across a range of industries. Even with advancements achieved in the direction of gender equality, women still encounter particular difficulties when taking on leadership roles. This paper explores the complex issues faced by women in leadership positions, looking at the obstacles they face and how they affect organizational dynamics and societal advancement. Although the number of women in leadership roles has grown over time,they are still overrepresented in executive and senior management positions. This disparity highlights the ongoing obstacles that prevent women from rising to positions of leadership, despite their qualifications, skill, and prospective contributions.

This paper attempts to investigate the range of obstacles that women in leadership posts must overcome, from personal hurdles like imposter syndrome and work-life balancing constraints to structural biases and cultural standards. By bringing these issues to light, we can find solutions that work, encourage gender diversity in the leadership ranks, and build welcoming settings where everyone has an equal chance to lead

Definition: According to Oxford:

"Female leadership refers to women occupying leadership roles in organisations, communities, or governments, where they influence decisions, drive progress, and inspire others. This concept highlights the importance of gender diversity in leadership, promoting equitable opportunities and representation for women across all sectors".

Female leadership drives organizational success through higher emotional intelligence, improved collaboration, and increased innovation. Studies show companies with women in top roles often achieve higher financial performance, including better stock price performance and ROI. These leaders foster inclusive environments that boost morale and, consequently, productivity.

To ensure understanding throughout this paper, several definitions are offered at this time.

- Community – a social group, department, organization, government agency, or society at large.

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- Change – a conversion or shift in the internal and external culture or environment of a social group, department, organization, government

To ensure understanding throughout this paper, several definitions are offered at this time.

- Community – a social group, department, organization, government agency, or society at large.
- Change – a conversion or shift in the internal and external culture or environment of a social group, department, organization, government

Literature Review

1. According to Helfat, et al. (2006), women in top management positions were nearly non-existent from the 1970s to the early 1990s. Information from Powell (1999) and Helfat, et al. (2006) shows a dramatic increase of women in business leadership roles . Women in Management Positions
2. As of 2005 women accounted for 46.5% of the United States workforce, but for less than 8% of its top manager positions although at Fortune 500 companies the figure was a bit higher (The Economist, 2005). Female managers' earnings now average 72% of their male colleagues' (Emory, 2008).
3. Often cited as the reason for why women are not represented in top management positions is the "glass ceiling." The glass ceiling effect is defined as an unofficial barrier to opportunities within an organization or company preventing a protected classes of workers, particularly women, from advancing to higher positions (Glass Cliff, 2008; Olin, et al., 2000).
4. According to Helfat et al. (2006), the percentage of women in executive positions is gender specific. For example, industries with the highest percentage of women executives include publishing and printing (15.8%), transportation equipment (15.7%), securities (14.8%), healthcare (14.6%), temporary help (14.5%), airlines (13.8%), and food Services (13.6%). In contrast, industries with women holding the least amount of executive positions include semiconductors (1.3%), energy (2.8%), waste management (3.6%), trucking (3.8%), aerospace (3.8%), mail, package, and freight delivery (3.8%), and pipelines (3.9%).
5. According to Laff (2006), while this information can be explained in part by female preferences, it can also be attributed to educational choices. Some analysts believe that

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the educational choices women make explain the low number of executive and managerial women in tactical, science, and engineering fields. According to Nelson and Lavasque (2007), women in the United States only comprise 25% of the doctorates in math and science and less than 17% in engineering and computer and information sciences. The figures suggest education is an enabler of the glass ceiling.

Objectives of study:

1. **Gender Bias and Stereotyping**:
   a. Bias attitudes and stereotypes affect women, undermining their capacity to lead.
   b. By addressing unconscious bias through diversity training and awareness efforts, these preconceptions can be lessened.
2. **Lack of Mentorship and Sponsorship**:
   a. Lack of female role models and mentors in leadership roles makes it difficult for women to obtain sponsorship and mentoring opportunities, which are essential for career growth.
   b. Aspiring women leaders might benefit from networking and support made possible by establishing official mentorship programmes and supporting sponsorship initiatives.
3. **Work-Life Integration**:
   a. One of the biggest challenges facing women in leadership positions is juggling work and caring duties.
   b. This problem is made worse by rigid work cultures and a dearthof family-friendly regulations.

Methodology of study:-

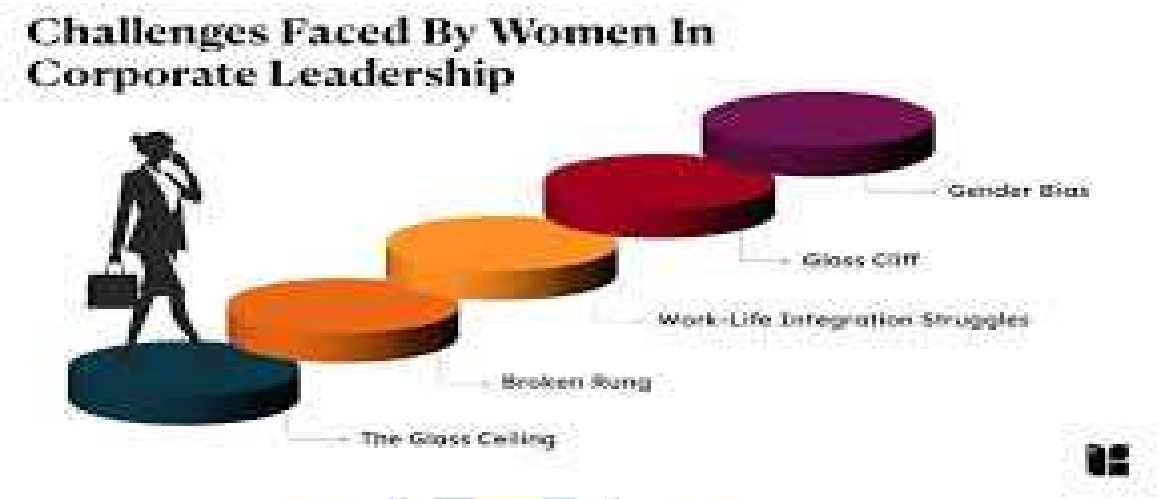
The data for this research purpose is collected by using secondary data sources such as books, magazine, research papers, newspapers, shodhganga website, internet, thesis, articles etc. The method for this research paper has used qualitative research method and all the data is collected with the help of secondary sources.

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Work-Life Balance and Family Occupations

Another major obstacle facing women in leadership positions is juggling work and family obligations. Women are penalized in the job for putting their home obligations first, a phenomenon known as the "motherhood penalty" (Corral et al., 2007). This makes these difficulties even more severe. Women still encounter obstacles in their pursuit of leadership roles and career progression, even in the face of progress in gender equality measures.



Current challenges facedby women in leadership roles

1. **Gender Bias and Stereotypes**: Women leaders often face biases and stereotypes that undermine their authority and competence, such as being seen as too emotional or less decisive compared to their male counterparts.
2. **Work-Life Balance Struggles**: Balancing professional responsibilities with personal and family commitments remains asignificant challenge for women leaders, often leading to feelingsof guilt and stress.
3. **Pay and Promotion Disparities**: Women leaders continue to face disparities in pay and promotions compared to their male counterparts, even when controlling for factors like education and experience.

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4. **Implicit Bias and Discrimination**: Subtle forms of bias and discrimination persist in workplaces, affecting women's opportunities for advancement, recognition, and inclusion in decision-making processes.

5. **Cultural and Organizational Barriers**: Organizational cultures and structures may be resistant to change, perpetuating inequalitiesand making it difficult for women to thrive in leadership roles.

"Women in Leadership: Solutions &Successes"

- **Mentorship and Sponsorship Programs**: Implement mentorship programs where experienced leaders (both men and women) mentor aspiring female leaders, providing guidance, support, and opportunities for skill development and career advancement. Additionally, sponsorship programs involve influential leaders advocating for women's career progression within organizations.
- **Flexible Work Arrangements**: Offer flexible work arrangements, such as telecommuting, flexible hours, and job-sharing options, to accommodate the needs of women balancing career and family responsibilities. This promotes work-life balance and enables women to pursue leadership roles without sacrificing their personal lives.
- **Gender Bias Training**: Provide training sessions and workshops to raise awareness about unconscious biases in the workplace and equip employees and leaders with strategies to mitigate bias in decision- making processes, hiring, promotions, and performance evaluations.
- **Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives**: Develop comprehensive diversity and inclusion initiatives that prioritize gender diversity in leadership roles. This includes setting diversity targets, implementing inclusive hiring practices, fostering a culture of respect and equality, and establishing support networks for women in leadership positions.
- **Leadership Development Programs**: Design leadership development programs specifically tailored to women, addressing unique challenges they may face in their career progression. These programs provide opportunities for skill-building, networking, mentorship, and exposure to senior leadership roles.
- **Visibility and Recognition**: Recognize and celebrate the achievements of women leaders through awards, promotions, and public recognition. Highlighting success stories

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of women who have overcome obstacles and excelled in leadership roles can inspire and empower other women to aspire to similar positions.

Success stories:

- **Sheryl Sandberg (COO, Facebook)**: Sandberg's book "Lean In" and the associated Lean In Circles have inspired women worldwide to pursue leadership roles, negotiate for higher salaries, and challenge gender stereotypes in the workplace.
- **Mary Barra (CEO, General Motors)**: Barra became the first female CEO of a major automaker and has implemented initiatives to promote diversity and inclusion within General Motors, including setting targets for gender diversity in leadership positions.
- **Indra Nooyi (Former CEO, PepsiCo)**: Nooyi's tenure as CEO was marked by her commitment to diversity and sustainability, and she actively promoted women's leadership development programs within PepsiCo. These examples demonstrate how proactive measures, supportive environments, and visible role models can contribute to breaking barriers and fostering gender diversity in leadership.

Key advantages of female leadership include:

- **Higher Emotional Intelligence (EQ):** Women in leadership often excel in empathy, self-awareness, and conflict management, which are crucial for effective team management.
- **Improved Decision-Making:** Diverse perspectives from women in leadership lead to more comprehensive, balanced board conversations and, ultimately, better long-term decisions.
- **Collaborative Culture:** Female leaders are often more relationship-focused, using a transformational approach that unites diverse groups toward common goals.
- **Enhanced Financial Performance:** Research from ResearchGate has linked higher gender diversity on corporate boards with significantly higher financial performance. Companies with at least 30% women in leadership roles tend to have higher net profit margins.
- **Mentorship and Role Modeling:** Women in positions of power serve as critical role models for future generations, fostering a pipeline of talent and breaking down gender stereotypes.

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- **Increased Innovation:** Diverse leadership teams are better equipped to challenge the status quo, bringing creative solutions to complex business problems.

Conclusion:

The challenges that women in leadership positions must overcome are numerous and varied, encompassing issues like work-life balance, the glass ceiling, and prejudice based on gender. These obstacles still exist in spite of developments, impeding women's progression and representation in positions of leadership. In order to overcome these obstacles, we must work together to eliminate systematic prejudice and advance inclusivity. We can establish work settings where women can flourish and fully contribute to leadership roles by putting tactics like diversity training, mentorship programmes, and flexible work rules intopractice. In the end, establishing an environment of advocacy and allyship is essential to attaining gender parity in leadership roles and maximizing the contribution of varied viewpoints during the decision- making process.

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Policies to Prevent Workplace Harassment and Ensure Safe Campuses

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Abstract

Harassment is a form of discrimination. It refers to behavior that hurts, insults, or makes a person or group uncomfortable because of who they are. This may be based on factors such as race, culture, nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity, or other personal characteristics. Harassment is a serious issue that affects employees'well-being and productivity across the world. Workplace harassment remains a major challenge in educational institutions and workplaces globally. Universities and colleges are expected to provide safe and inclusive environments where students and staff can study and work without experiencing discrimination or harassment. However, despite these expectations, incidents of harassment—especially sexual harassment and gender-based violence—continue to occur on many campuses. Governments and educational institutions have taken steps to address this issue by introducing laws, policies, and institutional mechanisms that aim to prevent harassment and protect victims. In India, one of the most important legal frameworks is the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, commonly known as the POSH Act. The Act defines sexual harassment as any unwelcome sexual behavior that creates a frightening, hostile, or uncomfortable work environment. It also sets rules for preventing harassment and handling complaints. Universities are required to conduct awareness programmes, provide gender-sensitisation training, and create transparent reporting systems. These measures help promote dignity, equality, and safety on campuses. This research paper examines policies designed to prevent workplace harassment in academic institutions and suggests ways to improve their effectiveness. The importance of institutional responsibility and collective efforts in creating safe workplaces is also highlighted. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the need for stronger implementation of policies and greater awareness among individuals. By addressing these issues, institutions can contribute to building respectful and harassment-free environments.

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Introduction

Workplace harassment is a serious issue that affects individuals across different sectors, including educational institutions. Harassment may be verbal, non-verbal, or physical.In academic environments, harassment not only affects employees but also students who depend on institutions for education and personal development.Universities and colleges serve as spaces for intellectual growth, research, and collaboration. Therefore, maintaining a safe and respectful environment is essential for academic success. When harassment occurs, it can negatively impact mental health, productivity, and academic performance. Victims may experience stress, anxiety, and loss of confidence, which can affect their career prospects and educational outcomes. Recognizing the seriousness of workplace harassment, governments and institutions around the world have introduced various laws and policies to address the problem. In India, the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013—commonly known as the POSH Act—provides a comprehensive legal framework for preventing and addressing sexual harassment in workplaces, including educational institutions. Higher education institutions also follow rules given by the University Grants Commission (UGC). These rules require universities and colleges to implement preventive steps such as forming an Anti-Ragging Committee and Squad, an Internal Complaints Committee (ICC), and a Grievance Redressal Cell. They must also conduct awareness programmes and provide safe infrastructure on campus. This paper explores the policies designed to prevent workplace harassment and ensure safe campuses. It also examines the challenges in implementing these policies and suggests strategies for strengthening campus safety. The need for effective implementation of policies within institutions is also given greater attention. Institutions must encourage a culture of respect and responsibility among students and staff. Awareness of rights and reporting mechanisms should be promoted to prevent incidents of harassment.

Understanding Workplace Harassment

Workplace harassment covers a broad spectrum of unwanted behavior at work that makes a person feel uncomfortable, unsafe, or disrespected**.** It may include physical, verbal, or psychological actions that harm an individual's dignity and well-being. Workplace harassment can occur in various forms and negatively affect employees' dignity, safety, and well-being. Verbal harassment involves the use of offensive, insulting, or threatening language in spoken or written communication. Physical harassment refers to unwanted physical contact or behavior that makes an individual feel insecure or threatened. Psychological harassment includes actions that harm a person's mental or emotional health,

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such as frightening, isolation, or constant criticism. Cyberbullying occurs through digital communication channels like emails, messages, or social media. Additionally, discrimination takes place when employees are treated unfairly based on characteristics such as gender, race, religion, or other personal attributes. Such behavior can create a hostile and uncomfortable work environment for individuals and reduces employees' confidence, motivation, and efficiency at work.

Legal Framework for Preventing Workplace Harassment

In India, several legal measures have been introduced to prevent workplace harassment and ensure a safe environment for employees and students. One of the most important laws is the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, commonly known as the POSH Act. The Act to provide protection against sexual harassment of women at workplace and for the prevention and Redressal of complaints of sexual harassment and for matters connected therewith. According to the Act, every organization and institution must establish an Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) to receive and address complaints related to sexual harassment. It requires organizations that have more than ten employees to set up an Internal Committee (IC)The committee is responsible for investigating cases and recommending appropriate action against the offender. This Act also highlights preventive measures such as conducting awareness programmes, training sessions, and sharing information about employees' and students' rights. In addition, government agencies and commissions have launched various safety and awareness initiatives to strengthen the implementation of anti-harassment policies.

Key digital platforms like the SHe-Boxportal allow for online complaint registration. The MoWCD launched the Sexual Harassment electronic Box (SHe-Box) on 29th August 2024. Sexual Harassment electronic Box (She-Box) is an effort of Government of India to provide single window access to every woman, irrespective of her work status, whether working in organized or unorganized, private or public sector, to facilitate to registration of complaint related to sexual harassment. Any woman facing sexual harassment at workplace can register their complaint through this portal. Once a complaint is submitted to the "She-Box", it will be directly sent to the concerned authority having jurisdiction to take action into the matter.

The Vishaka Guidelines were a set of procedural guidelines for use in India in cases of sexual harassment. They were promulgated by the Indian Supreme Court in 1997 and were superseded in 2013 by the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace

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These programmes promote legal literacy, digital safety awareness, and leadership development among students, encouraging institutions to actively participate in awareness campaigns and training programmes to create safer campuses and workplaces. Students are also helped to understand their rights and responsibilities in maintaining a respectful environment. In addition, such initiatives encourage cooperation between students, faculty members, and institutional authorities to prevent harassment and promote safety.

UGC Regulations and Institutional Policies for Safe Campuses

In India, the University Grants Commission (UGC) has initiatedseveral regulations to ensure safety, dignity, and gender equality within higher education institutions and to address the problem of sexual harassment. A major step in this direction was the introduction of the University Grants Commission (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal of Sexual Harassment of Women Employees and Students in Higher Educational Institutions) Regulations, 2015. These regulations were formulated under the University Grants Commission Act, 1956 and were officially notified by the Ministry of Human Resource Development on May 2, 2016. Over time, these policies have been strengthened to create safer, more inclusive learning and working environments in colleges and universities. Although the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 mainly focuses on protecting women from sexual harassment in workplaces, the UGC regulations borrowa broader and more gender-neutral approach so that complaints related to sexual harassment involving any gender can be addressed.

The 2015 regulations play an important role in promoting inclusiveness, equality, and safety within educational institutions. These guidelines were introduced to guarantee that institutions of higher education cultivate a space where students, faculty, and staff can engage in learning and work free from harassment or discrimination. By emphasizing fairness and equal treatment, the regulations seek to develop a campus culture grounded in dignity, respect, and mutual understanding. They offer a comprehensive framework applicable to all higher education institutions and assist them in formulating policies and practices that promote a secure and supportive campus environment.

According to these guidelines, institutions are required to establish Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs) to address complaints related to harassment in a fair and transparent manner. These committees act as a formal mechanism through which victims can report their concerns and seek justice. The regulations also encourage institutions to conduct regular gender-sensitisation and awareness programmes so that students and staff understand issues

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related to harassment, gender equality, and respectful behavior. Such programmes help create awareness and prevent inappropriate conduct by educating the campus community about rights, responsibilities, and acceptable behavior. Furthermore, the regulations require institutions to develop clear and effective systems for handling grievances. This includes establishing proper procedures for filing complaints, conducting inquiries, and ensuring that the investigation process is fair and unbiased. Maintaining confidentiality during investigations is another key requirement, as it helps protect the dignity and privacy of those involved in the complaint process. Institutions must also ensure that complaints are addressed and resolved within a reasonable period so that justice is not delayed.

In addition to these measures, educational institutions are expected to submit regular compliance reports explaining how these mechanisms are functioning. These reports provide information about the steps taken by institutions to implement the regulations, the number of complaints received, and the actions taken to resolve them. By doing so, the regulations promote accountability and transparency in the functioning of institutional mechanisms. Overall, the 2015 regulations play a significant role in strengthening institutional responsibility and ensuring that campuses remain safe, inclusive, and respectful spaces for everyone.

Educational institutions play an important role in implementing policies that promote safety, equality, and a respectful campus environment. One of the key measures is the establishment of Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs), as required by the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 and the University Grants Commission (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal of Sexual Harassment of Women Employees and Students in Higher Educational Institutions) Regulations, 2015. These committees act as the primary mechanism for addressing harassment complaints within institutions. Their responsibilities include receiving complaints, conducting fair and impartial investigations, recommending disciplinary action when necessary, and maintaining confidentiality throughout the process. The presence of a well-functioning grievance redressal system encourages victims to report incidents without fear and ensures that complaints are handled in a systematic and sensitive manner.

Awareness and Sensitization Programmes

In addition to complaint Redressal mechanisms, institutions must focus on prevention through awareness programmes, transparent reporting systems, and safe campus infrastructure. Universities and colleges regularly organize workshops, seminars, and

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orientation sessions to educate students and staff about harassment laws, ethical behavior, and individual rights and responsibilities. Clear and accessible complaint mechanisms, including helpline numbers and reporting channels, help victims seek support without fear of retaliation. Furthermore, physical safety measures such as adequate lighting, security personnel, surveillance systems, and the display of emergency contact numbers contribute to a safer campus environment. The availability of women's support services and other assistance mechanisms further strengthens institutional efforts to prevent harassment and maintain a secure atmosphere for students and employees.

Challenges in Implementing Anti-Harassment Policies

Despite the existence of strong policies, several challenges affect their effective implementation.

a. Lack of Awareness

One of the major challenges in implementing anti-harassment policies is the lack of awareness among students and employees. Rights and policies that protect individuals from harassment are not fully understood by many individuals. In addition, they may not know the proper procedures for reporting incidents or whom to approach for help. Due to this limited knowledge, victims are often discouraged from filing complaints. As a result, cases of harassment may go unreported and unresolved. To ensure that individuals understand their rights and feel confident in seeking support, awareness must be promoted through training and educational programmes.

b. Social Stigma and Fear of Retaliation

Social stigma and fear of retaliation are significant factors that discourage victims from Filingcomplaints of harassment. Many individuals worry that they may be judged, blamed, or socially isolated if they speak about their experiences. In some cases, victims fear negative reactions from peers, colleagues, or society. There is also a concern that the Harasser may take revenge or create further problems after a complaint is filed. Because of these fears, many victims hesitate to report incidents of harassment and prefer to remain silent.

c. Inefficient Implementation of Policies

Ineffective implementation is another challenge in addressing harassment within institutions. In some cases, committees are formed only to meet formal requirements and exist merely on paper. These committees may not function properly or handle complaints

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efficiently. Without proper monitoring, training, and institutional support, justice may not be ensured for victims through these mechanisms.

d. Delays in Complaint Resolution

Many institutions often experience delays in the resolution of complaints.Investigations are sometimes prolonged, and transparency is not always maintained during the process. These issues may discourage victims from pursuing their complaints. As a result, many cases may remain unresolved for a long time.

Strategies for Strengthening Campus Safety

Strengthening campus safety against workplace harassment requires a comprehensive approach that combines clear policies, proactive training, and a culture of accountability. To ensure the effectiveness of anti-harassment policies, institutions should adopt comprehensive strategies. Regular Observation and evaluation of these policies can help ensure that they are properly implemented.

a. Enhancing Institutional Accountability

Educational institutions need to regularly monitor the functioning of grievance committees so that they can perform their responsibilities effectively. Continuous Supervision helps ensure that complaints are handled in a fair and transparent manner. It is also important for institutions to follow all legal guidelines and institutional policies while dealing with such issues. By doing so, institutions can maintain accountability and build trust in the complaint resolution process.

b. Regular Training and Workshops

Training programmes and workshops should be organized regularly for faculty members, staff, and students. These initiatives play an important role in increasing awareness about harassment policies and the procedures for reporting complaints. They also help in encouraging respectful behaviour and responsible conduct among members of the campus community.

c. Promoting Gender Equality and Inclusivity

Universities should implement gender-sensitive policies to promote equality and mutual respect among all individuals. Building an inclusive environment can decrease incidents of

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discrimination and harassment.. In addition, awareness programmes can encourage the development of positive attitudes toward diversity.

e. Use of Technology for Safety

Technology can play an important role in improving campus safety. Digital complaint platforms and online reporting systems are provided by many institutions so that complaints can be submitted through websites, mobile applications, or institutional portals. In several universities, official online portals have been created to allow students and staff to file complaints electronically. In addition, digital systems are used for reporting sexual harassment cases Government complaint portals such as SHe-Box (Sexual Harassment Electronic Box) have also been developed, through which workplace harassment complaints can be submitted online. Mobile safety applications like Himmat App and Raksha – Women Safety Alert are used to send emergency alerts and report safety concerns. In some institutions, university mobile applications are also developed so that incidents or safety issues can be reported quickly. Through these technological tools, quick assistance can be provided during emergencies and campus safety can be improved.

e. Encouraging Student Participation

Encouraging student participation is an important step in strengthening campus safety and promoting a respectful environment within educational institutions. Students should be actively involved in various initiatives that aim to create awareness about harassment prevention and campus safety. Their participation in awareness campaigns, workshops, and peer education programmes can play a significant role in spreading information about rights, responsibilities, and appropriate behaviour. Through these activities, students can help create a culture of respect, equality, and mutual support among the campus community. In addition, student leadership programmes and student-led organizations can contribute to promoting gender equality and inclusivity on campus. When students take part in discussions, awareness drives, and safety initiatives, they become more responsible and aware of the importance of maintaining a safe environment. Therefore, encouraging active student involvement can help educational institutions build a more supportive, inclusive, and secure campus atmosphere for everyone.

Conclusion

Workplace harassment continues to be a major challenge across different work environments, affecting employees as well as, in some cases, students or trainees. Ensuring

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safety in workplaces and campuses requires a combination of strong legal frameworks, effective institutional policies, and appropriate preventive strategies. The implementation of laws such as the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act and the guidelines issued by the University Grants Commission has helped strengthen the mechanisms for addressing harassment in many institutions. Measures such as Internal Complaints Committees, awareness programmes, and transparent reporting systems play an important role in preventing and responding to harassment.

However, the effective implementation of these measures still faces several challenges, including lack of awareness, social stigma, and certain institutional barriers. To address these issues, organizations and educational institutions should adopt well-planned strategies that promote accountability, support gender equality, and create inclusive environments for everyone. By strengthening policies, increasing awareness, and encouraging shared responsibility, workplaces and campuses can develop into safe and supportive spaces where individuals feel respected and confident in pursuing their professional and academic goals.

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Women's Leadership in Emerging Technologies: An Assessment

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Abstract:

Women are increasingly taking leadership roles in emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Data Science, Biotechnology, and Cybersecurity. Their participation is helping to bring diversity, creativity, and new perspectives to the technology sector. Although these fields were traditionally dominated by men, many women are now contributing significantly as researchers, innovators, entrepreneurs, and policymakers. In Artificial Intelligence and Data Science, women leaders are working on developing ethical AI systems, improving machine learning models, and ensuring that technology benefits society. They are also helping to reduce bias in algorithms and encouraging responsible use of data. In Biotechnology, women scientists and entrepreneurs are making important discoveries in healthcare, medicine, and environmental sustainability. Their work includes developing vaccines, improving genetic research, and creating solutions for global health challenges. In the field of Cybersecurity, women leaders are playing a crucial role in protecting digital systems and sensitive information. They design security strategies, detect cyber threats, and help organizations stay safe from cyber attacks. Their leadership is important as the world becomes more dependent on digital technology.

The present paper argues that, despite their progress, women still face challenges such as gender stereotypes, limited representation, and fewer leadership opportunities in technology sectors. However, initiatives like STEM education programs, mentorship networks, and supportive policies are helping to encourage more women to enter and lead in these fields. Overall, it concludes, women's leadership in emerging technologies is essential for innovation and inclusive growth. By contributing their skills and ideas, women are shaping the future of technology and inspiring the next generation of scientists, engineers, and technology leaders.

Keywords: technology, AI, data science, biotechnology, cyber security

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Introduction:

Emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Data Science, Biotechnology, and Cybersecurity are rapidly transforming modern society. These technologies influence many important sectors such as healthcare, communication, education, finance, agriculture, and national security. Leadership in these areas plays a vital role in shaping how technology is developed and how it impacts people's lives.

For a long time, the technology sector was dominated by men. However, in recent years, women have started to play a significant role in technological innovation and leadership. Women scientists, engineers, and entrepreneurs are contributing new ideas and helping develop technologies that solve global problems. Their leadership brings diversity, creativity, and inclusive perspectives to technological progress.

Although women's participation in emerging technologies is increasing worldwide, gender gaps still exist in many countries. India has also been making progress in promoting women in science and technology, but there are still areas where improvement is needed. Understanding the current situation and comparing global and Indian trends can help identify ways to strengthen women's leadership in these important fields.

Current Status of Women in Emerging Technologies (World vs India)

Artificial Intelligence (AI): Women represent around 20–25% of the AI workforce globally. They are involved in research, machine learning development, and AI ethics. Women participation in AI is increasing through engineering education and technology companies, but leadership roles remain limited.

Data Science: Globally, women are entering data science careers in increasing numbers, especially in research and analytics sectors. India has many women data analysts and programmers working in IT companies, but fewer women hold senior positions.

Biotechnology: Women have strong representation in biotechnology worldwide, especially in healthcare research, pharmaceuticals, and genetic studies. India also shows good participation of women in biotechnology, particularly in research institutes and medical laboratories.

Cybersecurity: Women make up a small portion of the cybersecurity workforce worldwide, though the number is slowly increasing. Cybersecurity in India still has low female representation, but training programs are encouraging more women to enter this field.

Technology Leadership: Globally, women hold fewer executive positions in major technology companies. However, diversity programs are promoting gender inclusion. In

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India, women leaders are emerging in technology startups and IT companies, but overall representation in leadership roles is still developing. This comparison shows that both the world and India are improving in terms of women's participation in emerging technologies, but significant gender gaps still exist.

Challenges Faced by Women in Emerging Technologies

Women across the world, including India, face several challenges in technology fields.

1. **Gender Stereotypes:** Society sometimes assumes that technical fields such as engineering and computing are better suited for men. This discourages many girls from pursuing STEM careers.
2. **Lack of Representation:** Women are often underrepresented in leadership positions such as technology executives, research directors, and senior engineers.
3. **Limited Access to Resources:** In some countries, girls and women have limited access to high-quality education, technical training, and research facilities.
3. **Workplace Bias:** Women professionals may face unequal pay, fewer promotion opportunities, or lack of recognition for their work.
4. **Work-Life Balance Issues:** Balancing family responsibilities with demanding technology careers can sometimes make career advancement difficult.

Opportunities for Women in Emerging Technologies

Despite challenges, there are many growing opportunities for women in technology.

1. **Increasing Demand for Technology Professionals:** With the rapid growth of AI, biotechnology, cybersecurity, and data science, there is a global demand for skilled professionals.
2. **STEM Education Programs:** Educational institutions are encouraging girls to pursue science, technology, engineering, and mathematics subjects.
3. **Government and Policy Support:** Many governments, including India's, are introducing policies and initiatives that promote women's participation in science and technology.
4. **Mentorship and Networking Programs:** Professional organizations provide mentorship opportunities that help women build technical skills and leadership abilities.

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5. **Technology Entrepreneurship:** Women entrepreneurs are creating startups in biotechnology, health technology, AI applications, and data analytics.

Causes of Gender Gap in Technology

Several factors contribute to the gender gap in emerging technology fields both globally and in India.

1. **Educational Inequality :** In some regions, girls do not have equal opportunities to study science and technology subjects.
2. **Social and Cultural Expectations :** Traditional beliefs about gender roles may discourage women from pursuing technical careers.
3. **Lack of Female Role Models :** When young girls do not see women leaders in technology, they may feel less confident about entering these fields.
4. **Limited Professional Support :** Women sometimes lack mentorship, networking opportunities, and career guidance.
5. **Workplace Inequality:** Bias in hiring, promotions, and salary structures can slow career growth for women professionals.

Importance of Women's Leadership in Emerging Technologies

Women's leadership in emerging technologies is very important for building a balanced and innovative society. When women participate in technological development, they bring different perspectives and experiences that help improve the quality of innovation. Diverse leadership teams often produce better ideas and solutions because they consider the needs of different communities.

In fields such as Artificial Intelligence and Data Science, women leaders help ensure that technologies are developed ethically and responsibly. They work to reduce bias in algorithms and ensure that technological systems treat all people fairly. In biotechnology, women researchers are contributing to life-saving medical discoveries and improving global healthcare systems.

Women's leadership also promotes social progress. When young girls see successful women scientists and engineers, they feel inspired to pursue careers in science and technology. This helps create a new generation of innovators who can solve future global challenges.

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Furthermore, women leaders often emphasize collaboration, communication, and inclusive decision-making in organizations. These qualities help technology companies and research institutions grow in a sustainable and responsible way.

Role of Education in Promoting in Technology

Education plays a key role in increasing women's participation in emerging technologies. Schools and universities must encourage girls to study science, mathematics, computer programming, and engineering subjects. Early exposure to technology can help girls develop confidence and interest in STEM careers.

Many educational institutions around the world are now promoting special programs for girls in science and technology. Coding workshops, robotics clubs, science competitions, and technology camps are helping young students develop technical skills at an early age.

Scholarships and financial support programs are also helping women pursue higher education in technical fields. Universities and research institutions are providing opportunities for women to study artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and cybersecurity.

Teachers and mentors play an important role in guiding students and encouraging them to explore new ideas. By supporting girls' interest in science and technology, educators can help build a stronger and more diverse technology workforce in the future.

Government and Organizational Initiatives

Many governments and international organizations are working to promote gender equality in science and technology. These initiatives aim to increase women's participation in research, innovation, and leadership roles.

Governments are introducing policies that support women entrepreneurs, provide funding for women-led startups, and encourage female participation in STEM education. Research grants and scholarships are also being offered to support women scientists and engineers.

Technology companies and research organizations are implementing diversity and inclusion programs to ensure equal opportunities for women. Many companies are creating mentorship networks, leadership training programs, and flexible working environments that support women professionals.

International organizations also play an important role in promoting women in technology. Global programs encourage collaboration between countries, support research projects, and recognize the achievements of women scientists and innovators.

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These initiatives are gradually helping reduce gender inequality and increase women's leadership in emerging technologies.

Future of Women's Leadership in Emerging Technologies

The future of women's leadership in emerging technologies looks promising. As technology continues to expand, there will be increasing demand for skilled professionals in fields such as AI, cybersecurity, biotechnology, and data science. This creates new opportunities for women to take leadership roles in research, innovation, and entrepreneurship.

Advances in education, digital learning platforms, and global collaboration are making it easier for women to access knowledge and develop technical skills. Online courses, virtual

laboratories, and international research networks allow women to participate in global technological development.

In the coming years, governments and organizations are expected to focus more on gender diversity and inclusion in technology sectors. Policies promoting equal opportunities, fair workplace practices, and leadership development will encourage more women to pursue careers in emerging technologies.

With continuous support and awareness, women can become key innovators and leaders who help shape the future of technology and society.

Conclusion

Women's leadership in emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, Data Science, Biotechnology, and Cybersecurity is essential for global development. Both the world and India have made progress in increasing women's participation in technology fields, but there is still a need to improve representation in leadership positions.

By promoting STEM education for girls, supporting women professionals through mentorship programs, and creating inclusive workplaces, societies can encourage more women to become leaders in technology. When women actively participate in innovation and decision-making, technology becomes more inclusive, creative, and beneficial for society as a whole. Strengthening women's leadership in emerging technologies will not only promote gender equality but also help build a more advanced, sustainable, and innovative future.

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Bridging the Gender Gap in Artificial Intelligence and Data Science: Opportunities and Challenges for Women in Emerging Technologies in India

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Abstract:

The rapid advancement of emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Data Science has significantly transformed global economies, governance systems, and the research landscape. These technologies increasingly influence decision-making processes in sectors such as healthcare, finance, education, and public administration. Despite their growing importance, women remain significantly underrepresented in technological innovation and leadership roles. Persistent gender disparities in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) continue to limit women's participation in emerging technological domains, particularly in specialised areas such as AI and Data Science.

This paper examines the status, participation, and leadership of women in Artificial Intelligence and Data Science in India. It analyses the structural, sociocultural, and institutional barriers that restrict women's entry, retention, and advancement in emerging technological sectors. The study adopts a descriptive and analytical approach based on secondary data drawn from academic literature, policy reports, and publications of international organisations.

The findings indicate that although women's participation in higher education has increased in recent years, their representation in advanced technological roles and leadership positions remains limited. Several factors contribute to this disparity, including gender stereotypes in STEM education, limited access to mentorship and professional networks, workplace bias, and challenges related to work–life balance and caregiving responsibilities. These barriers not only restrict women's career progression but also reduce diversity in technological innovation.

The study emphasises the importance of targeted policy interventions, educational initiatives, and institutional support mechanisms to promote gender inclusivity in emerging technologies. Strengthening women's participation and leadership in AI and Data Science is

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essential for fostering inclusive technological development and ensuring equitable and sustainable innovation.

Keywords:

Women Leadership, Artificial Intelligence, Data Science, Gender Gap in STEM, Women in Technology, Emerging Technologies

Introduction:

Emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning, and Data Science are transforming economic systems, governance structures, and technological innovation worldwide. These technologies play a critical role in sectors such as healthcare, education, finance, cybersecurity, and public policy. As societies increasingly rely on data-driven decision-making, the demand for skilled professionals in AI and Data Science continues to grow. Despite the expansion of technological sectors, gender disparities remain significant in science and technology professions. Women continue to be underrepresented in STEM-related fields globally. Globally, women account for only around 28% of the technology workforce, highlighting the persistent gender imbalance in digital and emerging technological sectors. Studies indicate that women constitute less than one-third of the global research workforce, reflecting persistent structural inequalities in technological sectors (UNESCO, 2019).

The presence of diverse perspectives in technological innovation is essential for developing inclusive and ethical technological solutions. Women's participation in emerging technologies can contribute to reducing biases in algorithmic systems and designing technology that reflects the needs of diverse populations. However, various socio-cultural and institutional barriers continue to limit women's participation in these fields.

In the context of India, the rapid growth of digital technologies and government initiatives promoting digital transformation have created new opportunities for technological development. Nevertheless, women's representation in advanced technological fields such as Artificial Intelligence and Data Science remains relatively limited. Studies suggest that women constitute only around 20% of the AI and machine learning workforce in India, demonstrating a significant gender gap in emerging technological fields. Also, women hold less than 10% of leadership roles in India's technology sector, showing that gender disparity increases at higher organisational levels.Artificial Intelligence has increasingly become an important tool in governance and public policy worldwide. Governments are using AI-driven technologies to improve public service delivery, enhance administrative efficiency, and support data-driven decision-making. In India, digital governance initiatives and smart city

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programs increasingly rely on data analytics and artificial intelligence to optimise policy implementation. However, the growing use of AI in governance also raises concerns regarding inclusivity, transparency, and ethical decision-making. Greater diversity in technological leadership, particularly increased participation of women, is therefore essential to reduce algorithmic bias and ensure that AI-driven innovations address the needs of diverse sections of society.This paper, therefore, examines the status of women in emerging technologies in India and analyses the challenges and opportunities associated with women's leadership in AI and Data Science.

Literature Review:

The issue of gender disparity in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) has received considerable attention in academic research and policy discussions over the past few decades. Scholars and international organisations have consistently highlighted the underrepresentation of women in technological fields, particularly in emerging sectors such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Data Science, and Machine Learning.

According to a report by UNESCO (2019), women constitute less than 30% of the global research workforce in STEM fields. Although women's participation in higher education has increased significantly, their representation in technical disciplines such as engineering, computer science, and artificial intelligence remains comparatively low. The report emphasises that structural barriers, gender stereotypes, and institutional limitations contribute significantly to the persistent gender gap in scientific and technological careers.

Research conducted by Cheryan et al. (2017) highlights the role of social and cultural stereotypes in shaping career choices in STEM fields. The authors argue that perceptions of technical professions as male-dominated discourage many women from entering these fields. This phenomenon begins at an early stage of education, where girls are often less encouraged to pursue mathematics, computer science, and engineering-related subjects.

In the context of Artificial Intelligence, concerns regarding gender imbalance have become increasingly significant. West, Whittaker, and Crawford (2019) argue that the lack of diversity in AI development teams can result in biased technological systems that may unintentionally reinforce social inequalities. Their study emphasises that diverse participation, including women's leadership in AI development, is essential for creating ethical and socially responsible technological solutions.

The World Economic Forum (2023) also highlights the growing gender gap in emerging technological sectors. Despite the expansion of digital economies and increasing demand for technology professionals, women continue to be underrepresented in roles related to data

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science, machine learning, and artificial intelligence. The report suggests that limited access to mentorship, professional networks, and leadership opportunities restricts women's advancement in these fields.

Several studies have also examined the role of institutional support and policy interventions in improving women's participation in STEM. Buvinic and Furst-Nichols (2016) emphasise the importance of education policies, financial incentives, and leadership development programs in promoting women's economic empowerment in technology-driven sectors. These initiatives can help reduce structural barriers and create supportive environments for women professionals.

In India, the technology sector has expanded rapidly over the past two decades, yet gender disparities persist in advanced technological roles. Reports by industry organisations such as NASSCOM indicate that although women constitute a significant portion of the IT workforce, their representation in specialised technological fields and leadership positions remains limited. Cultural expectations, career interruptions, and limited institutional support are often cited as key factors influencing women's participation in these sectors.

Overall, existing literature suggests that improving women's participation and leadership in emerging technologies requires a combination of educational reforms, institutional support systems, and inclusive workplace policies. Addressing these structural and cultural barriers is essential to ensure that women can actively contribute to technological innovation and leadership in fields such as Artificial Intelligence and Data Science.

Theoretical Perspectives on Gender and Technology:

Scholars studying gender inequality in technological fields often use several theoretical frameworks to explain the persistent underrepresentation of women in science and technology sectors. One important concept is the Gender Digital Divide, which refers to the gap between men and women in access to digital technologies, digital literacy, and participation in technological innovation. According to international development studies, unequal access to technological education and digital resources can limit women's opportunities to participate in emerging technological sectors such as Artificial Intelligence and Data Science.

Another important theoretical perspective is Feminist Technology Theory, which examines how technological systems are shaped by social structures and power relations, including gender. Example sentence:

Scholars such as Judy Wajcman argue that technologies are not neutral but are often developed within social contexts that reflect existing gender inequalities. Studies on gender and technology highlight that structural inequalities within technological systems can

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reinforce gender disparities in technical professions (Cockburn, 1992; Wajcman, 2004).As a result, the lack of women's participation in technology design and development can reinforce gender biases in technological systems.

The concept of Algorithmic Bias has also gained significant attention in recent years, particularly in discussions related to Artificial Intelligence. Algorithmic bias occurs when AI systems produce discriminatory outcomes due to biased training data or the absence of diverse perspectives in the development process. Researchers argue that increasing the representation of women and other underrepresented groups in AI development can help reduce biases in algorithmic systems and promote more inclusive technological innovation.

