

RESEARCH ARTICLE

ROLE OF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION IN WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

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ABSTRACT

This study emphasizes the applicability of development communication to empower women. The gender gap is still in practice which can be reflected in the social, economic, political, and educational sectors globally. So, to reduce this gap women's empowerment plays a vital role. Women who cover over half of the global population still remain marginalized and dominated. This is the result of the lack of access to the world outside the four walls of the house. Despite the modernization, women are still lagging behind when it comes to empowerment, opportunities, and equality in comparison to their counterparts. This is the reason communication becomes so crucial to uplift women and help them reach their highest potential. Communication can help women understand their positions in society, realize their true worth, and thus fight against all the dominance still prevailing in our society. Through this article, we can draw the attention of policymakers regarding the aforementioned issues. In this article, we can explore that knowledge and skills are keys to the uplifting eminence of women which can be spread through developing communication. This paper analyzes that ICT can be the key tool for women in finally understanding and reclaiming their true status in society by helping them acknowledge the current situation they are forced to be standing at.

KEYWORDS

communication, equality, knowledge, women empowerment

1. INTRODUCTION

Women's empowerment is the process of giving women more influence over the strategic life decisions that impact them, as well as access to opportunities that allow them to fully achieve their potential. When a woman has the means, autonomy, and capacities to make important decisions, she is deemed empowered (Kabeer, 1999) (Mosedale, 2005). For the empowerment process to work, a scientific understanding of women's demands is required (Accascina, 2000). Women's support is a key tool for affecting change in their socioeconomic situation.

Women are in charge of half of the world's affairs. Women are considered as humanity's creators. Nature's finest characteristics of motherhood, compassion, humanity, and love are found in women. Despite the fact that they are the creators, they are ignored all throughout the world. Women have always been marginalized, from ancient Greece to the current day. Their opinions are never taken into account when it comes to crucial issues; rather, their opinions are undermined.

The movement for women's emancipation has been around for a long time. The media coverage has been instrumental in supporting the cause of women's emancipation but it has also focused on the marginalization of women (Hooda & Singh, 2011). Women's empowerment and the promotion of women's rights have become part of a larger global movement that has been breaking new ground in recent years.

The world is undergoing an information revolution, which is being accompanied by the emergence of totally new communication technology. Recent advances in the domains of information and communication technology have been really transformative. In reality, development communication has become the most important factor in determining the growth of nations, communities, and individuals.

Women's development requires a lot of communication, and the media plays a big part in it. It should be emphasized that the advancement of women's education and employment has aided the growth of the media. Women play an important part in all aspects of life, whether it is limiting population growth, spreading literacy, or enhancing the quality of life for large groups of people.

Women, on the other hand, can be expected to perform this role if they become aware of their own strength and are not purposefully sidelined by male dominance. In this regard, the media has a critical role to play in arousing women's desire to realize their full potential as change agents in society. Print and electronic media are both used in today's environment.

The media's job is to act as a bridge between the government and the people. During the second part of the twentieth century, a new discipline in mass communication known as development communication was established with the introduction of research projects and research papers from third-world nations to accomplish the social and economic development of these countries. Development communication can be an impetus for women's empowerment. It has the ability to reduce poverty, improve governance, overcome isolation, and give women a voice for those who can access and use them. If mass media organizations work together, women can be appropriately empowered. To protect the dignity of women, communication should use all of its mediums. Scholars have described mass media as "magic boosters" since they transmit social messages and so aid in the growth and empowerment of society's weaker ones.

This literature review will assess whether a women empowerment process is an integrative or sectoral approach, the efficacy of development communication in women empowerment, and strategies for making good access of communication technology to women for empowering purposes.

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2. METHODOLOGY

The review article uses a conceptual method of literature review. Various secondary sources like research articles, journals, books, online sources, newspapers, etc. have been referred for the study purpose.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Integrative Approach

Focusing on the influence of communication on women's daily lives and career prospects is especially important in the context of women's autonomy (Vipin & Sharma, 2011). It's crucial to remember the distinct qualities of the present revolution in the method of production, which is largely knowledge-intensive. Education is one of the salient ways of empowering women by delivering them knowledge and providing required skills that can be spread to a large number of women-only through communication. Similarly, communication can be taken as a medium for advocacy to spread awareness among women about the importance of economic independence, active participation in decision-making, and the adoption of new technologies. Likewise, it can be used to expose various atrocities against women like abuse, girl feticide, domestic violence, and so on. They may earn a good living from home if they put their abilities and networking experience to good use. Other women can benefit from information technology as well. Everyone has access to information and communication technologies (ICT), and women have an equal chance to profit from them.

