









## Women Empowerment in India since 1947: A Critical Analysis

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**Abstract:** The issue of women's empowerment is not new, this is an early concept. To empower the nation, we should empower the women. Discrimination between men and women, domestic violence, lack of education, lack of awareness about the government's efforts for women's empowerment and sexual harassment are the most common problems faced by women. Although various measures have been taken by the government and supporting bodies. The purposes of this paper are to explore the various schemes, acts, and laws for women's empowerment and to identify the status of women at present. For this research, various secondary resources like research papers, reports by various ministry organisations and reports by government, non-government and international organizations are used. Government and other supporting bodies' role in women's empowerment is reviewed. Based on analysis, it was found that women are not aware of their social and legal rights, especially in rural areas. They feel inferior to themselves economically or socially or prestigiously compared to men. Though several steps have been taken by the government and other supporting bodies like NGO's, still the women's condition in society is not satisfactory. Various rules and regulations have been formulated but the government must ensure that these rules are followed properly in the society. Women do not even know their rights; education can improve these inequalities. So, more efforts need to be made for women empowerment, so that women can use their full potential and contribute to themselves, family, society, and country. At the end of research paper, it was concluded that to encourage women empowerment women's education, employment opportunities and support for self-employment must be promoted.

### Introduction

Consideration of women's point of view, giving importance to them or efforts to improve the position of women by educating them, providing resources, giving training, and improving their awareness is called women empowerment (Naila, 2005; Sarah, 2005; Endalcachew, 2016). Women empowerment promotes women to make decisions and help them with different problems with the help of various laws, acts, schemes etc (Endalcachew, 2016). Now that women are considering their self-worth, they actively participate in every field to fulfil their dreams.

Women's empowerment is not an independent variable. It is a dependent variable that depends on several factors like the education of women (literate or illiterate), location of the women (rural or urban), caste etc. Government and other social bodies are actively participating to improve females' health, education, awareness, training, and financial help. But despite several efforts, a gap is found between the expected women empowerment and actual women empowerment due to a gap in result of efforts taken for women empowerment (Shettar et al., 2015).

Now a days, women are getting respectable jobs in all fields and areas. Still, women have not full freed from



gender discrimination, mental and physical harassment in the society. Only some women can use their full potential. Therefore, everyone should promote the women to utilise their full potential (Hazarika, 2011).

Formal system of education was introduced by the British Government in India before independence. But for the women, this system was not followed, women got the education through Zenana system or home education. The British government even supported the zenana system. So, formal education was provided to only men, women did not have the right to formal education (Desai and Krishnaraj, 1987).

In the past, women have suffered very much in the society. Women were considered the devoid members of society as well as family. Women were not even given basic rights like freedom to speak, voting etc. But with the passage of time, women? Are realizing their self-worth. The Indian government is making various efforts for women's empowerment, but women are still facing many problems (Priyadarshini, 2016).

### Model of women's empowerment

The process of women's empowerment takes place over a period that enables women who can make choices, have control of resources, and make strategies for their life (Lee-Rife, 2010). Author focused on the first order priorities in life, like livelihood decisions, marriage choice and child decisions, which should be taken as the priority decisions and consider the impact of this decision on second-order priorities like moral values in children, day-to-day decisions and taking care of families which are less important.



**Figure 1. Three-Dimensional Model.**  
(Source: Kabeer, 1999)

The author focused on the resources like human, material, money etc. as the precondition of empowerment (Kabeer, 1999). But having resources only is not sufficient. Women must have the knowledge of available resources. They should also know how to utilise the resources (Malhotra et al., 2002). According to Kabeer, Women empowerment is an end as well as a means to achieve the end. For example- Education may be an end or a means to achieve the end. So, women empowerment starts with resources, followed by the process, and finally ends with women empowerment or means for women empowerment.

The under developed Countries are mostly dependent agricultural sector. It is the most important factor of

employment, development, and empowerment. The research conducted in rural Punjab and Sindhi also reveals that the women actively involved in agriculture are more empowered than women who are not involved. The findings also support that women actively involved in the agricultural sector are also active in family planning (Mubeen et al., 2022). For women empowerment, self-help groups have been working from the initial time of women's empowerment. Government of India has also given importance to self-help groups for women's empowerment (Reshi, 2023). Result findings also revealed that women's participation in household decision-making, status of earning and various schemes for women's empowerment have a significant positive impact on women empowerment with the help of financial inclusion (Pal et al., 2022). Digital banking should be promoted for easy access to financial services (Kaur and Batra, 2023).