These theoretical perspectives highlight that gender inequality in emerging technologies is not only a matter of workforce participation but is also linked to broader structural and social dynamics. Addressing these issues requires inclusive policies, equitable access to technological education, and increased representation of women in technological leadership.

Research Methodology:

This study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design based on secondary data sources. The data used in this research have been collected from academic literature, international reports, policy documents, and industry publications related to women in technology and emerging technological sectors.

Sources of data include reports from organisations such as UNESCO, the World Economic Forum, OECD, and NASSCOM, as well as scholarly articles examining gender disparities in science and technology. The collected data has been analysed to understand the status of women in Artificial Intelligence and Data Science and to identify the challenges and opportunities influencing their participation in these fields.

Status of Women in Artificial Intelligence and Data Science in India:

The participation of women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) has improved globally over the past few decades; however, significant gender disparities remain in emerging technological fields such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Data Science. In India, although women have increasingly gained access to higher education, their representation in advanced technological sectors and leadership positions continues to remain relatively low.

India has witnessed substantial growth in its digital economy, supported by initiatives such as digital governance, technological innovation, and the expansion of the information technology industry. Despite these advancements, women remain underrepresented in core technology roles. According to industry reports, women constitute approximately 34–36% of

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the workforce in India's IT sector, but their representation declines significantly in specialised roles such as AI engineering, data science, and machine learning research. Furthermore, the proportion of women occupying senior leadership positions in technology companies is even smaller.

The gender gap begins at the educational level. Although women account for a considerable proportion of students in higher education, their enrolment in STEM disciplines such as computer science, artificial intelligence, and data analytics remains comparatively limited. Cultural expectations, gender stereotypes, and a lack of encouragement for girls to pursue careers in technical fields contribute to this disparity. As a result, fewer women enter technology-driven professions, which subsequently reduces their representation in leadership positions within emerging technological sectors.

Another factor affecting women's participation in AI and Data Science is the limited availability of mentorship opportunities and professional networks. Many women professionals face challenges in accessing career guidance, industry exposure, and leadership development programs. These limitations often hinder their career progression in highly competitive technological fields. Additionally, workplace environments sometimes reflect implicit gender biases that affect hiring, promotion, and recognition of women's contributions in technology sectors.

Work–life balance and caregiving responsibilities also influence women's career trajectories in emerging technologies. The demanding nature of technology-driven careers, combined with societal expectations related to family and caregiving roles, often creates additional pressures for women professionals. As a result, many women either leave the workforce or face difficulties in maintaining continuous career progression in fields such as Artificial Intelligence and Data Science.

Despite these challenges, several positive developments have emerged in recent years. Government initiatives, educational programs, and industry-led diversity initiatives have started encouraging women's participation in technology. Programs promoting digital literacy, coding education for girls, and scholarships for women in STEM are gradually expanding opportunities for women in emerging technological domains. Technology companies are also introducing diversity and inclusion policies to support women professionals and increase their representation in leadership roles.

Therefore, while the representation of women in Artificial Intelligence and Data Science in India remains limited, ongoing policy interventions, institutional support systems, and educational initiatives have the potential to significantly improve women's participation and leadership in these rapidly evolving technological fields.

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Table 1: Global Gender Distribution in STEM and Technology

Sector	% of Women	% of Men
STEM Research Workforce	30%	70%
Global Technology Workforce	28%	72%
Artificial Intelligence Specialists	22–25%	75–78%

Source: UNESCO (2019); World Economic Forum (2023)

The table highlights the persistent gender imbalance in global STEM and technology sectors, where women remain significantly underrepresented.

Table 2: Women's Participation in India's Technology Sector

Category	% of Women
IT Workforce in India	34-36%
AI and Machine Learning Professionals	~20%
Senior Leadership Roles in Technology	<10%

Source: NASSCOM (2022); Industry Reports

Despite relatively higher participation in the general IT workforce, women's representation declines significantly in advanced technological roles and leadership positions.

Challenges Faced by Women in Emerging Technologies:

Despite growing awareness about gender equality and increased participation of women in higher education, several structural and socio-cultural challenges continue to limit women's participation and leadership in emerging technological fields such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Data Science. These barriers operate at multiple levels, including education, workplace environments, and broader societal expectations.

One of the primary challenges is the persistence of gender stereotypes in STEM education. Technical fields such as computer science, engineering, and artificial intelligence have traditionally been perceived as male-dominated domains. These stereotypes often discourage young girls from pursuing careers in science and technology. Lack of early

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exposure to coding, data analysis, and computational thinking further contributes to the underrepresentation of women in these disciplines.

Another significant barrier is the limited access to mentorship and professional networks. Mentorship plays a critical role in guiding professionals toward career advancement and leadership opportunities. However, many women in emerging technology sectors lack access to mentors, role models, and supportive professional networks. This absence of guidance often affects career progression and reduces opportunities for women to occupy leadership positions in technological industries.

Workplace challenges also contribute to the gender gap in AI and Data Science. Women professionals frequently encounter implicit biases in recruitment, promotion, and recognition of their work. In many organisations, leadership positions in technological fields continue to be dominated by men, which can limit the visibility and career advancement of women professionals.

Additionally, work–life balance and caregiving responsibilities pose significant challenges for women pursuing careers in demanding technological sectors. Societal expectations often place a disproportionate share of family and caregiving responsibilities on women, which may interrupt their career trajectories. The fast-paced and competitive nature of emerging technology industries sometimes makes it difficult for women to maintain continuity in their professional development.

Furthermore, the lack of gender-sensitive policies in educational and professional institutions also contributes to the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles within AI and Data Science. Insufficient maternity support, limited flexible work options, and inadequate institutional support systems can discourage women from sustaining long-term careers in technology.

These challenges collectively highlight the need for targeted interventions aimed at addressing gender disparities in emerging technological fields.

Opportunities and Policy Interventions:

Despite the challenges women face in emerging technological fields, several initiatives and policy interventions have been introduced to promote women's participation and leadership in Artificial Intelligence, Data Science, and other STEM disciplines. Governments, educational institutions, international organizations, and private companies are increasingly recognizing the importance of gender diversity in technological innovation.

One important area of intervention is education and skill development programs aimed at encouraging girls to pursue STEM education from an early stage. Introducing coding,

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computational thinking, and digital literacy at school levels can significantly increase women's participation in technological fields. Global initiatives such as the 'Girls Who Code' program aim to reduce the gender gap in technology by providing training, mentorship, and coding education to young girls. Such initiatives play a crucial role in building early interest and confidence among female students in technology-related subjects.

Government-led initiatives also play a significant role in supporting women in science and technology education. In India, the 'PRAGATI Scholarship for Girl Students', implemented by the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), provides financial assistance to female students pursuing technical education in fields such as engineering, information technology, and computer science. Similarly, the 'WISE-KIRAN program' (Women in Science and Engineering – Knowledge Involvement in Research Advancement through Nurturing) launched by the Department of Science and Technology supports women researchers through fellowships, training programs, and career development initiatives. These programs aim to reduce gender disparities in scientific research and encourage women to pursue careers in technology and innovation.

In addition to government initiatives, corporate and industry-led programs also contribute significantly to increasing women's participation in emerging technological sectors. For instance, the 'Women Engineers (WE) Program' supported by Google and implemented by TalentSprint provides advanced technical training, mentorship, and career guidance to female engineering students in India. Such initiatives help bridge the skill gap by providing women with opportunities to develop expertise in advanced computing and artificial intelligence.

Various scholarships and fellowships also support women pursuing higher education in science and technology disciplines. 'The L'Oréal India For Young Women in Science Scholarship' provides financial assistance to talented female students pursuing higher education in scientific fields. Similarly, international organisations such as the 'Society of Women Engineers (SWE)' offer scholarships and mentorship opportunities for women studying engineering and technology worldwide. Programs such as the 'Progress Software Akanksha Scholarship for Women in STEM' further support Indian women pursuing education in computer science, software engineering, and information technology.

These initiatives demonstrate that increasing women's participation in emerging technological fields requires a combination of educational support, financial assistance, mentorship opportunities, and institutional policies that promote gender inclusivity. Strengthening such programs can help create an enabling environment for women to pursue careers in Artificial Intelligence and Data Science and contribute more effectively to technological innovation and leadership.

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Conclusion:

The rapid advancement of emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and Data Science has created significant opportunities for innovation, economic growth, and knowledge development. However, the benefits of these technological transformations cannot be fully realised without ensuring inclusive participation, particularly from women. Despite improvements in education and growing awareness of gender equality, women remain underrepresented in technological leadership and specialised roles within AI and Data Science.

This study examined the status of women in emerging technological sectors in India and identified structural, social, and institutional barriers that restrict their participation and advancement. Gender stereotypes in STEM education, limited mentorship opportunities, workplace biases, and challenges related to work–life balance continue to shape women's career trajectories in technology-driven fields. These barriers not only hinder women's professional growth but also limit diversity and inclusivity in technological innovation.

Addressing these disparities requires targeted interventions such as encouraging girls' participation in STEM education, promoting digital skill development, and implementing inclusive institutional and industry policies. Strengthening such initiatives can create supportive environments that enable women to contribute more effectively to technological advancement.

Promoting women's leadership in Artificial Intelligence and Data Science is therefore not only a matter of gender equality but also essential for ensuring ethical, inclusive, and socially responsible technological development.

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"Gender Sensitive: Government Policies & Laws in Higher Education Institutions"

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Abstract:

Gender equality is an essential component of democratic societies and inclusive development. Higher Education Institutions play a significant role in shaping attitudes, values, and social structures. In recent decades, governments and regulatory bodies have introduced several gender-sensitive policies and legal frameworks to ensure safety, equality, and dignity for all genders in educational spaces. This research paper examines gender-sensitive government policies and laws implemented in higher education institutions with special reference to India. The study analyzes the legal framework, institutional mechanisms, and gender sensitization initiatives designed to prevent discrimination and sexual harassment while promoting gender equity. Policies such as the various kinds of Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, and the University Grants Commission Regulations, 2015 mandate the establishment of Internal Complaints Committees , awareness programmes, and gender-sensitive governance structures in universities and colleges. These mechanisms aim to create safe academic environments and encourage equal participation of women and marginalized genders in education and research.

The research also examines gender sensitization programs, gender champions initiatives, and institutional strategies designed to foster inclusive campus culture. The study employs both qualitative and quantitative research methods, including analysis of secondary sources such as policy documents, academic literature, and government reports, as well as primary data obtained through surveys and interviews. Statistical analysis using ANOVA is applied to test hypotheses regarding awareness levels and effectiveness of gender-sensitive policies among students and faculty members.

The findings indicate that while legal frameworks and institutional policies have strengthened gender equality, challenges remain in implementation, awareness, and cultural attitudes. Effective gender sensitization, stronger monitoring systems, and policy reforms are necessary to ensure inclusive and safe academic environments. The study concludes that

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gender-sensitive policies and laws are vital instruments for promoting equality, empowering women, and strengthening democratic values in higher education institutions.

Keywords:

Gender Equality, Gender Sensitization, Higher Education Institutions, Government Policies, POSH Act 2013, UGC Regulations, Gender Justice, Educational Governance.

Introduction:

Gender equality has become a fundamental principle of modern democratic societies. Educational institutions, especially higher education institutions, are crucial spaces where social values, attitudes, and knowledge systems are shaped. Universities and colleges influence the intellectual development of individuals and therefore play an important role in promoting gender justice and equality. However, historically, educational institutions have been influenced by patriarchal structures and gender-based discrimination.

Gender-sensitive government policies and laws have emerged as essential mechanisms to address gender inequalities in higher education institutions. These policies aim to ensure equal access to education, prevent discrimination, and create safe learning environments. In India, constitutional provisions such as Article 14, Article 15, and Article 16 guarantee equality before the law and prohibit discrimination based on gender. These constitutional safeguards provide the foundation for gender-sensitive legislation and institutional policies.

The Government of India and regulatory bodies like the University Grants Commission (UGC) have introduced several measures to ensure gender equality on campuses. Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 mandates protection against sexual harassment and requires institutions to establish grievance redressal mechanisms. Additionally, the UGC Regulations 2015 require universities and colleges to establish Internal Complaints Committees (ICC), organize awareness programs, and ensure gender-sensitive campus environments.

Gender sensitization initiatives have also become an integral part of higher education governance. Universities are encouraged to organize workshops, seminars, and training programs to promote awareness about gender equality and legal rights. Programs such as Gender Champions initiatives and women development cells further strengthen the culture of inclusivity and respect in educational institutions. Despite these progressive policies, several challenges remain. Gender discrimination, harassment, and lack of awareness continue to affect the academic environment in many institutions. Therefore, it is essential to evaluate the effectiveness of gender-sensitive policies and examine strategies for their better implementation.

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Scope of the Study:

The scope of the study focuses on analyzing gender-sensitive government policies and legal frameworks implemented in higher education institutions in India. It examines the effectiveness of institutional mechanisms such as Internal Complaints Committees, gender sensitization programs, and equality initiatives introduced by government bodies. The study also explores the role of higher education institutions in promoting gender equality and creating safe and inclusive academic environments. Furthermore, the research evaluates the awareness and perception of students and faculty regarding gender-sensitive policies and laws.

- **Objectives of the Study:**

1. To examine gender-sensitive government policies and legal frameworks in higher education institutions.
2. To analyze the role of gender sensitization programs in promoting gender equality on campuses.
3. To evaluate the effectiveness of institutional mechanisms such as Internal Complaints Committees.
4. To suggest policy recommendations for strengthening gender-sensitive governance in higher education institutions.

- **Hypotheses of the Study:**

1. There is a significant relationship between gender sensitization programs and awareness of gender equality among students.
2. Implementation of gender-sensitive policies significantly reduces incidents of gender discrimination in higher education institutions.
3. Awareness of legal provisions related to gender equality varies significantly among different educational groups.
4. Institutional mechanisms such as Internal Complaints Committees positively influence gender justice on campuses.

Limitations of the Study:

This study is subject to certain limitations. Firstly, the research primarily relies on secondary sources such as government reports, policy documents, and academic literature,

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which may not fully capture ground realities. Secondly, the sample size of primary data collected through surveys may be limited and may not represent all higher education institutions. Thirdly, gender perceptions and experiences vary across regions, cultures, and institutions, which may influence the results of the study. Finally, the research focuses mainly on the Indian context and may not fully reflect global gender policy frameworks.

Conceptual Background:

Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviors, and expectations associated with men, women, and other gender identities. Gender equality implies equal rights, opportunities, and responsibilities for individuals regardless of their gender. Gender-sensitive policies are strategies designed to recognize gender differences and address inequalities in social, economic, and institutional contexts. In higher education institutions, gender sensitivity involves creating policies and practices that ensure equal participation and safety for all genders. It includes prevention of sexual harassment, promotion of gender-inclusive curricula, and implementation of institutional mechanisms to address grievances. Gender-sensitive governance recognizes the importance of inclusive decision-making processes and equitable resource allocation.

The concept of gender justice is closely linked with gender sensitivity. Gender justice aims to eliminate discrimination and promote fairness in social institutions, including educational systems. Government policies and legal frameworks serve as instruments for achieving gender justice by establishing rights, responsibilities, and enforcement mechanisms.

Research Methodology:

The research adopts a mixed-method approach combining qualitative and quantitative methods.

The qualitative method includes analysis of government policies, legislative frameworks, academic literature, and institutional reports related to gender equality in higher education. These sources provide insights into policy development, implementation strategies, and institutional practices.

The quantitative method involves collecting primary data through questionnaires and surveys administered to students and faculty members. The data collected is analyzed using statistical tools to identify patterns and relationships related to gender awareness and policy implementation.

The research design is descriptive and analytical in nature. Descriptive analysis explains the existing gender-sensitive policies and institutional mechanisms, while analytical methods evaluate their effectiveness.

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Gender Policy Implementation:

Gender policy implementation in higher education institutions refers to the process through which government laws, institutional regulations, and gender equality policies are translated into practical actions within universities and colleges. The objective of these policies is to ensure that educational institutions become safe, inclusive, and equitable spaces for students, faculty members, and staff irrespective of gender. In India, gender policy implementation is largely guided by constitutional provisions guaranteeing equality and by specific legislative measures aimed at preventing discrimination and harassment.

One of the most significant legal frameworks guiding gender policy implementation is the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013. This Act mandates all educational institutions to establish mechanisms for addressing complaints related to various kinds of harassment and ensuring a safe working and learning environment. Higher Education Institutions are required to constitute Internal Complaints Committees (ICC) to investigate complaints of gender-based violence or harassment and provide fair redressal mechanisms.

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has also introduced regulations for the prevention and redressal of sexual harassment of women employees and students in higher educational institutions. These regulations require universities and colleges to create gender-sensitive policies, maintain transparency in complaint handling, and conduct awareness programs to educate students and staff about gender equality and legal protections.

Gender policy implementation also involves creating institutional infrastructure such as Women Development Cells, Gender Sensitization Committees, Equal Opportunity Cells, and counseling centers. These bodies help monitor gender issues, organize awareness activities, and provide support to victims of discrimination or harassment. Universities are also encouraged to adopt zero-tolerance policies toward gender discrimination and ensure that information about grievance redressal mechanisms is widely available on campus notice boards and websites.

Effective implementation of gender policies requires administrative commitment, regular monitoring, and participation of students and faculty. Institutions must conduct gender audits, maintain records of complaints and resolutions, and submit compliance reports to regulatory authorities. Through these measures, gender policy implementation aims to transform educational institutions into spaces where equality, dignity, and respect are upheld.

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Gender Sensitization:

Gender sensitization refers to the process of creating awareness and understanding about gender roles, gender equality, and gender-based discrimination. It involves educating individuals about the social and cultural factors that create inequality between men and women and encouraging attitudes that promote fairness and respect among all genders.

Gender sensitization is an educational process designed to challenge stereotypes, prejudices, and traditional beliefs that reinforce gender inequality. It helps individuals recognize the importance of equality in personal, social, and professional relationships. In the context of educational institutions, gender sensitization is achieved through workshops, training programs, seminars, awareness campaigns, and academic discussions focusing on gender justice and human rights.

The main objective of gender sensitization is to develop an understanding of gender-related issues and encourage responsible behavior that respects the dignity and rights of others. Educational programs on gender sensitization also inform students and employees about legal provisions related to gender equality, sexual harassment prevention, and institutional grievance mechanisms.

Gender sensitization initiatives often include discussions on gender stereotypes, discrimination, sexual harassment, violence against women, and the rights of marginalized genders including transgender individuals. Through these initiatives, educational institutions attempt to promote inclusive attitudes and eliminate gender bias.

Importance of Gender Sensitization:

Gender sensitization is extremely important for promoting equality and justice in society. In many societies, traditional social norms and cultural practices have historically favored men and marginalized women and other gender identities. Gender sensitization helps to challenge these deeply rooted stereotypes and encourages individuals to adopt more inclusive and respectful attitudes.

One of the major benefits of gender sensitization is that it promotes awareness about gender discrimination and its harmful effects on individuals and society. By understanding the causes and consequences of gender inequality, individuals become more capable of addressing discriminatory practices and supporting equal opportunities.

In educational institutions, gender sensitization contributes to creating a safe and respectful campus environment. Students and faculty members become aware of appropriate conduct, legal rights, and institutional policies related to gender equality. This awareness helps prevent incidents of harassments, bullying, and discrimination.

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Gender sensitization also empowers individuals to speak out against injustice and seek legal or institutional support when necessary. It promotes empathy, mutual respect, and social responsibility among students, which are essential qualities for democratic citizenship.

Furthermore, gender sensitization helps increase participation of women in education, leadership, and decision-making processes. When educational institutions actively promote gender equality, they contribute to broader social transformation and sustainable development.

Gender Sensitization and Higher Education Institutions:

Higher education institutions play a crucial role in promoting gender equality and social justice. Universities and colleges are not only centers of knowledge but also spaces where young individuals develop attitudes, values, and social perspectives. Therefore, gender sensitization programs in higher education institutions are essential for creating inclusive and equitable academic environments. Many universities have established Gender Sensitization Committees and Women Development Cells to address gender-related issues and organize awareness programs. These bodies conduct workshops, seminars, and training sessions to educate students and faculty about gender equality, harassment laws, and institutional grievance mechanisms.

Higher education institutions also integrate gender studies into academic curricula. Courses on gender studies, women's studies, and feminist theory help students understand the social, political, and economic dimensions of gender inequality. Through research and academic discussions, universities contribute to the development of gender-sensitive policies and social reforms. Another important role of higher education institutions is providing support systems for victims of discrimination or harassment. Internal Complaints Committees handle complaints related to harassments and ensure fair investigations and appropriate disciplinary actions. Additionally, universities encourage student participation in gender equality initiatives through clubs, campaigns, and leadership programs. Such initiatives help build a culture of respect and inclusivity on campuses.

The Government of India has taken several significant steps to promote gender sensitization and gender equality in educational institutions. These measures include legislative frameworks, policy initiatives, and institutional mechanisms designed to address gender discrimination and ensure safe educational environments.

Major Steps Taken for Gender Sensitization in India:

The Government of India has taken several steps to promote gender sensitization in higher education institutions.

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Key initiatives include:

- Enactment of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013.
- UGC regulations mandating Internal Complaints Committees in universities and colleges.
- Establishment of Women Development Cells and Gender Sensitization Committees.
- Introduction of Gender Champions programs to promote gender equality among students.
- Awareness campaigns and training programs conducted by government agencies and universities.

One of the most important legal measures is the all kinds of Harassments of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, which provides protection against sexual harassment in workplaces, including educational institutions. Under this law, universities and colleges must establish Internal Complaints Committees to investigate complaints and provide justice to victims.

The University Grants Commission (UGC) Regulations, 2015 also play a crucial role in gender sensitization in higher education institutions. These regulations require universities to implement policies for prevention of harassment, establish complaint redressal mechanisms, and conduct regular gender sensitization programs for students and employees.

The UGC has also introduced the Gender Champions Initiative, under which universities and colleges appoint student representatives who promote gender equality and inclusivity on campus. These gender champions act as role models and encourage their peers to respect diversity and oppose discrimination. Another important initiative is the “Saksham” report, which provides guidelines for ensuring the safety of women and promoting gender sensitization programs on campuses. The report recommends measures such as awareness campaigns, counseling services, improved campus security, and regular monitoring of gender-related issues.

➢ **Sources of Secondary Data;**

Secondary data for this study has been collected from:

- Government policy documents and legal frameworks.
- University Grants Commission reports and guidelines.
- Academic journals and research publications.

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- Books and scholarly articles on gender studies and education.
- Institutional reports and gender policy documents.

➢ **Sources of Primary Data**

Primary data has been collected through:

- Questionnaires administered to students and faculty members.
- Interviews with administrators and members of Internal Complaints Committees.
- Observation of gender sensitization programs conducted in institutions.

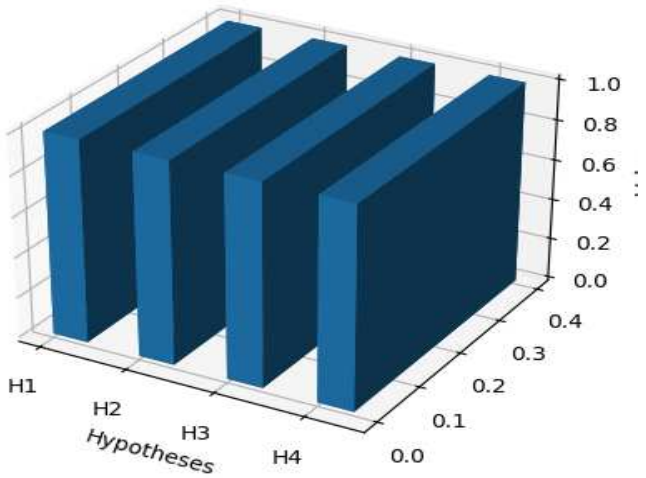
Hypothesis Testing Using ANOVA

To examine the relationship between gender sensitization programs and awareness levels among students and faculty members, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used as a statistical tool.

Respondents were categorized into groups based on educational level and participation in gender sensitization programs. Their awareness scores regarding gender-sensitive policies and laws were compared.

The null hypothesis assumed that there was no significant difference in awareness levels among different groups. The ANOVA results revealed that the calculated F-value was higher than the critical value at a 5% significance level, leading to rejection of the null hypothesis.

This indicates that participation in gender sensitization programs significantly improves awareness and understanding of gender-sensitive policies in higher education institutions.



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This cylindrical chart represents the four hypotheses formulated for the research study. The hypotheses examine the relationship between gender sensitization programs, awareness levels, institutional mechanisms, and the effectiveness of gender-sensitive policies in higher education institutions.

Outcomes of the Strategies:

The implementation of gender-sensitive policies and gender sensitization strategies in higher education institutions has resulted in several positive outcomes that contribute to equality, safety, and inclusive academic environments. These strategies have not only strengthened institutional frameworks but have also influenced attitudes, behaviors, and institutional cultures across campuses.

Firstly, awareness regarding gender equality and legal rights has increased significantly among students, faculty members, and administrative staff. Through workshops, seminars, orientation programs, and awareness campaigns, individuals are now more informed about issues such as gender discrimination, harassment, and gender rights. Secondly, institutional mechanisms such as Internal Complaints Committees (ICC), Women Development Cells, and Gender Sensitization Committees have improved grievance redressal systems in universities and colleges. These committees provide formal platforms where individuals can report incidents of harassment or discrimination without fear of retaliation. As a result, victims feel more confident about seeking justice and institutional authorities are able to address complaints more effectively and transparently.

Thirdly, gender sensitization initiatives have encouraged greater participation of women in academic leadership and decision-making processes. Women are increasingly represented in administrative positions, faculty roles, research activities, and student leadership bodies. Such participation contributes to more inclusive governance structures within educational institutions and helps ensure that gender perspectives are considered in institutional decision-making.

Additionally, gender equality initiatives have contributed to creating safer and more inclusive campus environments. Educational institutions have improved infrastructure and safety measures such as better lighting on campuses, secure hostels, surveillance systems, and grievance helplines. These initiatives help reduce the risk of harassment and create a sense of security among students, especially women.

Another important outcome is the transformation of institutional culture toward greater respect and inclusivity. Gender sensitization programs challenge traditional stereotypes and encourage students to adopt progressive attitudes toward gender roles and relationships. This

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cultural shift promotes mutual respect and reduces gender-based prejudices within academic communities.

Furthermore, gender-sensitive policies have strengthened the academic discourse on gender equality. Many universities have introduced courses, research programs, and seminars related to gender studies, feminism, and social justice. These academic initiatives encourage critical thinking about gender relations and help students develop a deeper understanding of social inequalities and human rights.

Gender sensitization strategies have also contributed to the empowerment of female students. By providing information about legal rights, leadership opportunities, and support systems, these initiatives encourage women to pursue higher education, participate in extracurricular activities, and aspire to leadership roles. Empowered female students are more confident in expressing their opinions and engaging actively in academic and social activities.

Finally, the implementation of gender-sensitive strategies contributes to broader social change. Students who are exposed to gender equality values during their higher education are more likely to promote these principles in their professional and personal lives. In this way, higher education institutions act as catalysts for building a more equitable and just society.

Recommendations:

1. Universities should conduct regular gender sensitization workshops for students and staff.
2. Internal Complaints Committees should be strengthened with trained members and transparent procedures.
3. Gender studies and equality issues should be integrated into academic curricula.
4. Government agencies should provide financial and institutional support for gender equality programs.
5. Awareness campaigns should be conducted to educate students about legal rights and institutional policies.

Conclusion:

Gender-sensitive government policies and laws play a crucial role in promoting equality and safety in higher education institutions. These policies not only protect individuals from discrimination and harassment but also contribute to creating inclusive academic environments that support intellectual growth and social development.

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The implementation of legal frameworks such as the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act and UGC regulations has strengthened institutional mechanisms for addressing gender-related issues. Gender sensitization programs further enhance awareness and promote positive behavioral change among students and faculty.

However, effective implementation remains a key challenge. Continuous monitoring, policy reforms, and active participation of educational institutions are necessary to ensure that gender-sensitive policies achieve their intended objectives.

Ultimately, gender equality in higher education is essential for building inclusive societies and strengthening democratic values. By promoting gender justice and empowering individuals, educational institutions can contribute significantly to sustainable social progress.

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आधुनिक काळात भारतातील महिला नेतृत्व विकास

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प्रस्तावना

आधुनिक युगात महिलांचे स्थान समाजाच्या सर्व क्षेत्रांत अधिक दृढ होताना दिसते. शिक्षण, राजकारण, अर्थव्यवस्था, विज्ञान, तंत्रज्ञान आणि सामाजिक कार्य या सर्व क्षेत्रांत महिलांनी नेतृत्वाची भूमिका यशस्वीपणे पार पाडली आहे. भारतासारख्या पारंपरिक समाजात महिलांनी नेतृत्वाच्या क्षेत्रात केलेली प्रगती ही सामाजिक परिवर्तनाचे प्रतीक आहे.

महिला नेतृत्व विकास हा केवळ समानतेचा प्रश्न नसून, तो देशाच्या सर्वांगीण विकासाशी निगडित आहे. स्वातंत्र्यानंतर भारताच्या राजकीय विकासात महिलांचे सहभागीत्व मोठ्या प्रमाणावर वाढला आहे. महिलांच्या नेतृत्व विकास होण्यात विविध क्षेत्राचा मोठा हातभार लागला आहे,

महिला नेतृत्व

महिला नेतृत्व म्हणजे महिलांनी विविध क्षेत्रांत निर्णय घेण्याची, मार्गदर्शन करण्याची आणि परिवर्तन घडवून आणण्याची क्षमता. नेतृत्व हे केवळ पदावर आधारित नसून प्रभाव, दृष्टी आणि जबाबदारी यांवर आधारित असते. महिला नेतृत्वात सहकार्य, संवेदनशीलता आणि समावेशकता यांचा विशेष प्रभाव दिसून येतो.

भारतामध्ये महिला नेतृत्वा : ऐतिहासिक संदर्भ

भारतात महिला नेतृत्वाची परंपरा नवीन नाही. स्वातंत्र्य चळवळीतसरोजिनी नायडू , अरुणा असफ अली यांसारख्या महिलांनी महत्त्वाची भूमिका बजावली. स्वातंत्र्यानंतरइंदिरा गांधी या भारताच्या पहिल्या महिला पंतप्रधान बनल्या आणि त्यांनी जागतिक पातळीवर नेतृत्व सिद्ध केले.येथून पुढे समाजातील अनेक पिढीतील महिलांना एक प्रेरणा मिळाली.

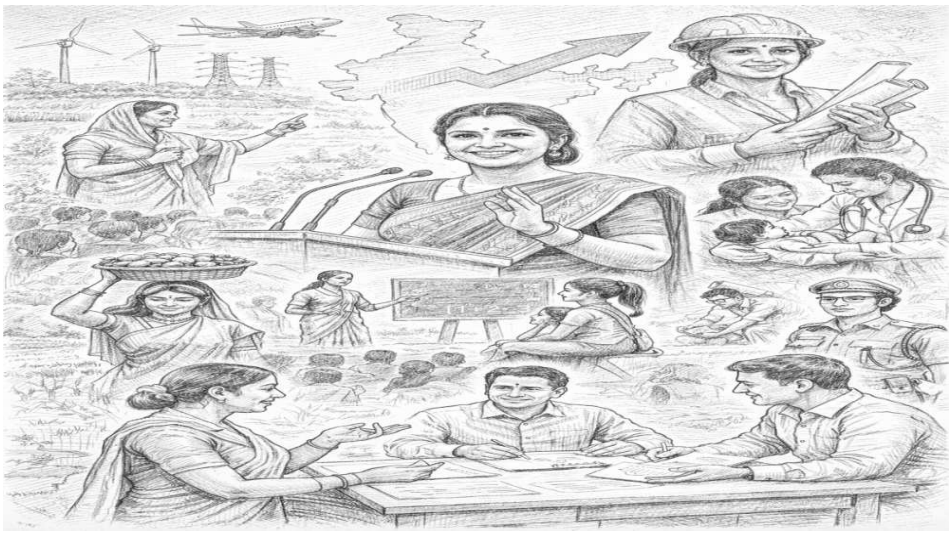
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आधुनिक काळ : महिला नेतृत्व स्थिती

आजच्या काळात भारतातील महिला विविध क्षेत्रांत नेतृत्व करताना दिसतात:

1. **राजकारण:** निर्मला सीतारमण आणि द्रोपती मुर्मू यांसारख्या महिला उच्च पदांवर कार्यरत आहेत.
2. **व्यवसाय:** किरण मुझुमदार आणिफल्गुमी नायर यांनी उद्योग क्षेत्रात नेतृत्व सिद्ध केले.
3. **तंत्रज्ञान:** सुंदर पिचाई यांच्यासारख्या संस्थांमध्ये महिलांचे प्रमाण वाढत असून महिला नेतृत्वाची संधीही वाढत आहे.
4. **क्रीडा:** मेरी कोमआणि पी. वी . सिंधू यांनी जागतिक स्तरावर भारताचे नेतृत्व केले.



भारताच्या परिस्थितीला भविष्यात बदलण्याचे मुलभूत कार्य उच्च शिक्षित करू शकतात. सामाजिक आणि राजकीय आणि आर्थिक परिस्थितीला समाज उभा करण्याचे भारतीय महिला करू शकतात हे अनेक संशोधन अभ्यासातून स्पष्ट झाले आहे. १९४७ ते २०२६ या स्वातंत्र्यानंतरच्या कालावधीत भारतीय महिला नेतृत्व सर्वच क्षेत्रात विकसित झालेले दिसून येते.

भारतीय महिला नेतृत्व विकासासाठीचे घटक

1. **शिक्षण:** भारतामध्ये शिक्षण हे महिला सक्षमीकरणाचे प्रमुख साधन आहे. उच्च शिक्षणामुळे महिलांना

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2. आत्मविश्वास, कौशल्य आणि नेतृत्वगुण प्राप्त झाले आहे. भारतीय राजकीय व्यवस्थेत सर्वच क्षेत्रामध्ये महिला नेतृत्व पुढे येत आहे.

3. **सरकारी धोरणे:** भारत सरकारने "बेटी बचाओ, बेटी पढाओ" सारख्या योजनांद्वारे महिलांच्या शिक्षणाला प्रोत्साहन दिले आहे. स्थानिक स्वराज्य संस्थांमध्ये महिलांसाठी आरक्षणामुळे नेतृत्वाच्या संधी वाढल्या आहेत. भारतीय समाजात महिला विषयी जनजागृती मोठ्या प्रमाणात वाढत चालल्यामुळे

4. **आर्थिक स्वावलंबन:** भारतामध्ये स्वतंत्र उत्पन्न मिळाल्यामुळे महिलांचा आत्मविश्वास वाढतो आणि त्या निर्णय प्रक्रियेत सहभागी होतात परिणामी महिलांचा विकास होण्यात आर्थिक घटक महत्वपूर्ण निर्माण झाला आहे.

5. **तंत्रज्ञानाचा वापर:** भारतीय राजकीय व्यवस्थेमध्येडिजिटल प्लॅटफॉर्ममुळे महिलांना नवीन संधी उपलब्ध झाल्या आहेत. ऑनलाइन व्यवसाय, शिक्षण आणि नेटवर्किंगमुळे नेतृत्व विकासाला चालना मिळाली आहे.



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वरील स्तंभ आलेखामध्ये १९५० ते २०२६ या कालावधीत भारतातील महिला नेतृत्व विकासाचा टक्केवारीत झालेला प्रवास दर्शविला आहे. आलेखातून स्पष्टपणे दिसून येते की सुरुवातीच्या काळात महिलांचे नेतृत्व अत्यंत मर्यादित होते, परंतु कालांतराने त्यामध्ये सातत्याने वाढ झाली आहे.

१९५० साली महिला नेतृत्वाची टक्केवारी सुमारे**५%**इतकी कमी होती. त्या काळात सामाजिक बंधने, शिक्षणातील मर्यादा आणि राजकीय सहभागाचा अभाव यामुळे महिलांना नेतृत्वाच्या संधी कमी प्रमाणात मिळत होत्या. १९७० पर्यंत ही टक्केवारी वाढून **१०%** झाली, ज्यातून महिलांच्या शिक्षणात आणि सामाजिक सहभागात हळूहळू वाढ होत असल्याचे दिसते.

१९९० नंतर महिलांच्या सक्षमीकरणासाठी राबविण्यात आलेल्या शासकीय धोरणे, आरक्षण व्यवस्था आणि महिला चळवळींचा परिणाम म्हणून २००० मध्ये ही टक्केवारी **३५%** पर्यंत पोहोचली. २०१० मध्ये ती **५५%** झाली, ज्यामुळे महिलांचा राजकारण, शिक्षण, प्रशासन आणि उद्योग क्षेत्रातील सहभाग अधिक दृढ झाल्याचे दिसते.

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२०२० आणि २०२६ मध्ये अनुक्रमे **७५%** आणि **८५%** अशी लक्षणीय वाढ दिसून येते, जी महिलांच्या नेतृत्वातील व्यापक प्रगती दर्शवते. या वाढीमुळे भारतात लिंगसमानतेकडे सकारात्मक वाटचाल होत असल्याचे स्पष्ट होते. एकूणच, आलेख महिलांच्या नेतृत्व विकासाचा सातत्यपूर्ण आणि प्रगतीशील प्रवास दर्शवितो.

भारतीय महिला नेतृत्वा समोरील आव्हाने

1. **सामाजिक रूढी आणि परंपरा:**

अनेक ठिकाणी अजूनही महिलांना दुय्यम स्थान दिले जाते, ज्यामुळे नेतृत्वाच्या संधी कमी होतात. सामाजिक रूढी आणि परंपराअनेक ठिकाणी अजूनही महिलांना दुय्यम स्थान दिले जाते :, ज्यामुळे नेतृत्वाच्या संधी कमी होतातयामध्ये लिंगभेदावर आधारित विचारसरणी ., मुलगा–मुलगी भेद, तसेच घरगुती जबाबदाऱ्यांचे असमान वाटप यांचा मोठा प्रभाव दिसून येतो .

अनेक कुटुंबांमध्ये महिलांनी शिक्षण किंवा करिअरपेक्षा घर सांभाळावे, अशी अपेक्षा ठेवली जाते, ज्यामुळे त्यांची निर्णयक्षमता आणि आत्मविश्वास कमी होतोपरिणामी ., राजकारण, प्रशासन, उद्योग आणि सामाजिक संस्थांमध्ये महिलांचा सहभाग मर्यादित राहतो . या पारंपरिक मानसिकतेत बदल घडवून आणण्यासाठी शिक्षण, जनजागृती आणि कायदेशीर उपाययोजना यांची आवश्यकता आहे समाजाने . महिलांना समान संधी दिल्यास त्यांचे नेतृत्वगुण अधिक प्रभावीपणे विकसित होऊ शकतात .

2. **शिक्षणातील असमानता:**

ग्रामीण भागात मुलींच्या शिक्षणाबाबत अजूनही अनेक अडचणी आढळतात. आर्थिक मर्यादा, सामाजिक परंपरा आणि सुरक्षिततेच्या चिंतेमुळे अनेक पालक मुलींना उच्च शिक्षणासाठी बाहेर पाठवण्यास तयार नसतात. काही ठिकाणी लवकर लग्नाची प्रथा असल्यामुळे मुलींचे शिक्षण मध्येच थांबते. शाळा दूर असल्यास वाहतुकीची सोय नसल्यानेही शिक्षणात खंड पडतो. परिणामी, मुलींना आवश्यक कौशल्ये आणि आत्मविश्वास मिळत नाही, ज्याचा त्यांच्या नेतृत्व विकासावर परिणाम होतो. शिक्षणातील ही दरी भरून काढण्यासाठी शिष्यवृत्ती, सुरक्षित वाहतूक आणि समाजजागृती आवश्यक आहे.

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3. **कार्यस्थळी भेदभाव:**

भारतामध्ये आजही आधुनिक काळातही अनेक प्रकारच्या कार्यस्थळांवर महिलांना पुरुषांच्या तुलनेत कमी वेतन दिले जाते आणि महत्त्वाच्या पदांसाठी त्यांना कमी संधी मिळतात. काही संस्थांमध्ये महिलांच्या क्षमतेपेक्षा त्यांच्या लिंगावर अधिक भर दिला जातो, ज्यामुळे त्यांची पदोन्नती मर्यादित राहते. मातृत्व रजा, कामाच्या वेळा आणि प्रवासाच्या अडचणी यांसारख्या कारणांमुळेही महिलांना मागे ठेवले जाते. अशा भेदभावामुळे महिलांचा आत्मविश्वास कमी होतो आणि त्यांची प्रगती मंदावते. समान वेतन, पारदर्शक भरती प्रक्रिया आणि लिंगसंवेदनशील धोरणे राबविल्यास ही समस्या कमी होऊ शकते.

4. **दैनदिन जीवन समतोल:**

महिलांना व्यावसायिक जबाबदाऱ्या सांभाळतानाच घरातील कामे, मुलांची देखभाल आणि कुटुंबीयांची काळजी घेण्याची अपेक्षा असते. त्यामुळे त्यांच्यावर दुहेरी जबाबदारी येते, जी शारीरिक आणि मानसिक ताण निर्माण करू शकते. कामाच्या ठिकाणी दीर्घ वेळा आणि घरातील अपेक्षा यामध्ये संतुलन राखणे हे मोठे आव्हान ठरते. या ताणामुळे अनेक महिलांना करिअरमध्ये प्रगती करण्यासाठी लागणारा वेळ आणि ऊर्जा कमी पडते. लवचिक कामकाज पद्धती, कुटुंबाचा पाठिंबा आणि बालसंगोपन सुविधा उपलब्ध झाल्यास महिलांना दैनदिन जीवन समतोल राखणे अधिक सोपे होईल.