Development communication leads to having access to the same information as to their male counterparts and receiving updated information without distortion or censorship. This leads to a shift of perspective, a better knowledge of their current condition and the causes of poverty and illiteracy, and the start of participatory information-sharing procedures. Furthermore, such kinds of networking provide alternative means of communication to those provided by conservative or government-controlled media outlets, accelerating the empowering process.

Women became more knowledgeable as alternative channels of contact with the outside world became available, and they were empowered enough to understand that their true causes of poverty and illiteracy were poor state governance processes, not natural calamities. Today's women were able to discover a link between terrible governance and poverty, which was their first move toward empowerment.

In all disciplines, communication reduces the importance of time and distance. As a result of technological advancements, a large percentage of employment outsourced by large corporations goes to women. They may now receive training in any of the knowledge-based fields and, with the aid of ICT, contribute to a broader viewpoint.

3.2 Efficacy of Development Communication in Women Empowerment

(Agarwal, 2003) reported the need for suitable technology in developing women entrepreneurs by increasing local capacity and improving job quality. Knowing the processes/products would develop a scientific mindset in women, resulting in increased production efficiency and less drudgery in their daily job. Furthermore, the author posits that science and technology should be used to reduce the labor of women both within and outside the home. He also recognized the importance of women's expertise and experience in long-term growth. These would make it easier for them to participate in the development as equal partners (Sanap, 2012).

In the article "Empowering Rural Women via Science and Technology," (Chowdhury, 2006) points out that in order to build women-oriented technology for empowerment, particular professions and views for women must be established. (Cherian, 2006) proposed the following strategies for overcoming barriers to women's use and assessment of ICT, with a focus on India: (a) making women's empowerment through ICT a priority issue, (b) the importance of a rights-based approach to ICT policy, (c) adopting ICT policies that are tailored to women's needs, i.e. ICTs should be made more "women-friendly," (d) addressing language barriers.

(Kumar & Kochher, 2011) demonstrated how technology may be used effectively to support small-scale enterprises that are promoted by women as part of a self-employment plan. (Padmini, Salamuddeen, Janardhan, & Suresh, 2013) observed the importance of mobile technology in women's empowerment. Women are utilizing mobile phones in a variety of ways, according to the authors, including to stay safe in times of

hardship, as a media connection with current news, and as an e-learning device to become literate. (Arivanandan, 2013) observed the socio-economic inclusion of rural women in rural regions using two types of information and communication technologies: mobile phones and the internet

4. DISCUSSION

Nepal ranks 106 out of 156 countries in the Global Gender Gap report 2021 compiled by World Economic Forum. This is resulted due to the prevalent suppression of women in terms of literacy, opportunities, and women's involvement in decision-making when it comes to the important aspects of society. (Akhter & Naheed, 2014) observed the critical review of the status of women in society depicts that women of the world are not living in ideal situations. With the help of efficient communication, the centuries of suppression of women can finally come to an end. Development communication can prove to be a boon for women in terms of being given the opportunities to compete with their male counterparts for position and credibility. Women's empowerment is likely to involve an awareness of the sociopolitical environment that can lead to an emergence of new beliefs about the right to exercise capabilities and take advantage of opportunities in one's community (Grabe, 2011). During the past decade, advances in information technology have facilitated a global communications network that transcends national boundaries and has an impact on public policy, private attitudes, and behavior (Narayana & Ahamad, 2016). Despite the fact that women are still lagging behind in getting equal opportunities and freedom, there has been remarkable work to uplift their status and reduce gender inequality. Various women-targeted programs are conducted by the government, NGOs, INGOs on economic independence through various skills and raised income. The government has made provision quotas for women in various sectors for uplifting their positions and encouraging equal participation.

4.1 Strategies for Making Good Access of Communication Technology to Women for Empowering Purpose

Women's access to ICT technology, as well as their autonomy in receiving and producing information relevant to their problems and views, are crucial challenges (Mookkiah & Mahendra, 2017). In order to fully engage in the evolution and effect of new technology, they must be included in the decision-making surrounding its development.

The potential of communication development or ICT for women in poor countries is greatly reliant on their degree of technical ability and education, which is the primary need for accessing global information. Governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) must provide technical instruction on the use of ICT in both official and informal education systems, as well as begin distance learning and vocational courses. It is important to recognize that while information and communication technology cannot solve all of the difficulties that women face in their development, it may provide new information resources and provide new communication channels for disadvantaged groups.

5. CONCLUSION

Putting it in a nutshell an eternity of discrimination, gender violence, and male dominance in terms of opportunities and access to resources can be swiped out with the help of ICT and development communication. No society can ever thrive where half of it is flourishing while the other half remains marginalized. That's the way we as an individual along with various governmental as well as non-governmental organizations can work hand in hand and try to empower every women and reach women who have previously been unreachable, enabling them to participate in economic improvement and make knowledgeable choices on issues that concern them.

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