Media is also important for women empowerment if the media performs its duties with responsibilities. Media should have a positive attitude toward women's problems. Now a days, women are also participating and working in media as a consumer and a media person also. If the media understand the roles and responsibilities to remove the exploitation of women and empowerment of women, it could help in women's empowerment as well as the development of society and nation (Bhat, 2022). Women empowerment is not achieved completely. They are not given equal status, freedom, and dignity as man. The government of India is trying to strengthen the status of women's empowerment through various laws, acts, guidelines, packages, subsidies, and schemes for women empowerment. There is no doubt that the government is making lots of efforts for women's empowerment and women are also doing well in every field. They are getting higher education and getting higher positions at jobs also. They are contributing towards the development of society. But despite several efforts by the government and NGOs, the status of women's empowerment is not satisfactory. Women's empowerment can be accelerated by providing education and opportunities for women empowerment. Sometimes, women also create hurdles in women empowerment by creating gender biases between male children and female child. This attitude should be change. Otherwise, women's empowerment will not have any meaning (Sangwan and Bawa, 2022).

Research is conducted to investigate the status of Indians as compared to other countries and investigate the preparation to achieve Goal -5 of sustainable development of the United Nations. In this paper, an attempt is made to critically examines the status of

women in India. This paper discusses various efforts for women empowerment like constitution rules, acts, legislation, plans and programmes by the government. The India ranks low among other countries. Research found that to achieve SDG-5 by 2030, the government should revise and improve women empowerment's policies (Singh and Singh, 2020). Women's Freedom to take decisions and freedom of movement varies considerably with age, education, and employment. Usually, women do not have the right to say where their earnings are spent. Control over cash earnings increased with age and education. The paper also revealed that educational level and employment opportunities for women are the essential factors accelerating women's empowerment, but it solely does not depend on these factors. Women empowerment also depends on the attitude of society toward women. Society needs to treat men and women equally, without any gender discrimination (Menon et al., 2020). In research, a negative correlation is found between other family members' income and women's entry for employment. Some other factors like caste, religion, cultural and economic factors also affect the women's empowerment. Individual and household factors also determine women's employment (Sarkar et al., 2019).

Women empowerment is essential for the development of society and getting attention now a days (Arora, 2024). Women education is a vital tool for women's empowerment. Education leads a reduction in gender biasness and improve the status of women within the family. To improve women's education, the government should establish schools, universities, institutions, etc., for women or girls (Ahmad Bhat, 2015). Multimedia strategies should be adopted for effective learning (Torkos, 2023). To empower women, education is most important, Education can improve the economic and social status of women. Women must have equal opportunities without any gender biasness. Child marriage is continued in some villages. It should be eliminated from society. Women should be given the freedom to live their life in their own way. Some women are living in abusive relationships because of society. Family members should support their daughters if they do not want to live with their husbands due to abusive relationships (Babbar, 2022). Intervention focusing on child welfare through women's empowerment may develop second-order impacts on intra-household decision-making. But, the stickiness of social norms may limit women's empowerment and gender roles (Kandpal & Baylis, 2019). Women's socio-economic situation greatly impacts their household status and participation in

decision-making. Improving women's education and employability can empower them and strengthen their decision-making confidence (Ang & Lai, 2023). Domestic violence is a crime that impacts women all over the world. The impact of employment on the status of women in reducing domestic violence is very much. There is a requirement for policies that improve women's employability (Kinyondo and Joseph, 2020).

Training should be designed for unemployed people according to the needs and requirements of vocational skills needs of businesses. Women in our society can better explain the causes of their unemployment, like self-failures like lack of education, lack of required skills to perform a job etc (Willot and Stevenson, 2006). Digital technology is also playing an important role in skills enhancement (Malhotra et al., 2023). Digital payments should also be promoted in transforming the financial landscape of India (Dutta, 2023). Challenges and opportunities have been raised for economic expansion and job creation due to globalization and technological development. The nation can be developed into a productive, innovative, and competitive nation with skilled human potential. By focusing only on education and ignoring the other skills and career counseling and creating jobs based on the skill education would not produce the desired results. Environment and support to develop technical skills and transferable skills are most important. Technical skills training should be provided as an essential element of basic education but cannot replace it (Behera and Gaur, 2022). Information and communication technology impact women's personalities, their perception, and their position in society. However, to get the full advantages of ICT, the initiative should be taken as required (Rabayah, 2010). Work from home or freelancing offers a significant financial benefit to share information, skills, abilities, and time. The large group of entrepreneurs are part-time employees doing the freelancing. This management of both tasks provides higher financial benefits to both. This is a major reason for freelancing by organisations (Rawoof et al., 2021). Education is one of the most important methods for involving and empowering any person or society. It is most required for women to support women to develop socially and economically. Various departments are engaged in empowering women's empowerment, whether it is the hospitality department and tourism department or any other department. Most hotels and tourist companies are trying to offer women jobs and empower them socially and financially (Smita and Patel, 2022). E-learning is also a very popular learning method (Nain, 2023).