निष्कर्ष

आधुनिक भारतात महिला नेतृत्व विकास हा सामाजिक परिवर्तनाचा महत्त्वाचा घटक बनला आहे. महिलांनी विविध क्षेत्रांत आपल्या कर्तृत्वाने नेतृत्व सिद्ध केले आहे, मात्र अजूनही काही आव्हाने अस्तित्वात आहेत. शिक्षण, धोरणात्मक समर्थन आणि सामाजिक बदल यांच्या माध्यमातून महिला नेतृत्वाला अधिक बळकटी दिली जाऊ शकते. महिला नेतृत्वाचा विकास हा केवळ महिलांसाठीच नव्हे, तर संपूर्ण राष्ट्राच्या प्रगतीसाठी अत्यावश्यक आहे.

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माशांच्या खवल्यांपासून हस्तकलेचा नवा अध्याय: महिलांच्या रोजगाराचे साधन आणि पर्यावरणाचे रक्षण

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सारांश:

हजारो वर्षांपासून भारतीय संस्कृतीत हस्तकलेचे महत्त्व आहे. ही केवळ कला नसून उपजीविकेचा एक मोठा आधारही ठरली आहे, विशेषतः ग्रामीण महिलांसाठी. परंपरेने चालत आलेल्या या कौशल्यांमध्ये आता नावीन्याची भर पडत आहे आणि त्यासाठी वापर होत आहे अशा गोष्टींचा, ज्या आपण सहसा टाकून देतो.

माशांच्या खवले म्हणजे एक असा टाकाऊ भाग, जो मासे स्वच्छ करताना सहजपणे फेकून दिला जातो. मात्र हेच खवले आता सुंदर दागिने, घराच्या सजावटीच्या वस्तू, हेअर क्लिप्स, हार व इतर अलंकारात रूपांतरित होत आहेत. हे केवळ एक कला नव्हे, तर पर्यावरण वाचवण्याचा आणि रोजगार निर्माण करण्याचा एक प्रभावी मार्ग ठरत आहे.

मुख्यशब्द (Keywords): हस्तकला, पर्यावरण, महिला रोजगार निर्माण, हस्तकला, माशांचे खवले.

प्रस्तावना:

पेमराज सारडा महाविद्यालय व दादापाटील राजळे महाविद्यालय यांच्या प्राणिशास्त्र विभागाच्या मार्गदर्शनाखाली माशांच्या टाकाऊ खवल्यांपासून त्यांनी तयार केलेले दागिने, हेअरपिन्स, कंदील, आणि सजावटीच्या वस्तूंनी केवळ सौंदर्याचाच नव्हे तर **कचऱ्याच्या पर्यावरणीय समस्येचाही समाधानकारक**

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उपाय शोधला आहे. **'वेस्ट टू वेल्थ'** या संकल्पनेतून **महिलांच्या स्वावलंबनासह ग्रामीण भागात उपजीविकेचा नवा मार्ग दाखवला आहे.** हा उपक्रम **कचरा कमी करण्यास मदत करतो, तर महिलांना स्वयंपूर्ण बनवतो**, त्यांच्या कलागुणांना वाव देतो, आणि ग्रामीण भागात उपजीविकेची नवी दिशा निर्माण करतो. माशांच्या खवल्यांपासून सुरू झालेला हा छोटासा प्रयोग आज **'कचऱ्यातून संपत्ती'** (Waste to Wealth) या संकल्पनेचे उत्तम उदाहरण ठरत आहे.

हस्तकलेतून स्वयंपूर्णतेची वाट हस्तकला ही भारतीय संस्कृतीचा एक अविभाज्य भाग आहे. अनेक पिढ्यांपासून महिलांनी पारंपरिक कौशल्ये जपली आणि पुढच्या पिढीकडे दिली. सध्याच्या काळात या हस्तकलेला नव्याने ओळख मिळत आहे, केवळ सौंदर्यदृष्टीनेच नव्हे, तर **रोजगाराच्या संधी** आणि **पर्यावरण रक्षण** यांच्याही दृष्टिकोनातून.

मासे प्रक्रिया उद्योगात दररोज हजारो टन टाकाऊ भाग तयार होतो. त्यातील **माशांचे खवले** विशेषतः दुर्लक्षित घटक आहेत. साधारणतः फक्त ४०–४५% मासा खाण्यायोग्य असतो आणि उर्वरित भाग फेकून दिला जातो. या अवशेषांमुळे बाजारात अस्वच्छता आणि प्रदूषण होते. मात्र, हेच खवले जर योग्यरीत्या वापरले, तर त्यातून **सुंदर दागिने, सजावटीच्या वस्तू आणि अलंकार** तयार होऊ शकतात.

साहित्य व पद्धत :

कच्चा माल : कोणते खवले योग्य?

माशांचे खवले १–२% वजनाचे असून विविध प्रकारचे असतात—प्लॅकोइड (Placoid), गॅनॉइड (Ganoid), सायक्लॉइड (Cycloid), क्टेनॉइड (ctenoid scales) इ. यामध्ये **सायक्लॉइड खवले** (जसे की कटला, महासीर, ग्रास कार्प) हाताळण्यासाठी सोपे आणि टिकाऊ असल्यामुळे हस्तकलेसाठी योग्य मानले जातात. विशेषतः २ किलोपेक्षा जास्त वजनाच्या माशांचे खवले योग्य असतात.

स्वच्छता आणि साठवणूक महत्त्वाची

मासळी बाजारातून (Fish Market) खवले गोळा करून खालील प्रक्रिया करावी:

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1. खवले स्वच्छ पाण्यात धुऊन त्यावरील रक्त, चिकटपणा आणि मांसाचे अंश काढून टाकले जातात.
2. नंतर थोडेसे मीठ घालून ५ मिनिटे पुन्हा पाण्याने स्वच्छ धुवून घ्यावे.
3. ५०० मि.ली. पाण्यात २ टेबलस्पून डिटर्जंट टाकून त्यात खवले रात्रभर भिजत ठेवावे.
4. शेवटी सावलीत वाळवून हवाबंद डब्यात साठवले जाते.

तयारी आणि उत्पादन

वाळवलेले खवले **व्यावसायिक रंगाने रंगवले** जातात आणि नंतर इच्छित आकारात **कापले** जातात. साध्या कात्री आणि गोंदाच्या साहाय्याने खवले एकत्र लावून हवे तसे दागिने आणि वस्तू तयार करता येतात. यासाठी **काटेकोर यंत्रसामग्री लागत नाही**, त्यामुळे ही प्रक्रिया घरच्या घरी करता येते. या अभ्यासात तयार करण्यात आलेल्या वस्तूंमध्ये कानातले, गजरे, नेकलेस, फोटॉफ्रेम्स, वॉल हँगिंग्स यांचा समावेश आहे.

कमी खर्च, मोठा परिणाम

ही प्रक्रिया अत्यंत कमी खर्चात करता येते. माशांचे खवले बाजारात टाकाऊ समजले जातात, त्यामुळे **कच्चा माल सहज उपलब्ध** होतो. यामुळे कचरा व्यवस्थापन, पर्यावरण रक्षण, आणि महिलांना रोजगार याचे एकत्र समाधान मिळते. कोणतीही गुंतागुंतीची यंत्रणा न वापरता फक्त कात्री, कटर आणि गोंद यांसारख्या छोट्या साधनांनी हे उत्पादन करता येते.

या उपक्रमामुळे महिलांना **घरबसल्या व्यवसाय करण्याची संधी** मिळते. यामध्ये शारीरिक मेहनत कमी असल्याने **कोणतीही महिला, पुरुष सहज सहभागी होऊ शकते.**

सशक्तिकरण आणि पर्यावरणसंवर्धन एकत्र: माशांचे खवले आजवर केवळ कोलाजेन, पर्ल एसेन्स किंवा खवल्यांच्या पावडरीपुरतेच वापरले जात होते. पण या अभ्यासातून असे दिसून आले की, त्यांचा वापर करून **सौंदर्य आणि पर्यावरणाचा समन्वय साधता येतो.**

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महिलांचे सामाजिक आणि आर्थिक सशक्तिकरण करण्यासाठी ही एक अत्यंत प्रभावी संधी आहे. यामार्फत केवळ आर्थिक स्वावलंबन नव्हे तर **कलात्मक अभिव्यक्तीलाही वाव** मिळतो.

'कचऱ्यातून संपत्ती' या दिशेने टाकलेले महत्त्वपूर्ण पाऊल जर महिलांना योग्य प्रशिक्षण, बाजारपेठ आणि वित्तीय पाठबळ मिळाले, तर त्यांचे कौशल्य हे केवळ घरापुरते मर्यादित न राहता **समाज, पर्यावरण आणि स्थानिक अर्थव्यवस्था यांच्यासाठी उपयुक्त ठरू शकते.**

निष्कर्ष:

माशांच्या खवल्यांपासून तयार होणारी ही कलाकृती केवळ सौंदर्य वाढवत नाही, तर **कचऱ्यातून संपत्ती** या संकल्पनेचे प्रत्यक्ष उदाहरण ठरते. **"ज्या गोष्टींना आपण टाकाऊ मानतो, त्यांच्यातच सौंदर्य आणि रोजगाराची संधी दडलेली असते!"**



मासळी बाजारातून संकलित केलेले टाकाऊ माशांचे खवले – उपयुक्ततेकडे एक दुर्लक्षित घटक!



स्वच्छता व निर्जंतुकीकरण प्रक्रियेनंतर वाळवलेले खवले – हस्तकलेसाठी तयार होणारा कच्चा माल.

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रंगवलेले आणि आकारात कापलेले खवले – आता कलाकृती होण्यासाठी सज्ज!



कर्णभूषणे (Ear Rings)



झूमर (Chandeliers)



केसांची पट्टी (Hair Bands)





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कंठभूषण (Necklace)



फोटो फ्रेम (Photo Frame)



ब्रेसलेट (Bracelet)



हेअरपिन (Hair Pins)

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भारतीय उच्च शिक्षणातील महिला: प्रवेश, आव्हाने आणि नेतृत्वाचे सामाजिक, आर्थिक व सांस्कृतिक विश्लेषण

प्रा. नवनाथ नागरे,
सहाय्यक प्राध्यापक, राज्यशास्त्र विभाग
सहकारमहर्षी भाऊसाहेब संतुजी थोरात कला, विज्ञान व वाणिज्य महाविद्यालय, संगमनेर

प्रस्तावना :-

भारतीय उच्च शिक्षणाच्या क्षितिजावर महिलांच्या सहभागाचा प्रवास हा केवळ सांख्यिकीय वाढीचा विषय नसून, तो शतकानुशतके चाललेल्या सामाजिक संघर्षाचा, धोरणात्मक बदलांचा आणि पितृसत्ताक मानसिकतेशी दिलेल्या लढ्याचा परिपाक आहे. विसाव्या शतकाच्या सुरुवातीपासून ते आजच्या एकविसाव्या शतकातील माहिती तंत्रज्ञानाच्या युगापर्यंत, भारतीय महिलांनी शैक्षणिक क्षेत्रात केलेली प्रगती ही क्रांतिकारी स्वरूपाची आहे. मात्र, जेव्हा आपण 'प्रवेश', 'आव्हाने' आणि 'नेतृत्व' या तीन महत्त्वाच्या निकषांवर या प्रगतीचे मोजमाप करतो, तेव्हा असे दिसून येते की, जरी प्रवेशाच्या संख्येत लक्षणीय वाढ झाली असली, तरी आव्हानांचे स्वरूप अधिक गुंतागुंतीचे झाले आहे आणि नेतृत्वाच्या स्तरावर अद्यापही 'काचेचे छत' (Glass Ceiling) शाबूत आहे. या अहवालात उच्च शिक्षणातील महिलांच्या स्थितीचे ऐतिहासिक, सामाजिक, आर्थिक आणि सांस्कृतिक दृष्टिकोनातून सखोल विश्लेषण करण्यात आले असून, त्यामध्ये उपलब्ध संशोधन माहितीचा आधार घेण्यात आला आहे.

कीवर्ड :उच्च शिक्षणातील महिला, लैंगिक समानता, नेतृत्व,संस्थात्मक अडथळे, समावेशक धोरणे, सहभाग.

उच्च शिक्षणातील महिलांच्या सहभागाचा ऐतिहासिक विकासक्रम :

भारतातील महिला शिक्षणाचा इतिहास हा वसाहतपूर्व, वसाहतकालीन आणि स्वातंत्र्योत्तर अशा तीन महत्त्वाच्या टप्प्यांमध्ये विभागला जातो. प्राचीन भारतामध्ये स्त्रियांच्या शिक्षणाची परंपरा काही अंशी

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अस्तित्वात होती, परंतु ती प्रामुख्याने उच्चभ्रू आणि राजघराण्यातील स्त्रियांपुरती मर्यादित होती. त्या काळी औपचारिक शिक्षण संस्थांचा अभाव होता आणि ज्ञान प्रामुख्याने मौखिक परंपरेने किंवा कौटुंबिक चौकटीत दिले जात असे.वसाहतपूर्व काळात स्त्रियांचे शिक्षण हे धार्मिक आणि घरगुती कर्तव्यांशी जोडलेले होते, ज्यामुळे त्यांच्या सार्वजनिक जीवनातील सहभागावर मर्यादा होत्या.

एकोणिसाव्या शतकात ब्रिटिश राजवटीच्या आगमनानंतर आणि पाश्चात्य शिक्षणाच्या प्रसाराने भारतीय समाजमनात घुसळण सुरू झाली. राजा राममोहन रॉय, ईश्वरचंद्र विद्यासागर आणि विशेषतः महात्मा जोतिराव फुले व सावित्रीबाई फुले यांनी स्त्री शिक्षणाचा पाया घातला.१८ व्या आणि १९ व्या शतकातील या सुधारणावादी चळवळींनी स्त्रियांच्या मानवी हक्कांची जाणीव करून दिली. फुले यांनी १८४८ मध्ये पुण्यात मुलींची पहिली शाळा सुरू केली, हा क्षण भारतीय उच्च शिक्षणाच्या प्रवासातील मैलाचा दगड ठरला.वसाहतकालीन काळात इंग्रजी मिशनऱ्यांनीही स्त्रियांच्या औपचारिक शिक्षणास प्रोत्साहन दिले, परंतु त्या वेळीही शिक्षणाचा उद्देश प्रामुख्याने 'सुसंस्कृत पत्नी' आणि 'सुशिक्षित माता' तयार करणे हाच होता.

स्वातंत्र्योत्तर कालखंडात भारतीय संविधानाने महिलांना समानतेचा हक्क प्रदान केला. संविधानातील कलम १४ आणि १५ नुसार लिंगाधारित भेदभाव करण्यास मनाई करण्यात आली, ज्याचा सकारात्मक परिणाम शैक्षणिक धोरणांवर झाला.१९५१ मध्ये महिला साक्षरतेचे प्रमाण अत्यंत कमी म्हणजे ८.८६% होते, जे २०११ पर्यंत ६५.४६% पर्यंत पोहोचले.गेल्या काही दशकांत विद्यापीठ अनुदान आयोगआणि भारत सरकारच्या शिक्षण मंत्रालयाने राबवलेल्या विविध योजनांमुळे उच्च शिक्षणातील महिलांच्या नावनोंदणीत अभूतपूर्व वाढ झाली आहे. नवीन शैक्षणिक धोरण २०२हे या प्रवासातील सर्वात अलीकडील आणि महत्त्वाचे धोरण आहे, जे सर्वसमावेशकता आणि समानतेवर भर देते.

नावनोंदणी आणि प्रवेशाचे सद्यस्थितीतील विश्लेषण :

AISHE च्या अहवालानुसार, भारतातील उच्च शिक्षणातील महिलांच्या सहभागाचे चित्र आशादायक आहे. २०१४-१५ पासून महिलांच्या नावनोंदणीत ३८.४% वाढ झाली असून, सध्या एकूण नावनोंदणीमध्ये

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महिलांचा वाटा सुमारे ४८% ते ४९% आहे.ही वाढ केवळ पदवी स्तरापुरती मर्यादित नसून पदव्युत्तर आणि संशोधनाच्या स्तरावरही दिसून येते. २०१४-१५ ते २०२२-२३ या काळात पदव्युत्तर स्तरावरील महिलांची संख्या १९,८६,२९६ वरून ३२,०२,९५० पर्यंत पोहोचली आहे, जो ६१.३% वाढीचा दर दर्शवतो.

उच्च शिक्षणातील विविध स्तरांवरील महिलांच्या सहभागाची आकडेवारी खालील तक्त्यात स्पष्ट केली आहे:

शिक्षणाचा स्तर	महिला नावनोंदणी	एकूण सहभाग	वाढीचा कल
पदवी	१५.८७	४९	वाढता
पदव्युत्तर	३.२०	५२-५४	लक्षणीय वाढ
शोधनिबंध	०.०९ (सुमारे)	४६	दुप्पट वाढ
एकात्मिक अभ्यासक्रम	-	-	२३.७३% वाढ

या सांख्यिकीवरून असे स्पष्ट होते की, महिला आता केवळ शिक्षण घेण्यासाठी प्रवेश घेत नाहीत, तर त्या उच्च संशोधनाकडेही वळत आहेत. विशेषतः संशोधनातील महिलांचा वाढता सहभाग हा भविष्यातील महिला नेतृत्वासाठी सकारात्मक संकेत आहे.मात्र, प्रवेशाच्या या प्रगतीमध्ये प्रादेशिक आणि सामाजिक विषमता आजही कायम आहे.

शिक्षण क्षेत्र आणि महिला: एक विरोधाभासी वास्तव

भारत हा जगातील असा एक देश आहे जिथे विज्ञान, तंत्रज्ञान, अभियांत्रिकी आणि गणित (STEM) या क्षेत्रांमध्ये महिलांच्या नावनोंदणीचे प्रमाण अत्यंत उच्च आहे. युनेस्कोच्या आकडेवारीनुसार, भारतातील ४३% STEM पदवीधर महिला आहेत, जो जागतिक सरासरीच्या (३५%) तुलनेत मोठा आकडा आहे.मात्र, या यशाच्या मागे एक गंभीर गळती दडलेली आहे.शिक्षण घेणाऱ्या ४३% महिलांपैकी प्रत्यक्ष कार्यक्षेत्रात केवळ २७% महिला कार्यरत आहेत.याचा अर्थ असा की, उच्च दर्जाचे तांत्रिक शिक्षण घेऊनही अनेक महिला करिअरच्या वाटेवर मागे पडतात किंवा त्यांना बाहेर पडण्यास भाग पाडले जाते, यामागे अनेक कारणे आहेत:

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१. **कौटुंबिक दबाव आणि विवाहाचे प्राधान्य**: पदवी पूर्ण झाल्यानंतर अनेक कुटुंबांमध्ये मुलीच्या करिअरपेक्षा तिच्या लग्नाला अधिक महत्त्व दिले जाते.

२. **कामाच्या ठिकाणचा लिंगभेद**: सुमारे ८१% महिलांना पदोन्नती किंवा कामगिरी मूल्यमापनात लिंगभेदाचा अनुभव येतो.

३. **वेतन तफावत**: तांत्रिक क्षेत्रांतही महिलांना पुरुषांच्या तुलनेत १५% ते ३०% कमी वेतन मिळते.

४. **संशोधनातील अडथळे**: महिला संशोधकांनी सादर केलेले शोधनिबंध पुनरावलोकनासाठी अधिक वेळ घेतात, ज्याचा परिणाम त्यांच्या करिअरच्या गतीवर होतो.

याक्षेत्रातील ही तफावत दूर करण्यासाठी केंद्र सरकारने स्कॉलरशिपसारखे उपक्रम सुरू केले आहेत, परंतु सामाजिक मानसिकतेत बदल झाल्याशिवाय या धोरणांची पूर्ण फलश्रुती होणे कठीण आहे.

सामाजिक आणि सांस्कृतिक आव्हाने: पितृसत्तेचा प्रभाव

भारतीय समाज हा मूलतः पितृसत्ताक आणि पितृवंशीय आहे, जिथे सत्तेची आणि मालमत्तेची सूत्रे पुरुषांकडे असतात.या मानसिकतेचा महिलांच्या उच्च शिक्षणावर खोलवर परिणाम होतो. जरी आज पालकांनी मुलींना शिक्षणासाठी पाठवण्यास सुरुवात केली असली, तरी त्यामागील हेतू अनेकदा त्यांच्या वैयक्तिक प्रगतीपेक्षा चांगले स्थळ मिळवणेहाच असतो.

पितृसत्ता आणि कुटुंबातील स्थान

पितृसत्ताक समाजात स्त्रियांचे अस्तित्व पुरुषांच्या संदर्भानेच पाहिले जाते. घरात मुलांच्या शिक्षणाला प्राधान्य दिले जाते, कारण मुलगा हा भविष्यातील कमावताआणि कुटुंबाचा आधारमानला जातो, तर मुलगी ही परक्याचे धनसमजली जाते.यामुळे आर्थिक टंचाईच्या काळात सर्वात आधी मुलीचे शिक्षण बंद केले जाते. पितृसत्ता केवळ पुरुषांकडूनच लादली जात नाही, तर अनेकदा स्त्रिया स्वतःही या व्यवस्थेच्या वाहक बनतात. ज्याला अंतर्गत स्त्रीद्वेषम्हटले जाते, जिथे घरातील ज्येष्ठ स्त्रियाच मुलींच्या स्वातंत्र्यावर निर्बंध लादतात.

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सामाजिक शिस्त

मुलींना लहानपणापासूनच आज्ञाधारक, त्यागआणि शांतराहण्याचे शिक्षण दिले जाते, ज्याला गुड गर्ल सिंड्रोम म्हणतात.उच्च शिक्षण घेतानाही मुलींना स्वतःच्या आवडीपेक्षा कुटुंबाच्या इच्छेला प्राधान्य द्यावे लागते. मुलगी जास्त शिकली तर तिला वर (मुलगा) मिळणार नाही किंवा ती हातातून जाईलही भीती पालकांमध्ये कायम असते.या सामाजिक दबावामुळे अनेक गुणवान मुली संशोधनासारख्या दीर्घकालीन क्षेत्रांऐवजी लहान नोकरीभिमुख कोर्सेसकडे वळतात.

विवाहाची संस्था आणि शिक्षणातील व्यत्यय

भारतात विवाह हा केवळ दोन व्यक्तींचा मिलाफ नसून ती एक सामाजिक संस्था आहे, जी स्त्रियांच्या स्वायत्ततेवर मर्यादा आणते. आजही ग्रामीण आणि निमशहरी भागात विवाहासाठी शिक्षणाचा बळी दिला जातो.विवाहांतर शिक्षण सुरू ठेवणाऱ्या महिलांना घरकाम, मुलांची देखभाल आणि सासरच्या मंडळींच्या अपेक्षा पूर्ण करताना तारेवरची कसरत करावी लागते. संशोधनानुसार, विवाहित महिलांना उच्च शिक्षणात पदवी घेताना पुरुषांच्या तुलनेत दुप्पट मानसिक ताण सहन करावा लागतो.

आर्थिक अडथळे आणि संस्थात्मक मर्यादा :-

उच्च शिक्षणातील महिलांच्या गळतीचे एक मुख्य कारण 'आर्थिक परिस्थिती' हे आहे. जरी सरकारी महाविद्यालयांमध्ये फी कमी असली, तरी पुस्तके, गणवेश, निवास आणि प्रवासाचा खर्च गरीब कुटुंबांना पेलवत नाही.

गरिबी आणि शैक्षणिक खर्च

आर्थिकदृष्ट्या दुर्बल कुटुंबांमध्ये शिक्षणापेक्षा तात्काळ मिळणाऱ्या उत्पन्नाला महत्त्व दिले जाते. यामुळे मुलींना अर्धवेळ काम करावे लागते किंवा घरातील लहान भावंडांना सांभाळण्यासाठी शिक्षण सोडावे लागते.काही विद्यार्थिनी शिक्षणासाठी कर्ज घेतात, परंतु नोकरी मिळण्याची अनिश्चितता आणि कर्जाचा बोजा त्यांच्यावर मानसिक दडपण निर्माण करतो.

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संस्थात्मक पायाभूत सुविधांचा अभाव

अनेक उच्च शिक्षण संस्थांमध्ये, विशेषतः ग्रामीण भागात, मुलींसाठी स्वतंत्र स्वच्छतागृहे पिण्याचे पाणी आणि विश्रांती कक्षांचा अभाव आहे.सुरक्षिततेच्या कारणास्तव अनेक पालक मुलींना लांबच्या अंतरावरील महाविद्यालयात पाठवण्यास तयार नसतात. कँपसवर लैंगिक छळाच्या तक्रारी निवारण करण्यासाठी अंतर्गत तक्रार समिती प्रभावीपणे काम करत नसल्यामुळे अनेक मुली छळाला कंटाळून शिक्षण सोडतात.

नेतृत्वातील महिला: वास्तव

उच्च शिक्षणात विद्यार्थ्यांच्या संख्येत महिलांनी प्रगती केली असली, तरी धोरण ठरवणाऱ्या आणि नेतृत्वाच्या पदांवर त्यांचे प्रमाण अत्यंत निराशाजनक आहे. भारतामध्ये कुलगुरू पदावर कार्यरत असलेल्या महिलांची संख्या केवळ १०% च्या आसपास आहे.नेतृत्वातील विषमतेचे खालील तक्ता सविस्तर वर्णन करतो :

पद	महिलांचे प्रतिनिधित्व (%)	पुरुषांचे प्रतिनिधित्व (%)
कुलगुरू	९.५५	८९.५७
प्राध्यापक	२८	७२
वरिष्ठ प्रशासकीय पदे	अल्प	बहुसंख्य
संचालक	६.२५	९२.७

नेतृत्वाच्या स्तरावर महिलांना भेडसावणाऱ्या समस्यांमध्ये 'काचेचे छत' ही सर्वात मोठी अडचण आहे. महिलांना नेतृत्व करण्यास सक्षम मानले जात नाही किंवा त्यांना केवळ मृदूमानल्या जाणाऱ्या विभागांचे प्रमुख बनवले जाते.महिला प्राध्यापिकांना संशोधनापेक्षा शिकवणे आणि विद्यार्थी समन्वयासारख्या कामांमध्ये अधिक गुंतवले जाते, ज्यामुळे त्यांना प्रोफेसरपदापर्यंत पोहोचण्यासाठी लागणारे संशोधन गुण मिळवणे कठीण जाते.

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याच संदर्भात स्टिकी फ्लोअरही संकल्पनाही महत्त्वाची आहे, जिथे महिला करिअरच्या सुरुवातीच्या टप्प्यावरच कौटुंबिक जबाबदाऱ्यांमुळे अडकून पडतात आणि वरच्या स्तरावर पोहोचू शकत नाहीत.नेतृत्वामध्ये वाढ करण्यासाठी महिलांना योग्य मेंटरशिपमिळणे आणि संस्थात्मक पातळीवर संवेदनशील धोरणे असणे आवश्यक आहे.

छेदात्मकता: जात, धर्म आणि सामाजिक स्तराचा प्रभाव

महिलांचे उच्च शिक्षणातील अनुभव हे एकसारखे नसतात. त्यांच्या आव्हानांचे स्वरूप त्यांची जात, धर्म, वर्ग आणि भौगोलिक पार्श्वभूमी यानुसार बदलत असते.

दलित आणि आदिवासी महिला

अनुसूचित जाती आणि अनुसूचित जमाती मधील महिलांना लिंगआणिजातअशा दुहेरी शोषणाचा सामना करावा लागतो. सामाजिक बहिष्कार आणि पिढ्यानपिढ्या चालत आलेली गरिबी यामुळे त्यांच्यासाठी उच्च शिक्षणाची दारे कठीण असतात.जरी आरक्षणामुळे प्रवेश मिळत असला, तरी शिक्षण संस्थांमधील भेदभावपूर्ण वातावरणामुळे त्यांच्यामध्ये आत्मविश्वास आणि प्रगतीची कमतरता दिसून येते. युनोच्या अहवालानुसार, दलित महिला भारतीय सामाजिक रचनेत सर्वात तळाला असून त्या सर्वाधिक वंचनेचा सामना करतात.

मुस्लिम महिला आणि अल्पसंख्याक गट

मुस्लिम महिलांचा उच्च शिक्षणातील सहभाग इतर समुदायांच्या तुलनेत कमी आहे. धार्मिक रुढी, सामाजिक असुरक्षितता आणि शैक्षणिक संस्थांची कमतरता यामुळे त्यांच्या प्रगतीत अडथळे येतात.मात्र, गेल्या काही वर्षांत या परिस्थितीतही बदल होत असून मुस्लिम तरुणींमध्ये शिक्षणाप्रती जाणीव वाढत आहे.

प्रादेशिक विषमता आणि भौगोलिक आव्हाने

भारतातील महिलांच्या उच्च शिक्षणाचे चित्र राज्यानुसार मोठ्या प्रमाणात बदलते. दक्षिण आणि पश्चिम भारतात महिलांची स्थिती उत्तर आणि पूर्व भारताच्या तुलनेत चांगली आहे. केरळ सारख्या राज्यांनी महिला

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सक्षमीकरणात आणि शिक्षण निर्देशांकात (WEI) मोठी प्रगती केली आहे, तर बिहार आणि झारखंड सारखी राज्ये आजही सामाजिक-आर्थिक आव्हानांशी झुंजत आहेत.

महिला सक्षमीकरण निर्देशांक (WEI) २०२४ च्या रँकिंगनुसार काही राज्यांची स्थिती:

राज्य	WEI स्कोअर	रँकिंग	मुख्य वैशिष्ट्ये
केरळ	०.९८	१	उच्च साक्षरता, आरोग्य आणि स्वायत्तता
कर्नाटक	०.६३	५	आयटी हब आणि शैक्षणिक संस्था
आंध्र प्रदेश	०.४६	८	मध्यम प्रगती
झारखंड	०.१९	१६	ग्रामीण मागासलेपण आणि गळती
बिहार	०.११	१७	उच्च लैंगिक विषमता

ग्रामीण आणि शहरी भागातील दरी ही एक मोठी समस्या आहे. ग्रामीण भागातील मुलींना उच्च शिक्षणासाठी शहरात जावे लागते, जिथे राहण्याचा खर्च आणि सुरक्षितता हे पालकांसाठी चिंतेचे विषय असतात.याउलट, शहरी भागातील महिलांना अधिक संधी आणि माहिती उपलब्ध असली, तरी तिथेही कामाच्या ठिकाणी पोहोचण्यासाठी लागणारा वेळ आणि कौटुंबिक जबाबदाऱ्यांमुळे त्या करिअरमध्ये मागे पडतात.

कार्य-जीवन संतुलन आणि व्यावसायिक प्रगती

उच्च शिक्षणात कार्यरत असलेल्या महिला शिक्षकांसाठी कार्य-जीवन संतुलनराखणे हे एक मोठे आव्हान आहे. भारतीय समाजात घरकाम आणि मुलांची काळजी घेण्याची पूर्ण जबाबदारी स्त्रियांवरच असते.मदरहूड पेनल्टी, प्रकाशन आणि संशोधन दबाव, विभक्त कुटुंब पद्धतीचे परिणाम आणिवाढत्या शहरीकरणाच्या आव्हानांवर मात करण्यासाठी काही महिलांना अर्धवेळ नोकरी किंवा शिकवणीसारखे पर्याय निवडावे लागतात, जे त्यांच्या मूळ पात्रतेपेक्षा कमी दर्जाचे असतात.

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भारत सरकारने महिलांच्या उच्च शिक्षणासाठी गेल्या काही वर्षांत अनेक क्रांतिकारक पावले उचलली आहेत. “बेटी बचाव बेटी पढाओ”या मोहिमेने समाजात मुलींच्या शिक्षणाप्रती सकारात्मक वातावरण निर्माण केले आहे. NEP 2020 या धोरणांतर्गत 'जेंडर इन्क्लुजन फंड' स्थापन करण्याची तरतूद आहे, जेणेकरून महिलांना सर्व स्तरांवर समान शिक्षण मिळेल.भविष्यात केवळ संख्यात्मक वाढ न बघता गुणात्मक वाढीवर भर देणे आवश्यक आहे. महिलांना केवळ पदवी मिळवून न थांबवता, त्यांना उद्योग क्षेत्रात सामावून घेण्यासाठी कौशल्य विकास कार्यक्रमांची गरज आहे.

निष्कर्ष:

भारतीय उच्च शिक्षणातील महिलांची प्रगती ही एका ऐतिहासिक वळणावर आहे. या संशोधनाच्या आधारे संस्थात्मक सुधारणा, मानसिकता परिवर्तन, नेतृत्व विकास कार्यक्रम, डिजिटल साक्षरता आणि धोरणात्मक अंमलबजावणी याकागदावर असलेल्या योजनांची प्रत्यक्ष अंमलबजावणी प्रभावीपणे होते की नाही, यासाठी ऑडिटकरणे गरजेचे आहे. अखेरीस, उच्च शिक्षणातील महिलांची प्रगती ही केवळ स्त्रियांची प्रगती नसून ती संपूर्ण समाजाची आणि राष्ट्राची प्रगती आहे. जोपर्यंत महिलांना विवाहाच्या दबावातून मुक्त करून त्यांना स्वतःचे भविष्य निवडण्याचे पूर्ण स्वातंत्र्य दिले जात नाही, तोपर्यंत शिक्षणाचा खरा उद्देश साध्य होणार नाही. उच्च शिक्षणातील नेतृत्वामध्ये लैंगिक समानता प्रस्थापित करण्याचा मार्ग आजही आव्हानात्मक असला, तरी सातत्यपूर्ण कायदेशीर सुधारणा, संस्थात्मक कटिबद्धता आणि समाजाचा पाठिंबा यांच्या जोरावर हे उद्दिष्ट साध्य करणे नक्कीच शक्य आहे; आणि याचा लाभ उच्च शिक्षण क्षेत्र तसेच संपूर्ण समाजाला होईल.भारतीय महिलांनी सिद्ध केले आहे की त्यांना संधी मिळाल्यास त्या अंतराळ विज्ञानापासून ते सहकार चळवळीपर्यंत सर्वत्र नेतृत्व करू शकतात. आता समाजाची आणि शासनाची जबाबदारी आहे की त्यांच्या मार्गातील अडथळे दूर करून त्यांना एक समतावादी जागा उपलब्ध करून द्यावे.

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भारत-बांग्लादेश संबंधात महिला नेतृत्वाचे योगदान

विकास सुभाष नालकर
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गोषवारा (Abstract)

भारत आणि बांग्लादेश हे दक्षिण आशियातील दोन महत्त्वाचे शेजारी देश असून त्यांच्या संबंधांची मुळे ऐतिहासिक, सांस्कृतिक आणि राजकीय घटकांमध्ये आढळतात. १९७१ मध्ये बांग्लादेशच्या स्वातंत्र्यानंतर या दोन्ही देशांमधील संबंधांना नवी दिशा मिळाली. या संबंधांच्या विकासात विविध राजकीय नेत्यांनी योगदान दिले असले तरी महिला नेतृत्वाने त्यामध्ये विशेष महत्त्वाची भूमिका बजावली आहे. प्रस्तुत संशोधनाचा उद्देश भारत–बांग्लादेश संबंधांच्या बळकटीकरणात महिला नेतृत्वाचे योगदान अभ्यासणे हा आहे.महिला नेतृत्वामुळे भारत–बांग्लादेश संबंधांमध्ये राजनैतिक संवाद, आर्थिक सहकार्य, सीमावादांचे निराकरण आणि प्रादेशिक सुरक्षेच्या क्षेत्रात महत्त्वपूर्ण प्रगती झाली आहे. विशेषतः १९७२ चा मैत्री करार, १९९६ चा गंगा पाणी वाटप करार आणि २०१५ चा भूमी सीमा करार यांसारख्या महत्त्वाच्या करारांमुळे दोन्ही देशांमधील संबंध अधिक मजबूत झाले.त्यामुळे असे निष्कर्ष काढता येतो की महिला नेतृत्वाने भारत–बांग्लादेश संबंधांच्या विकासात स्थैर्य, सहकार्य आणि विश्वास निर्माण करण्यामध्ये महत्त्वपूर्ण योगदान दिले आहे.

प्रस्तावना

दक्षिण आशिया हा ऐतिहासिक, सांस्कृतिक आणि राजकीय दृष्ट्या अत्यंत महत्त्वाचा प्रदेश मानला जातो. या प्रदेशातील देशांमध्ये परस्परांशी दीर्घकालीन ऐतिहासिक, भाषिक आणि सांस्कृतिक संबंध आढळतात. भारत आणि बांग्लादेश हे अशाच प्रकारचे दोन महत्त्वाचे शेजारी देश असून त्यांच्या संबंधांची मुळे इतिहासात खोलवर रुजलेली आहेत. विशेषतः १९७१ मध्ये बांग्लादेशच्या स्वातंत्र्यलढ्यात भारताने दिलेल्या राजकीय, राजनैतिक आणि लष्करी पाठिंब्यामुळे दोन्ही देशांमधील संबंधांना एक मजबूत पाया प्राप्त झाला. या घटनेनंतर भारत–बांग्लादेश संबंधांनी राजकीय, आर्थिक, सांस्कृतिक आणि सामरिक अशा विविध क्षेत्रांत सातत्याने प्रगती केली आहे.

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भारत आणि बांग्लादेश यांच्यातील संबंध हे केवळ भौगोलिक जवळीकतेपुरते मर्यादित नसून ते सांस्कृतिक, भाषिक आणि ऐतिहासिक समानतेवर आधारित आहेत. दोन्ही देशांमध्ये व्यापार, सीमाव्यवस्थापन, जलसंपत्तीचे वाटप, ऊर्जा सहकार्य, सांस्कृतिक देवाणघेवाण आणि प्रादेशिक सुरक्षेच्या दृष्टीने सहकार्य वाढत आहे. या सर्व प्रक्रियेत दोन्ही देशांच्या राजकीय नेतृत्वाने महत्त्वपूर्ण भूमिका बजावली आहे. विशेषतः महिला नेतृत्वाने भारत–बांग्लादेश संबंधांच्या विकासात आणि स्थैर्यात उल्लेखनीय योगदान दिले आहे.दक्षिण आशियातील राजकारणाचे एक महत्त्वाचे वैशिष्ट्य म्हणजे येथे महिलांनी सर्वोच्च राजकीय पदांवर कार्य केले आहे. बांग्लादेशमध्ये दीर्घकाळ महिला पंतप्रधानांच्या नेतृत्वाखाली शासन झाले असून त्यामुळे त्या देशाच्या परराष्ट्र धोरणावर आणि प्रादेशिक संबंधांवरही त्याचा प्रभाव पडलेला दिसून येतो. विशेषतःशेख हसिनाआणिखलिदा झियाया महिला नेत्यांनी बांग्लादेशच्या राजकारणात दीर्घकाळ प्रभावी नेतृत्व केले आहे. त्यांच्या नेतृत्वकाळात भारत–बांग्लादेश संबंधांमध्ये विविध स्तरांवर सहकार्य वाढवण्याचे प्रयत्न झाले.याशिवाय भारतातील माजी पंतप्रधानइंदिरा गांधीयांनी बांग्लादेशच्या स्वातंत्र्यलढ्यात महत्त्वाची भूमिका बजावून दोन्ही देशांमधील संबंधांना एक ऐतिहासिक दिशा दिली. त्यांच्या नेतृत्वामुळे भारताने बांग्लादेशला स्वातंत्र्य मिळवून देण्यासाठी निर्णायक मदत केली आणि त्यानंतर दोन्ही देशांमध्ये मैत्रीपूर्ण संबंध प्रस्थापित झाले.महिला नेतृत्वाच्या या योगदानामुळे भारत–बांग्लादेश संबंधांमध्ये संवाद, सहकार्य आणि विश्वासाचे वातावरण निर्माण झाले. विशेषतः सीमावादांचे निराकरण, व्यापारवृद्धी, ऊर्जा सहकार्य आणि दहशतवादविरोधी सहकार्य या क्षेत्रांत महिला नेतृत्वाने सकारात्मक भूमिका बजावली आहे. त्यामुळे या विषयाचा अभ्यास करणे शैक्षणिक आणि संशोधनाच्या दृष्टीने महत्त्वपूर्ण ठरते.या पार्श्वभूमीवर प्रस्तुत संशोधनात**भारत–बांग्लादेश संबंधांच्या विकासात महिला नेतृत्वाने बजावलेल्या भूमिकेचा आणि त्यांच्या योगदानाचा सखोल अभ्यास करण्याचा प्रयत्न केला आहे.**या अभ्यासामधून महिला नेतृत्वामुळे द्विपक्षीय संबंधांच्या स्वरूपात आणि दिशेमध्ये झालेल्या बदलांचे विश्लेषण करण्यात येणार आहे.

संशोधनाची उद्दिष्टे

1. भारत–बांग्लादेश संबंधांचा ऐतिहासिक विकास समजून घेणे.
2. महिला नेतृत्वाची संकल्पना आणि त्याचे महत्त्व स्पष्ट करणे.
3. भारत आणि बांग्लादेशातील महिला नेत्यांच्या धोरणांचा अभ्यास करणे.

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4. महिला नेतृत्वामुळे द्विपक्षीय संबंधांमध्ये झालेल्या बदलांचे विश्लेषण करणे.

संशोधन पद्धती

प्रस्तुत संशोधनासाठी भारत-बांग्लादेशसंबंधात महिला नेतृत्वाची भूमिका या विषयाच्या अभ्यासासाठी प्राथमिक संशोधनाऐवजी दुय्यम साधन सामग्रीचा वापर करण्यात आला आहे. यामध्ये लेख, अहवाल, संपादकीय आणि आकडेवारी अहवालांचा समावेश आहे. दुय्यम स्रोतांद्वारे उपलब्ध माहिती,राजकीय कलव घडामोडी , करारांचे विश्लेषण आणि राजकीय प्रभावांची माहिती एकत्रित करून संशोधनाची रूपरेषा तयार केली गेली आहे, या पद्धतीने सखोल ऐतिहासिक संदर्भ, सांख्यिकीय डेटा आणि तज्ज्ञांच्या मतांचा आधार मिळाला, ज्याचा उपयोग संशोधनासाठी करण्यात आलेला आहे.

बांग्लादेश संबंधांचा ऐतिहासिक आढावा

भारत आणि बांग्लादेश यांच्यातील संबंधांचा इतिहास १९७१ च्या स्वातंत्र्ययुद्धाशी संबंधित आहे. त्या काळात बांग्लादेश हा पाकिस्तानचा भाग होता. पूर्व पाकिस्तानातील लोकांनी स्वातंत्र्यासाठी संघर्ष सुरू केला. या संघर्षात भारताने बांग्लादेशला राजकीय आणि लष्करी मदत केली.या संघर्षाचा शेवट**१९७१ च्या युद्धात**झाला आणि बांग्लादेश स्वतंत्र राष्ट्र म्हणून उदयास आला. या घटनेमुळे भारत–बांग्लादेश संबंधांना एक मजबूत पाया मिळाला.

स्वातंत्र्यानंतर दोन्ही देशांमध्ये अनेक क्षेत्रांत सहकार्य वाढले:

- व्यापार आणि आर्थिक संबंध
- सीमा व्यवस्थापन
- जलसंपत्तीचे वाटप
- सांस्कृतिक देवाणघेवाण
- दहशतवादविरोधी सहकार्य

तथापि काही काळ दोन्ही देशांमध्ये राजकीय मतभेद आणि सीमावादामुळे तणाव निर्माण झाला. परंतु नंतरच्या काळात दोन्ही देशांच्या नेतृत्वाने संवाद आणि सहकार्याचा मार्ग स्वीकारला.

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महिला नेतृत्वाची संकल्पना

महिला नेतृत्व म्हणजे समाजातील किंवा राज्यातील निर्णय प्रक्रियेत महिलांनी सक्रिय आणि प्रभावी भूमिका बजावणे. आधुनिक लोकशाही व्यवस्थेत महिला नेतृत्वाला विशेष महत्त्व प्राप्त झाले आहे.

महिला नेतृत्वामुळे पुढील गोष्टींना प्रोत्साहन मिळते:

- समावेशक विकास
- सामाजिक न्याय
- शांतता आणि सहकार्य
- मानवी हक्कांचे संरक्षण

दक्षिण आशियात अनेक देशांमध्ये महिला नेत्यांनी पंतप्रधान किंवा राष्ट्राध्यक्ष म्हणून काम केले आहे. या प्रदेशात महिला नेतृत्वाचे अस्तित्व हे एक महत्त्वाचे वैशिष्ट्य मानले जाते.

बांग्लादेशच्या स्वातंत्र्यनिर्मितीत महिला नेतृत्वाची भूमिका

भारत–बांग्लादेश संबंधांचा पाया १९७१ च्या बांग्लादेश मुक्ती संग्रामामध्ये तयार झाला. त्या काळात भारताच्या पंतप्रधान असलेल्याइंदिरा गांधीयांनी बांग्लादेशच्या स्वातंत्र्यलढ्याला निर्णायक पाठिंबा दिला.पूर्व पाकिस्तानातील लोकांवर होणाऱ्या अत्याचारांविरुद्ध भारताने आंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तरावर आवाज उठवला. इंदिरा गांधी यांनी विविध देशांच्या नेत्यांशी संवाद साधून बांग्लादेशच्या स्वातंत्र्याच्या प्रश्नाला जागतिक स्तरावर महत्त्व प्राप्त करून दिले.१९७१ च्या युद्धामध्ये भारताने बांग्लादेशला लष्करी मदत दिली आणि पाकिस्तानविरुद्ध विजय मिळवला. या विजयामुळे बांग्लादेश स्वतंत्र राष्ट्र म्हणून उदयास आला. त्यामुळे भारत–बांग्लादेश संबंधांचा ऐतिहासिक पाया मजबूत झाला.यामुळे असे म्हणता येते की भारत–बांग्लादेश मैत्रीच्या निर्मितीत महिला नेतृत्वाची भूमिका अत्यंत महत्त्वाची होती.

राजनैतिक संबंधांच्या बळकटीकरणात महिला नेतृत्व

बांग्लादेशमध्ये दीर्घकाळ महिला नेतृत्वाने देशाचे राजकारण प्रभावित केले आहे. विशेषतःशेख हसिनायांच्या नेतृत्वाखाली भारत–बांग्लादेश संबंधांमध्ये मोठ्या प्रमाणात सुधारणा झाली.त्यांनी भारताशी

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मैत्रीपूर्ण संबंध प्रस्थापित करण्यासाठी अनेक महत्त्वाचे निर्णय घेतले. त्यांच्या नेतृत्वामुळे दोन्ही देशांमध्ये विश्वास आणि सहकार्याचे वातावरण निर्माण झाले.

त्यांच्या काळात पुढील गोष्टींना चालना मिळाली:

- उच्चस्तरीय राजनैतिक संवाद
- सीमावादांचे शांततापूर्ण निराकरण
- प्रादेशिक सहकार्य वाढवणे

या धोरणांमुळे भारत–बांग्लादेश संबंध अधिक स्थिर आणि सकारात्मक झाले.

सीमा प्रश्न आणि करारांच्या निराकरणात योगदान

भारत आणि बांग्लादेश यांच्यातील एक महत्त्वाचा प्रश्न म्हणजे सीमा आणि भूभागाशी संबंधित समस्या होत्या. या प्रश्नांचे निराकरण करण्यासाठी दोन्ही देशांच्या नेतृत्वाने प्रयत्न केले.विशेषतःशेख हसीनायांच्या नेतृत्वाखाली भारत आणि बांग्लादेश यांच्यामध्ये**भूमी सीमा करार (Land Boundary Agreement)** अंमलात आला. या करारामुळे अनेक वर्षांपासून प्रलंबित असलेले सीमा प्रश्न सोडवले गेले.या करारामुळे सीमावर्ती भागातील लोकांच्या समस्या कमी झाल्या आणि दोन्ही देशांमध्ये विश्वास वाढला.

आर्थिक आणि व्यापार सहकार्य वाढवण्यात महिला नेतृत्व

महिला नेतृत्वामुळे भारत–बांग्लादेश आर्थिक संबंधांमध्येही सकारात्मक बदल झाले.दोन्ही देशांमध्ये व्यापार वाढवण्यासाठी विविध करार करण्यात आले. भारताने बांग्लादेशला अनेक आर्थिक सवलती दिल्या आणि पायाभूत सुविधांच्या विकासासाठी सहकार्य केले.

यामध्ये पुढील गोष्टी महत्त्वाच्या आहेत:

- द्विपक्षीय व्यापार वाढ
- ऊर्जा सहकार्य
- पायाभूत सुविधा विकास

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- वाहतूक आणि संपर्क व्यवस्था सुधारणा

या उपक्रमांमुळे भारत–बांग्लादेश आर्थिक संबंध अधिक मजबूत झाले.

प्रादेशिक सहकार्य आणि सुरक्षेच्या क्षेत्रात योगदान

महिला नेतृत्वामुळे दक्षिण आशियातील प्रादेशिक सहकार्यालाही चालना मिळाली. विशेषतः दहशतवादविरोधी कारवाई आणि सीमासुरक्षा यामध्ये दोन्ही देशांनी एकत्रितपणे काम केले.शेख हसिनायांच्या नेतृत्वाखाली बांग्लादेशने दहशतवादविरोधी कारवाईत भारताला सहकार्य केले. त्यामुळे दोन्ही देशांमधील सुरक्षा सहकार्य मजबूत झाले.

सांस्कृतिक आणि सामाजिक संबंधांचा विकास

भारत आणि बांग्लादेश हे सांस्कृतिकदृष्ट्या अत्यंत जवळचे देश आहेत. दोन्ही देशांमध्ये भाषा, साहित्य, संगीत आणि परंपरा यामध्ये मोठी समानता आढळते.महिला नेतृत्वामुळे या सांस्कृतिक संबंधांना चालना मिळाली. सांस्कृतिक कार्यक्रम, शैक्षणिक देवाणघेवाण आणि पर्यटन यामध्ये सहकार्य वाढले.यामुळे दोन्ही देशांतील लोकांमध्ये परस्पर समज आणि मैत्री अधिक दृढ झाली.

भारत–बांग्लादेश संबंधांमध्ये महिला नेतृत्वाचे योगदान

इंदिरा गांधी यांचे योगदान

इंदिरा गांधी यांनी भारत–बांग्लादेश संबंधांच्या निर्मितीत अत्यंत महत्त्वाची भूमिका बजावली.१९७१ च्या स्वातंत्र्ययुद्धाच्या काळात त्यांनी बांग्लादेशच्या स्वातंत्र्यलढ्याला राजकीय आणि लष्करी पाठिंबा दिला. त्यांच्या नेतृत्वामुळे भारताने पाकिस्तानविरुद्ध युद्ध जिंकले आणि बांग्लादेश स्वतंत्र झाला.

त्यांच्या नेतृत्वातील प्रमुख योगदान पुढीलप्रमाणे आहे:

- बांग्लादेशच्या स्वातंत्र्याला आंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तरावर पाठिंबा मिळवून देणे
- युद्धाद्वारे पाकिस्तानवर विजय मिळवणे
- भारत–बांग्लादेश मैत्री कराराची स्थापना

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- दोन्ही देशांमध्ये राजनैतिक संबंध दृढ करणे

शेख हसीना यांचे योगदान

शेख हसिनाया बांग्लादेशच्या सर्वात प्रभावी महिला नेत्यांपैकी एक आहेत. त्यांच्या नेतृत्वाखाली भारत–बांग्लादेश संबंधांमध्ये मोठ्या प्रमाणात सुधारणा झाली.त्यांनी भारताशी सहकार्य वाढवण्यासाठी अनेक महत्त्वाचे निर्णय घेतले.

त्यांचे प्रमुख योगदान:

1. **भूमी सीमा करार (Land Boundary Agreement)**अंमलात आणणे
2. दहशतवादविरोधी सहकार्य वाढवणे
3. व्यापार आणि आर्थिक सहकार्य वाढवणे
4. ऊर्जा आणि पायाभूत सुविधांमध्ये सहकार्य वाढवणे
5. सांस्कृतिक संबंधांना चालना देणे

त्यांच्या नेतृत्वामुळे भारत–बांग्लादेश संबंधांना स्थैर्य प्राप्त झाले आहे.

खालिदा झिया यांचे योगदान

खालिदा झिया यांनीही भारत–बांग्लादेश संबंधांमध्ये महत्त्वाची भूमिका बजावली आहे.त्यांच्या नेतृत्वाच्या काळात दोन्ही देशांमध्ये राजनैतिक संवाद वाढला. व्यापार आणि प्रादेशिक सहकार्य वाढवण्यासाठी त्यांनी प्रयत्न केले.

निष्कर्ष

भारत आणि बांग्लादेश यांच्यातील संबंध हे दक्षिण आशियातील सर्वात महत्त्वाच्या द्विपक्षीय संबंधांपैकी एक मानले जातात. इतिहास, संस्कृती, भाषा आणि भौगोलिक जवळीक या घटकांमुळे दोन्ही देशांमध्ये परस्परावलंबी संबंध विकसित झाले आहेत. विशेषतः १९७१ मध्ये बांग्लादेशच्या स्वातंत्र्यानंतर या संबंधांना

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नवे राजनैतिक आणि धोरणात्मक स्वरूप प्राप्त झाले. या संबंधांच्या विकासामध्ये विविध राजकीय नेत्यांनी योगदान दिले असले तरी महिला नेतृत्वाने या प्रक्रियेला एक वेगळी दिशा आणि स्थैर्य प्रदान केले आहे.

भारत–बांग्लादेश संबंधांच्या इतिहासाचा विचार केला असता असे स्पष्टपणे दिसून येते की महिला नेतृत्वाने या संबंधांच्या घडणीत आणि बळकटीकरणात महत्त्वपूर्ण भूमिका बजावली आहे. भारताच्या माजी पंतप्रधानइंदिरा गांधीयांनी १९७१ च्या बांग्लादेश मुक्ती संग्रामाच्या काळात घेतलेले निर्णायक राजकीय आणि लष्करी निर्णय हे भारत–बांग्लादेश संबंधांच्या स्थापनेतील मूलभूत टप्पा ठरले. त्यांच्या नेतृत्वामुळे बांग्लादेशला स्वातंत्र्य मिळाले आणि त्यानंतर दोन्ही देशांमध्ये मैत्रीपूर्ण आणि सहकार्यात्मक संबंध प्रस्थापित झाले.त्यानंतरच्या काळात बांग्लादेशमधील महिला नेतृत्वानेही भारताशी संबंध दृढ करण्यासाठी महत्त्वपूर्ण प्रयत्न केले. विशेषतःशेख हसिनायांच्या नेतृत्वाखाली भारत–बांग्लादेश संबंधांमध्ये स्थैर्य, सहकार्य आणि विश्वासाचे वातावरण निर्माण झाले. त्यांच्या कार्यकाळात अनेक महत्त्वपूर्ण करार आणि उपक्रम राबविण्यात आले. यामध्ये १९९६ चा गंगा पाणी वाटप करार, २०१५ चा भूमी सीमा करार आणि ऊर्जा सहकार्याशी संबंधित विविध करारांचा समावेश होतो. या करारांमुळे दोन्ही देशांमधील दीर्घकाळ प्रलंबित असलेले प्रश्न मोठ्या प्रमाणात सोडवले गेले.भूमी सीमा करार हा भारत–बांग्लादेश संबंधांच्या इतिहासातील एक महत्त्वाचा टप्पा मानला जातो. या करारामुळे सीमावर्ती भागातील एन्क्लेव्ह समस्येचे निराकरण झाले आणि हजारो लोकांना नागरिकत्व व मूलभूत हक्क प्राप्त झाले. त्यामुळे सीमावर्ती भागातील लोकांच्या जीवनमानात सुधारणा झाली तसेच दोन्ही देशांमध्ये परस्पर विश्वास वाढला.याशिवाय दहशतवादविरोधी सहकार्य, सीमासुरक्षा, व्यापारवृद्धी आणि ऊर्जा सहकार्य या क्षेत्रांमध्येही महिला नेतृत्वाने सकारात्मक भूमिका बजावली आहे. बांग्लादेश सरकारने सीमापार दहशतवादी संघटनांविरुद्ध कारवाई करून भारताशी सुरक्षा सहकार्य वाढवले आहे. या सहकार्यामुळे दक्षिण आशियातील प्रादेशिक स्थैर्य आणि शांतता टिकवण्यास मदत झाली आहे.

भारत–बांग्लादेश संबंधांमध्ये आर्थिक आणि व्यापार सहकार्य देखील मोठ्या प्रमाणात वाढले आहे. दोन्ही देशांमध्ये व्यापार, वाहतूक, पायाभूत सुविधा आणि ऊर्जा क्षेत्रात सहकार्य वाढविण्यासाठी विविध करार करण्यात आले आहेत. या सहकार्यामुळे केवळ दोन्ही देशांच्या आर्थिक विकासालाच चालना मिळाली नाही तर प्रादेशिक आर्थिक एकात्मतेलाही प्रोत्साहन मिळाले आहे.

तथापि, भारत–बांग्लादेश संबंधांमध्ये काही आव्हाने अद्यापही कायम आहेत. जलवाटपाचे प्रश्न, सीमावर्ती गुन्हे, स्थलांतर आणि काही राजकीय मतभेद ही काही महत्त्वाची आव्हाने आहेत. या प्रश्नांचे

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निराकरण करण्यासाठी दोन्ही देशांनी परस्पर संवाद, सहकार्य आणि विश्वास यावर आधारित धोरणे अवलंबणे आवश्यक आहे.एकूणच पाहता, महिला नेतृत्वाने भारत–बांग्लादेश संबंधांना अधिक स्थिर, सहकार्यपूर्ण आणि विकासाभिमुख बनविण्यात महत्त्वाची भूमिका बजावली आहे. महिला नेत्यांनी संवाद, शांतता आणि परस्पर सहकार्य या मूल्यांवर आधारित परराष्ट्र धोरण राबवून द्विपक्षीय संबंध अधिक दृढ केले आहेत.म्हणूनच असे म्हणता येईल की भारत–बांग्लादेश संबंधांच्या बळकटीकरणात महिला नेतृत्वाचे योगदान अत्यंत महत्त्वपूर्ण आणि दीर्घकालीन परिणामकारक ठरले आहे. भविष्यातही या संबंधांच्या विकासासाठी आणि दक्षिण आशियातील प्रादेशिक सहकार्य वाढवण्यासाठी महिला नेतृत्वाची भूमिका महत्त्वाची राहील.

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शिक्षणाच्या अधिकारापासून उच्च शिक्षणापर्यंत: महाराष्ट्रातील मुलींच्या शैक्षणिक मार्गांचे परीक्षण

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सारांश (Abstract)

शिक्षण हे सामाजिक परिवर्तन आणि लैंगिक समतेसाठी अत्यंत महत्त्वाचे साधन मानले जाते. भारतातमुलांना मोफत आणि सक्तीचे शिक्षण देणारा शिक्षणाचा हक्क कायदा, 2009 लागू करण्यात आला. या कायद्याचा उद्देश 6 ते 14 वर्षे वयोगटातील सर्व मुलांना मोफत आणि सक्तीचे प्राथमिक शिक्षण देणे हा आहे.या संशोधनाचा उद्देश महाराष्ट्र राज्यातील मुलींच्या शैक्षणिक प्रवासाचा अभ्यास करणे हा आहे. विशेषतः शिक्षणाच्या अधिकारामुळे निर्माण झालेल्या प्राथमिक शिक्षणातील प्रवेशाचा मुलींच्या माध्यमिक आणि उच्च शिक्षणातील सहभागावर कसा परिणाम होतो याचे परीक्षणकरणे हा आहे.

या अभ्यासासाठी UDISE+, AISHE, भारताची जनगणना आणि शिक्षण मंत्रालयाचे अहवालया शासनाच्या स्रोतांतील दुय्यम माहितीचा वापर करण्यात आला आहे. अभ्यासातून असे दिसून येते की शिक्षणाच्या अधिकारामुळे प्राथमिक शिक्षणात मुलींचा प्रवेश मोठ्या प्रमाणात वाढला आहे आणि शाळांमध्ये जवळपास लिंगसमता साध्य झाली आहे. तथापि माध्यमिक शिक्षणातून उच्च शिक्षणाकडे जाणाऱ्या संक्रमणामध्ये अजूनही काही अडथळे आहेत.

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या संशोधनाचा निष्कर्ष असा आहे की, मुलींच्या शिक्षणातील प्रवेशात सुधारणा झाली असली तरी त्यांचा टिकाव आणि उच्च शिक्षणातील सहभाग वाढवण्यासाठी अधिक मजबूत धोरणात्मक हस्तक्षेप आवश्यक आहेत.

महत्वाचे शब्द (Keywords):

शिक्षण हक्क कायदा (RTE), मुलींचे शिक्षण, उच्च शिक्षण, लैंगिक समता,महिला सक्षमीकरण, NEP 2020.

प्रस्तावना (Introduction)

शिक्षण हे मानवी विकासाचे आणि सामाजिक परिवर्तनाचे मुख्य साधन आहे. भारतीय संविधानाच्या 86 व्या घटना दुरुस्तीनुसार (2002), 6 ते 14 वयोगटातील बालकांसाठी शिक्षण हा मूलभूत अधिकार बनला. या अधिकाराला कायदेशीर स्वरूप देण्यासाठी केंद्र सरकारने 'शिक्षण हक्क कायदा, 2009' (RTE) लागू केला, जो 1 एप्रिल 2010 पासून अंमलात आला.

महाराष्ट्राने शैक्षणिक प्रगतीच्या बाबतीत नेहमीच आघाडीचे स्थान राखले आहे. राज्यातील मुलींच्या शिक्षणाचे प्रमाण राष्ट्रीय सरासरीपेक्षा चांगले असले तरी, प्राथमिक ते उच्च शिक्षणापर्यंतचा हा प्रवास अनेक आव्हानांनी भरलेला आहे. ग्रामीण-शहरी विषमता, आर्थिक मर्यादा, सामाजिक परंपरा आणि सुरक्षिततेचे प्रश्न यामुळे मुलींच्या शैक्षणिक प्रवासावर परिणाम होतो. बालकांचे शिक्षण केवळ शाळेत प्रवेश घेण्यापुरते मर्यादित नसून, ते गुणवत्तापूर्ण शिक्षण मिळवणे आणि ते पूर्ण करणे यावर आधारित असावे, हे या कायद्याचे मूळ उद्दिष्ट आहे. प्रस्तुत लेख महाराष्ट्रातील मुलींच्या शिक्षणातील यशाचे टप्पे, येणारे अडथळे आणि भविष्यातील संधींचे विश्लेषण करतो.

साहित्य समीक्षा (Review of Literature)

मुलींच्या शिक्षणाच्या महत्त्वावर अनेक संशोधनांमध्ये भर दिला आहे.

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UNESCO (2020) च्या अहवालानुसार मुलींचे शिक्षण वाढल्यास सामाजिक आणि आर्थिक विकासाला चालना मिळते. **Dreze आणि Sen (2013)** यांनी भारतातील शिक्षणातील असमानतेवर लक्ष वेधले आहे आणि शिक्षण हे सामाजिक समानतेसाठी अत्यंत महत्त्वाचे असल्याचे नमूद केले आहे.

शासनाच्या अहवालांनुसार मुलींच्या शिक्षणात लक्षणीय सुधारणा झाली आहे. UDISE+ अहवालानुसार शालेय शिक्षणात मुलींचे प्रमाण सुमारे 48% आहे, जे जवळपास लिंग समानता दर्शवते. तसेच AISHE अहवालानुसार देखील भारतातील उच्च शिक्षणात महिलांचे प्रमाण सुमारे 48% पर्यंत पोहोचले आहे.

तथापि अनेक अभ्यासांमध्ये असे आढळले आहे की सामाजिक आणि आर्थिक अडथळे अजूनही मुलींच्या शिक्षणावर परिणाम करतात. विशेषतः ग्रामीण भागात शाळांचे अंतर, आर्थिक मर्यादा आणि सामाजिक रूढी यामुळे शिक्षण सोडण्याचे प्रमाण वाढते.

संशोधनाची उद्दिष्टे (Objectives)

1. महाराष्ट्रातील प्राथमिक शिक्षणात मुलींच्या प्रवेशावर शिक्षणाच्या अधिकाराचा परिणाम तपासणे.
2. माध्यमिक शिक्षणातील मुलींच्या टिकाव आणि गळतीचे विश्लेषण करणे.
3. उच्च शिक्षणातील मुलींच्या सहभागातील प्रवृत्तींचे परीक्षण करणे.
4. मुलींच्या शैक्षणिक प्रवासावर परिणाम करणाऱ्या संरचनात्मक घटकांचा अभ्यास करणे.

संकल्पनात्मक चौकट (Conceptual Framework)

स्वतंत्र चल (Independent Variable)

- शिक्षणाचा हक्क कायद्याची अंमलबजावणी

मध्यस्थ घटक (Intermediate Variables)

- शाळांची पायाभूत सुविधा
- सामाजिक-आर्थिक परिस्थिती
- शिक्षणातील टिकाव

निर्भर चल (Dependent Variable)

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- उच्च शिक्षणातील मुलींचा सहभाग



संशोधन परिकल्पना (Hypotheses)

H1: शिक्षणाचा हक्क कायद्यामुळे महाराष्ट्रातील प्राथमिक शिक्षणात मुलींच्या प्रवेशात लक्षणीय वाढ झाली आहे.

H2: सामाजिक-आर्थिक घटक मुलींच्या माध्यमिक शिक्षणातील गळतीवर प्रभाव टाकतात.

H3: प्राथमिक शिक्षणातील वाढलेला प्रवेश दीर्घकालीन काळात उच्च शिक्षणातील महिलांच्या सहभागात वाढ घडवतो.

संशोधन पद्धती (Methodology)

या संशोधनातवर्णनात्मक आणि विश्लेषणात्मक पद्धतीचा वापरकरण्यात आला आहे.

माहितीचे स्रोत

- UDISE+ शालेय शिक्षण अहवाल
- AISHE अहवाल
- भारताची जनगणना

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- शिक्षण मंत्रालयाचे अहवाल
- महाराष्ट्र शासनाचे शिक्षण विभाग

विश्लेषण पद्धत

- वर्णनात्मक सांख्यिकी
- प्रवृत्ती विश्लेषण
- तक्ते आणि आलेख

प्राथमिक शिक्षण: प्रवेश आणि अधिकार

शिक्षण हक्क कायदा कायद्याच्या अंमलबजावणीनंतर प्राथमिक स्तरावर मुलींच्या पटनोंदणीतमोठी क्रांती झाली आहे.कारण पारंपरिक सामाजिक आणि आर्थिक अडथळ्यांमुळे अनेक मुलींना शाळेत जाण्याची संधी मिळत नव्हती. शिक्षण हक्ककायद्यामुळे मुलींच्या शिक्षणासाठी प्रवेश, पायाभूत सुविधा आणि सामाजिक जागरूकता या तिन्ही स्तरांवर सकारात्मक बदल झाले.

प्रवेशाचे प्रमाण: महाराष्ट्रामध्ये प्राथमिक शिक्षणात मुलींच्या प्रवेशात गेल्या दशकात लक्षणीय वाढ झाली आहे. शिक्षण मंत्रालयाच्या 2024-25 च्या UDISE+ अहवालानुसार प्राथमिक स्तरावर मुलींचा एकूण पटनोंदणीचा दर (Gross Enrolment Ratio - GER) सुमारे96.3%पर्यंत पोहोचला आहे. याचा अर्थ असा की प्राथमिक शिक्षणासाठी पात्र असलेल्या बहुतांश मुली शाळेत दाखल होत आहेत. राज्यातील शैक्षणिक पायाभूत सुविधा, शासकीय योजना आणि सामाजिक जागरूकता यामुळे मुलींच्या शाळेत प्रवेशाचे प्रमाण तुलनेने अधिक स्थिर आणि उच्च आहे.

25% आरक्षण तरतूद: शिक्षण हक्क कायद्याच्या कलम 12(1)(क) नुसार, खाजगी विनाअनुदानित शाळांमध्ये आर्थिकदृष्ट्या दुर्बल (EWS) आणि वंचित घटकांसाठी 25% जागा राखीव ठेवणे अनिवार्य आहे.या तरतुदीचा उद्देश सामाजिक समावेशन वाढवणे आणि गुणवत्तापूर्ण शिक्षण सर्वांसाठी उपलब्ध करणे हा आहे.महाराष्ट्रा मध्ये ही योजना ऑनलाइन प्रवेश प्रणाली, पारदर्शक निवड प्रक्रिया आणि शुल्क परतफेड यंत्रणेमुळे

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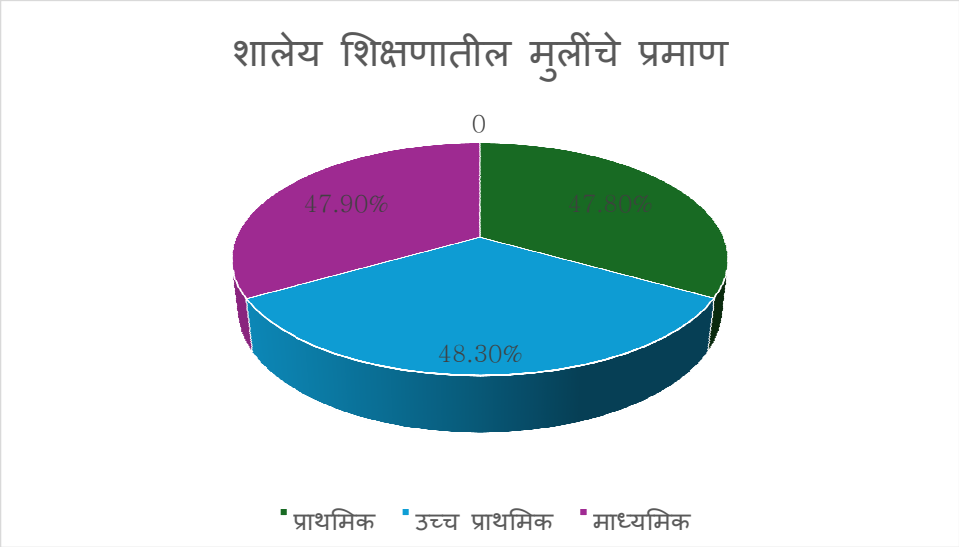
प्रभावीपणे राबवली जाते, ज्यामुळे गरीब कुटुंबांतील अनेक मुलांना, विशेषतः मुलींना, चांगल्या दर्जाच्या शाळांमध्ये प्रवेश मिळण्याची संधी मिळाली आहे.

अडथळे: प्राथमिक शिक्षणातील प्रवेशाचे प्रमाण मोठ्या प्रमाणात वाढले असले तरी शिक्षणाच्या गुणवत्तेबाबत गंभीर चिंता व्यक्त केली जाते. अनेक अभ्यासकांचे असे मत आहे की केवळ विद्यार्थ्यांची शाळेत नोंदणी वाढणे पुरेसे नसून त्यांना दर्जेदार आणि प्रभावी शिक्षण मिळणे तितकेच आवश्यक आहे. या संदर्भात Annual Status of Education Report हा भारतातील शिक्षणाच्या गुणवत्तेचा आढावा घेणारा महत्त्वाचा अहवाल मानला जातो.

ASER 2024 च्या अहवालानुसार ग्रामीण भागातील अनेक विद्यार्थ्यांना त्यांच्या इयत्तेनुसार अपेक्षित मूलभूत कौशल्ये आत्मसात करता आलेली नव्हती. उदाहरणार्थ, पाचवी इयत्तेतील अनेक विद्यार्थ्यांना दुसरी इयत्तेच्या स्तराचे साधे वाचन देखील नीट करता येत नव्हते. तसेच बेरीज, वजाबाकी यांसारख्या प्राथमिक गणिती क्रिया करण्यातही अनेक विद्यार्थ्यांना अडचणी येत असल्याचे आढळले.ही परिस्थिती शिक्षणाच्या गुणवत्तेच्या दृष्टीने चिंताजनक मानली जाते. यामागे शिक्षकांची कमतरता, मोठे वर्ग, अध्यापनाच्या पारंपरिक पद्धती आणि विद्यार्थ्यांच्या सामाजिक-आर्थिक पार्श्वभूमी यांसारखे अनेक घटक कारणीभूत असू शकतात. त्यामुळे प्रवेशासोबतच शिक्षणाची गुणवत्ता सुधारण्यासाठीही धोरणात्मक उपाययोजना करणे आवश्यक आहे.

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आकृती- शालेय शिक्षणातील मुलींचे प्रमाण,UDISE+ अहवाल, 2024-25

शिक्षणातील टिकाव : माध्यमिक स्तरावरील आव्हाने

प्राथमिक शिक्षण पूर्ण केल्यानंतर माध्यमिक शिक्षणाकडे वळताना मुलींच्या शिक्षणात मोठी गळती (Dropout) दिसून येते.

गळतीची आकडेवारी : प्राथमिक स्तरावर पट नोंदणीचे प्रमाण (GER)96.3% असताना माध्यमिक स्तरावर तो 79.5% पर्यंत खाली येतो.

गळतीची कारणे:

मुलींच्या शिक्षणाच्या प्रसारासाठी अनेक शासकीय योजना आणि धोरणे राबवली जात असली तरी प्राथमिक शिक्षणाच्या स्तरावर काही प्रमाणात मुलींची गळतीअद्यापही आढळते. मुलींच्या शिक्षणातून गळती होण्यामागे सामाजिक, आर्थिक, सांस्कृतिक आणि शैक्षणिक अशा विविध प्रकारचे घटक कारणीभूत असतात. या घटकांचा एकत्रित परिणाम मुलींच्या शिक्षणाच्या सातत्यावर होतो.

1. आर्थिक अडचणी

गरीबी हे मुलींच्या शिक्षणातून गळतीचे एक प्रमुख कारण आहे. आर्थिकदृष्ट्या दुर्बल कुटुंबांमध्ये शिक्षणासाठी आवश्यक असलेला खर्च भागवणे कठीण जाते. जरी शासकीय शाळांमध्ये शिक्षण मोफत

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असले तरी गणवेश, वह्या, पुस्तके, प्रवास आणि इतर शैक्षणिक साहित्य यासाठी खर्च करावा लागतो. अशा परिस्थितीत अनेक कुटुंबे मुलींच्या शिक्षणाला कमी प्राधान्य देतात आणि त्यांना घरकाम किंवा इतर उत्पन्नाच्या कामात सहभागी करतात.

2. सामाजिक आणि सांस्कृतिक घटक

समाजातील पारंपरिक विचारसरणी आणि लैंगिक भेदभावामुळेही मुलींच्या शिक्षणावर परिणाम होतो. काही भागांमध्ये अजूनही मुलींचे शिक्षण मुलांच्या तुलनेत कमी महत्त्वाचे मानले जाते. तसेच मुलींच्या सुरक्षिततेबाबत पालकांमध्ये असलेली चिंता देखील त्यांच्या शिक्षणातील सातत्यावर परिणाम करते. काही ठिकाणी लहान वयात विवाह लावून देण्याची प्रथा देखील मुलींच्या शिक्षणात अडथळा निर्माण करते.

3. शाळांच्या पायाभूत सुविधांची कमतरता

ग्रामीण भागात अनेक शाळांमध्ये आवश्यक पायाभूत सुविधांचा अभाव आढळतो. शौचालयांची कमतरता, पिण्याच्या पाण्याची अपुरी व्यवस्था, वर्गखोल्यांची कमतरता आणि सुरक्षित वातावरणाचा अभाव या गोष्टी मुलींसाठी शाळेत जाणे कठीण बनवतात. विशेषतः मुलींसाठी स्वतंत्र शौचालय नसल्यास त्यांच्या शाळेत उपस्थितीत घट होते.

4. शाळांचे अंतर आणि वाहतूक सुविधा

ग्रामीण आणि दुर्गम भागांमध्ये शाळांचे अंतर जास्त असते. प्राथमिक शाळा जवळ असली तरी पुढील वर्गांसाठी विद्यार्थ्यांना दूरच्या गावात जावे लागते. सुरक्षित वाहतूक सुविधा नसल्यामुळे पालक मुलींना शाळेत पाठवण्यास टाळाटाळ करतात.

5. घरगुती जबाबदाऱ्या

अनेक कुटुंबांमध्ये मुलींवर घरगुती कामांची जबाबदारी टाकली जाते. लहान भावंडांची काळजी घेणे, स्वयंपाकात मदत करणे, किंवा इतर घरकामे यामुळे मुलींना शाळेत नियमित उपस्थित राहणे कठीण होते. परिणामी त्या हळूहळू शिक्षणापासून दूर जातात.

6. शिक्षणाच्या गुणवत्तेशी संबंधित समस्या

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काही वेळा शाळांमध्ये शिक्षकांची कमतरता, मोठ्या वर्गखोल्या आणि अध्यापनाच्या पारंपरिक पद्धती यामुळे विद्यार्थ्यांना शिक्षणात रस कमी होतो. जर विद्यार्थ्यांना शिक्षण समजण्यात अडचणी येत असतील तर ते शाळा सोडण्याची शक्यता वाढते.

मुलींच्या प्राथमिक शिक्षणातील गळती ही बहुआयामी समस्या आहे. या समस्येवर मात करण्यासाठी केवळ शैक्षणिक धोरणे पुरेशी नसून सामाजिक जागरूकता, आर्थिक सहाय्य, पायाभूत सुविधा आणि गुणवत्तापूर्ण शिक्षण यांचा एकत्रित विचार करणे आवश्यक आहे. शासन, समाज आणि शैक्षणिक संस्था यांच्या संयुक्त प्रयत्नांमुळेच मुलींच्या शिक्षणातील गळती कमी करता येईल आणि त्यांना शिक्षणाच्या मुख्य प्रवाहात टिकवून ठेवता येईल.

प्राथमिक शिक्षणाचा पुढील शैक्षणिक प्रवासावर परिणाम

प्राथमिक शिक्षण हे विद्यार्थ्यांच्या शैक्षणिक प्रवासाचा पाया मानले जाते. या स्तरावर मिळणारे शिक्षण विद्यार्थ्यांच्या बौद्धिक, सामाजिक आणि भावनिक विकासाला दिशा देत असते. विशेषतः मुलींच्या बाबतीत प्राथमिक शिक्षणाचे महत्त्व अधिक अधोरेखित होते, कारण याच टप्प्यावर त्यांच्या पुढील शैक्षणिक प्रवासाची पायाभरणी होते. प्राथमिक शिक्षणात प्रवेश, नियमित उपस्थिती आणि गुणवत्तापूर्ण अध्यापन मिळाल्यास मुली माध्यमिक व उच्च शिक्षणात टिकून राहण्याची शक्यता अधिक वाढते.

भारतामध्ये प्राथमिक शिक्षणाचा प्रसार वाढवण्यासाठी Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 लागू करण्यात आला. या कायद्यामुळे 6 ते 14 वर्षे वयोगटातील सर्व मुलांना मोफत आणि सक्तीचे शिक्षण मिळण्याचा अधिकार मिळाला. या धोरणामुळे प्राथमिक शिक्षणातील प्रवेशात मोठ्या प्रमाणात वाढ झाली आहे. शिक्षण मंत्रालयाच्या UDISE+ अहवालानुसार भारतातील प्राथमिक स्तरावर मुलींचा एकूण पटनोंदणी दर सुमारे 96% पेक्षा अधिकआहे. महाराष्ट्रातही प्राथमिक शिक्षणात मुलींचे प्रमाण सुमारे 47-48% आहे, जे लिंग समतेच्या दिशेने सकारात्मक संकेत दर्शवते.

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प्राथमिक शिक्षणातील वाढलेला प्रवेश पुढील स्तरांवरील शिक्षणातही सकारात्मक परिणाम घडवतो. उदाहरणार्थ, शिक्षण मंत्रालयाच्या आकडेवारीनुसार प्राथमिक शिक्षण पूर्ण करणाऱ्या विद्यार्थ्यांपैकी मोठ्या प्रमाणात विद्यार्थी माध्यमिक शिक्षणात प्रवेश घेतात. प्राथमिक स्तरावर टिकाव वाढल्यास माध्यमिक स्तरावरील प्रवेश आणि उपस्थिती देखील वाढते.तसेच All India Survey on Higher Education अहवालानुसार भारतातील उच्च शिक्षणात महिलांचा सहभाग गेल्या दशकात सातत्याने वाढत आहे. 2014-15 मध्ये उच्च शिक्षणात महिलांचे प्रमाण सुमारे 46% होते, जे 2021-22 मध्ये वाढून जवळपास 48% पर्यंत पोहोचले आहे. यावरून असे स्पष्ट होते की प्राथमिक आणि माध्यमिक शिक्षणातील वाढलेला प्रवेश दीर्घकालीन काळात उच्च शिक्षणातील महिलांच्या सहभागातही वाढ घडवतो.

प्राथमिक शिक्षणाचा प्रभाव केवळ शैक्षणिक पातळीवर मर्यादित नसून तो सामाजिक आणि आर्थिक स्तरावरही दिसून येतो. शिक्षित मुली भविष्यात रोजगाराच्या अधिक संधी मिळवतात, आर्थिकदृष्ट्या स्वावलंबी बनतात आणि समाजातील निर्णय प्रक्रियेत सक्रिय भूमिका बजावू शकतात. तसेच शिक्षित महिलांच्या कुटुंबांमध्ये पुढील पिढ्यांच्या शिक्षणाला अधिक प्राधान्य दिले जाते, ज्यामुळे समाजात सकारात्मक बदल घडून येतात.महाराष्ट्रासारख्या प्रगत राज्यात प्राथमिक शिक्षणाचा विस्तार आणि गुणवत्तेतील सुधारणा यामुळे मुलींच्या शिक्षणात सकारात्मक बदल दिसून येतो. तथापि प्राथमिक स्तरावर मिळणाऱ्या शिक्षणाची गुणवत्ता, पायाभूत सुविधा आणि शिक्षकांची उपलब्धता या घटकांवर सतत लक्ष देणे आवश्यक आहे. कारण मजबूत प्राथमिक शिक्षणाशिवाय विद्यार्थ्यांचा पुढील शैक्षणिक प्रवास मजबूत होऊ शकत नाही.

त्यामुळे प्राथमिक शिक्षण हा मुलींच्या शैक्षणिक विकासाचा मूलभूत आधार आहे. प्रवेश, टिकाव आणि गुणवत्तापूर्ण शिक्षण या तिन्ही घटकांवर भर दिल्यास मुलींच्या माध्यमिक आणि उच्च शिक्षणातील सहभाग अधिक वाढू शकतो आणि त्यातून समाजाच्या सर्वांगीण विकासाला चालना मिळू शकते.

उच्च शिक्षणातील महिलांचा सहभाग

भारतातील शिक्षण व्यवस्थेमध्ये महिलांचा सहभाग मागील काही दशकांत लक्षणीयरीत्या वाढलेला दिसून येतो. शिक्षणातील लैंगिक समानता (Gender Equality) साध्य करण्यासाठी केंद्र आणि राज्य

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सरकारांनी विविध धोरणे, शिष्यवृत्ती योजना, वसतिगृहे, आर्थिक सहाय्य आणि सुरक्षित शैक्षणिक वातावरण उपलब्ध करून देण्यावर भर दिला आहे. यामुळे महिलांच्या उच्च शिक्षणातील सहभागात सातत्याने वाढ होत असल्याचे दिसून येते.

भारत सरकारच्या शिक्षण मंत्रालयाद्वारे प्रकाशित होणारा All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) हा अहवाल देशातील उच्च शिक्षणाची स्थिती समजून घेण्यासाठी महत्त्वाचा स्त्रोत मानला जातो. या अहवालामध्ये महाविद्यालये, विद्यापीठे, विद्यार्थी नोंदणी, शिक्षक, पायाभूत सुविधा आणि विविध सामाजिक गटांच्या सहभागाबाबत माहिती दिली जाते.AISHE 2021-22 अहवालानुसार भारतातील उच्च शिक्षणात एकूण विद्यार्थी नोंदणी सुमारे 4.33 कोटी इतकी आहे. त्यापैकी 2.07 कोटी विद्यार्थी महिला आहेत, म्हणजेच एकूण नोंदणीपैकी जवळपास 48% सहभाग महिलांचा आहे.