## Research Gap

In the past, women faced lots of challenges and problem. Males were treated superior in comparison to female members. Even women did not have the right to education. But after independence, according to our constitution, women have given equal rights to men. Government has made various provisions, legislative and schemes for women's empowerment, but still, women are not empowered equal to men. So, the purpose of this research is to identify the gap in women's empowerment and suggest measures to improve the women's empowerment.

## Research Objectives

# To study the various provisions, legislative measures, and schemes for women's empowerment.

# To analyze the actual position of women empowerment.

# To analyze the gap in actual and expected empowerment and suggest measures to improve women's empowerment status.

## Materials and Methods

This study focused on investigating women's status in our country and identifying the gap between expected women empowerment and actual empowerment. Also suggest some practices to minimize this gap. This research is based on the secondary data. Data regarding initiatives and efforts taken for the empowerment of women is taken from the website of National Commission for women, research papers and reports by government organizations. To investigate the actual position of women, data regarding crimes against women, global gender gap, and literacy rate is taken. Various secondary resources like research papers, reports by various organizations working under the ministry and reports by government, non-government and international organizations are used to collect data.

## Data collection

Crime report against women is analysed with specific reference to seven highest crime states in India for the years 2019, 2020, 2021. Data for crime in the year 2022 is not available, so it is not used for analysis. Crime reports were taken from the 2019, 2020 and 2021 National Crime Records Bureau reports. India position in Global Gender Gap is analysed for the year 2014, 2017, 2020 and 2023 as the overall gender gap and gender gap on different parameters like economic involvement, educational status, Health empowerment, and political participation. Data was taken from the 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020, and 2023 reports of world economic forum. Women's Literacy rate in India is analyzed for 1941,

1951, 1981, 1991, 2001, 2011 and 2021. Data was taken from the survey by National Statistical Office 1941, 1951, 1981, 1991, 2001, 2011 and 2021.

Data is presented and analysed in the form of tables, graphs, bars, and charts. NVivo is used to calculate the frequency count.

## Result

### Provisions for women's empowerment

Women are capable of fulfilling their responsibilities in the same manner as men do, so women should also be developed in the same manner as men. So certain provisions are made in our constitution for the females, So, that they also get equal treatment like men. These provisions are-

1. Article 14 (equality before law),
2. Article 15 to prohibit the discrimination based on gender, religion, sex, race etc.,
3. Article 16 to the equal opportunities at public employment,
4. Article 19 to ensure the freedom of speech, movement, and choice of religion,
5. Article 21 to promote personal liberty,
6. Article 23 to prohibit human and workforce trafficking,
7. Article 38 for the welfare of people,
8. Article 41 for public assistance and to promote the right to work and education,
9. Article 42 to maintain working conditions and maternity benefits.

### Legislative measures for women's empowerment

For the protection of women's right and to promote them various legislative measure were taken. These measures are-

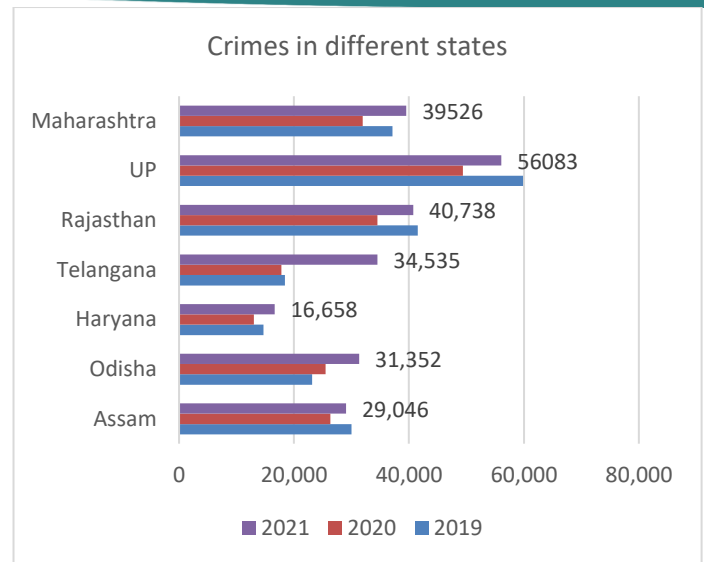
1. Special marriage act, 1954
2. The Hindu marriage act, 1955
3. Hindu minority and guardianship act 1956
4. The Hindu succession act, 1956
5. The immoral traffic act, 1956
6. Dowry prohibition act, 1961
7. The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961
8. Contract Labor Act, 1970 & Factories Act, 1948
9. The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976
10. Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005
11. The indecent representation of women (prohibition) Act, 1986
12. Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987
13. Protection of women from domestic violence Act, 2005
14. Prohibition of child marriage Act
15. The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace

(Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013  
 16.The Trafficking in Persons (Prevention, Care and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2021.