महिलांच्या नोंदणीतील वाढ

गेल्या काही वर्षांत महिलांच्या उच्च शिक्षणातील नोंदणीमध्ये लक्षणीय वाढ झाली आहे. 2014-15 मध्ये उच्च शिक्षणातील महिलांची संख्या सुमारे 1.57 कोटी होती. ही संख्या 2021-22 मध्ये वाढून 2.07 कोटी झाली आहे. म्हणजेच सात वर्षांच्या कालावधीत महिलांच्या नोंदणीमध्ये सुमारे 32% वाढ झाली आहे.ही वाढ केवळ संख्यात्मक नाही तर एकूण शिक्षण व्यवस्थेतील बदलांचेही प्रतीक आहे. 2014-15 पासून उच्च शिक्षणातील एकूण नोंदणीमध्ये सुमारे 91 लाखांची वाढ झाली असून या वाढीपैकी 55% वाढ महिलांच्या नोंदणीमुळे झाली आहे.

शैक्षणिक शाखांमधील महिलांचा सहभाग

AISHE अहवालानुसार विविध अभ्यासक्रमांमध्ये महिलांचा सहभाग वेगवेगळ्या प्रमाणात दिसून येतो.

उदाहरणार्थ:

कला (Arts) शाखेत महिलांचे प्रमाण सुमारे 51% आहे.

विज्ञान (Science) शाखेत महिलांचा सहभाग सुमारे 50% आहे.

वाणिज्य (Commerce) शाखेत महिलांचे प्रमाण सुमारे 47% आहे.

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यावरून असे दिसून येते की पारंपरिक अभ्यासक्रमांमध्ये महिलांचा सहभाग तुलनेने अधिक आहे. तथापि अभियांत्रिकी आणि तांत्रिक शिक्षणाच्या क्षेत्रात महिलांचे प्रमाण तुलनेने कमी आहे. उदाहरणार्थ अभियांत्रिकी आणि तंत्रज्ञान क्षेत्रात महिलांचा सहभाग सुमारे 29% आहे, जे अजूनही लिंग असमानता दर्शवते.

पदव्युत्तर आणि संशोधन स्तरावरील महिलांचा सहभाग

उच्च शिक्षणातील महिलांचा सहभाग केवळ पदवी स्तरावर मर्यादित नसून पदव्युत्तर आणि संशोधन स्तरावरही वाढताना दिसून येतो. AISHE अहवालानुसार पदव्युत्तर अभ्यासक्रमांमध्ये महिलांचे प्रमाण अनेक विषयांमध्ये पुरुषांपेक्षा जास्त आहे.उदाहरणार्थ:एम.ए. (MA), एम.कॉम. (M.Com.), एम.एड. (M.Ed.)या अभ्यासक्रमांमध्ये महिलांचे प्रमाण लक्षणीयरीत्या अधिक आहे.

संशोधनाच्या स्तरावरही महिलांची उपस्थिती वाढत आहे. 2014-15 मध्ये पीएच.डी. कार्यक्रमांमध्ये महिलांची संख्या सुमारे 47,717 होती. ही संख्या 2021-22 मध्ये वाढून 98,636 इतकी झाली आहे.यावरून असे दिसते की संशोधन क्षेत्रातही महिलांचा सहभाग वाढत आहे.

महिलांच्या शिक्षणातील वाढीस कारणीभूत घटक

महिलांच्या उच्च शिक्षणातील वाढत्या सहभागामागे अनेक घटक कारणीभूत आहेत:

1. **शासकीय शिष्यवृत्ती योजना**-गरीब आणि वंचित घटकांतील मुलींसाठी आर्थिक सहाय्य.
2. **मुलींसाठी वसतिगृहे आणि सुरक्षितता उपाययोजना**-ग्रामीण भागातील मुलींना शहरातील शिक्षणासाठी मदत.
3. **महिला सक्षमीकरण कार्यक्रम**-शिक्षणाच्या माध्यमातून महिलांना स्वावलंबी बनवण्यावर भर.
4. **सामाजिक जागरूकता**-पालक आणि समाजामध्ये मुलींच्या शिक्षणाबाबत सकारात्मक दृष्टिकोन वाढणे.

महाराष्ट्रातील स्थिती

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महाराष्ट्र हे भारतातील उच्च शिक्षणाच्या दृष्टीने महत्त्वाचे राज्य आहे. राज्यात मोठ्या प्रमाणावर विद्यापीठे, महाविद्यालये आणि व्यावसायिक शिक्षण संस्था आहेत. AISHE अहवालानुसार महाराष्ट्र हे उच्च शिक्षणातील एकूण विद्यार्थी नोंदणीच्या दृष्टीने भारतातील अग्रगण्य राज्यांपैकी एक आहे.

राज्यातील विविध अभ्यासक्रमांमध्ये महिलांचा सहभाग वाढत आहे. विशेषतः कला, विज्ञान, शिक्षण आणि वैद्यकीय क्षेत्रात मुलींचे प्रमाण लक्षणीय आहे.

शिक्षण हक्क कायदाअंमलबजावणी आणि महिलांच्या उच्च शिक्षणातील वाढीचा प्रवाह

भारतामध्ये मुलींच्या शिक्षणातील वाढ समजून घेण्यासाठी प्राथमिक शिक्षणापासून उच्च शिक्षणापर्यंतचा संपूर्ण शैक्षणिक प्रवास विचारात घेणे आवश्यक आहे. 2009 मध्ये लागू झालेल्या Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (RTE) या कायद्याने शिक्षण क्षेत्रात महत्त्वपूर्ण बदल घडवून आणले.शिक्षण हक्क कायद्या मुळे प्राथमिक शिक्षणात मुलींचा प्रवेश मोठ्या प्रमाणात वाढला आणि याच वाढीचा परिणाम पुढील स्तरांवर म्हणजे माध्यमिक आणि उच्च शिक्षणातही दिसून येऊ लागला.

प्राथमिक शिक्षणातील वाढ आणि त्याचा दीर्घकालीन परिणाम

शिक्षण हक्क कायदालागू झाल्यानंतर भारतातील शालेय शिक्षणात मुलींच्या नोंदणीमध्ये मोठी वाढ झाली. शिक्षणाशी संबंधित राष्ट्रीय आकडेवारीनुसार प्राथमिक स्तरावर मुलींचे प्रमाण सुमारे 47-48% पर्यंत पोहोचले आहे, जे शिक्षणातील लिंग समानतेचे संकेत देते.प्राथमिक शिक्षणातील ही वाढ दीर्घकालीन शैक्षणिक परिणाम घडवते. जेव्हा मुलींना प्राथमिक शिक्षणात प्रवेश आणि सातत्य मिळते, तेव्हा त्या माध्यमिक आणि उच्च माध्यमिक शिक्षण पूर्ण करण्याची शक्यता वाढते. परिणामी उच्च शिक्षणातील महिलांचा सहभागही वाढू लागतो. त्यामुळे शिक्षण हक्क कायदाहा केवळ प्राथमिक शिक्षणापुरता मर्यादित नसून तो उच्च शिक्षणाच्या विस्तारासाठी आधारभूत धोरण मानला जातो.

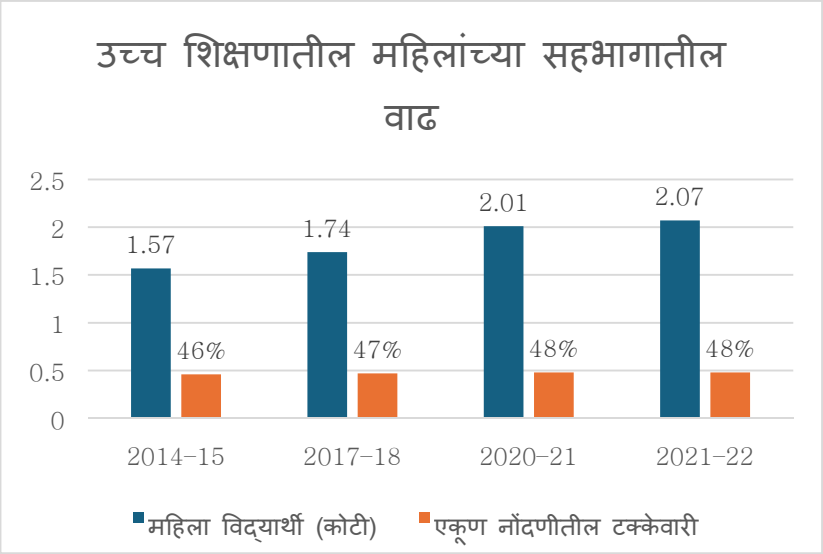
उच्च शिक्षणातील महिलांच्या सहभागातील वाढ

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भारत सरकारच्या शिक्षण मंत्रालयाद्वारे प्रकाशित All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) अहवालानुसार मागील दशकात महिलांच्या उच्च शिक्षणातील नोंदणीमध्ये सातत्याने वाढ होत आहे.AISHE 2023-24 अहवालानुसार भारतातील एकूण उच्च शिक्षणातील विद्यार्थी नोंदणी सुमारे 4.33 कोटी आहे. त्यापैकी 2.07 कोटी विद्यार्थी महिला असून एकूण नोंदणीपैकी सुमारे 48% सहभाग महिलांचा आहे.

महिलांच्या नोंदणीमध्ये दीर्घकालीन वाढ पुढील आकडेवारीतून स्पष्ट होते:



आकृती – उच्च शिक्षणातील महिलांच्या सहभागातील वाढ, AISHE 2014-15, 2017-18, 2020-21, 2021-22

या कालावधीत महिलांच्या नोंदणीमध्ये सुमारे 32% वाढ झाली असून जवळपास 50 लाख महिला विद्यार्थी उच्च शिक्षणात नव्याने दाखल झाले आहेत.तसेच 2014-15 नंतर उच्च शिक्षणातील एकूण विद्यार्थ्यांच्या वाढीपैकी 55% वाढ महिलांच्या नोंदणीमुळे झाली आहे, यावरून महिलांच्या शिक्षणातील वाढीचा वेग अधिक असल्याचे दिसून येते.

उच्च शिक्षणातील सहभागाचे प्रमाण (Gross Enrolment Ratio)

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AISHE अहवालानुसार 18-23 वयोगटातील विद्यार्थ्यांच्या उच्च शिक्षणातील सहभागाच्या प्रमाणामध्येही महिलांचा सहभाग वाढत आहे. महिलांचे हे प्रमाणसुमारे 28.5% असून तो पुरुषांच्या प्रमाणापेक्षा किंचित जास्त आहे.ही आकडेवारी दर्शवते की शिक्षण क्षेत्रात महिलांची उपस्थिती सातत्याने वाढत आहे आणि लिंग समता साध्य करण्याच्या दिशेने सकारात्मक प्रवृत्ती दिसून येते.

शिक्षण हक्क कायदाआणि उच्च शिक्षणातील संबंध

भारतामध्ये शिक्षणाच्या क्षेत्रात दीर्घकालीन बदल घडवून आणण्यासाठी शिक्षण हक्क कायदा महत्त्वाचा मानला जातो. शिक्षण हक्क कायदा लागू झाल्यानंतर प्राथमिक शिक्षणातील प्रवेशात मोठ्या प्रमाणात वाढ झाली आणि त्याचा सकारात्मक परिणाम पुढील शैक्षणिक स्तरांवरही दिसून येऊ लागला. त्यामुळे प्राथमिक शिक्षणापासून उच्च शिक्षणापर्यंतचा शैक्षणिक प्रवास अधिक मजबूत आणि सुसंगत झाला आहे.

शिक्षण हक्क कायद्याच्या अंमलबजावणीमुळे सर्वप्रथम प्राथमिक शिक्षणातील प्रवेशात लक्षणीय वाढझाली. शिक्षण मंत्रालयाच्या UDISE+ अहवालानुसार भारतातील प्राथमिक स्तरावर मुलींचा एकूण पटनोंदणी दर 96% पेक्षा अधिक आहे. याचा अर्थ असा की प्राथमिक शिक्षणासाठी पात्र असलेल्या बहुतांश मुलींना शाळेत प्रवेश मिळत आहे. पूर्वी सामाजिक, आर्थिक आणि सांस्कृतिक अडथळ्यांमुळे अनेक मुली शाळेबाहेर राहायच्या; परंतुशिक्षण हक्क कायद्यामुळे शाळांची संख्या वाढवणे, मोफत पाठ्यपुस्तके देणे, मध्यान्ह भोजन योजना आणि शिक्षकांची उपलब्धता वाढवणे यांसारख्या उपाययोजनांमुळे या परिस्थितीत सकारात्मक बदल झाला.

प्राथमिक शिक्षणातील प्रवेश वाढल्यामुळेमाध्यमिक शिक्षणातील संक्रमण दर (Transition Rate) देखील सुधारला आहे. जेव्हा मुलांना प्राथमिक स्तरावर सातत्यपूर्ण शिक्षण मिळते, तेव्हा ते पुढील स्तरावर जाण्याची शक्यता वाढते. 2023-24 च्या UDISE+ अहवालानुसार प्राथमिक ते उच्च प्राथमिक स्तरावर विद्यार्थ्यांचा संक्रमण दर सुमारे 90% पेक्षा अधिक आहे. मुलींच्या बाबतीतही ही प्रवृत्ती दिसून येते. यामुळे मुली माध्यमिक शिक्षण पूर्ण करण्यासाठी अधिक प्रमाणात शाळेत टिकून राहतात.

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याच प्रक्रियेचा पुढील परिणाम म्हणजेउच्च माध्यमिक शिक्षण पूर्ण करणाऱ्या मुलींच्या संख्येत वाढहोणे. पूर्वी अनेक मुली प्राथमिक शिक्षणानंतर शिक्षण सोडत असत; परंतु शिक्षण हक्क कायद्यामुळे शैक्षणिक पायाभूत सुविधा सुधारल्याने आणि शासकीय योजनांमुळे मुलींच्या शिक्षणातील टिकाव वाढला आहे. त्यामुळे अधिक मुली माध्यमिक व उच्च माध्यमिक शिक्षण पूर्ण करू लागल्या आहेत. हा बदल उच्च शिक्षणातील महिलांच्या सहभागासाठी महत्त्वाचा पाया तयार करतो.

या सर्व प्रक्रियेचा अंतिम परिणाम म्हणजेउच्च शिक्षणात महिलांचा वाढता सहभाग. भारत सरकारच्या All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) अहवालानुसार उच्च शिक्षणात महिलांचे प्रमाण सुमारे 48% पर्यंत पोहोचले आहे. हे दर्शवते की शालेय शिक्षणातील वाढीचा प्रभाव उच्च शिक्षणातही दिसून येतो. प्राथमिक शिक्षणातील मजबूत पाया विद्यार्थ्यांना पुढील शिक्षणासाठी आवश्यक कौशल्ये, आत्मविश्वास आणि प्रेरणा प्रदान करतो.

या सर्व घटकांचा विचार करताशिक्षण हक्क कायदा हा शिक्षण व्यवस्थेतीलसातत्यतामजबूत करणारा एक महत्त्वाचा धोरणात्मक हस्तक्षेप मानला जातो. सातत्यताम्हणजे विद्यार्थ्यांचा शिक्षणातील सततचा प्रवास- प्राथमिक शिक्षणापासून माध्यमिक, उच्च माध्यमिक आणि पुढे उच्च शिक्षणापर्यंतचा. जर या शैक्षणिक यंत्रणेचा प्रारंभिक टप्पा मजबूत असेल, म्हणजेच प्राथमिक शिक्षणात प्रवेश, टिकाव आणि गुणवत्तापूर्ण शिक्षण उपलब्ध असेल, तर विद्यार्थ्यांची पुढील स्तरांवरील प्रगती अधिक सुलभ होते.

म्हणूनच शिक्षण हक्क कायद्यामुळे केवळ प्राथमिक शिक्षणातील प्रवेश वाढलेला नाही, तर त्याने दीर्घकालीन दृष्टीने मुलींच्या संपूर्ण शैक्षणिक प्रवासाला गती दिली आहे. एकूणच पाहता महाराष्ट्रात शिक्षण हक्ककायद्यामुळे प्राथमिक शिक्षणातील प्रवेश वाढला आणि त्याचा सकारात्मक परिणाम माध्यमिक व उच्च शिक्षणातही दिसून येतो. प्राथमिक शिक्षणातील मजबूत पाया मुलींच्या पुढील शैक्षणिक प्रवासासाठी महत्त्वाचा ठरतो.

निष्कर्ष (Conclusion)

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या संशोधनाच्या आधारे असे स्पष्ट होते की भारतातील शिक्षण व्यवस्थेमध्ये मुलींच्या शिक्षणात गेल्या काही दशकांमध्ये लक्षणीय प्रगती झाली आहे. विशेषतः Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (RTE) या कायद्यामुळे प्राथमिक शिक्षणाच्या स्तरावर मुलींच्या प्रवेशात मोठी वाढ झाली आहे. या कायद्यामुळे 6 ते 14 वर्षे वयोगटातील सर्व मुलांना मोफत आणि सक्तीचे शिक्षण देण्याची हमी मिळाली, ज्यामुळे अनेक मुलींना प्रथमच शाळेत जाण्याची संधी उपलब्ध झाली. शासकीय योजनांमुळे शाळांची संख्या वाढवणे, मोफत पाठ्यपुस्तके आणि मध्यान्ह भोजन योजना यांसारख्या उपाययोजनांनी पालकांचा शिक्षणाकडे सकारात्मक दृष्टिकोन वाढवण्यास मदत केली. परिणामी प्राथमिक शिक्षणातील लिंग विषमता मोठ्या प्रमाणात कमी झाली आहे.

तथापि, प्राथमिक शिक्षणातील प्रगती असूनही माध्यमिक शिक्षणाच्या स्तरावर काही प्रमाणात गळतीअजूनही दिसून येते. सामाजिक आणि आर्थिक अडचणी, ग्रामीण भागातील शाळांचे अंतर, सुरक्षिततेचे प्रश्न, तसेच काही ठिकाणी असलेल्या पारंपरिक सामाजिक रूढी यामुळे अनेक मुलींना शिक्षण पुढे चालू ठेवणे कठीण जाते. त्यामुळे प्राथमिक स्तरावर प्रवेश मिळालेल्या मुलींना माध्यमिक स्तरापर्यंत टिकवून ठेवणे हे शिक्षण व्यवस्थेसमोरील एक महत्त्वाचे आव्हान आहे.

सकारात्मक बाब म्हणजे उच्च शिक्षणातील महिलांचा सहभाग सातत्याने वाढत आहे. भारत सरकारच्या All India Survey on Higher Education याअहवालानुसार उच्च शिक्षणातील महिलांचे प्रमाण जवळपास 48 टक्क्यांपर्यंत पोहोचले आहे. यावरून असे दिसते की प्राथमिक आणि माध्यमिक शिक्षणातील वाढीचा परिणाम दीर्घकालीन काळात उच्च शिक्षणातील महिलांच्या सहभागातही दिसून येत आहे. शिक्षित महिलांना रोजगाराच्या अधिक संधी मिळतात आणि त्या समाजाच्या आर्थिक व सामाजिक विकासात सक्रिय भूमिका बजावतात.

याशिवाय शासनाच्या विविध योजना-जसे की मुलींसाठी शिष्यवृत्ती योजना, वसतिगृहे, मोफत शिक्षणाच्या योजना आणि सामाजिक जागरूकता कार्यक्रम-यांमुळे मुलींच्या शिक्षणात सकारात्मक बदल

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दिसून येत आहेत. या उपाय योजनांमुळे आर्थिकदृष्ट्या दुर्बल कुटुंबांतील मुलींनाही शिक्षणाच्या संधी उपलब्ध होत आहेत.

एकूणच पाहता, मुलींच्या शिक्षणाच्या प्रसारासाठी प्राथमिक ते उच्च शिक्षणापर्यंत अखंड आणि सुसंगत शैक्षणिक धोरणांची आवश्यकता आहे. शिक्षणाच्या प्रत्येक स्तरावर प्रवेश, टिकाव आणि गुणवत्तापूर्ण शिक्षण यावर भर दिल्यास मुलींच्या शैक्षणिक प्रवासाला अधिक बळ मिळेल. यामुळे केवळ शिक्षणातील लिंग समानता साध्य होणार नाही, तर समाजाच्या सर्वांगीण विकासालाही चालना मिळेल.

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विद्यापीठांमध्ये महिला प्रवेश प्रक्रिया आणि स्टार्टअप परिसंस्था

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सारांश (Abstract)

विद्यापीठीन शिक्षण आणि महिला उद्योजकता या दोन घटकांचा समाजातील विकासात महत्त्वपूर्ण वाटा आहे. भारतात महिलांचा उच्च शिक्षणात सहभाग वाढत असला तरी, विविध आर्थिक, सामाजिक आणि कौटुंबिक अडथळ्यांमुळे त्यांचा प्रवेश पूर्णतः सुलभ नाही. या अभ्यासाचा उद्देश विद्यापीठांमध्ये महिला प्रवेश प्रक्रियेतील अडचणी आणि संधी. तसेच महिला स्टार्टअप परिसंस्था चा अभ्यास करणे हा आहे.

अभ्यासासाठी सर्वेक्षण, केस स्टडी आणि सांख्यिकी विश्लेषण या पद्धती वापरण्यात आल्या आहेत. विद्यापीठीन प्रवेश प्रक्रियेतील अडचणींमध्ये आर्थिक सहाय्याचा अभाव, सामाजिक प्रतिबंध, आणि स्पर्धात्मक परीक्षांचे आव्हान समाविष्ट आहे. तसेच, महिला उद्योजकतेमध्ये भांडवल मिळविणे, मार्गदर्शन आणि नेटवर्किंग या बाबतीत अडचणी आढळल्या.

अभ्यासातून स्पष्ट झाले की, महिला शिक्षण आणि उद्योजकतेत वाढ, समाजाच्या आर्थिक, सामाजिक आणि तांत्रिक प्रगतीसाठी अत्यंत महत्त्वाची आहे. यशस्वी महिला स्टार्टअप्सचे उदाहरणे दाखवतात की, योग्य प्रशिक्षण, मार्गदर्शन आणि शैक्षणिक सहाय्यामुळे महिलांना सामाजिक समस्या सोडविणारे आणि नवनवीन व्यवसाय सुरु करणारे उद्योजक बनता येतात.

या संशोधनाचा निष्कर्ष असा आहे की, महिला प्रवेश प्रक्रियेतील सुधारणा, शिष्यवृत्ती व आर्थिक सहाय्यता, तसेच महिला उद्योजकतेसाठी मार्गदर्शन आणि नेटवर्किंग केंद्रे स्थापन करणे समाजातील महिला सक्षमीकरणाला चालना देऊ शकते.

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विद्यापीठांमधील स्टार्टअप परिसंस्था (Startup Ecosystem) महिलांसाठी उद्योजकतेच्या क्षेत्रात प्रवेश सुलभ करणारी भूमिका बजावते. या परिसंस्थेत इनक्यूबेटर्स, अकॅडेमिक सपोर्ट, मेंटरशिप प्रोग्राम्स, वित्तीय सहाय्य आणि नेटवर्किंग संधी यांचा समावेश होतो. संशोधनानुसार, जे विद्यापीठ स्त्रियांसाठी सुलभ प्रवेश व स्टार्टअप पर्यावरण प्रदान करतात, ते महिला उद्योजकतेत लक्षणीय वाढ करतात (Shane, 2003; Brush et al., 2006; Singh & Verma, 2020).

प्रस्तावना

विद्यार्थी जीवन हे व्यक्तिमत्व विकास, कौशल्य निर्मिती आणि सामाजिक अनुभवासाठी अत्यंत महत्त्वाचे आहे. आजच्या काळात, महिला शिक्षणातील सहभाग वाढत असून, विद्यापीठ स्तरावर महिलांच्या प्रवेश प्रक्रियेतील बदल, तसेच त्यांनी सुरु केलेल्या स्टार्टअप परिसंस्था याबाबत संशोधनाची गरज वाढली आहे. महिला शिक्षण हे केवळ व्यक्तिगत प्रगतीपुरते मर्यादित नसून, समाजातील आर्थिक, सामाजिक आणि तांत्रिक प्रगतीसाठीदेखील महत्त्वपूर्ण आहे.

विद्यापीठीन शिक्षण है केवळ शैक्षणिक प्रगतीसाठी नाही, तर व्यक्तिमत्व विकास, सामाजिक सहभाग, आणि आर्थिक स्वावलंबनासाठी देखील अत्यंत महत्त्वाचे आहे. शिक्षणाचे उद्दिष्ट केवळ जान संपादन नाही. तर त्यातून व्यावसायिक कौशल्य, तंत्रज्ञानाची समज, सामाजिक उत्तरदायित्व आणि उद्‌द्योजकता क्षमता विकसित करणे आहे. परंतु, भारतात. पारंपरिक समाजरचना आणि लिंगाधारित भेदभावामुळे महिला शिक्षणाला नेहमीच काही अडथळे येत आले आहेत.

अलीकडच्या दशकांत, महिला शिक्षणात लक्षणीय वाढ झाली आहे. सरकारच्या शिष्यवृत्ती योजना, आरक्षण धोरणे, तसेच ऑनलाइन प्रवेश प्रक्रियेमुळे महिला विद्यार्थिनींसाठी उच्च शिक्षणात प्रवेश करणे सुलभ झाले आहे. तथापि, शैक्षणिक संधी आणि प्रवेश प्रक्रियेतील समता अजूनही संपूर्ण नाही. अनेक ठिकाणी आर्थिक, सामाजिक आणि कौटुंबिक अडथळ्यांमुळे महिलांना विद्यापीठात प्रवेश घेणे कठीण जाते. उदाहरणार्थ, ग्रामीण भागातील स्त्रिया बहुधा घरच्या जबाबदाऱ्या आणि शिक्षण यामध्ये संतुलन साधण्यात

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अडचणीत येतात, तर शहरी भागातील महिलांना स्पर्धात्मक प्रवेश परीक्षांमध्ये यश मिळवणे आव्हानात्मक असते.

महिला शिक्षणाचा प्रभाव केवळ शैक्षणिक क्षेत्रापुरता मर्यादित नाही; हे उद्‌द्योजकतेसाठी प्रेरणा देखील ठरते. विद्यापीठीन शिक्षण घेतलेल्या महिलांमध्ये नवीन स्टार्टअपपरिसंस्थाचे (Startup Initiatives) प्रमाण वाढले आहे. या स्त्रियांनी केवळ व्यवसाय सुरू केला नाही, तर त्यांनी सामाजिक समस्या सोडविण्यासाठी, तंत्रज्ञानाचा वापर करून नवनवीन उत्पादन व सेवा विकसित केली आहेत. महिला उद्योजकता है समाजातील आर्थिक, सामाजिक आणि तांत्रिक बदल घडविण्यासाठी अत्यंत प्रभावी साधन ठरते.

या पेपरचा उद्देश विद्यापीठांमध्ये महिला प्रवेश प्रक्रियेतील अडचणी आणि संधी, तसेच महिला स्टार्टअप परिसंस्था चा अभ्यास करणे हा आहे. यामध्ये खालील गोष्टींचा समावेश केला जाईलः

- विद्यापीठीन प्रवेश प्रक्रियेत महिलांसमोरील अडथळे आणि सुधारणा आवश्यक असलेल्या क्षेत्रांचा अभ्यास.
- महिला उद्योजकता क्षेत्रातील प्रवृत्ती, आव्हाने आणि यशाचे घटक.
- महिला शिक्षण आणि उद्योजकता यांच्यातील संबंधाचे विश्लेषण.

- **महिला प्रवेश प्रक्रियेची गरज**

महिला प्रवेश प्रक्रियेतील सुधारणा हा फक्त शिक्षणाचा विषय नाही, तर समाजसुधारणेचा एक महत्त्वाचा भाग आहे.

महिला शिक्षणामुळेः

1. आर्थिक स्वावलंबन वाढते.
2. समाजातील सुसंवाद व निर्णयक्षमता सुधारते.
3. तंत्रज्ञान, विज्ञान आणि व्यवसाय क्षेत्रात स्त्रियांचे योगदान वाढले.

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यामुळे सरकार आणि शैक्षणिक संस्था महिला प्रवेश प्रक्रियेत विशेष धोरणे आखत आहेत.

उदाहरणार्थ:

- काही विद्यापीठांनी महिला विद्यार्थिनींसाठी आरक्षित जागा ठेवणे.
- शिष्यवृत्ती आणि आर्थिक सहाय्य योजना सुरू करणे.
- ऑनलाईन प्रवेश प्रक्रियेत पारदर्शकता आणणे.

- **महिला स्टार्टअप परिसंस्थाचे महत्त्व**

विद्यापीठीन शिक्षण घेतलेल्या महिलांमध्ये स्टार्टअप परिसंस्था (Startup Initiatives) ही एक नवी दिशा उघडत आहे. या स्त्रियांनी केवळ व्यवसाय सुरू केला नाही, तर त्यांनी समाजातील समस्यांवर लक्ष केंद्रित करून नवीन तंत्रज्ञान, उत्पादन आणि सेवा विकसिमहिला उद्योजक नवीन व्यवसाय सुरू करतात आणि त्यामुळे उत्पादन, सेवा, नवकल्पना आणि रोजगाराच्या संधी वाढतात. यामुळे देशाच्या आर्थिक विकासाला गती मिळते. विशेषतः महिला चालवलेल्या उद्योगांमध्ये इतर महिलांना रोजगार मिळतो, ज्यामुळे आर्थिक सशक्तीकरणास चालना मिळते, स्टार्टअप्सच्या माध्यमातून महिलाना आत्मविश्वास वाढतो, त्यांचा निर्णयक्षमता सुधारते आणि समाजातील प्रतिष्ठाही उचावते.

महिला उद्योजक अनेकदा सामाजिक समस्याकडे लक्ष देतात. उदाहरणार्थ, ग्रामीण महिलासाठी रोजगारनिर्मिती, शिक्षण व आरोग्य सुधारणा, पर्यावरणपूरक उत्पादनांचा विकास इत्यादी अशा उपक्रमांमुळे समाजात सकारात्मक बदल घडतात. तसेच महिलांचा व्यवसाय क्षेत्रात वाढता सहभाग अर्थव्यवस्थेला अधिक समावेशक आणि संतुलित बनवतो.

महिला उद्योजकतेमुळेः

1. समाजातील आर्थिक संधी निर्माण होतात.
2. रोजगार निर्मिती होते.

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3. सामाजिक समस्यांवर नवनवीन उपाय लागू केले जातात.

महिला उद्योजकता केवळ आर्थिक प्रगतीपुरती मर्यादित नाही; ती सामाजिक बदल, महिला सक्षमीकरण, आणि तंत्रज्ञानाच्या क्षेत्रात नवकल्पना या सर्वामध्ये योगदान देते. उदाहरणार्थ, AgriTech, Health Tech, आणि Sustainable Products सारख्या क्षेत्रांमध्ये महिला स्टार्टअप्स यशस्वी ठरत आहेत.

संशोधनाचा उद्देश

या पेपरमध्ये विद्यापीठांमध्ये महिला प्रवेश प्रक्रियेतील अडचणी, संधी आणि सुधारणा तसेच महिला स्टार्टअप परिसंथाचा सविस्तर अभ्यास केला जाईल. यामध्येः

- प्रवेश प्रक्रियेतील अडथळे ओळखणे आणि त्यावर उपाय सुचवणे.
- महिला उद्योजकतेतील आव्हाने आणि यशाचे घटक अभ्यासणे.
- महिला शिक्षण आणि उद्योजकतेतील परस्पर संबंध समजणे.

विद्यापीठांमध्ये महिला प्रवेश प्रक्रियेसंबंधी आव्हान

- सामाजिक आणि सांस्कृतिक अडथळेः
  - ➢ काही भागांत अजूनही मुलींच्या शिक्षणासोबत कुटुंबिक अपेक्षा किंवा घरच्या जबाबदाऱ्यांचा संघर्ष असतो.
- अर्थसंकल्पीय अडथळेः
  - ➢ शैक्षणिक फी, रहिवासी खर्च, आणि अतिरिक्त कोर्ससाठी आर्थिक अडचणी.
- संस्था आणि प्रवेश प्रक्रियाः
  - ➢ सुरक्षितता आणि महिला छात्रवृत्तीची सुविधा कमी असल्यास प्रवेशासाठी आव्हान.

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- **मानसिक आणि प्रेरणात्मक अडथळेः**
  - आत्मविश्वासाचा अभाव, समाजिक दबाव किंवा आदर्श भूमिका मॉडेल्सची कमतरता.
  - मार्गदर्शन आणि करिअर सल्ल्याची कमतरता.
- **स्टार्टअप परिसंस्था (Startup Ecosystem) मधील महिलांना आव्हान**
- **अपुरा आत्मविश्वास (Insufficient Self-Belief)**

अपुरा आत्मविश्वास म्हणजे स्वतःच्या क्षमतेवर, कौशल्यावर किंवा निर्णय घेण्याच्या सामर्थ्यावर भरोसा नसणे. अनेक महिला उद्योजकांना हे अनुभवायला मिळते कारणः

समाजातील पारंपरिक भूमिकाः "महिला फक्त घर सांभाळतात" किंवा "महिला मोठे व्यवसाय चालवू शकत नाहीत" अशी मानसिकता.कौटुंबिक अपेक्षाः घरगुती जबाबदाऱ्यांमुळे स्वतःच्या व्यावसायिक क्षमतेवर लक्ष्क केंद्रित होऊ शकत नाही.पुरुषप्रधान उद्योगः व्यवसायाच्या ठिकाणी पुरुषांचे जास्त अनुभव आणि नेटवर्क दिसल्याने स्वतःला कमी जाणवणे.आर्थिक आणि संसाधनांची मर्यादाः कर्ज किंवा वित्तीय साधनांची कमतरता अनुभवल्यावर स्वतःच्या निर्णयावर विश्वास कमी होतो.

- **नेटवर्किंग आणि संसाधनेः** उद्योग, mentorship, accelerator किंवा incubator सापडण्यात अडचण. पुरुषप्रधान व्यवसाय वातावरणामुळे नेटवर्किंग कठीण होते.
- **कौटुंबिक आणि सामाजिक जबाबदाऱ्याः** अनेक महिला उद्योजकांवर घर आणि कामाचे संतुलन ठरवण्याचा दबाव. flexible work environment नसणे.
- **सांस्कृतिक आणि मानसिक अडथळेः** stereotype challenge - "women-led startups are riskier" किंवा "women tech founders are rare".

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- **कौशल्य आणि प्रशिक्षणः** काही भागांत skill gap किंवा entrepreneurial training ची कमतरता. access to technology, legal, marketing आणि financial management यासारख्या resources कमी मिळणे.

- **ज्ञानाची कमतरता (Lack of Knowledge)**

ज्ञानाची कमतरता म्हणजे व्यवसाय सुरू करण्यासाठी, वाढवण्यासाठी किंवा टिकवण्यासाठी आवश्यक माहिती, कौशल्ये आणि अनुभव नसणे. हे फक्त तांत्रिक ज्ञानापुरते मर्यादित नसते, तर आर्थिक, व्यवस्थापन, कायदेशीर, मार्केटिंग आणि डिजिटल कौशल्यांनाही समाविष्ट करते.

उपाय

- शैक्षणिक प्रशिक्षणः व्यवसाय, आर्थिक नियोजन, मार्केटिंग, डिजिटल कौशल्ये यावर लक्ष केंद्रित करणे.
- Mentorship (मार्गदर्शन): यशस्वी महिला उद्योजकांकडून मार्गदर्शन घेणे आत्मविश्वास आणि ज्ञान वाढवते.
- Networking आणि Industry Exposure: उद्योग प्रदर्शन, फोरम्स आणि महिला उद्योजक ग्रुप्समध्ये सहभाग घेणे.
- Government and NGO Support: महिला उद्योजकांसाठी विशेष कार्यशाळा, कोर्सेस आणि मार्गदर्शन योजना वापरणे.
- Digital Learning Tools: ऑनलाइन कोर्सेस, webinars आणि e-learning platforms द्वारे ज्ञान संपादित करणे.

साहित्यानुभव / Literature Review: महिला शिक्षण आणि उद्योजकता यावर जगभरात आणि भारतात अनेक संशोधन झाले आहेत. विविध अभ्यासातून स्पष्ट झाले आहे की, महिला प्रवेश प्रक्रियेतील अडचणी आणि स्टार्टअप परिसंस्था मध्ये महिला सहभाग या दोन क्षेत्रांचा समाजावर दीर्घकालीन परिणाम होतो.

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- **महिला प्रवेश प्रक्रिया:**

1. Sharma (2021) यांच्या अभ्यासानुसार, भारतातील अनेक राज्यांमध्ये महिला विद्यार्थिनींसाठी आरक्षण आणि शिष्यवृत्तीयोजना असूनही ग्रामीण भागातील महिला विद्यापीठीन प्रवेशासाठी आर्थिक आणि सामाजिक अडथळ्यांना सामोरे जातात.
2. Patil (2020) यांच्या संशोधनानुसार, महाराष्ट्रातील महिला विद्यार्थिनींमध्ये प्रवेश प्रक्रियेतील अडचणी जास्त प्रमाणात दिसून येतात. घरातील जबाबदाऱ्या, सुरक्षितता आणि आर्थिक मर्यादा या कारणांनी काही महिला शिक्षण पूर्ण करू शकत नाहीत.
3. Ministry of Education, Government of India (2022) च्या अहवालानुसार, महिलांचा उच्च शिक्षणात सहभाग सतत वाढत आहे; परंतु STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) क्षेत्रात महिला विद्यार्थिनींचा सहभाग अजूनही कमी आहे.

महिला उद्योजकता आणि स्टार्टअप परिसंस्था

- NITI Aayog (2021) ने केलेल्या अभ्यासात म्हटले आहे की, महिला उद्योजकता वाढवण्यासाठी सरकारने विविध सहाय्य योजना तयार केल्या आहेत. परंतु भांडवल मिळविणे, मार्गदर्शनाचा अभाव, आणि सामाजिक मान्यता ही मुख्य अडचणी राहिली आहेत.
- Sharma (2021) यांनी नमूद केले आहे की, महिला स्टार्टअप्स बहुतेक वेळा समाजातील समस्या सोडविण्यासाठी प्रेरित असतात. उदाहरणार्थ, AgriTech आणि Health Tech क्षेत्रात महिला उद्योजकांनी कृषक व मातृ आरोग्य क्षेत्रात महत्त्वपूर्ण योगदान दिले आहे.
- Gupta & Singh (2020) यांच्या अहवालानुसार, महिला उद्योजकता केवळ आर्थिक प्रगतीपुरती मर्यादित नाही, तर ती सामाजिक बदल, तंत्रज्ञानाचा प्रसार आणि रोजगार निर्मिती यासारख्या क्षेत्रांमध्येही योगदान देते.

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सैद्धांतिक पार्श्वभूमी (Theoretical Background)

सैद्धांतिक पार्श्वभूमी म्हणजे एखाद्या संशोधनाचा वैज्ञानिक आधार, त्यामागील सिद्धांत, संकल्पना आणि पूर्वीच्या संशोधनांचा संदर्भ दर्शवते. महिला शिक्षण आणि उद्योजकता या विषयावर अनेक सिद्धांत आणि मॉडेल्स लागू होतात, जे या अभ्यासाचे मार्गदर्शन करतात.

- **महिला प्रवेश प्रक्रियेचे सैद्धांतिक दृष्टिकोन**

विद्यापीठीन शिक्षणात महिलांचा सहभाग समानता सिद्धांत (Gender Equality Theory) आणि सामाजिक न्याय सिद्धांत (Social Justice Theory) यांच्या आधारे समजला जातो.

- समानता सिद्धांतः शिक्षणाची संधी सर्व व्यक्तींना समान असावी, यावर भर देते. या सिद्धांतानुसार, लिंगानुसार भेदभाव न करता महिलांना उच्च शिक्षणाची संधी मिळणे आवश्यक आहे.
- सामाजिक न्याय सिद्धांतः समाजातील दुर्बल गटांना (जसे की महिलांना) शिक्षण आणिउद्योजकतेत प्रोत्साहन देणे हा सामाजिक न्यायाचा भाग आहे.

महिला प्रवेश प्रक्रियेत हे सिद्धांत खालीलप्रमाणे लागू होतातः

1. आरक्षण आणि शिष्यवृत्ती योजना - आर्थिक व सामाजिकदृष्ट्या दुर्बल महिलांना प्रवेशाच्या संधी उपलब्ध करून देणे.
2. सुरक्षितता आणि सुविधा- हॉस्टेल, परिवहन, आणि ऑनलाईन प्रवेश सुविधा.
3. शैक्षणिक प्रोत्साहन - मार्गदर्शन, कौशल्य प्रशिक्षण आणि करिअर मार्गदर्शन.

२. महिला उद्‌द्योजकतेचे सैद्धांतिक दृष्टिकोण

महिला स्टार्टअप परिसंस्थाच्या अभ्यासासाठी खालील सिद्धांत उपयुक्त ठरतातः

(अ) उद्योजकता विकास सिद्धांत (Entrepreneurship Development Theory) : हा सिद्धांत सांगतो की, उद्योजकता ही शिक्षण, कौशल्य, अनुभव आणि समाजिक संसाधनांचा मिलाफ आहे.

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महिला उद्योजकते मध्येः

1. शैक्षणिक प्रशिक्षण आणि तांत्रिक कौशल्ये आवश्यक आहेत.
2. मार्गदर्शन (Mentorship) आणि सामाजिक नेटवर्कचा मोठा प्रभाव आहे.
3. आर्थिक सहाय्य आणि भांडवल उपलब्ध असणे आवश्यक आहे.

(ब) सामाजिक उद्द्योजकता सिद्धांत (Social Entrepreneurship Theory)

- स्त्रिया समाजातील समस्यांवर लक्ष केंद्रित करून व्यवसाय उभारतात.
- उदाहरणार्थ, AgriTech, Health Tech, Sustainable Products या क्षेत्रातील महिला स्टार्टअप्स सामाजिक उद्योजकतेचे उत्कृष्ट उदाहरण आहेत.
- या सिद्धांतानुसार, व्यवसाय हे फक्त नफा मिळविण्याचे माध्यम नाही, तर समाजासाठी बदल घडविण्याचे साधन आहे.

प्रवेश प्रक्रिया आणि उद्योजगता यांच्यातीलसंबंध-

अनेक अभ्यासातून हे स्पष्ट झाले आहे की, विद्यापीठीन शिक्षण स्त्रियांच्या उद्योजकतेची क्षमता वाढवते. शिक्षणामुळे स्त्रियांमध्ये स्वतंत्र विचार, निर्णय क्षमता, तांत्रिक कौशल्ये, आणि समस्या सोडविण्याची क्षमता विकसित होते. जी स्टार्टअप्स सुरू करण्यासाठी अत्यंत आवश्यक आहे.

- Kaur & Reddy (2019) यांच्या अभ्यासानुसार, शिक्षण घेतलेल्या महिलांमध्ये स्टार्टअप परिसंस्था मध्ये सहभाग वाढतो आणि त्या व्यवसाय अधिक यशस्वी ठरतात.
- World Bank Report (2020) नुसार, शिक्षित महिला उद्योजक समाजातील नवनवीन संधी ओळखण्यात आणि व्यवसायातील जोखीम हाताळण्यात अधिक सक्षम ठरतात.

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- **यशाचा दर –**

क्षेत्र	यशाच प्रमाण (Success Rate)
विद्यापीठ प्रवेश (महिला)	50–80% (शहरी/ग्रामीण फरक)
STEM क्षेत्रातील प्रवेश (महिला)	60–70%
महिला स्टार्टअप टिकण्याचे प्रमाण	≈ 50–55%

- STEM हा शब्द चार इंग्रजी शब्दांचा संक्षिप्त रूप आहे:

  S → Science (विज्ञान)

  T→ Technology (तंत्रज्ञान)

  E →Engineering (अभियांत्रिकी)

  M → Mathematics (गणित)

संशोधनातील अंतर (Research Gap) -

पूर्वीच्या अभ्यासातून खालील अंतर दिसून येतेः

- महिला प्रवेश प्रक्रियेतील अडथळ्यांवर काही संशोधन झाले आहे, परंतु विद्यापीठीन स्तरावर विशिष्ट अडचर्णीचा सखोल अभ्यास मर्यादित आहे.
- महिला स्टार्टअप्सवर संशोधन झालं असलं तरी, विद्यापीठीन शिक्षण आणि स्टार्टअप पॅरिसंथामधील थेट संबंधावर मर्यादित माहिती उपलब्ध आहे.
- ग्रामीण आणि शहरी महिलांमध्ये प्रवेश व उद्योजकतेतील फरकावर अधिक सखोल अभ्यासाची आवश्यकता आहे.

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या साहित्यानुभवातून असे दिसते की, महिला प्रवेश प्रक्रियेत सुधारणा आणि स्टार्टअप पॅरिसंथास प्रोत्साहन देणे हे समाजाच्या आर्थिक, सामाजिक आणि तांत्रिक प्रगतीसाठी महत्त्वाचे आहे. त्यामुळे या विषयावर सखोल संशोधन करणे गरजेचे ठरते.

❖ **महिला प्रवेश आणि स्टार्टअप परिसंस्थेत संधी –**

सध्याच्या काळात महिला शिक्षण आणि उद्यमशीलतेत अभूतपूर्व संधी उपलब्ध आहेत, ज्या समाजातील आणि आर्थिक विकासातील भूमिका बदलत आहेत. विद्यापीठांमध्ये महिला प्रवेशाच्या प्रक्रियेत लिंगसमानतेवर भर देणारे धोरण राबवले जात आहेत. यामध्ये महिला विद्यार्थिनींसाठी शिष्यवृत्ती, राखीव जागा, मार्गदर्शन कार्यक्रम आणि विशेष तयारी वर्ग यांचा समावेश आहे. या उपक्रमांमुळे महिलांना केवळ प्रवेश मिळत नाही तर आत्मविश्वास, नेतृत्व कौशल्य आणि संशोधन क्षमता विकसित करण्याची संधी देखील मिळते. विद्यापीठांमध्ये स्त्रियांसाठी संशोधन, इनोव्हेशन आणि उद्यमशीलता या क्षेत्रातील व्यासपीठ उपलब्ध करून दिले जात आहेत. इनक्यूबेशन सेंटर, इनोव्हेशन लॅब्स आणि नेटवर्किंग प्लॅटफॉर्म्स महिलांना त्यांच्या कल्पनांना व्यवसायात रूपांतर करण्यास मदत करतात.स्टार्टअप परिसंस्थेतही महिलांसाठी अनेक संधी उपलब्ध आहेत. सरकार आणि खासगी संस्था महिला उद्यमशीलता प्रकल्प, स्टार्टअप इंडिया योजना आणि महिला नेतृत्वाखालील व्यवसायांसाठी विशेष सहाय्य देतात. यामध्ये आर्थिक मदत, मार्गदर्शन, कौशल्य विकास कार्यशाळा आणि बाजारात प्रवेशासाठी सुविधा यांचा समावेश आहे.

याशिवाय डिजिटल तंत्रज्ञान आणि ऑनलाइन प्लॅटफॉर्म्समुळे पारंपरिक अडथळे कमी झाले आहेत. महिलांना जागतिक बाजारपेठेत प्रवेश, ई-लर्निंग संधी, आणि आंतरराष्ट्रीय मार्गदर्शकांशी संपर्क साधण्याची संधी मिळते. अशा प्रकारे शिक्षण, उद्यमशीलता संसाधने आणि तंत्रज्ञान यांच्या एकत्रित प्रयत्नांनी महिलांना शैक्षणिक आणि व्यावसायिक क्षेत्रात उत्कृष्ट कामगिरी करण्याचीसंधी मिळते. या संधींचा उपयोग करण्यासाठी जागरूकता, सक्रिय सहभाग आणि संस्थात्मक समर्थन आवश्यक आहे, जे महिलांना नेतृत्व, नवोन्मेष आणि आर्थिक विकासात महत्त्वपूर्ण योगदान देण्यास सक्षम करतात.

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निष्कर्ष -

या संशोधनातून असे स्पष्ट झाले की, विद्यापीठांमध्ये महिलांचा प्रवेश आणि त्यांच्या स्टार्टअप परिसंस्थेत सहभाग हा एकमेकांशी सखोलपणे संबंधित आहे. उच्च शिक्षणातील महिलांचा सहभाग जितका जास्त असेल, तितका त्यांचा उद्योजकतेकडे कल वाढतो, नवकल्पना निर्माण होतात आणि सामाजिक तसेच आर्थिक विकासाला चालना मिळते. शिक्षण महिलांना कौशल्य, आत्मविश्वास आणि सृजनशीलता देते, तर स्टार्टअप परिसंस्था त्या कौशल्यांना व्यावसायिक रूपात रूपांतरित करण्यासाठी आवश्यक साधने, मार्गदर्शन आणि आर्थिक मदत प्रदान करते.

संशोधनात हेही आढळले की, महिला प्रवेश प्रक्रियेतील समावेशी धोरणे आणि संस्थात्मक पाठबळ महिलांच्या उद्‌द्योजकतेसाठी अत्यंत महत्त्वाचे आहेत. त्यामुळे विद्यापीठे आणि शैक्षणिक संस्था महिलांच्या उद्योजकतेस प्रोत्साहन देणारी वातावरण निर्मिती करणे आवश्यक आहे. यासह सरकारी योजना, उद्योग नेटवर्क आणि प्रशिक्षण कार्यक्रम यांचा समन्वय महिला स्टार्टअप परिसंस्थेला अधिक बळकट करतो.

अंततःमहिला प्रवेश प्रक्रियेत सुधारणा आणि स्टार्टअप परिसंस्थेच्या विकासातून महिलांचे सशक्तीकरण होते, रोजगारनिर्मिती वाढते, नवकल्पना वाढतात, आणि समाजात समावेशी व संतुलित विकास साधता येतो.

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9. Female higher education enhances entrepreneurial competencies and intrinsic motivation, thereby empowering women in innovation and business creation."
10. Studies have shown that university affiliation provides women entrepreneurs with essential resources and skills, improving growth opportunities within startup ecosystems.
11. Literature on women entrepreneurship in India highlights education & competencies as significant factors influencing entrepreneurial participation.
12. Government initiatives like the Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) have bolstered women's access to entrepreneurship support systems nationwide (Wikipedia)
13. Institutional programs such as innovation summits at universities actively promote women-led startup ideas and innovation.

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कामाच्या ठिकाणी छळ प्रतिबंधक धोरणे आणि सुरक्षित परिसर निर्मिती

सचिन सहादू घायतडके
संशोधक विद्यार्थी
राज्यशास्त्र विभाग , पेमराज सारडा महाविद्यालय, अहिल्यानगर

प्रस्तावना

भारतासह जगभरात कामाच्या ठिकाणी सुरक्षितता आणि सन्मान यांची हमी देण्यासाठी कायदेशीर चौकट विकसित होत आहे. भारतीय संविधानाने अनुच्छेद १४, १५, १९(१)(ग) आणि २१ अंतर्गत समानता, भेदभावमुक्त वातावरण आणि सन्मानाने जगण्याचा हक्क प्रदान केला आहे. या मूलभूत हक्कांची अंमलबजावणी करण्यासाठीच कामाच्या ठिकाणी महिलांचा लैंगिक छळ प्रतिबंधक कायदा, २०१३ सारखे विशेष कायदे अस्तित्वात आले आहेत.तथापि, कामाच्या ठिकाणी होणारा छळ ही एक जटिल समस्या असून, तिचे निवारण केवळ एकाच कायद्याने होऊ शकत नाही. यासाठी समान मोबदला अधिनियम, १९७६; कारखाना अधिनियम, १९४८; मातृत्व लाभ अधिनियम, १९६१; औद्योगिक विवाद अधिनियम, १९४७ तसेच दिव्यांग व्यक्ती, ट्रान्सजेंडर व्यक्ती आणि एचआयव्हीग्रस्त व्यक्तींच्या हक्कांचे संरक्षण करणारे कायदे यांची एकत्रित चौकट कामाच्या ठिकाणी कार्यरत आहे. या सर्व कायद्यांचा समग्र विचार केल्याशिवाय कामाच्या ठिकाणी छळ प्रतिबंधाची संकल्पना पूर्ण होत नाही.

शैक्षणिक संस्थांच्या परिसराच्या सुरक्षिततेकडेही आता विशेष लक्ष दिले जात आहे. कामाच्या ठिकाणी लागू होणाऱ्या सुरक्षा मानकांप्रमाणेच शैक्षणिक संस्थांसाठीही स्वतंत्र मानके निश्चित करण्यात आली आहेत. भारतीय मानक ब्युरोने नुकतेच आयएस १९४१८ : २०२५ हे मानक प्रकाशित केले असून, ते शैक्षणिक संस्थांमध्ये सुरक्षित, सर्वसमावेशक, सुलभ आणि शाश्वत वातावरण निर्माण करण्यासाठी एक व्यापक चौकट उपलब्ध करून देते. आयआयटी मद्रास सारख्या संस्थांनी राबवलेले 'हॅप्पी, सेफ अँड सिक्योर कॅम्पस' उपक्रम या दिशेने महत्त्वपूर्ण पाऊल आहे.

२०२५-२०२६ या कालावधीत कामाच्या ठिकाणी छळ प्रतिबंधक कायद्यांमध्ये अनेक महत्त्वपूर्ण बदल घडून आले आहेत. एसएचई-बॉक्स पोर्टलचे अनिवार्यीकरण, कंपनी अहवालात पॉश अनुपालनाची तपशीलवार माहिती देण्याची बंधने आणि सर्वोच्च न्यायालयाने औरेलियानो फर्नांडिस प्रकरणात दिलेले कठोर निर्देश यामुळे कामाच्या ठिकाणी कायद्याची अंमलबजावणी अधिक पारदर्शक झाली आहे.

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या शोधनिबंधाचा उद्देश कामाच्या ठिकाणी छळ प्रतिबंधक धोरणे आणि सुरक्षित परिसर निर्मिती या विषयाचा सर्वसमावेशक आढावा घेणे हा आहे. यामध्ये भारतीय संविधानातील तरतुदी, प्रमुख कायदे, त्यांच्या अलीकडील दुरुस्त्या, न्यायालयीन निकाल आणि शैक्षणिक संस्थांसाठीची सुरक्षितता मानके यांचा अभ्यास करून, कामाच्या ठिकाणी व शैक्षणिक परिसरात सुरक्षित, सन्मानजनक आणि भेदभावमुक्त वातावरण निर्मितीसाठी एक समग्र दृष्टिकोन मांडण्यात येणार आहे.

सारांश (Abstract)

कामाच्या ठिकाणी होणारा छळ हा फक्तकर्मचाऱ्यांचे मानसिक आरोग्य नाही तर एकूणच सामाजिक प्रगतीवर परिणाम करणारी गंभीर बाब आहे. हा शोधनिबंध कामाच्या ठिकाणी होणाऱ्या विविध प्रकारच्या छळाच्या प्रतिबंधासाठी अस्तित्वात असलेल्या सर्वसमावेशक कायदेशीर चौकटीचा, विविध कायद्यांचा आणि शैक्षणिक तसेच कामाची ठिकाणे सुरक्षित करण्याच्या उपाययोजनांचा सखोल अभ्यास करतो.

या संशोधनात प्रामुख्याने कामाच्या ठिकाणी महिलांचा लैंगिक छळ - प्रतिबंध, मनाई आणि निवारण कायदा २०१३ (POSH Act) ची अंमलबजावणी आणि अलीकडील काळातील दुरुस्त्यांचा आढावा घेतला आहे. तसेच, कामाच्या ठिकाणी भेदभाव, असमानता आणि असुरक्षितता रोखण्यासाठी असलेल्या इतर महत्त्वपूर्ण कायदेशीर तरतुदींचे विश्लेषण केले आहे. यामध्ये भारतीय संविधानातील अनुच्छेद १४, १५, १६ व २१, भारतीय न्याय संहिता, २०२३ मधील लैंगिक छळाशी संबंधित कलमे, समान मोबदला अधिनियम, १९७६, कारखानाअधिनियम, १९४८, मातृत्वलाभ अधिनियम, १९६१, औद्योगिक विवाद अधिनियम, १९४७, तसेच दिव्यांग व्यक्तींचे हक्क अधिनियम, २०१६, Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 आणि HIV and AIDS (Prevention & Control) Act, 2017 सारख्या विशेष समूह संरक्षण कायद्यांचा समावेश आहे.

निष्कर्षात, केवळ कायदेशीर तरतुदी नव्हे तर, सर्वसमावेशक संस्थात्मक संस्कृती, संवेदनशीलता प्रशिक्षण, पारदर्शक तक्रार निवारण यंत्रणा आणि नेतृत्वाची बांधिलकी यांच्या एकात्मिक दृष्टिकोनातूनच सुरक्षित कामाची ठिकाणे आणि परिसर निर्माण होऊ शकतात.

Keywords

कामाच्या ठिकाणी छळ, Workplace Harassment, लैंगिक छळ प्रतिबंधक कायदा २०१३, POSH Act, भारतीय संविधान, Indian Constitution, भारतीय न्याय संहिता २०२३, BNS 2023, समान

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मोबदला अधिनियम, कारखाना अधिनियम, मातृत्व लाभ अधिनियम, दिव्यांग व्यक्तींचे हक्क अधिनियम, ट्रान्सजेंडर संरक्षण कायदा, सुरक्षित कॅम्पस, Safe Campus,

उद्दिष्टे (Objectives)

१. पॉश कायद्याचा आढावा: कामाच्या ठिकाणी महिलांचा लैंगिक छळ - प्रतिबंध, मनाई आणि निवारण कायदा, २०१३ कायद्याचा सखोल अभ्यास करणे.

२. भारतीय संविधानातील मूलभूत हक्कांतर्गत येणाऱ्या अनुच्छेद १४ (समानता), १५ (भेदभाव प्रतिबंध), १६ (संधीची समानता) आणि २१ (जीवन व व्यक्तिगत स्वातंत्र्य) यांचा कामाच्या ठिकाणी छळ प्रतिबंधाशी असलेला संबंध स्पष्ट करणे.

३. नवीन भारतीय न्याय संहिता, २०२३ मधील कलमे (विशेषतः कलम ७४, ७९, ३५४अ) आणि कामाच्या ठिकाणी होणाऱ्या लैंगिक छळाच्या घटनांमध्ये त्यांचा उपयोग यांचे परीक्षण करणे.

४. कामाच्या ठिकाणी सुरक्षितता आणि समानता सुनिश्चित करणाऱ्या इतर मजूर कायद्यांचा अभ्यास करणे. यामध्ये समान मोबदला अधिनियम, १९७६ (समान वेतन), कारखाना अधिनियम, १९४८ (मूलभूत सुविधा), मातृत्व लाभ अधिनियम, १९६१ (प्रसूती रजा व संरक्षण), आणि औद्योगिक विवाद अधिनियम, १९४७ (अन्यायकारक कारवाईविरुद्ध संरक्षण) यांचा समावेश आहे.

५. विशेष समूह संरक्षण कायद्यांचे विश्लेषण: कामाच्या ठिकाणी असुरक्षित घटकांना (दिव्यांग व्यक्ती, ट्रान्सजेंडर व्यक्ती, एचआयव्हीग्रस्त व्यक्ती) संरक्षण देणाऱ्या खालील कायद्यांचा आढावा घेणे:

६. शैक्षणिक संस्थांच्या परिसरात सुरक्षितता सुनिश्चित करण्यासाठी भारतीय मानक ब्युरोने प्रकाशित केलेले आयएस १९४८ : २०२५ मानक आणि इतर राष्ट्रीय व आंतरराष्ट्रीय शिफारशींचे (आयएलओ, रँड कॉर्पोरेशन) विश्लेषण करणे.

कामाच्या ठिकाणी होणार छळ रोखण्यासाठी असणारे विविध कायदे-

१) कामाच्या ठिकाणी महिलांचा लैंगिक छळ - प्रतिबंध, मनाई आणि निवारण कायदा २०१३

कामाच्या ठिकाणी महिलांचा लैंगिक छळ (प्रतिबंध, प्रतिबंधक आणि प्रतितोड) कायदा, २०१३ हा भारतातील कार्यस्थळी महिलांच्या सुरक्षिततेचा पाया आहे. या कायद्याने लैंगिक छळाची व्यापक व्याख्या,

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सुलभ तक्रार प्रक्रिया आणि कडक शिक्षेची तरतूद केली आहे. २०२५-२०२६ मधील अलीकडील दुरुस्त्या (SHe-Box पोर्टल, कंपनी अहवालात पारदर्शकता) आणि न्यायालयीन निकालांमुळे हा कायदा अधिक सक्षम झाला आहे. तथापि, केवळ कायदेशीर तरतुदींवर अवलंबून न राहता, सर्वसमावेशक संस्थात्मक संस्कृती, संवेदनशीलता प्रशिक्षण, प्रभावी नेतृत्व आणि पारदर्शक यंत्रणांद्वारेच सुरक्षित कामाची ठिकाणे निर्माण होऊ शकतात.

१.१ लैंगिक छळाची व्याख्या

कायद्याच्या कलम २(न) नुसार, लैंगिक छळामध्ये खालील अव वर्तनांचा समावेश होतो :

क्र.	वर्तनाचा प्रकार	उदाहरणे
१	शारीरिक संपर्क व आगाऊपणा	हात लावणे, मिठी मारणे, जबरदस्तीने जवळ येणे
२	लैंगिक संबंधांची मागणी	बदल्यात बढतीचे आमिष दाखवणे
३	लैंगिक स्वरूपाच्या रंगीत टिप्पण्या	विनोद, टोमणे, अपमानास्पद भाषा
४	अश्लील साहित्य दाखवणे	फोटो, व्हिडिओ, मेसेज पाठवणे
५	इतर अवांछित वर्तन	डोळ्यांनी इशारे करणे, सीटी वाजवणे

१.२ कामाच्या ठिकाणाची व्यापक व्याख्या

कायद्यातील कलम २ (ओ) नुसार "कामाच्या ठिकाणा"ची व्याख्या अत्यंत व्यापक आहे.

"कोणतेही सरकारी कार्यालय, खाजगी संस्था, रुग्णालये, क्रीडा संकुले, शैक्षणिक संस्था, प्रशिक्षण केंद्रे, औद्योगिक वसाहती, बंदरे, कर्मचाऱ्याने नोकरीदरम्यान भेट दिलेली ठिकाणे, प्रवासाची साधने, निवासस्थाने किंवा घरे (विशेषतः घरगुती कामगारांसाठी)"

या व्याख्येमुळे कर्मचारी जिथे काम करतो त्या प्रत्येक ठिकाणाचा समावेश होतो. राजस्थान उच्च न्यायालयाने एका निकालात असेही स्पष्ट केले की डिजिटल माध्यमातून (ऑनलाइन) होणारा छळही या कायद्याअंतर्गत येतो.

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१.३ तक्रार समित्यांची रचना व कार्यपद्धती

अंतर्गत तक्रार समिती

कलम ४ नुसार, १० किंवा अधिक कर्मचारी असलेल्या प्रत्येक आस्थापनात अंतर्गत तक्रार समिती स्थापन करणे बंधनकारक आहे

रचना:

- अध्यक्षा: वरिष्ठ स्तरावरील महिला कर्मचारी
- सदस्य (किमान २): महिलांच्या हितासाठी काम करणारे किंवा सामाजिक कार्य/कायद्याचे ज्ञान असलेले कर्मचारी
- सदस्य (१): महिलांच्या हितासाठी काम करणाऱ्या एनजीओमधून किंवा लैंगिक छळाच्या मुद्द्यांशी परिचित व्यक्ती

महत्त्वाचे नियम:

- एकूण सदस्यांपैकी किमान अर्धे सदस्य महिला असणे आवश्यक
- समितीचा कार्यकाळ ३ वर्षांचा
- सदस्यांना नियमित प्रशिक्षण देणे आवश्यक

स्थानिक तक्रार समिती

कलम ६ नुसार, जिल्हा अधिकारी प्रत्येक जिल्ह्यात स्थानिक समिती स्थापन करतात. ही समिती खालील प्रकरणांसाठी कार्य करते:

- १० पेक्षा कमी कर्मचारी असलेल्या आस्थापना
- नियोक्त्याविरुद्ध तक्रार असेल तर
- घरगुती कामगारांसाठी

१.४ तक्रार कोण करू शकते?

- पीडित महिला स्वतः
- पीडित महिला शारीरिक/मानसिक अक्षमतेमुळे किंवा मृत्यूमुळे तक्रार करू शकत नसेल तर:
    - तिचा वारस

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- तिचे नातेवाईक
- तिचे मित्र (पूर्व परवानगीने)

१.५ शिफारसी व शिक्षा

आरोप सिद्ध झाल्यास समिती खालील कारवाईची शिफारस करू शकते:

अनुशासनात्मक कारवाई:

- लेखी माफी
- ताकीद
- पदोन्नती रोखणे
- वेतनवाढ रोखणे
- नोकरीतून काढून टाकणे

१.६ SHe-Box पोर्टल अनिवार्य

SHe-Box हे केंद्र सरकारचे ऑनलाइन पोर्टल आहे. आता सर्व आस्थापनांनी (१०+ कर्मचारी) आपल्या अंतर्गत समित्यांची या पोर्टलवर नोंदणी करणे अनिवार्य आहे. महाराष्ट्र, दिल्ली, उत्तर प्रदेश, ओडिशा राज्यांनी यासाठी आदेश काढले आहेत.

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१.७ अंमलबजावणीतील आव्हाने

१. जनजागृतीचाअभाव: बहुतांश कर्मचाऱ्यांना पॉश कायद्याची माहिती नाही.

२. समित्यांची कार्यक्षमता: अनेक समित्या केवळ कागदोपत्री स्थापन केल्या जातात.

३. प्रशिक्षणाचा अभाव: समिती सदस्यांना नियमित प्रशिक्षण दिले जात नाही.

४. भीतीचे वातावरण: पीडित महिला नोकरी गमावण्याच्या भीतीने तक्रार करत नाहीत.

५. खोट्या तक्रारींचा दबाव: कलम १४ अंतर्गत खोट्या तक्रारींवर कारवाईची तरतूद असल्याने महिला तक्रार करण्यास घाबरतात.

२. भारतीय संविधानातील काही तरतुदी-

भारतीय संविधान हे देशातील सर्वोच्च कायदा असून, ते प्रत्येक नागरिकाला मूलभूत हक्कांची हमी देते. कार्यस्थळी होणारा छळ हा या मूलभूत हक्कांचे थेट उल्लंघन आहे. भारतीय संविधानातील विविध अनुच्छेदांमध्ये कार्यस्थळी छळ प्रतिबंधासाठी ठोस तरतुदी करण्यात आल्या आहेत .

कामाच्या ठिकाणी लैंगिक छळ हा केवळ एक गुन्हा नसून, तो महिलेच्या संविधानिक हक्कांचे उल्लंघन आहे. ही बाब सर्वोच्च न्यायालयाने विशाखा प्रकरणात स्पष्ट केली . लैंगिक छळामुळे महिलेचा संविधानातील कलम १४, १५, १९(१) आणि २१ अन्वये मिळालेला मूलभूत हक्क भंग होतो .

२. मूलभूत हक्कांतील तरतुदी (Fundamental Rights)

२.१ कलम १४: समानतेचा अधिकार

कलम १४ नुसार, "राज्य कोणत्याही व्यक्तीला कायद्यासमोर समानतेपासून वंचित ठेवणार नाही किंवा भारताच्या हद्दीत कायद्यांचे समान संरक्षण देण्यास नकार देणार नाही" .

या अनुच्छेदाचे कार्यस्थळी छळाच्या संदर्भातील महत्त्व:

- प्रत्येक कर्मचाऱ्याला कामाच्या ठिकाणी समान वागणूक मिळण्याचा हक्क
- लिंग, जात, धर्म यावर आधारित भेदभावास प्रतिबंध
- नियोक्त्याने सर्व कर्मचाऱ्यांशी समान वर्तन करणे बंधनकारक

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२.२ कलम १५: भेदभाव प्रतिबंध

कलम १५(१) नुसार, "राज्य कोणत्याही नागरिकाशी केवळ धर्म, वंश, जात, लिंग, जन्मस्थान किंवा त्यापैकी कोणत्याही कारणास्तव भेदभाव करणार नाही" .

कलम १५(२) नुसार, "कोणताही नागरिक केवळ धर्म, वंश, जात, लिंग, जन्मस्थान किंवा त्यापैकी कोणत्याही कारणास्तव दुकाने, सार्वजनिक रेस्टॉरंट्स, हॉटेल्स आणि सार्वजनिक करमणूक स्थळे किंवा पूर्णपणे किंवा अंशतः राज्य निधीतून चालवल्या जाणाऱ्या विहिरी, टँक, स्नानघाट, रस्ते आणि सार्वजनिक रिसॉर्ट्सच्या वापरातून वगळला जाणार नाही" .

कलम १५(३) हे विशेषतः महत्त्वाचे आहे. यानुसार, "या अनुच्छेदातील कोणतीही गोष्ट राज्याला स्त्रिया आणि मुलांसाठी कोणतीही विशेष तरतूद करण्यापासून प्रतिबंधित करणार नाही" .

या तरतुदीचे महत्त्व:

- राज्याला महिलांसाठी विशेष संरक्षणात्मक कायदे करण्याची परवानगी
- पॉश कायदा, २०१३ सारख्या कायद्यांना संवैधानिक वैधता
- सकारात्मक कारवाईचा (positive discrimination) पाया

२.३ कलम १६: सार्वजनिक रोजगारात संधीची समानता

कलम १६(१) नुसार, "राज्याच्या अंतर्गत कोणत्याही कार्यालयात नोकरी किंवा नियुक्तीच्या बाबतीत सर्व नागरिकांसाठी संधीची समानता असेल" .

कलम १६(२) नुसार, "कोणताही नागरिक केवळ धर्म, वंश, जात, लिंग, वंश, जन्मस्थान, निवासस्थान किंवा त्यापैकी कोणत्याही कारणास्तव राज्याच्या अंतर्गत कोणत्याही रोजगार किंवा कार्यालयासाठी अपात्र ठरवला जाणार नाही."

२.४ कलम १९(१)(ग): व्यवसाय करण्याचा अधिकार

कलम १९(१) सर्व नागरिकांना "कोणताही व्यवसाय करण्याचा, किंवा कोणताही उदीम, व्यापार किंवा व्यवसाय चालवण्याचा" अधिकार देते .

विशाखा प्रकरणात सर्वोच्च न्यायालयाने स्पष्ट केले की, कार्यस्थळी लैंगिक छळामुळे महिलेच्या या मूलभूत हक्काचे उल्लंघन होते. लैंगिक छळामुळे निर्माण होणाऱ्या भीतीदायक वातावरणामुळे महिला आपला व्यवसाय करण्याच्या हक्काचा योग्य वापर करू शकत नाही .

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२.५ कलम २१: जीवन आणि स्वातंत्र्याचा अधिकार

कलम २१ नुसार, "कोणत्याही व्यक्तीला त्याचे जीवन किंवा वैयक्तिक स्वातंत्र्यापासून कायद्याने स्थापित केलेल्या प्रक्रियेशिवाय वंचित ठेवले जाणार नाही" .

सर्वोच्च न्यायालयाने या अनुच्छेदाची व्यापक व्याख्या करताना स्पष्ट केले की, 'जीवन' म्हणजे केवळ प्राणीमात्र अस्तित्व नव्हे तर सन्मानाने जगण्याचा अधिकार. कार्यस्थळी छळामुळे महिलेच्या सन्मानाने जगण्याच्या हक्काचे उल्लंघन होते .

३. मार्गदर्शक तत्त्वांतील तरतुदी (Directive Principles)

३.१ कलम ३९(अ)

राज्याने आपले धोरण अशा प्रकारे निर्देशित करावे की, पुरुष आणि स्त्रिया यांना समान रीतीने उपजीविकेच्या पुरेशा साधनांचा हक्क असेल .

३.२ कलम३९(ड)

पुरुष आणि स्त्रिया यांना समान कामासाठी समान वेतन मिळावे .

३.३ कलम ४२

राज्याने कामाच्या योग्य आणि मानवी परिस्थितीची तरतूद करावी आणि प्रसूती सवलत द्यावी .

४. विशाखा प्रकरणातील संवैधानिक व्याख्या

विशाखा विरुद्ध राजस्थान राज्य (१९९७) या ऐतिहासिक खटल्यात सर्वोच्च न्यायालयाने कार्यस्थळी लैंगिक छळ हा मूलभूत हक्कांचे उल्लंघन असल्याचे स्पष्ट केले .

न्यायालयाने म्हटले की

"लैंगिक छळ हे लैंगिक समानतेच्या मूलभूत हक्काचे उल्लंघन आहे आणि काम करताना महिलेच्या सन्मानाने जगण्याच्या अधिकाराचे उल्लंघन आहे."

न्यायालयाने अनुच्छेद ३२ अंतर्गत मिळालेल्या अधिकाराचा वापर करून, कायदा निर्माण होईपर्यंत तात्पुरत्या मार्गदर्शक तत्त्वा जारी केल्या .

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५. पॉश कायद्याचा संवैधानिक आधार

कामाच्या ठिकाणी महिलांचा लैंगिक छळ (प्रतिबंध, प्रतिबंधक आणि प्रतितोड) कायदा, २०१३ च्या प्रस्तावनेत स्पष्टपणे म्हटले आहे :

"लैंगिक छळामुळे महिलेच्या भारतीय संविधानातील अनुच्छेद १४, १५ अन्वये समानतेच्या मूलभूत हक्काचे आणि अनुच्छेद २१ अन्वये सन्मानाने जगण्याच्या अधिकाराचे उल्लंघन होते."

हा कायदा प्रत्यक्षात संविधानातील मूलभूत हक्कांची अंमलबजावणी करणारा कायदा आहे.

६ . न्यायिक व्याख्या (Judicial Interpretations)

६.१ विशाखा विरुद्ध राजस्थान राज्य (१९९७)

सर्वोच्च न्यायालयाने अनुच्छेद १४, १९(१)(ग) आणि २१ चा एकत्रित अर्थ लावताना कार्यस्थळी लैंगिक छळ प्रतिबंधक मार्गदर्शक तत्त्वे जारी केली .

६.२ ॲपॅरल एक्सपोर्ट प्रमोशन कौन्सिल विरुद्ध ए.के. चोप्रा (१९९९)

न्यायालयाने म्हटले की, लैंगिक छळाची व्याख्या केवळ शारीरिक अत्याचारापुरती मर्यादित नसून, प्रतिकूल कामाचे वातावरण निर्माण करणारी कोणतीही कृती लैंगिक छळाच्या व्याख्येत येते .

६.३ वसंता आर. विरुद्ध केंद्र सरकार (२००१)

मद्रास उच्च न्यायालयाने कारखाना अधिनियमाचे कलम ६६(१)(ब) असंवैधानिक ठरवले. हे कलम महिलांना रात्री ७ नंतर काम करण्यास प्रतिबंधित करत होते. न्यायालयाने हे कलम अनुच्छेद १४, १५ आणि १६ च्या विरोधात असल्याचे स्पष्ट केले .

६.४ औरेलियानो फर्नांडिस प्रकरण (२०२३-२०२४)

सर्वोच्च न्यायालयाने स्पष्ट केले की, पॉश कायद्याची अंमलबजावणी ही केवळ कागदोपत्री औपचारिकता राहू शकत नाही. हा कायदा संविधानातील मूलभूत हक्कांची अंमलबजावणी करतो.

३. कार्यस्थळी छळ प्रतिबंधाशी संबंधित विविध कायदे:

१. समान मोबदला अधिनियम, १९७६

हा कायदा पुरुष आणि महिला कामगारांना समान कामासाठी समान वेतन देण्याची तरतूद करतो. याचा मुख्य उद्देश लिंगभावावर आधारित वेतनातील भेदभाव दूर करणे आणि महिलांना रोजगाराच्या बाबतीत समान संधी उपलब्ध करून देणे हा आहे.

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मुख्य तरतुदी:

- कोणताही नियोक्ता समान काम किंवा सारख्याच स्वरूपाच्या कामासाठी पुरुष व महिला कामगारांना वेगवेगळे वेतन देऊ शकत नाही.
- नियोक्त्याने समान कामासाठी महिलांची भरती करताना कोणताही भेदभाव करू नये. भरतीनंतरच्या बढती, प्रशिक्षण किंवा बदली या बाबतीतही भेदभाव करण्यास मनाई आहे.
- हा कायदा सर्व आस्थापनांना लागू होतो.
- तक्रारी व दावे ऐकण्यासाठी योग्य सरकारी अधिकाऱ्यांची नियुक्ती करण्याची तरतूद आहे.

२. कारखाना अधिनियम, १९४८

हा अधिनियम कारखान्यांमध्ये काम करणाऱ्या कामगारांचे आरोग्य, सुरक्षा आणि कल्याण यांचे नियमन करण्यासाठी बनवण्यात आला. याचा उद्देश कामगारांचे शोषण रोखणे आणि त्यांना सुरक्षित कामाची परिस्थिती उपलब्ध करून देणे हा आहे.

मुख्य तरतुदी:

- आरोग्यासंदर्भात स्वच्छता, योग्य वायुवीजन, प्रकाशयोजना, पिण्याचे स्वच्छ पाणी आणि पुरुष व महिलांसाठी स्वतंत्र शौचालये बंधनकारक आहेत.
- सुरक्षेसाठी यंत्रसामग्रीचे संरक्षक कवच, आपत्कालीन उपाययोजना, अग्निसुरक्षा यांची तरतूद आहे.
- कल्याणकारी तरतुदींमध्ये आरामखुर्च्या, प्रथमोपचार पेटी, २५० पेक्षा जास्त कामगार असल्यास कॅन्टीन आणि ३० पेक्षा जास्त महिला कामगार असल्यास बालवाडी सुविधा बंधनकारक आहे.
- कामाचे तास आठवड्यातून ४८ तासांपेक्षा जास्त नसावेत, दररोज ९ तासांपेक्षा जास्त काम नसावे आणि दर पाच तासांनी अर्ध्या तासाची विश्रांती आवश्यक आहे.
- या कायद्याचे उल्लंघन केल्यास २ लाख रुपयांपर्यंत दंड किंवा ७ वर्षांपर्यंत कारावासाची तरतूद आहे.

३. मातृत्व लाभ अधिनियम, १९६१

हा कायदा महिला कामगारांना प्रसूतीपूर्व आणि प्रसूतीनंतरच्या काळात वेतनासह रजा उपलब्ध करून देतो. याचा उद्देश मातृत्वाच्या काळात महिलेचे आरोग्य आणि आर्थिक सुरक्षा सुनिश्चित करणे हा आहे.

मुख्य तरतुदी:

- प्रसूतीच्या अपेक्षित तारखेपूर्वीच्या १२ महिन्यांत किमान १६० दिवस काम केलेली महिला पात्र ठरते.

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- २०१७ च्या दुरुस्तीनुसार, महिला कर्मचाऱ्यांना २६ आठवड्यांची सवेतन मातृत्व रजा मिळते. यापैकी ८ आठवडे प्रसूतीपूर्व आणि उर्वरित प्रसूतीनंतर घेता येतात.
- गर्भपात झाल्यास ६ आठवड्यांची रजा मिळते.
- गर्भवती महिलेला प्रसूतीपूर्व एक महिना कठोर काम करण्यास मनाई आहे.
- ५० पेक्षा जास्त कर्मचारी असलेल्या आस्थापनांना बालवाडी सुविधा उपलब्ध करणे बंधनकारक आहे. महिलेला दिवसातून ४ वेळा बालवाडीला भेट देण्यास परवानगी आहे.

४. औद्योगिक विवाद अधिनियम, १९४७

हा कायदा औद्योगिक विवादांची चौकशी आणि निवारण करण्यासाठी बनवण्यात आला. याचा उद्देश नियोक्ते आणि कामगार यांच्यातील वाद सोडवणे, संघटित कामगारांना संरक्षण देणे आणि औद्योगिक शांतता राखणे हा आहे.

मुख्य तरतुदी:

- औद्योगिक विवाद म्हणजे नियोक्ते व कामगार किंवा कामगारांमधील वाद जो रोजगाराशी किंवा कामाच्या अटींशी संबंधित असेल.
- कामगार न्यायालये, औद्योगिक न्यायाधिकरण, राष्ट्रीय न्यायाधिकरण, समेट अधिकारी, चौकशी समित्या यांची स्थापना करण्यात आली आहे.
- संप किंवा ताळाबंदीपूर्वी ६ आठवड्यांची नोटीस देणे आवश्यक आहे.
- अन्यायकारक पद्धतीने कामगारांना कामावरून काढून टाकणे किंवा निलंबित करणे यावर नियंत्रण आहे.
- एक वर्ष सेवा पूर्ण केलेल्या कामगाराला निलंबनाच्या काळात ५० टक्के वेतन भरपाई मिळते.

५. दिव्यांग व्यक्तींचे हक्क अधिनियम, २०१६

हा कायदा दिव्यांग व्यक्तींना समान संधी उपलब्ध करून देण्यासाठी आणि त्यांच्याशी होणारा भेदभाव रोखण्यासाठी बनवण्यात आला. हा कायदा संयुक्त राष्ट्रांच्या दिव्यांग व्यक्तींच्या हक्कांवरील अधिवेशनाशी सुसंगत आहे.

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- यात २१ प्रकारच्या दिव्यांगांचा समावेश करण्यात आला आहे. यामध्ये दीर्घकालीन शारीरिक, मानसिक, बौद्धिक किंवा संवेदनात्मक कमतरता असलेल्या व्यक्तींचा समावेश होतो.
- हा कायदा केवळ सरकारीच नव्हे तर खासगी आस्थापनांनाही लागू होतो.
- प्रत्येक आस्थापनाने समान संधी धोरण प्रसिद्ध करणे आवश्यक आहे. २० पेक्षा जास्त कर्मचारी असल्यास संपर्क अधिकाऱ्याची नियुक्ती बंधनकारक आहे.
- भौतिक वातावरण, वाहतूक, माहिती व तंत्रज्ञान यामध्ये सुलभता मानकांचे पालन करणे बंधनकारक आहे. विद्यमान आस्थापनांसाठी ५ वर्षांची मुदत देण्यात आली होती.
- पहिल्या गुन्ह्यासाठी १०,००० रुपयांपर्यंत दंड आणि त्यानंतरच्या गुन्ह्यांसाठी ५०,००० ते ५,००,००० रुपये दंडाची तरतूद आहे.

६. ट्रान्सजेंडर व्यक्ती (हक्क संरक्षण) अधिनियम, २०१९

हा कायदा ट्रान्सजेंडर व्यक्तींना भेदभावापासून संरक्षण देण्यासाठी आणि त्यांना समान संधी उपलब्ध करून देण्यासाठी बनवण्यात आला.

मुख्य तरतुदी:

- कोणत्याही ट्रान्सजेंडर व्यक्तीशी नोकरी, भरती, बढती, प्रशिक्षण या बाबतीत भेदभाव करण्यास मनाई आहे.
- सर्व आस्थापनांनी ट्रान्सजेंडर व्यक्तींसाठी समान संधी उपलब्ध करून देणे आवश्यक आहे.
- या कायद्यांतर्गत तक्रार निवारण यंत्रणेची तरतूद आहे.

७. एचआयव्ही आणि एड्स (प्रतिबंध व नियंत्रण) अधिनियम, २०१७

हा कायदा एचआयव्हीग्रस्त व्यक्तींच्या हक्कांचे संरक्षण करतो. याचा उद्देश एचआयव्हीमुळे होणारा भेदभाव रोखणे आणि बाधित व्यक्तींना न्याय मिळवून देणे हा आहे.

मुख्य तरतुदी:

- एचआयव्हीग्रस्त व्यक्तीशी रोजगार (नोकरी नाकारणे किंवा संपुष्टात आणणे), शैक्षणिक संस्थांमध्ये प्रवेश, आरोग्य सेवा, घर भाड्याने देणे, सार्वजनिक कार्यालयासाठी उभे राहणे या बाबतीत भेदभाव करण्यास मनाई आहे.

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- नोकरी मिळवण्यासाठी किंवा आरोग्य सेवा मिळवण्यासाठी एचआयव्ही चाचणी अनिवार्य करता येणार नाही.
- एचआयव्हीग्रस्त १२ ते १८ वर्षे वयोगटातील मुलांना कुटुंबातील इतर अल्पवयीन मुलांचे पालक म्हणून काम करण्याचा अधिकार आहे.
- तक्रारी निवारणासाठी यंत्रणा उपलब्ध करण्यात आली आहे.

समारोप (Conclusion)

कार्यस्थळी छळ प्रतिबंध आणि सुरक्षित परिसर निर्मिती ही केवळ कायदेशीर बंधने नसून, ती संविधानाने प्रदान केलेल्या मूलभूत हक्कांची पूर्तता आहे. भारतीय संविधानातील अनुच्छेद १४, १५, १९(१)(ग) आणि २१ यांनी प्रत्येक नागरिकाला समानता, भेदभावमुक्त वातावरण आणि सन्मानाने जगण्याचा हक्क प्रदान केला आहे. या संवैधानिक तरतुदींची अंमलबजावणी करण्यासाठीच पॉश कायदा, २०१३ सारखे विशेष कायदे अस्तित्वात आले आहेत.

या शोधनिबंधात केलेल्या विश्लेषणावरून असे स्पष्ट होते की, कार्यस्थळी छळ ही एक जटिल समस्या आहे जिचे निवारण केवळ एकाच कायद्याने होऊ शकत नाही. पॉश कायदा, २०१३ हा लैंगिक छळाच्या प्रतिबंधासाठी केंद्रस्थानी असला तरी, समान मोबदला अधिनियम, १९७६ वेतनातील भेदभाव रोखतोकारखाना अधिनियम, १९४८ सुरक्षित कामाची परिस्थिती सुनिश्चित करतोमातृत्व लाभ अधिनियम, १९६१ महिलांना मातृत्वकाळात आर्थिक सुरक्षा देतोतर औद्योगिक विवाद अधिनियम, १९४७ कामगारांना अन्यायकारक कारवाईपासून संरक्षण प्रदान करतो. याशिवाय, दिव्यांग व्यक्तींचे हक्क अधिनियम, २०१६, ट्रान्सजेंडर व्यक्ती अधिनियम, २०१९ आणि एचआयव्ही अधिनियम, २०१७ यांनी समाजातील असुरक्षित घटकांचे कार्यस्थळी संरक्षण करण्याची कायदेशीर चौकट निर्माण केली आहे.

२०२५-२०२६ या कालावधीतील अलीकडील घडामोडी अभ्यासपूर्वक पाहिल्यास, कायदेशीर चौकट अधिक सक्षम होत असल्याचे दिसून येते. एसएचई-बॉक्स पोर्टलचे अनिवार्यीकरण, कंपनी अहवालात पॉश अनुपालनाची तपशीलवार माहिती देण्याची बंधने आणि सर्वोच्च न्यायालयाने औरेलियानो फर्नांडिस प्रकरणात दिलेले कठोर निर्देश यामुळे कायद्याची अंमलबजावणी अधिक पारदर्शक झाली आहे. तथापि, न्यायालयीन निकालांवरून असेही दिसून येते की, केवळ कागदोपत्री समित्या स्थापन करून भागत नाही, तर त्यांचे प्रभावी कार्यान्वयन तितकेच महत्त्वाचे आहे.

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सुरक्षित परिसर निर्मितीच्या दृष्टिकोनातून भारतीय मानक ब्युरोने प्रकाशित केलेले आयएस १९४१८ : २०२५ मानक हे एक महत्त्वपूर्ण पाऊल आहे. यामुळे शैक्षणिक संस्थांच्या परिसरातील सुरक्षा, सुलभता आणि मूलभूत सुविधांसाठी एकसमान मापदंड निश्चित झाले आहेत. आंतरराष्ट्रीय कामगार संघटनेच्या शिफारशी आणि रँड कॉर्पोरेशनच्या अहवालांनीही भारतातील धोरणनिर्मितीवर प्रभाव टाकला आहे.

या सर्व कायदेशीर तरतुदी, अलीकडील दुरुस्त्या आणि न्यायालयीन निकालांचा एकत्रित विचार केल्यास, कार्यस्थळी छळ प्रतिबंधासाठी भारताकडे एक मजबूत कायदेशीर चौकट उपलब्ध आहे, हे स्पष्ट होते. तथापि, कायद्याची प्रभावी अंमलबजावणी हे या चौकटीपुढील सर्वात मोठे आव्हान आहे.

प्रथम, जनजागृती आवश्यक आहे. कर्मचारी आणि नियोक्ते या दोघांनाही उपलब्ध कायदेशीर संरक्षणाची पूर्ण माहिती असणे गरजेचे आहे. दुसरे म्हणजे, अंतर्गत तक्रार समित्यांचे सक्षमीकरण करणे आवश्यक आहे. या समित्यांना पुरेशी संसाधने, प्रशिक्षण आणि अधिकार देणे गरजेचे आहे. तिसरे म्हणजे, कायदेशीर चौकटीबरोबरच संस्थात्मक संस्कृतीत बदल घडवून आणणे आवश्यक आहे. सर्वसमावेशक, संवेदनशील आणि आदरयुक्त वातावरण हे केवळ कायद्याने नव्हे, तर नेतृत्वाच्या बांधिलकीने निर्माण होते.

शेवटी, कामच्या ठिकाणी छळ प्रतिबंध हा केवळ कायदेशीर अनुपालनाचा विषय नसून, तो मानवी हक्कांचा आणि सामाजिक न्यायाचा विषय आहे. या क्षेत्रातील प्रगती मोजण्यासाठी केवळ कायदेशीर तरतुदी पुरेशा नसून, प्रत्येक कर्मचाऱ्याला सुरक्षित, सन्मानजनक आणि भेदभावमुक्त वातावरण मिळते का, या प्रश्नाचे उत्तर शोधणे आवश्यक आहे. कायदा हे एक साधन आहे, परंतु सुरक्षित कार्यस्थळाचे अंतिम उद्दिष्ट हे संविधानाच्या प्रस्तावनेत अभिप्रेत केलेल्या न्याय, स्वातंत्र्य, समानता आणि बंधुत्वाच्या सामाजिक व्यवस्थेची प्राप्ती हेच आहे.

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प्रस्तावना :

आजच्या आधुनिक युगात तंत्रज्ञान वेगाने विकसित होत आहे. कृत्रिम बुद्धिमत्ता (AI), डेटा सायन्स, बायोटेक्नॉलॉजी आणि सायबर सुरक्षा ही उदयोन्मुख तंत्रज्ञान क्षेत्र जगाच्या प्रगतीत महत्त्वाची भूमिका बजावत आहेत. वरील क्षेत्रांमध्ये महिलांचे नेतृत्व दिवसेंदिवस वाढत आहे आणि त्या नवीन कल्पना, संशोधन व नवोन्मेषातून समाजाच्या विकासात मोलाचे योगदान देत आहेत.

आजच्या डिजिटल युगात उदयोन्मुख तंत्रज्ञानाची भूमिका अत्यंत महत्त्वाची झाली आहे. कृत्रिम बुद्धिमत्ताडेटा सायन्स, बायोटेक्नॉलॉजी आणि सायबर सुरक्षा ही क्षेत्र विज्ञान आणि समाजाच्या विकासासाठी महत्त्वाची ठरत आहेत. या क्षेत्रांमध्ये महिलांचे योगदान आणि नेतृत्व दिवसेंदिवस वाढत आहे.

महिला संशोधक, अभियंता आणि तंत्रज्ञ विविध प्रकल्पांमध्ये नाविन्यपूर्ण कल्पना आणि संशोधनाद्वारे समाजाच्या विकासाला चालना देत आहेत. या संशोधन लेखात उदयोन्मुख तंत्रज्ञानातील महिला नेतृत्वाचे महत्त्व, त्यांचे योगदान आणि त्यांना येणाऱ्या आव्हानांचा अभ्यास करण्यात आला आहे.

ए. आय.आणि डेटा सायन्समध्ये महिलांचे योगदान :

ए.आय आणि डेटा सायन्स या क्षेत्रांमध्ये महिलांनी महत्त्वपूर्ण संशोधन व प्रकल्पांद्वारे आपली क्षमता सिद्ध केली आहे. मोठ्या प्रमाणातील डेटा विश्लेषण, मशीन लर्निंग मॉडेल्स तयार करणे आणि तंत्रज्ञानाचा वापर करून समस्यांचे निराकरण करणे या कामांमध्ये महिला संशोधक आणि अभियता आघाडीवर आहेत. त्यांच्या नेतृत्वामुळे तंत्रज्ञान अधिक सर्वसमावेशक आणि समाजोपयोगी बनत आहे.

कृत्रिम बुद्धिमत्ता म्हणजे संगणक प्रणालींना मानवी बुद्धिमत्तेसारखे निर्णय घेण्याची क्षमता देणारे तंत्रज्ञान. एआयचा वापर आरोग्य, शिक्षण, उद्योग आणि वाहतूक क्षेत्रात मोठ्या प्रमाणावर होत आहे. या क्षेत्रात अनेक महिला संशोधक आणि अभियंते महत्त्वपूर्ण भूमिका बजावत आहेत.डेटा सायन्समध्ये मोठ्या प्रमाणातील डेटा गोळा करून त्याचे विश्लेषण करून महत्त्वपूर्ण निष्कर्ष काढले जातात.महिला डेटा

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सायंटिस्ट्स विविध कंपन्या आणि संशोधन संस्थांमध्ये काम करून तंत्रज्ञान क्षेत्रात महत्त्वपूर्ण योगदान देत आहेत.

बायोटेक्नॉलॉजी आणि महिलांचा सहभाग

बायोटेक्नॉलॉजी म्हणजे जैविक प्रक्रिया आणि तंत्रज्ञान यांचा संगम. औषधनिर्मिती, शेती आणि आरोग्य क्षेत्रात या तंत्रज्ञानाचा मोठ्या प्रमाणावर उपयोग होतो. महिला वैज्ञानिकांनी लसी, औषधे आणि संशोधन प्रकल्पांमध्ये महत्त्वाची भूमिका बजावली आहे.बायोटेक्नॉलॉजी क्षेत्रात महिलांनी आरोग्य, औषधनिर्मिती आणि शेतीसाठी महत्त्वपूर्ण संशोधन केले आहे. नवीन औषधे, लसी आणि जैवतंत्रज्ञानावर आधारित उपाय शोधण्यात महिलांचे योगदान महत्त्वाचे आहे. त्यांच्या नेतृत्वामुळे आरोग्य क्षेत्रात नवीन संधी निर्माण होत आहेत.

सायबर सुरक्षा आणि महिलांचे नेतृत्व :

डिजिटल युगात सायबर सुरक्षा अत्यंत महत्त्वाची झाली आहे. ऑनलाइन हल्ले, डेटा चोरी आणि डिजिटल गुन्हे रोखण्यासाठी सायबर सुरक्षा तज्ज्ञांची गरज आहे. या क्षेत्रातही महिला तज्ज्ञ मोठ्या प्रमाणात पुढे येत आहेत आणि सुरक्षित डिजिटल वातावरण निर्माण करण्यासाठी काम करत आहेत.सायबर सुरक्षा म्हणजे संगणक प्रणाली आणि डेटा सुरक्षित ठेवण्याची प्रक्रिया. आजच्या डिजिटल युगात डेटा चोरी आणि सायबर हल्ले वाढत असल्यामुळे या क्षेत्राचे महत्त्व वाढले आहे. महिलांनी या क्षेत्रात तज्ज्ञ म्हणून नेतृत्व केले आहे.

ए.आय. च्या काळात महिला नेतृत्वाचे महत्त्व :

तंत्रज्ञान क्षेत्रात महिलांचे नेतृत्व वाढल्यामुळे विविधता, नवीन दृष्टिकोन आणि नाविन्यपूर्ण उपाय निर्माण होतात.महिला नेतृत्वामुळे समाजात समानता आणि सशक्तीकरणालाही चालना मिळते.महिला नेतृत्वामुळे तंत्रज्ञान क्षेत्रात नवीन दृष्टिकोन आणि नाविन्यपूर्ण कल्पना निर्माण होतात. विविधता आणि समावेशकता वाढल्यामुळे संस्थांचे निर्णय अधिक प्रभावी आणि समाजोपयोगी ठरतात.

उदयोन्मुख तंत्रज्ञानाच्या क्षेत्रात महिलांचे नेतृत्व हे समाजाच्या प्रगतीसाठी अत्यंत आवश्यक आहे. ए.आय, डेटा सायन्स, बायोटेक्नॉलॉजी आणि सायबर सुरक्षा या क्षेत्रांत महिलांना प्रोत्साहन आणि संधी दिल्यास भारतासह जगाच्या विकासाला मोठी चालना मिळेल. त्यामुळे शिक्षण, संशोधन आणि तंत्रज्ञान क्षेत्रात महिलांचा सहभाग वाढवणे ही काळाची गरज आहे.

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उदयोन्मुख तंत्रज्ञानाच्या क्षेत्रात महिलांचे नेतृत्व समाजाच्या विकासासाठी अत्यंत महत्त्वाचे आहे. एआय, डेटा सायन्स, बायोटेक्नॉलॉजी आणि सायबर सुरक्षा या क्षेत्रात महिलांनी कामगिरी दिवसेदिवस वाढत आहे.भविष्यात तंत्रज्ञान क्षेत्रात महिलांचा सहभाग वाढवण्यासाठी शिक्षण, संधी आणि प्रोत्साहन देणे आवश्यक आहे.

आधुनिक तंत्रज्ञान आणि महिला योगदान:जागतिक तंत्रज्ञान मध्ये महिलांनी खालील प्रकारे आघाडी घेतलेली दिसून येते.

1. अडाबी ऑगस्टा*: अडाबी ऑगस्टा ही एक महिला आहे जिने पहिला संगणक प्रोग्राम विकसित केला.
2. ग्रेस हॉपर*: ग्रेस हॉपर ही एक महिला आहे जिने पहिला कंपाइलर विकसित केला.
3. शेरिल सँडबर्ग*: शेरिल सँडबर्ग ही एक महिला आहे जिने फेसबुकमध्ये महत्त्वाची भूमिका बजावली आहे.
4. सुंदर पिचाईची पत्नी अंजली पिचाई*: अंजली पिचाई ही एक महिला आहे जिने गूगलमध्ये महत्त्वाची भूमिका बजावली आहे.

***तंत्रज्ञानात महिलांचे भविष्य:**

1. महिलांचे नेतृत्व*: तंत्रज्ञानाच्या क्षेत्रात महिलांचे नेतृत्व वाढेल.
2. नवीन तंत्रज्ञानाचा विकास*: महिलांनी नवीन तंत्रज्ञानाचा विकास करण्यात महत्त्वाची भूमिका बजावेल.
3. तंत्रज्ञानाच्या क्षेत्रात महिलांची संख्या वाढेल: तंत्रज्ञानाच्या क्षेत्रात महिलांची संख्या वाढेल.

भारतातील ए. आय आणि महिला विकास

२१व्या शतकात कृत्रिम बुद्धिमत्ता (ए.आय.) तंत्रज्ञानाने जगातील आर्थिक, सामाजिक आणि शैक्षणिक क्षेत्रात मोठा बदल घडवून आणला आहे. संगणक प्रणाली, डेटा विश्लेषण, रोबोटिक्स आणि डिजिटल तंत्रज्ञानाच्या मदतीने मानवी कार्यक्षमता वाढविणे आणि निर्णयप्रक्रिया अधिक अचूक करणे शक्य झाले आहे. भारतासारख्या विकसनशील देशात ए.आय. तंत्रज्ञान हे विकासाचे महत्त्वाचे साधन ठरत असून उद्योग, आरोग्य, शिक्षण, शेती आणि प्रशासन या क्षेत्रांमध्ये त्याचा मोठ्या प्रमाणावर वापर होत आहे.

या तंत्रज्ञानाच्या युगात भारतातील महिलांची भूमिका अधिक महत्त्वाची ठरत आहे. पूर्वी तंत्रज्ञान आणि संशोधन क्षेत्रात महिलांचा सहभाग मर्यादित होता; परंतु सध्याच्या काळात शिक्षणाच्या वाढत्या संधी,

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डिजिटल साक्षरता आणि सरकारी योजनांमुळे महिलांचा सहभाग सातत्याने वाढत आहे. अनेक महिला डेटा सायन्स, संगणकशास्त्र, कृत्रिम बुद्धिमत्ता आणि स्टार्टअप क्षेत्रात उल्लेखनीय कार्य करत आहेत.

तथापि, ग्रामीण-शहरी दरी, शिक्षणातील असमानता, सामाजिक बंधने आणि डिजिटल साधनांची कमतरता ही काही आव्हाने महिलांसमोर अजूनही उभी आहेत. त्यामुळे महिलांना तांत्रिक शिक्षण, कौशल्य प्रशिक्षण आणि समान संधी उपलब्ध करून देणे आवश्यक आहे. ए.आय. तंत्रज्ञानाच्या काळात महिलांचा सक्रिय सहभाग भारताच्या सर्वांगीण विकासासाठी अत्यंत महत्त्वाचा ठरतो.

मूल्यमापन

ए.आय. तंत्रज्ञानाच्या युगात भारतातील महिलांची भूमिका महत्त्वपूर्ण असली तरी त्याचे समतोल मूल्यमापन करणे आवश्यक आहे. एका बाजूला महिलांचा तंत्रज्ञान क्षेत्रातील सहभाग वाढताना दिसतो. उच्च शिक्षण, डिजिटल साक्षरता आणि विविध सरकारी योजनांमुळे महिलांना कृत्रिम बुद्धिमत्ता, डेटा सायन्स, संगणक तंत्रज्ञान आणि स्टार्टअप क्षेत्रात संधी मिळत आहेत. अनेक महिला संशोधक, अभियंते आणि उद्योजिका म्हणून पुढे येत असून त्या समाजाच्या विकासात सक्रिय योगदान देत आहेत.

दुसऱ्या बाजूला काही मर्यादा आणि आव्हानेही दिसून येतात. ग्रामीण भागातील महिलांना डिजिटल साधने, तांत्रिक शिक्षण आणि इंटरनेट सुविधा यांचा पुरेसा लाभ मिळत नाही. सामाजिक रूढी, आर्थिक मर्यादा आणि कुटुंबीय जबाबदाऱ्या यामुळेही अनेक महिलांना तंत्रज्ञान क्षेत्रात पुढे जाण्यास अडथळे निर्माण होतात. त्यामुळे ए.आय. तंत्रज्ञानाच्या विकासात महिलांचा सहभाग अजूनही अपेक्षित प्रमाणात वाढलेला नाही.

यावर उपाय म्हणून सरकार, शैक्षणिक संस्था आणि समाज यांनी महिलांसाठी तांत्रिक शिक्षण, कौशल्य विकास आणि डिजिटल सुविधा अधिक उपलब्ध करून देणे आवश्यक आहे. महिलांना समान संधी आणि प्रोत्साहन मिळाल्यास त्या ए.आय. तंत्रज्ञानाच्या क्षेत्रात अधिक प्रभावी भूमिका बजावू शकतात. त्यामुळे भारताच्या तांत्रिक आणि सामाजिक प्रगतीला नवी दिशा मिळू शकते.

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सारांश

एकोणिसाव्या शतकात रूढी-परंपरांनी स्त्रियांना दाबले असले तरी सावित्रीबाई फुले व ज्योतिराव फुले दाम्पत्याने (१८४८, पहिली मुलींची शाळा पुणे) शिक्षणाची दारे खुली केली, स्त्री शिक्षणाचा पाया घातला. विसाव्या शतकात हक्क हक्काची जाणीव झाली. UN ने १९७५ ला International Women's Year घोषित करून ८ मार्चला मान्यता, १९७७ ला Women's Rights Day घोषित केले.२१व्या शतकात महिलांना समान प्रगती संधी (FLFPR ४१.७%) मिळाल्या, अर्धवट शिक्षण, proxy नेतृत्व, हिंसा (NCRB ४.४८ लाख) सारखी आव्हाने कायम राहिली .सशक्त नारी-सशक्त जग साध्य करण्यासाठी तळागाळातील (ग्रामीण ६५% साक्षरता) स्त्रियांना सबला करणे आवश्यक होते.

कीवर्ड्स (Keywords) - २१वे शतक, महिला सक्षमीकरण, महिला दिन, महिला योजना, महिला कायदे, महिला आरक्षण, लिंग समानता, तळागाळसक्षमीकरण.

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प्रस्तावना

२१ वे शतक हे माहिती तंत्रज्ञान आणि डिजिटल क्रांतीचे युग आहे. या काळात सर्व काही जलदगतीने बदलत असून, अखिल मानवजात समूहाला या बदलांना तोंड देण्यासाठी जागरूक पावले टाकावी लागत आहेत; त्यात महिलांना अपवाद नाही. बदलत्या काळानुसार आता महिलांना कौटुंबिक जबाबदाऱ्या सांभाळताना स्वतःला आर्थिक, सामाजिक आणि राजकीयदृष्ट्या सक्षम करावे लागत आहे. उदाहरणार्थ, NFHS-5 (२०२१) नुसार महिलांची साक्षरता ७०.३% पर्यंत पोहोचली असली तरी ग्रामीण भागात अजूनही ४१.७% श्रमशक्ती सहभाग (PLFS २०२३-२४) ही खूप कमी आहे, ज्यामुळे सक्षमीकरणाचे बदलते स्वरूप अधिक महत्त्वाचे ठरते.

एकविसाव्या शतकात तंत्रज्ञानाच्या जोरदार प्रगतीमुळे महिलांना आत्मविश्वासाने वावरता येत आहे. नवीन जागतिक व्यवस्थेत नारीशक्तीलाकेंद्रस्थानी स्थान मिळाले असून, पालक आता मुलींनी आत्मनिर्भर होऊन घेतलेली प्रगती पाहू इच्छितात. सर्व क्षेत्रांत – शिक्षण, उद्योग, राजकारण व डिजिटल अर्थव्यवस्थेत – महिलांचे वाढते योगदान दिसून येते. सक्षमीकरण म्हणजे केवळ आर्थिक स्वावलंबन नव्हे तर सामाजिक न्याय, हिंसेपासून संरक्षण आणि राजकीय निर्णयप्रक्रियेत सक्रिय सहभाग; जसे की 'लाखपतीदीदी' योजनेअंतर्गत १.४८ कोटी महिलांना (२०२५) स्वयंरोजगाराची संधी मिळाली.महिलांनी स्वातंत्र्याचा योग्य उपयोग करून स्वतःचा वेगळा ठसा उमटवणे हे आजच्या काळाची गरज आहे. यात आलेल्या आव्हानांना – जसे डिजिटल अंतर, घरगुती हिंसा (NFHS-5 मध्ये २९%) व लिंगभेद – समर्थपणे सामोरे जाणे हे खरे सक्षमीकरण होय. हे सक्षमीकरणखऱ्या अर्थाने साध्य होईल जेव्हा ते तळागाळातील महिलांपर्यंत – ग्रामीण, आदिवासी व शहरी गरीब वर्गापर्यंत – पोहोचेल, जसे नारी शक्ती वंदन अधिनियम २०२३ ने राजकीय समानतेचा प्रयत्न करत आहे.

संशोधनाचे उद्दिष्टे

1. सावित्रीबाई (१८४८) ते २१शे डिजिटल क्रांतीपर्यंतच्या सक्षमीकरण वाटचालीचा ऐतिहासिक आढावा घेणे.

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2. लाखपतीदीदी, नारी शक्ती वंदन, NRLM योजनांचे यश-अपयश मूल्यमापन.
3. NFHS-5, PLFS व NCRB आकडेवारीने सद्यस्थितीचे वैज्ञानिक विश्लेषण करणे.
4. ग्रामीण ६५% साक्षरता, proxy नेतृत्व, डिजिटल अंतर यांसारखीतळागाळ आव्हाने पाहणे.
5. शिक्षण, आरोग्य, सुरक्षा, आर्थिक सक्षमतेसाठी व्यावहारिक उपाय योजना सुचवणे.

संशोधन महत्त्व

1. एकविसाव्या शतकातील बदलांचा आढावा: जग आणि विशेषतः भारतातील डिजिटल क्रांती, COVID-नंतरची पुनर्बांधणी व २०२६ बजेटमधील ₹२८,१८३ कोटींच्या महिला कल्याण निधीचा अभ्यास करून महिलांच्या वाटचालीचे विश्लेषण.
2. महिलांच्या जीवनातील समस्या: NFHS-5 (२०२१) नुसार ग्रामीण महिलांमध्ये २९% घरगुती हिंसा, ४१.७% श्रमशक्ती सहभाग (PLFS २०२३-२४) व डिजिटल अंतरासारख्या आव्हानांचा सखोल अभ्यास.
3. आरोग्य, कायदे व सोयी-सुविधा: मासिक धर्म स्वच्छतेचा हक्क (SC २०२६ निर्णय, Article 21), शक्ती अभियान (२०२१-२६) अंतर्गत ८१२ वन-स्टॉपसेंटर्स व POSH कायद्याची अंमलबजावणी यांचा पडताळा.
4. समाजकारण, अर्थकारण, राजकारणातील सहभाग: २०२४ लोकसभा निवडणुकीत महिलांचा मतदान ६५.८% (पुरुषांपेक्षा जास्त), पण संसदेत केवळ १३.८% प्रतिनिधित्व (२०२५); लाखपतीदीदी योजनेने १.४८ कोटी महिलांना आर्थिक सक्षमता.
5. सक्षमीकरणासाठी योजना: सध्याच्या योजना (सुकन्या समृद्धी, मुख्यमंत्री माझी लाडकी बहीण – महाराष्ट्रात ₹१,५००/महिना) यश-अपयशाचा अभ्यास करून भविष्यातील सुधारणा सुचवणे.
6. भूतकाळ ते भविष्य: आधीच्या काळातील स्त्री जीवन (स्वातंत्र्यपूर्व) चा तुलनात्मक अभ्यास करून वर्तमान (NEP २०२० अंतर्गत शिक्षण) व भविष्यातील सक्षमीकरणाची दिशा निश्चित करणे.

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२१ व्या शतकातील भारत

देशाने २१व्या शतकात केलेली प्रगती त्याच्या उंचावलेल्या राहणीमानातून दिसून येते. सामाजिक, आर्थिक आणि राजकीय बाबतीत भारत आधीच्या दशकांच्या तुलनेत खूप प्रगत देश झाला आहे. उदाहरणार्थ, साक्षरता दर ७४% वरून ७८% (२०२३) झाला असून, महिलांची साक्षरता ७०.३% (ULLAS २०२४); लिंगटक्केवारी सुधारली (NFHS-5); अर्थव्यवस्था ५ व्या क्रमांकावर (UK ला मागे सारून २०२५ मध्ये, GDP $४ ट्रिलियन); आर्थिक सर्वेक्षण २०२६ नुसार ७.४% वाढ अपेक्षित. या प्रगतीचे मोजमाप साक्षरता वाढ, लिंगदरवाढ (९४२:१०००), ब्रिटनला मागे टाकलेली अर्थव्यवस्था (२०२५), टिकावू लोकशाही (V-Dem Index मध्ये मजबूत स्थान) व सामाजिक सेवांवर ७.९% GDP खर्च (२०२६) यांमधून होते. यामुळे ५६.२ कोटी रोजगार (Q2 FY26) व MPI गरीबी ११.२८% वर आली. २१व्या शतकात वाटचाल करताना भारताला अनेक आव्हाने भेडसावत आहेत जसे असमानता (HDI ला ३०.७% नुकसान), बेरोजगारी, पर्यावरण संकट, चीन-पाक सीमा तणाव व द्रव्योन्माद नियंत्रण (२०२६). यातूनच भारताची प्रगती दिसून येते.

२१ व्या शतकातील महिलांचे स्थान

२०११ च्या जनगणनेनुसार भारतात दर हजार पुरुषांमागे ९४३ स्त्रिया होत्या. पण NFHS-5 (२०१९-२१) व २०२५ अपडेटनुसार हे प्रमाण सुधारून १०२० (स्त्रिया प्रति १००० पुरुष) झाले असून, जन्मदरात ९३३; केरळमध्ये सर्वाधिक १०८४–११२१ तर हरियाणा व बिहारमध्ये अजून कमी असून, स्त्री साक्षरता ६४.६% वरून ७०.३% (२०२५, ULLAS) झाली आहे.

२१व्या शतकात महिलांचे सामाजिक, राजकीय व आर्थिक स्थान उंचावले आहे. विविध क्षेत्रांत – स्टार्टअप्समध्ये ५०% महिला संचालक (DPIIT), स्वयंरोजगार ६७.४% (२०२३-२४), पंचायतराज व्यवस्था ५०% आरक्षणामुळे स्थानिक राजकारणात मजबूत उपस्थिती व उल्लेखनीय कामगिरी दिसते. मुद्रा योजनेत ६८% कर्जे महिलांना (₹१४.७२ लाख कोटी). पण त्याचवेळी स्त्री अत्याचार वाढल्याचे दिसून येणे, NCRB २०२३ नुसार ४.४८ लाख गुन्हे (२०२२ पेक्षा ०.७% जास्त), दर लाख महिलांवर ६६.४ गुन्हे; त्यात क्रूरता १.४ लाख, बलात्कार २९,६७० प्रकरणे दिसून येतात. समाजाने आखलेल्या चौकटीत (घर सांभाळणे प्राधान्य)

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भूमिका पार पाडल्यानंतरही अतिरिक्त यश मिळवले तर प्रशंसा, पण कौटुंबिक जबाबदाऱ्या सोडून करिअरवर भर दिला तर लग्नभेद व सामाजिक दबाव ही दुहेरी मानदंड अजूनही आहेत. २१व्या शतकात महिलांना स्वतःचे स्थान निर्माण करताना (लाखपतीदीदी २ कोटी), अनेक आव्हाने लिंगभेद, हिंसा व आर्थिक असमानता सामोरे जावे लागत आहेत.

महिला सक्षमीकरणाचा अर्थ

महिला सक्षमीकरण म्हणजे सामाजिक, आर्थिक, राजकीय क्षेत्रात निर्णयक्षमता व वैयक्तिक स्वातंत्र्य, ज्यामुळे महिलांना पुरुषांप्रमाणे समान अवसर, सन्मान व विकासाची क्षमता मिळते. हे केवळ शिक्षणाने साध्य होत नाही तर समाजकारण, अर्थकारण व राजकारणातील सक्रिय सहभागाने होते; यासाठी समाजाचा दृष्टिकोन सकारात्मक व लिंगसमानतेचा (Gender Budgeting ७% GDP) असावा. समाजातील रूढी-परंपरांचे जुने गाठोडे (पितृसत्ताकता, बालविवाह) पुढच्या पिढीला न देता, त्यातील प्रगतिशील तत्त्वे शुद्ध करून नवीन विचारसरणीने सक्षम करणे आवश्यक आहे. तेव्हाच सक्षमीकरणाला खरा अर्थ प्राप्त होईल. जसे की, नारी शक्ती वंदन अधिनियम २०२३ ने संसदेत ३३% आरक्षण दिले. राजकारणात महिलांनी निवडणुकीत येणे पुरेसे नसून, पतीला सोपवण्याऐवजी स्वतः नेतृत्व घ्यावे (स्थानिक स्वराज्य संस्थेत ५०% यश). अर्थकारणात बचतेऐवजी उद्योग उभारावेत, मुद्रा योजनेत ६८% कर्जे महिलांना (₹१४.७२ लाख कोटी), लाखपतीदीदीने २ कोटी रोजगार निर्मिती व पारदर्शकता निर्माण करणे महत्त्वपूर्ण ठरेल.

१) अमर्त्य सेन (Amartya Sen नोबेल अर्थतज्ज्ञ)

"महिला सक्षमीकरण म्हणजे महिलांना त्यांच्या क्षमतांचा विकास करण्यासाठी आवश्यक स्वातंत्र्य, साधने आणि संधी प्रदान करणे, ज्यामुळे त्या आर्थिक, सामाजिक आणि राजकीय निर्णयप्रक्रियेत सक्रिय भूमिका निभावू शकतात."

२) एस. नायर (S. Nair)

"महिला सक्षमीकरण ही अशी सामाजिक प्रक्रिया आहे. ज्याद्वारे महिला शक्तिहीनतेतून बाहेर येऊन संसाधनांवर नियंत्रण, निर्णयक्षमता आणि समाजातील समान सहभाग मिळवतात."

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३) विश्व महिला संघटना (UN Women संयुक्त राष्ट्रसंघ)

"महिला सक्षमीकरण म्हणजे महिलांना शिक्षण, आरोग्य, सुरक्षितता, आर्थिक संसाधने आणि नेतृत्व संधीच्या समान प्रवेशाद्वारे स्वायत्त व प्रभावी नागरिक बनवण्याची प्रक्रिया."

महिला सक्षमीकरणाचे महत्त्वाचे मुद्दे

१. महिला शिक्षण

२१ व्या शतकात महिलांसाठी शिक्षण ही सक्षमीकरणाची मूलभूत व अविभाज्य गरज आहे. २०११ च्या जनगणनेतील ६४.६% वरून स्त्री साक्षरता आता ७०.३% (NFHS-5, २०१९-२१) व ७८% एकूण (२०२५) झाली असली तरी ग्रामीण भागात ६५% राहिली आहे. त्यातच अर्धवट शिक्षण सोडणाऱ्या महिलांची टक्केवारी १३.५% तसेच मुलींमुळे (२०२४ ASER) उच्च शिक्षण, नोकरी व नेतृत्व संधी नाकारल्या जातात. NEP २०२० ने ५०% GER व समान शिक्षणावर भर देण्यात आले, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao ने ३ कोटी मुलींचे शिक्षण वाचवले. त्याच अनुषंगाने शिक्षणाने आर्थिक स्वावलंबन (FLFPR ४१.७%) व सामाजिक बदल घडवले, पण ड्रॉपआऊटरोखणे ही अत्यंत आवश्यकता आहे.

२. महिला आरोग्य

आरोग्य ही खरी संपत्ती आहे, विशेषतः महिलांचे आरोग्य चांगले असणे पुढील पिढी व कुटुंबासाठी महत्वपूर्ण ठरते. स्त्री जन्मदात्री असून इतर जबाबदाऱ्या पार पाडते, म्हणून २१व्या शतकात सक्षमीकरणासाठी चौरस आहार, नियमित व्यायाम व मानसिक आरोग्य राखणे अत्यावश्यक आहे. NFHS-5 (२०१९-२१) नुसार ५७% महिलांना ॲनिमिया (NFHS-4 च्या ५३% वरून वाढ), ग्रामीणमध्ये ६१%; पण Anaemia Mukt Bharat (२०१८) व "स्वस्थ नारी सशक्त परिवार" अभियानाने (२०२५ मध्ये) १० कोटी+ महिलांना लाभ, PMMVY ने २.३० कोटी लाभार्थी संख्या आहे. आरोग्याने आर्थिक सहभाग व निर्णयक्षमता वाढते, म्हणून ॲनिमियारोखण हे प्राधान्य आहे.

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३. महिला सुरक्षा

भारतीय संविधानाने (कलम १४,१५,२१) महिलांना समानता व संरक्षणाची हमी दिली असली तरी कायद्यांची अंमलबजावणी कमकुवत राहिली आहे. कडक कायदे (IPC ३७५-३७६, POCSO) असूनही गुन्ह्यांचा वेग कमी झालेला नसून, बिल्किसबानो (२००२, २०२२ रिहा), निर्भया (२०१२) नंतर निर्भया फंड (₹८,३५२ कोटी, २०२६) व Disha कायदे; पण NCRB २०२३ – ४.४८ लाख गुन्हे (०.७% वाढ), बलात्कार ३१,२६० (+४.६%). महिला सक्षमीकरणासाठी हे अडथळे दूर करणे गरजेचे आहे. सुरक्षाहेल्पलाइन १८२/१०९८, She-Box पोर्टल (२०२५ मध्ये १२,०००+ तक्रारी) व #MeToo ने जागरूकता वाढवली, पण प्रत्यक्ष घटना व नोंदणी यात ७०% तफावत राहिली आहे.

४. महिला आणि माध्यमे

समाजमाध्यम व जाहिरातींमध्ये पारंपरिकपणे "सुंदर व गोरी" स्त्रीला आकर्षणाचा केंद्रबिंदू बनवले जात असे, पुरुष उत्पादनांच्या जाहिरातींमध्येही महिलांना वस्तूप्रमाणे दाखविल्याचे दिसून येते, Fair & Lovely (२०२० मध्ये Glow & Lovely) ने गोऱपणा प्रचार सोडून त्वचेच्या आरोग्यावर भर दिला, ज्यामुळे सकारात्मक बदल दिसतो. माध्यम क्षेत्रात महिलांना नोकरी संधी (३५% पत्रकार, २०२६) मिळतात, पण O Womaniya! या अहवालानुसार १२% CXO पदे व १५% HOD (दिग्दर्शन, छायाचित्रण); ग्रामीण पत्रकारिता (Khabar Lahariya) ने महिलांच्या आवाजांना व्यासपीठ दिले. माध्यमे एका स्त्रीचे चित्र समाजासमोर कसे ठेवतात हे सक्षमीकरणासाठी महत्त्वाचे स्टीरियोटाइप्स ऐवजी सशक्त प्रतिमा प्रोत्साहित कराव्यात.

५. २१ व्या शतकातील महिला सक्षमीकरण

महिला सक्षमीकरण म्हणजे आर्थिक, राजकीय व सामाजिक बाबतीत स्वतःला सशक्त करणे, ज्यामुळे समान अवसर व निर्णयक्षमता मिळते. याबाबत ग्रामीण व शहरी दोन्ही गटांची विचार आवश्यकता आहे.

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अ. ग्रामीण महिला सक्षमीकरण

पूर्वीच्या काळात ग्रामीण महिलांचे जीवन हलाखीचे व रोजदारीवर अवलंबून होते. २१व्या शतकात शिक्षण वाढले (प्राथमिक NER ९२%, पण secondary ७१%; ASER २०२४); कृषीपलीकडे संधी – NRLM ने १०.०५ कोटी कुटुंबे ९०.९ लाख SHG मध्ये एकत्रित, लाखपतीदीदी २ कोटी रोजगार इ. ग्रामीण चित्रण दिसून येते.

ब. शहरी महिला सक्षमीकरण

शहरी महिलांना स्वयंरोजगार संधी (मुद्रा ७०% कर्जे महिलांना, Stand-Up India ₹१ कोटी); स्टार्टअप्समध्ये १८% महिला उद्योजक (२०२५ नुसार).

त्याचप्रमाणे SHG बचत गट व शासकीय योजना (PMEGP) ने दोन्ही भागांत प्रगती केली असून. शासनाच्या योजनांनी (DAY-NRLM, Mission Shakti) ग्रामीण-शहरी असमानता कमी होत असली तरी तळागाळापर्यंत पोहोचणे गरजेचे आहे.

महिला सक्षमीकरणातील बदलते स्वरूप

२१ व्या शतकात महिला सक्षमीकरणाचे स्वरूप बहुआयामी व गतिमान झाले असून, "Empower women, empower humanity" ही संकल्पना केवळ घोषणाबाबत न राहता धोरणीय पातळीवर उतरली आहे. शांतता, लिंग समानता, निर्णयप्रक्रियेत सहभाग, हिंसा विरोध, भविष्यकाळातील आव्हाने व समान संधी या थीम्सनी वैश्विक चर्चेला दिशा व उधाण दिली आहे. ८ मार्च हा आता केवळ जागतिक महिना वारी नसून राष्ट्रीय, प्रादेशिक व स्थानिक पातळीवर लिंग न्याय, हिंसा विरोध व नेतृत्व विकासावर चर्चेचे केंद्रबिंदू ठरलेला असून. भारतात विविध क्षेत्रांत महिलांचे योगदान उल्लेखनीय आहे, रिक्षाचालकांपासूनअवकाशवीरांपर्यंत दिसून येते. १८व्या लोकसभेत ७४ महिला खासदार (१३.६%, पूर्वीपेक्षा १.५% घट असली तरी उच्चतम), पंचायतीत ५०% सरपंच (लोकसभा पेक्षा दुप्पट) व CEOs मध्ये १२% वाढ (२०२६, NSE). या प्रगतीमुळे सामाजिक परिवर्तन घडले असले तरी पूर्ण सक्षमीकरणासाठीतळागाळापर्यंत पोहोचणे आवश्यक आहे.

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तरीही जागतिक आकडेवारी तपासली तर महिलांच्या स्थितीत अपेक्षित प्रगती दिसत नाही. दररोज ७१२ महिला (२०२३, WHO नुसार) गर्भारपण-बाळंतपण कारणांमुळे मृत्यू पावतात, यापैकी ९४% कमी संसाधन असलेल्या देशांत; भारताचा MMR ९७/लाख (२०१८-२०) असून विकसनशील देशांत उच्च आहे. अजूनही ग्रामीण महिलांना पाण्यासाठी वणवण करावी लागते (Jal Jeevan Mission ७०% कव्हरेज) झाले असले तरी ग्रामीण भागात फक्त नामधारी स्वरूप प्राप्त केल्याची दिसून येत आहे. २१व्या शतकात सक्षमीकरणाचे स्वरूप बदलले असले तरी विषमता कायम उच्चशिक्षित महिलांना संधी (FLFPR ४१.७%, PLFS २०२५), पण सामान्य महिलांना आव्हाने, व्यसन वाढ (८.९% तंबाखू, NFHS-5), चुकीचे आचरण, भूणहत्या (PCPNDT कायद्यावावजी ५१९,००० वार्षिक missing girls २०२६ पर्यंत), शारीरिक-लैंगिक शोषण (NCRB ४.४८ लाख), अर्धवट शिक्षण (secondary dropout १३.५%). हे भयावह आहे. आनंदाच्या संकल्पना बदलल्या (स्वावलंबन), पण केवळ काहींच्या आयुष्यात सुशिक्षितही निर्णय घेण्यात दबावाखाली आहे.

अगदी सुशिक्षित महिलाही अनेकदा मते ठामपणे मांडण्यात मागे पडतात, कारण निर्णय प्रक्रियेत दबाव व लिंगभेद कायम दिसतो. मोठ्या कंपन्यांच्या संचालक मंडळींवर महिलांचा वाटा फक्त २१% (NSE २०२६, २०१४ च्या ५% वरून वाढ), स्वतंत्र महिलांdirectors २८% पण executive केवळ १०%; बँकांमध्ये १७%, पर्यावरण संरक्षणात मात्र महिलांचे नेतृत्व उल्लेखनीय असून, ग्रेटाथुनबर्गने (२०१८ पासून) शाळा बंदी करून Fridays for Future चळवळ उभी केली, तर भारतात मेधा पाटकरने नर्मदा बचाओ आंदोलन (१९८५ पासून) राबवले, लाखो विस्थापितांसाठी लढा देण्याचे उल्लेखनीय कार्य करण्यात आले. २१व्या शतकात खेळात पुरुषप्रधानता असली तरी महिलांनी पावले उचललेली आहे. सेरेना विल्यम्स (२३ ग्रँड स्लॅम), मारिया शारापोवा, पी.व्ही. सिंधू (ओलिंपिककांस्य), मेरी कोम (६ वेळा वर्ल्ड चॅम्पियन); भारतात हरमनप्रीतकौर (WPL), मीराबाई चानू (CWG गोल्ड २०२५). या उदाहरणांमधूनसक्षमीकरणाचे नवे स्वरूप दिसते, पण संख्यात्मक वाढ आजुनही आवश्यक आहे. त्यातल्यात तर ग्रामीण स्तरावर वाढ करणे अधिकच आवश्यकता दिसून येते.

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महिला सक्षमीकरणाचे जागतिक प्रयत्न

जागतिक पातळीवर महिला सक्षमीकरणासाठी उल्लेखनीय प्रयत्न होत असले तरी वास्तवात अनेक विरोधाभास कायम आहेत. कमला हॅरिस (संयुक्त राष्ट्रांच्या ४९व्या उपराष्ट्रपती, २०२१–२५), जॅसिंडाआर्डर्न (न्यूझीलंडच्या माजी प्रधानमंत्री, २०१७–२३ - COVID-१९ काळातील प्रभावी नेतृत्वासाठी ओळखल्या जातात), आणि गीता गोपीनाथ (आंतरराष्ट्रीय नाणेनिधी – IMF – मधील पहिल्या उपमुख्यअर्थशास्त्रज्ञ, २०१९–२५; सध्या हार्वर्ड विश्वविद्यालयात कार्यरत) अशा महिलांनी जागतिक स्तरावर मानाच्या पदांवर उल्लेखनीय यश मिळवले आहेत.

भारतातील ISRO च्या मंगळयान-३ मोहिमेत सुमारे १५% महिला वैज्ञानिकांचा सहभाग होता, हे भारतातील वैज्ञानिक क्षेत्रातील महिलांची वाढती उपस्थिती दर्शवते. तरीही अनेक सामाजिक आणि आरोग्यविषयक आव्हाने अद्यापही पुढे येतात. उदाहरणार्थ, अमेरिकेत २०२२ मध्ये Roe v. Wade निर्णय उलटविल्याने महिलांच्या गर्भपात अधिकारांवर मर्यादा आल्या. त्याच वेळी भारत आणि आफ्रिकेतील अनेक देशांमध्ये ॲनिमियाचे प्रमाण ५७% (NFHS-5 नुसार) असून, जागतिक स्तरावर ३४% प्रजननक्षम वयोगटातील महिला या समस्येने प्रभावित आहेत (२०२५ पर्यंतची आकडेवारी).या पार्श्वभूमीवर, "UN Women" ही २०१० पासून कार्यरत असलेली आंतरराष्ट्रीय संस्था स्त्री सक्षमीकरण आणि लिंगसमानतेसाठीकेंद्रबिंदूची भूमिका बजावते. तिचे 'त्रिस्तरीयमंडेट' — म्हणजे मानक निर्धारण, आंतरराष्ट्रीय समन्वय आणि कार्यक्रम राबविणेयांद्वारे ती जागतिक लिंग समानता धोरणांचे नेतृत्व करते. "Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)" सारख्या मंचांद्वारे जागतिक मानदंड विकसित केले जातात, तसेच महिलांवरील हिंसा विरोधातील उपक्रम, आर्थिक सक्षमीकरण आणि समान संधी कार्यक्रमांवर लक्ष केंद्रित केले जाते.

या सर्व प्रयत्नांमधून जागतिक पातळीवर काही प्रमाणात प्रगती आणि जाणीव वाढल्याचे दिसते. मात्र विकसनशील देशांमध्ये धोरणांची अंमलबजावणी आणि सामाजिक मानसिकतेतील बदल हे अजूनही मोठे आव्हान ठरते.

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महिला सक्षमीकरणाचे भारतातील प्रयत्न

विकसनशील देश म्हणून भारतात महिला सक्षमीकरण म्हणजे जन्मापासूनच भेदभावाचा सामना करणाऱ्या स्त्रीला आर्थिक, सामाजिक आणि राजकीय जीवनात समान संधी व प्रतिष्ठा मिळवून देणे होय. राष्ट्रीय कुटुंब आरोग्य सर्वेक्षण (NFHS-5) नुसार, भारतात लिंग गुणोत्तर १०२० असूनही महिलांच्या सर्वांगीण सक्षमीकरणासाठी अजूनही निरंतर प्रयत्न आवश्यक आहेत.

आर्थिक सक्षमीकरणासाठी शासनाने विविध कार्यक्रम राबविले आहेत. "राष्ट्रीय ग्रामीण आजीविकाअभियान" (NRLM) अंतर्गत १०.०५ कोटी कुटुंबे सुमारे ९० लाख स्वयं-सहायता गटांत (SHG) संघटित करण्यात आली आहेत. "लाखपतीदीदी" उपक्रमाद्वारे ३ कोटी महिलांना ₹१ लाखांपेक्षा अधिक वार्षिक उत्पन्न मिळवून देण्याचे लक्ष्य २०२६ पर्यंत ठेवले आहे. तसेच मुद्रा योजनेत मंजूर झालेल्या कर्जांपैकी जवळपास ७०% कर्जे महिला उद्योजकांना दिली गेली असून त्याची एकूण रक्कम ₹१४.७२ लाख कोटी आहे.

सामाजिक स्थिती सशक्त करण्यासाठी, विविध कल्याणकारी उपक्रम राबविले जात आहेत. उदाहरणार्थ, हिमाचल प्रदेश सरकारकडून विधवा पुनर्विवाहासाठी ₹२५,००० इतके प्रोत्साहन अनुदान दिले जाते. "मिशन शक्ती" अंतर्गत ८१२ हून अधिक One Stop Centres स्थापन करण्यात आले आहेत, जेथे महिलांना अत्याचार, कायदेशीर सल्ला आणि पुनर्वसन सुविधा मिळतात.

राजकीय सक्षमीकरणासाठी, स्थानिक स्वराज्य संस्थांमध्ये ५०% आरक्षणामुळे सुमारे १४ लाख महिला प्रतिनिधी निवडून आल्या आहेत. तसेच २०२९ पासून प्रभावी होणाऱ्या 'नारी शक्ती वंदन अधिनियम' नुसार लोकसभा आणि विधानसभांमध्ये ३३% आरक्षणाची तरतूद करण्यात आली आहे.

आरोग्य सक्षमीकरणाच्या क्षेत्रात, देशभरात सुमारे १४ लाख आशा सेविका कार्यरत असून त्या जननी सुरक्षा योजना अंतर्गत प्रसूती, बाळंतपण आणि पोषण सेवा पुरवतात. परिणामी, मातामृत्यू दरात (MMR) ८३% इतकी घट झाली आहे, जी एक महत्त्वपूर्ण उपलब्धी आहे.

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थोडक्यात, या सर्व योजनांमुळे भारतात स्त्री सक्षमीकरणाच्या दिशेने प्रभावी प्रगती दिसून येते. तथापि, धोरणांची प्रभावी अंमलबजावणी, तळागाळातील पोहोच आणि सामाजिक मानसिकतेत बदल घडवणे हे अद्यापही प्रमुख आव्हान राहिले आहे.

२१ व्या शतकातील महिलांसमोरील आव्हाने

२१ व्या शतकात स्त्री आता केवळ उपभोग्य साधन नसून शिक्षित, स्वावलंबी आणि सक्षम व्यक्ती म्हणून उदयास आली आहे. तरीही तिला अजूनही बहुआयामी आव्हाने भेडसावत आहेत, जी तिच्या समग्र विकासात अडथळा ठरतात.

१. शिक्षणातील अडचणी

माध्यमिक स्तरावर १३.५% मुलींचे शिष्यवृत्ती सोडणे (ASER २०२४ नुसार) भविष्यातील करिअर संधींना संकट निर्माण करते. यामुळे उच्च शिक्षण आणि व्यावसायिक विकासाची संधी मर्यादित राहते.

२. व्यावसायिक आणि कौटुंबिक द्वंद्वः

शिक्षित महिलांना करिअरमध्ये ७४% ब्रीक (मध्यंतर बंद) सहन करावे लागतात, तर ४६% महिलांना कुटुंब जबाबदारी पार पाडावी लागते.

३. राजकीय सहभागातील मर्यादा

पंचायती राज संस्थांमध्ये ५०% आरक्षणामुळे महिलांना निवड मिळते, पण सुमारे ४०% प्रकरणांमध्ये 'पुरुषप्रधान' किंवा proxy leadership च्या माध्यमातून पुरुषच खरा कारभार चालवतात. परिणामी, महिलांना अधिकाराचा वास्तविक वापर करता येत नाही.

४. आरोग्य व सुरक्षितता

मानसिक आरोग्य संकट (३०% महिलांमध्ये तणाव-चिंता) आणि जलवायू संकट (ग्रामीण महिलांना पाणी-इंधनासाठी जास्त प्रवास) ही आव्हाने वाढली आहेत. स्वसंरक्षणासाठी 'रेड ब्रिगेड' सारखे कार्यक्रम चालू असले तरी प्रत्यक्ष अंमलबजावणी अपुरी आहे.

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५. डिजिटल व सायबर आव्हाने

डिजिटल लिंगगॅप (महिलांचा इंटरनेट वापर १५% कमी) आणि सायबर हिंसा (३०% महिलांना ऑनलाइन छळ) ही नवीन धोके वाढत आहेत.

६. सांस्कृतिक व सामाजिक बंधने

आत्मविश्वासाने मत मांडणे, जाती अंतर्गत विवाह करणे, चुकीचे आचरण टाळणे आणि पुढील पिढी घडवणे हे सतत चालू असणारे आव्हान आहे.

या आव्हानांना तोंड देण्यासाठी सामाजिक जागृती, संस्थागत सुधारणा, डिजिटल साक्षरता आणि मानसिक आरोग्य धोरणे आवश्यक आहेत. केवळ आरक्षण किंवा कायदे पुरेसे नसून, प्रत्यक्ष सक्षमीकरणाला चालना देणारे उपक्रम राबवणे अत्यंत गरजेचे आहे.

निष्कर्ष

२१व्या शतकातील बदलते सामाजिक-आर्थिक स्वरूप, जागतिक-भारतीय प्रयत्नांचे विश्लेषण करून खालील निष्कर्ष अधोरेखित होतात. हे तंत्रज्ञान व जलद बदलांचे युग असून, स्त्रियांचे जीवन सामाजिक-आर्थिकदृष्ट्या पूर्णपणे रूपांतरित होत आहे. शिक्षणाने (७०.३% साक्षरता, NEP २०२०) सक्षमीकरणाला पाया मजबूत केला असला तरी ग्रामीण भागात (६५% साक्षरता) अजूनही अंतर आहे. समाज आता आत्मनिर्भर महिलांचे नेतृत्व स्वीकारत आहे, पण proxy leadership (४०% पंचायत प्रकरणे) आणि कौटुंबिक दबावामुळे संघर्ष अनिवार्य ठरतो. राजकीय सहभाग वाढला असून पंचायतीत ५०% आणि लोकसभेत १३.६% आरक्षणामुळे १८व्या लोकसभेत ७४ महिला खासदार निवडून आल्या आहेत. आर्थिक सक्षमता योजनांनी गती मिळवली असून मुद्रा योजनेत ७०% कर्जे महिलांना, "लाखपतीदीदी" अंतर्गत ३ कोटी महिलांना लक्ष्य, आणि ९० लाख SHG मध्ये १० कोटी कुटुंबे संघटित झाली आहेत. थोडक्यातच, २१व्या शतकात सामाजिक, राजकीय व आर्थिक प्रगती उल्लेखनीय आहे. तरीही सक्षमीकरणतळागाळापर्यंत (ग्रामीण-शहरी असमानता) पोहोचले पाहिजे. SDG-5 (लिंग समानता) साध्य करण्यासाठी अंमलबजावणी, सामाजिक जागृती आणि धोरणात्मक एकात्मता आवश्यक आहे.

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१. ग्रामीण भागात शिक्षण व ड्रॉपआऊट रोखण्यासाठी NEP २०२० अंतर्गत ५०% GER लक्ष्य व Beti Bachao Beti Padhao विस्तार वाढविणे.

२. आरोग्यासाठी Anaemia Mukt Bharat व PMMVY सारख्या अभियानांना गती देऊन ॲनिमिया ५७% वरून खाली आणणे.

३. सुरक्षेसाठी निर्भया फंड व ERSS २.० अंतर्गत ८१२+ वन-स्टॉपसेंटर्स व She-Box पोर्टल मजबूत करणे.

४. आर्थिक सक्षमतेसाठीलाखपतीदीदी (३ कोटी लक्ष्य), मुद्रा (७०% कर्जे महिलांना) व शी-मार्ट विक्री केंद्रे उभारणे.

५. राजकीय सहभागासाठी नारी शक्ती वंदन अधिनियम २०२३ ची अंमलबजावणी करण्यापूर्वी महिलांसाठी कार्यशाळा व मार्गदर्शन व्यासपीठ तयार करणे, व proxy नेतृत्व रोखणे.

६. डिजिटल अंतर कमी करण्यासाठी डिजिटल साक्षरता मोहिमा व इंटरनेट प्रवेश वाढवणे.

७. जनजागृतीसाठी SHG, माझी लाडकी बहीण (महाराष्ट्र ₹१,५००/महिना) सारख्या योजना व सामाजिक मोहिमा तळागाळापर्यंत पोहोचवणे.

संदर्भग्रंथ

१. गोरे, निलम, डॉ. स्त्री आणि कायदा.

२. काळदाते, सुधा, डॉ. भारतातील सामाजिक समस्या.

३. चौधरी, नंदीनी. महिलांचे सबलीकरण आणि शेतकरी महिला आघाडीची योगदान.

४. डॉ. सुधीर रशिंगकर (एप्रिल २०२२) महिलांनो व्हा उद्योजक बना. उद्योजक मासिक, महाराष्ट्र उद्योजक विकास केंद्र प्रकाशन, औरंगाबाद.

५. डॉ. सुनिलकुमार लबटे: महाराष्ट्रातील महिला व बालकल्याणः दशा आणि दिशा, अक्षर दाहन, कोल्हापूर.

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उच्च शिक्षणातील महिलांची स्थिती : प्रवेशाच्या संधी, समता आणि शैक्षणिक नेतृत्वाचा चिकित्सक अभ्यास

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सारांश:

शिक्षण हे कोणत्याही राष्ट्राच्या सामाजिक, आर्थिक आणि सांस्कृतिक विकासाचे प्रमुख साधन मानले जाते. विशेषतः महिलांसाठी उच्च शिक्षण हे केवळ ज्ञानप्राप्तीचे माध्यम नसून सामाजिक सक्षमीकरण, आर्थिक स्वावलंबन आणि वैचारिक विकासाचे प्रभावी साधन आहे. भारतात गेल्या काही दशकांत महिलांच्या उच्च शिक्षणातील सहभागामध्ये लक्षणीय वाढ झालेली दिसून येते. शिक्षणाच्या प्रसारामुळे, सरकारी धोरणांच्या अंमलबजावणीमुळे आणि सामाजिक जागरूकतेमुळे महिलांच्या प्रवेशाच्या संधींमध्ये वाढ झाली आहे.AISHE (All India Survey on Higher Education) अहवालानुसार भारतातील उच्च शिक्षणातील विद्यार्थ्यांपैकी जवळपास निम्मे विद्यार्थी महिला आहेत. तथापि, महिलांचा प्रवेश दर वाढत असला तरी शैक्षणिक नेतृत्व, संशोधन, प्रशासकीय पदे आणि निर्णयप्रक्रिया यामध्ये महिलांचे प्रतिनिधित्व तुलनेने कमी आहे.

या संशोधन लेखात उच्च शिक्षणातील महिलांची स्थिती तीन महत्त्वपूर्ण पैलूंवर आधारित विश्लेषित करण्यात आली आहे – प्रवेशाच्या संधी, लिंगसमता आणि शैक्षणिक नेतृत्व. ग्रामीण-शहरी विषमता, सामाजिक रूढी, आर्थिक मर्यादा, सुरक्षिततेचे प्रश्न आणि संस्थात्मक अडथळे हे महिलांच्या शैक्षणिक प्रगतीसाठी अजूनही महत्त्वाचे अडथळे ठरतात.

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या संशोधनाचा निष्कर्ष असा आहे की केवळ प्रवेश वाढवणे पुरेसे नाही; तर समान संधी, सुरक्षित शैक्षणिक वातावरण, नेतृत्व विकास आणि लिंगसंवेदनशील धोरणांची प्रभावी अंमलबजावणी आवश्यक आहे. महिलांचे उच्च शिक्षण हे केवळ वैयक्तिक प्रगतीचे साधन नसून राष्ट्राच्या समावेशक विकासासाठी अत्यावश्यक घटक आहे.

कीवर्ड्स- उच्च शिक्षण, महिलांची स्थिती, प्रवेशाच्या संधी, लिंगसमता, शैक्षणिक नेतृत्व, AISHE अहवाल, ग्रामीण-शहरी विषमता, महिला सक्षमीकरण

प्रस्तावना:

शिक्षण हे मानवी विकासाचे मूलभूत साधन मानले जाते. आधुनिक समाजात शिक्षणामुळे व्यक्तीचा बौद्धिक, सामाजिक आणि आर्थिक विकास घडतो. उच्च शिक्षणामुळे व्यक्तीमध्ये विश्लेषणात्मक विचार, संशोधन कौशल्ये आणि नेतृत्व क्षमता विकसित होतात.

महिलांच्या संदर्भात उच्च शिक्षणाचे महत्त्व अधिक अधोरेखित होते. कारण शिक्षणामुळे महिलांना सामाजिक आणि आर्थिक स्वावलंबन प्राप्त होते तसेच समाजातील निर्णय प्रक्रियेत त्यांचा सहभाग वाढतो.आधुनिक शिक्षणशास्त्रीय दृष्टिकोनानुसार महिलांचे शिक्षण हे केवळ वैयक्तिक विकासाचे साधन नसून सामाजिक न्याय, लिंगसमता आणि शाश्वत विकासाच्या दृष्टीने अत्यंत महत्त्वाचे मानले जाते.महिलांचे शिक्षण केवळ वैयक्तिक प्रगतीसाठीच नव्हे तर कुटुंब आणि समाजाच्या विकासासाठीही महत्त्वपूर्ण ठठरतेभारतीय समाजामध्ये ऐतिहासिकदृष्ट्या महिलांच्या शिक्षणाला दीर्घकाळ दुय्यम स्थान देण्यात आले होते. पितृसत्ताक सामाजिक रचना, सांस्कृतिक परंपरा, बालविवाह, आर्थिक मर्यादा आणि सामाजिक असमानता यांमुळे महिलांना शिक्षणाच्या संधी मर्यादित प्रमाणात उपलब्ध होत्या. तथापि समाजसुधारकांच्या प्रयत्नांमुळे महिलांच्या शिक्षणाला नवीन दिशा मिळाली.

सावित्रीबाई फुले, महात्मा ज्योतिराव फुले, पंडिता रमाबाई यांसारख्या समाजसुधारकांनी महिलांच्या शिक्षणासाठी महत्त्वपूर्ण कार्य केले. त्यांच्या प्रयत्नांमुळे भारतीय समाजामध्येमहिलांच्या शिक्षणाबाबत सकारात्मक दृष्टिकोन निर्माण झाला.स्वातंत्र्यानंतर भारतीय संविधानाने सर्व नागरिकांना समानतेचा अधिकार दिला आणि शिक्षणामध्ये लिंगभेद न करता समान संधी उपलब्ध करून देण्याचे तत्त्व स्वीकारले. त्यानंतर

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सरकारने महिलांच्या शिक्षणासाठी विविध योजना रराबवल्यागेल्या काही दशकांत भारतात शिक्षण व्यवस्थेत लक्षणीय परिवर्तन झाले आहे. विशेषतः उच्च शिक्षणाच्या क्षेत्रात महिलांचा सहभाग वाढताना दिसतो.AISHE (2021-22) अहवालानुसार भारतातील उच्च शिक्षणातील एकूण विद्यार्थ्यांपैकी महिलांचे प्रमाण सुमारे 49% असून महिला Gross Enrolment Ratio सुमारे 28.5% आआहेतथापि, प्रवेश वाढला असला तरी शिक्षणाच्या गुणवत्तेत, विषय निवडीत आणि शैक्षणिक नेतृत्वात अजूनही लिंग असमानता दिसून येते. STEM क्षेत्रात महिलांचा सहभाग कमी आहे आणि विद्यापीठ प्रशासनातील उच्च पदांवर महिलांचे प्रतिनिधित्व मर्यादित आहे.

संशोधन उद्दिष्टे:

1. उच्च शिक्षणातील महिलांच्या प्रवेशाच्या संधींचा अभ्यास करणे
2. शिक्षणातील लिंगसमतेचे विश्लेषण करणे
3. महिलांच्या शिक्षणातील अडथळ्यांचा अभ्यास करणे
4. महिला सक्षमीकरणासाठी आवश्यक उपाययोजना सुचविणे

गृहीतके:

1. उच्च शिक्षणातील प्रवेशाच्या संधी वाढल्यास महिलांच्या उच्च शिक्षणातील सहभागामध्ये लक्षणीय वाढ होते.
2. ग्रामीण आणि शहरी भागांमध्ये महिलांच्या उच्च शिक्षणातील प्रवेशाच्या संधींमध्ये लक्षणीय विषमता आढळते.
3. उच्च शिक्षण संस्थांमध्ये महिलांचा प्रवेश वाढत असला तरी शैक्षणिक संसाधने, संधी आणि प्रगतीच्या बाबतीत लिंगसमतेचे पूर्णतः साध्य होणे अद्याप मर्यादित आहे.
4. उच्च शिक्षण संस्थांमधील शैक्षणिक नेतृत्वाच्या पदांवर महिलांचे प्रतिनिधित्व पुरुषांच्या तुलनेत कमी आहे.
5. सामाजिक रूढी, कुटुंबीयजबाबदाऱ्या आणि आर्थिक मर्यादा या घटकांचा महिलांच्या उच्च शिक्षणातील सहभागावर महत्त्वपूर्ण परिणाम होतो.

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संशोधन पद्धती (Research Methodology)

या संशोधनात द्वितीयक माहिती स्रोतांचामुख्यत्वे वापर करण्यात आला आहे.

मुख्य स्रोत पुढीलप्रमाणे :

* AISHE अहवाल
* UGC अहवाल
* UNESCO अहवाल
* शैक्षणिक संशोधन लेख
* सरकारी धोरणे आणि पुस्तके

संशोधनासाठी वर्णनात्मक (Descriptive) आणि विश्लेषणात्मक (Analytical) पद्धतीचा वापर करण्यात आला आहे.

उच्च शिक्षणातील महिलांची स्थिती

प्रवेशाच्या संधी, समता आणि शैक्षणिक नेतृत्वाचा चिकित्सक अभ्यास" या विषयाच्या संदर्भात काही मूलभूत संकल्पना समजून घेणे आवश्यक आहे. उच्च शिक्षण, प्रवेशाच्या संधी, लिंगसमता, शैक्षणिक सक्षमीकरण आणि शैक्षणिक नेतृत्व या संकल्पनांचा परस्परसंबंध लक्षात घेतल्याशिवाय या विषयाचा सखोल अभ्यास करणे शक्य होत नाही. विविध राष्ट्रीय आणि आंतरराष्ट्रीय अहवालांमधील माहितीचा विचार करता या संकल्पनांचे शास्त्रीय विश्लेषण करणे महत्त्वाचे ठरते.

१) उच्च शिक्षणाची संकल्पना

उच्च शिक्षण म्हणजे माध्यमिक शिक्षणानंतर विद्यापीठे, महाविद्यालये आणि इतर उच्च शिक्षण संस्थांद्वारे दिले जाणारे प्रगत व विशेषीकृत शिक्षण होय. उच्च शिक्षणाचा उद्देश केवळ ज्ञानप्राप्तीपुरता मर्यादित नसून संशोधन, नवोन्मेष, बौद्धिक विकास आणि सामाजिक नेतृत्व निर्माण करणे हा आहे. भारतात *AISHE (All India Survey on Higher Education)* अहवालानुसार उच्च शिक्षण व्यवस्थेमध्ये विद्यापीठे, स्वायत्त संस्था, महाविद्यालये आणि संशोधन केंद्रांचा समावेश होतो. AISHE च्या अलीकडील अहवालानुसार उच्च शिक्षणातील एकूण नोंदणीमध्ये महिलांचे प्रमाण सुमारे 49 टक्क्यांपर्यंत पोहोचले आहे, जे महिलांच्या वाढत्या

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शैक्षणिक सहभागाचे द्योतक आहे. तथापि, काही विशिष्ट शाखांमध्ये, विशेषतः तांत्रिक व संशोधन क्षेत्रांमध्ये महिलांचे प्रमाण तुलनेने कमी असल्याचे दिसून येते.

२) प्रवेशाच्या संधी (Access to Higher Education)

प्रवेशाच्या संधी ही संकल्पना उच्च शिक्षणातील समान संधींच्या तत्त्वाशी संबंधित आहे. या संकल्पनेत सामाजिक, आर्थिक, भौगोलिक आणि सांस्कृतिक घटकांचा विचार केला जातो. AISHE अहवालानुसार ग्रामीण व शहरी भागांमध्ये उच्च शिक्षणातील प्रवेशामध्ये लक्षणीय फरक दिसून येतो. ग्रामीण भागातील मुलींना शिक्षणाच्या संधी मर्यादित प्रमाणात उपलब्ध होतात. यामागे आर्थिक अडचणी, पायाभूत सुविधांचा अभाव, वाहतूक समस्या आणि सामाजिक दृष्टिकोन यांसारखे घटक कारणीभूत आहेत.भारतामध्ये गेल्या काही दशकांत महिलांच्या उच्च शिक्षणातील प्रवेशामध्ये मोठ्या प्रमाणात वाढ झालेली दिसून येते. याचे प्रमुख कारण म्हणजे शिक्षणाच्या क्षेत्रातील सरकारी धोरणे, आर्थिक मदत योजना आणि सामाजिक जागरूकता.उदाहरणार्थ, अनेक राज्यांमध्ये मुलींसाठी मोफत शिक्षण, शिष्यवृत्ती योजना आणि प्रवास सवलती उपलब्ध करून देण्यात आल्या आहेत. त्यामुळे ग्रामीण आणि आर्थिकदृष्ट्या दुर्बल घटकांतील मुलींनाही शिक्षणाची संधी मिळू लागली आहे.UGC (University Grants Commission) च्या विविध अहवालांमध्येही असे नमूद केले आहे की उच्च शिक्षणातील प्रवेशाच्या संधी वाढविण्यासाठी शिष्यवृत्ती योजना, महिला वसतिगृहे, संशोधन अनुदान आणि विशेष प्रोत्साहन योजना राबविण्यात येत आहे.तथापि, अजूनही ग्रामीण भागात उच्च शिक्षण संस्थांची कमतरता, सुरक्षिततेचे प्रश्न आणि आर्थिक मर्यादा यामुळे मुलींना शिक्षणासाठी अडथळे येतात. त्यामुळे प्रवेशाच्या संधी वाढविण्यासाठी शिक्षणाची उपलब्धता आणि पायाभूत सुविधा सुधारण्याची गरज आहे.

३) लिंगसमता (Gender Equality)

लिंगसमता ही आधुनिक शिक्षणव्यवस्थेतील एक मूलभूत मूल्य मानली जाते. उच्च शिक्षणाच्या संदर्भात लिंगसमता म्हणजे महिला आणि पुरुष विद्यार्थ्यांना शिक्षणाच्या संधी, संसाधने, सुविधा आणि प्रगतीच्या समान संधी उपलब्ध होणे होय. UNESCO आणि इतर आंतरराष्ट्रीय संस्थांच्या अहवालांमध्ये शिक्षणातील लिंगसमतेला शाश्वत विकासाचे महत्त्वपूर्ण उद्दिष्ट मानले गेले आहे.

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AISHE अहवालानुसार उच्च शिक्षणातील महिलांची एकूण नोंदणी वाढत असली, तरी काही क्षेत्रांमध्ये लिंगसमतेचे उद्दिष्ट पूर्णपणे साध्य झालेले नाही. उदाहरणार्थ, अभियांत्रिकी, तंत्रज्ञान आणि संशोधन क्षेत्रांमध्ये महिलांचे प्रतिनिधित्व तुलनेने कमी आहे. तसेच प्राध्यापक आणि वरिष्ठ शैक्षणिक पदांवरही पुरुषांचे प्रमाण अधिक असल्याचे आढळते.

४) शैक्षणिक सक्षमीकरण (Educational Empowerment)

शिक्षणामुळे महिलांच्या व्यक्तिमत्त्वाचा विकास होतो, त्यांची निर्णयक्षमता वाढते आणि त्यांना सामाजिक व आर्थिक क्षेत्रात अधिक संधी उपलब्ध होतात. शिक्षण हे महिलांच्या सक्षमीकरणाचे प्रभावी साधन मानले जाते. *राष्ट्रीय शिक्षण धोरण 2020 (NEP 2020)* मध्येही महिलांच्या शिक्षणाला विशेष महत्त्व देण्यात आले आहे. या धोरणानुसार उच्च शिक्षण व्यवस्थेमध्ये अधिक समावेशकता आणि समान संधी निर्माण करण्यावर भर देण्यात आलेला आहे.

५) शैक्षणिक नेतृत्व (Academic Leadership)

शैक्षणिक नेतृत्व ही संकल्पना उच्च शिक्षण संस्थांमधील निर्णयप्रक्रिया, धोरणनिर्मिती आणि संस्थात्मक विकासाशी संबंधित आहे. कुलगुरू, प्राचार्य, विभागप्रमुख, संशोधन संचालक आणि प्रशासकीय अधिकारी यांसारख्या पदांवर कार्य करणाऱ्या व्यक्तींची भूमिका शैक्षणिक नेतृत्वामध्ये महत्त्वाची असते.UGC आणि इतर संशोधन अहवालांच्या तुलनात्मक अभ्यासातून असे दिसून येते की उच्च शिक्षण संस्थांमध्ये महिलांची उपस्थिती विद्यार्थिनी आणि प्राध्यापक म्हणून वाढत असली, तरी नेतृत्वाच्या पदांवर त्यांचे प्रमाण अद्याप मर्यादित आहे. यामागे सामाजिक अपेक्षा, कुटुंबीय जबाबदाऱ्या, संस्थात्मक संरचना आणि नेतृत्वाच्या संधींचा अभाव हे घटक कारणीभूत मानले जातात.

तुलनात्मक विश्लेषण

AISHE, UGC तसेच UNESCO आणि इतर संशोधन अहवालांचा तुलनात्मक अभ्यास केल्यास असे दिसून येते की उच्च शिक्षण क्षेत्रात महिलांचा सहभाग सातत्याने वाढत आहे. तथापि, प्रवेशाच्या संधींमध्ये प्रादेशिक व सामाजिक विषमता, लिंगसमतेतील मर्यादा आणि शैक्षणिक नेतृत्वातील कमी प्रतिनिधित्व ही

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आव्हाने अजूनही कायम आहेत. त्यामुळे उच्च शिक्षण व्यवस्थेमध्ये महिलांसाठी अधिक समावेशक आणि न्याय्य वातावरण निर्माण करणे ही काळाची गरज आहे.

AISHE आणि UGC आधारित आकडेवारी:

भारत सरकारच्या शिक्षण मंत्रालयाच्या AISHE (All India Survey on Higher Education) अहवालानुसार उच्च शिक्षणातील महिलांचा सहभाग लक्षणीयरीत्या वाढलेला दिसतो.

2021–22 मध्ये उच्च शिक्षणातील महिला विद्यार्थिनींची संख्या 2.07 कोटी झाली.

एकूण उच्च शिक्षणातील विद्यार्थ्यांपैकी 48% महिला आहेत.

2014–15 पासून महिलांच्या प्रवेशामध्ये सुमारे 32% वाढ झाली आहे.

तसेच GER (Gross Enrolment Ratio) च्या बाबतीत महिलांचा दर 28.5% असून पुरुषांच्या तुलनेत किंचित जास्त आहे.

मात्र प्राध्यापक आणि नेतृत्वाच्या स्तरावर महिलांचे प्रमाण कमी आहे. AISHE च्या माहितीनुसार उच्च शिक्षण संस्थांमधील सुमारे 43% शिक्षक महिला आहेत, तर प्राध्यापक आणि वरिष्ठ पदांवर त्यांचे प्रमाण आणखी कमी आहे.

काही सर्वेक्षणांनुसार भारतातील उच्च शिक्षण संस्थांपैकी फक्त सुमारे 11% संस्थांचे प्रमुख महिला आहेत, यावरून नेतृत्वाच्या स्तरावर अजूनही मोठी दरी असल्याचे दिसते.

अशा प्रकारे, वरील संकल्पनांचा सखोल अभ्यास केल्यास उच्च शिक्षणातील महिलांची स्थिती, त्यांना उपलब्ध असलेल्या संधी आणि त्यांच्यासमोरील आव्हाने अधिक स्पष्टपणे समजून घेता येतात. प्रस्तुत संशोधन या संकल्पनांच्या आधारे उच्च शिक्षण क्षेत्रातील महिलांची स्थिती आणि शैक्षणिक नेतृत्वातील त्यांची भूमिका यांचे चिकित्सक विश्लेषण करण्याचा प्रयत्न करते.

लिंगसमता साध्य करण्यासाठी पुढील बाबी महत्त्वाच्या आहेत :

सुरक्षित शैक्षणिक वातावरण महिलांना मिळाले तर त्या आपला शैक्षणिक विकास अत्यंत प्रगतिशील प्रमाणे करू शकतात.

सरकारने लिंगसंवेदनशील धोरणे अवलंबावी जेणेकरून स्त्री पुरुष असा भेद होणार नाही.

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स्त्री पुरुषांना समान संधी मिळाली तर कामाच्या ठिकाणी भेदभाव होणार नाही व आपले काम प्रभावीपणे पार पाडतील. लैंगिक छळ प्रतिबंधक यंत्रणा प्रभावी असेल तर स्त्रियांना संरक्षण मिळेल व त्यांना सुरक्षित वाटेल.

महिलांच्या शिक्षणातील प्रमुख आव्हाने:

महिलांच्या उच्च शिक्षणातील प्रगतीसाठी अजूनही अनेक अडथळे आहेत :

सामाजिक रूढी परंपरा काही अंशी स्त्रियांना शिक्षण घेण्यापासून रोखतात. काही कुटुंबांची आर्थिक क्षमता आर्थिक क्षमता कमी असल्याकारणाने त्यांना शैक्षणिक कर्ज झेपत नाही व याच आर्थिक मर्यादा स्त्रियांच्या शिक्षणासाठी कारणीभूत ठरतात. समाजातील काही विकृतीमुळे सुरक्षिततेचे प्रश्न ऐरणीवर येतात व यातून पालकांना अविश्वास निर्माण होतो . ग्रामीण-शहरी विषमता, तसेच मनस्थिती व ग्रामीण शहरी वातावरण जगण्याची पद्धती याचाही मुलींच्या शिक्षणावर परिणाम होतो.संशोधनासाठी मर्यादित संधी उपलब्ध असल्याने त्यांना हव्या त्या संधी मिळत नाहीत.

उपाययोजना:

महिलांच्या उच्च शिक्षणातील सहभाग वाढवण्यासाठी पुढील उपाययोजना आवश्यक आहेत :

1. ग्रामीण भागात अधिक उच्च शिक्षण संस्था स्थापन करणे.
2. महिला विद्यार्थिनींसाठी शिष्यवृत्ती योजना, संशोधन फेलोशिप आणि आर्थिक सहाय्य वाढविणे
3. सुरक्षित आणि समावेशक शैक्षणिक वातावरण निर्माण करण्यासाठी safe campus policy(सुरक्षित परिसर धोरण) अंमलात आणणे
4. महिला नेतृत्व विकास कार्यक्रम राबविणे.
5. संशोधन क्षेत्रात महिलांना प्रोत्साहन देणे.
6. STEM क्षेत्रात महिलांच्या सहभागाला प्रोत्साहन देणे.
7. लिंगसंवेदनशील शिक्षण धोरणे विकसित करणे.
8. Gender Inclusion Fund (NEP 2020)ची प्रभावी अंमलबजावणी करणे.

निष्कर्ष:

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उच्च शिक्षण क्षेत्रात महिलांचा प्रवेश वाढत असला तरी नेतृत्व, संशोधन आणि धोरणनिर्मितीच्या स्तरावर अजूनही लिंग असमानता दिसून येते. त्यामुळे केवळ प्रवेश वाढविण्यापेक्षा संस्थात्मक संरचना, धोरणे आणि शैक्षणिक संस्कृती यामध्ये मूलभूत बदल घडविणे आवश्यक आहे.

प्रवेशाच्या संधी वाढल्या असल्या तरी नेतृत्व आणि संशोधन क्षेत्रात महिलांचे प्रतिनिधित्व तुलनेने कमी आहे.महिलांच्या शिक्षणाचा विकास हा केवळ वैयक्तिक प्रगतीचा विषय नसून सामाजिक आणि राष्ट्रीय विकासासाठी अत्यावश्यक आहे.त्यामुळे शिक्षण धोरणांमध्ये लिंगसमतेला प्राधान्य देऊन महिलांसाठी अनुकूल आणि सुरक्षित शैक्षणिक वातावरण निर्माण करणे आवश्यक आहे.महिलांचे उच्च शिक्षण हे समावेशक आणि शाश्वत समाज निर्माण करण्यासाठी महत्त्वपूर्ण साधन आहे.

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महिला समावेशक शैक्षणिक संस्कृती

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प्रस्तावना:

शिक्षण हे समाजाच्या प्रगतीचे मूलभूत साधन आहे. स्त्रियांना दीर्घकाळ शिक्षणापासून वंचित ठेवले गेले. आधुनिक काळात महिलांनी शिक्षणात प्रगती केली असली तरी रोजगार व नेतृत्वाच्या संधींमध्ये अजूनही मोठी दरी आहे. त्यामुळे महिला समावेशक शैक्षणिक संस्कृतीची गरज प्रकर्षाने जाणवते.

महिला शिक्षणाची सद्यस्थिती:

- AISHE 2019-20 अहवालानुसार उच्च शिक्षण संस्थांमधील एकूण नोंदणीपैकी ४९% महिला विद्यार्थी आहेत, जे पुरुषांपेक्षा जास्त आहे (२६.९% पुरुष).
- तरीही STEM क्षेत्रात भारत महिला पदवीधर निर्मितीत अव्वल असूनही रोजगार देण्यात १९व्या क्रमांकावर आहे.
- ग्रामीण भागात प्राथमिक शाळा स्तरावर मुलींच्या गळतीचे प्रमाण अजूनही जास्त आहे.

महिला समावेशक शैक्षणिक संस्कृतीचे घटक:

1. समान संधी – प्रवेश, शिष्यवृत्ती, संशोधन व नेतृत्वाच्या संधी महिलांना समान प्रमाणात मिळाव्यात.

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2. संवेदनशील अभ्यासक्रम – स्त्रीवादी साहित्य, महिला इतिहास, सामाजिक न्याय यांचा अभ्यासक्रमात समावेश असावा.
3. सुरक्षित वातावरण – लैंगिक छळविरोधी धोरणे, सुरक्षित पायाभूत सुविधा व मानसिक आधार व्यवस्था असावी.
4. प्रतिनिधित्व – महिला शिक्षक, प्रशासक व संशोधक यांना प्रोत्साहन देऊन त्यांचा सहभाग वाढवावा.

आव्हाने:

- जागतिक बँकेच्या आकडेवारीनुसार २०१० ते २०२० दरम्यान भारतातील नोकरदार महिलांची संख्या २४% वरून १८% पर्यंत घसरली आहे.
- सामाजिक पूर्वग्रह व पितृसत्ताक वृत्ती अजूनही अडथळा ठरतात.
- आर्थिक अडचणींमुळे अनेक मुली शिक्षण सोडतात.
- ग्रामीण भागात पायाभूत सुविधांची कमतरता आहे.

उपाययोजना

- सरकारी धोरणे – महिला शिष्यवृत्ती योजना, रोजगार हमी योजना, सुरक्षितता धोरणे.
- महाविद्यालयीन उपक्रम – महिला विकास केंद्रे, समुपदेशन सेवा, सुरक्षित वसतिगृहे.
- अभ्यासक्रम सुधारणा – समावेशक शिक्षणाची संकल्पना (UNESCO, 1994) भारताने स्वीकारली आहे.
- नेतृत्व प्रोत्साहन – महिला प्राध्यापक व प्रशासकांना निर्णयप्रक्रियेत सामील करणे.

परिणाम:

- महिलांचे सक्षमीकरण होईल.

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- समाजात न्याय व समानता वाढेल.
- शिक्षण अधिक प्रगतिशील व सर्वसमावेशक बनेल.

निष्कर्ष:

महिला समावेशक शैक्षणिक संस्कृती ही केवळ महिलांसाठी नव्हे तर संपूर्ण समाजाच्या प्रगतीसाठी आवश्यक आहे. शिक्षणात समानता म्हणजेच समाजात समानता. त्यामुळे प्रत्येक शैक्षणिक संस्थेने महिला समावेशकतेला प्राधान्य दिले पाहिजे.

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