**Government Schemes for Women Empowerment**

Some of the government schemes are-

1. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao that promotes girls' education
2. STEP that supports employment by offering training to them
3. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan was started to promote education
4. The National Literacy Mission is also one of the programs for supporting education
5. National Rural Health Mission was started to improve the health status of women
6. Self Help Groups
7. Gender budgeting
8. NMEW (National Mission for Empowerment of Women)
9. Swadhar scheme
- 10.Development of Women & Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA)
- 11.Swayamsidha Scheme
- 12.SABLA etc. are also some schemes for empowerment of women.



**Figure 2. State with the highest number of crimes in India.**

Crime against women and children is increasing, but all cases were not being charge-sheeted. There is 40% increase in cases but only 31% being charge sheeted. Mostly registered cases were under the cruelty with husband or other family members. The maximum number of cases were from Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Maharashtra. Number of cases in 2021 in Uttar Pradesh

**Table 1. State with the highest number of crimes in India.**

Year/State	Assam	Odisha	Haryana	Telangana	Rajasthan	UP	Maharashtra
2019	30,025	23,183	14,683	18,394	41,550	59853	37144
2020	26,352	25,489	13,000	17,791	34,535	49385	31954
2021	29,046	31,352	16,658	34,535	40,738	56083	39526

Source: Compiled by Author based on National Crime Records Bureau report of 2019, 2020 and 2021.

**Crime against Women**

As per NCRB report, the crime rate against women increased from the year 2020 to 2021. In the year 2020, the crime rate was 56.5 percent while in 2021, it was 64.5 percent. Four categories of crimes are cruelty by husband or other family members, Assault on women, rape, and kidnapping. Out of these categories, the maximum crimes were under the category of cruelty by husband or other family members (31.8 Percent). Maximum number of reported crimes were from the Uttar Pradesh (56,083) in 2021. Minimum number of registered crimes was in Nagaland. In the year 2021, only 507 cases were registered under Domestic violence which is only .01 percent of registered crimes against women. It is showing under-reporting of cases.

was 56,083. Crime against women should be minimized and reporting of cases should be promoted so that crime can be avoided.

**Position of India in Global Gender Gap**

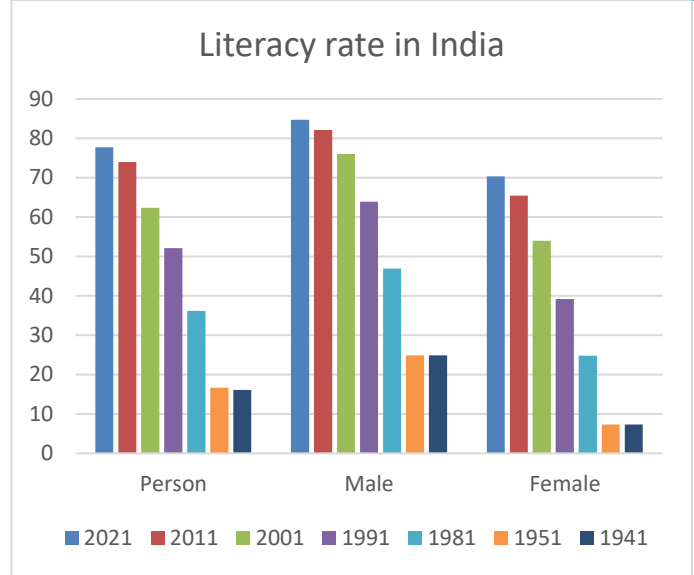
In the year 2017, the ranking of India had improved. India had 108 ranking out of 144 countries in 2016. In the year 2023, India has 127 ranking out of 146 countries, which is not satisfactory. Political empowerment Index is 59 in 2023, which has increased from the year 2020. Health and survival index in 2023 is 142 out of 146 countries. India is the 5<sup>th</sup> last country in Health and Survival Index. The educational attainment index is 26 in 2023, which is quite better than the previous years. Economic participation and opportunity index in 2023 is 142 out of 146 countries. India is 4<sup>th</sup> last in Economic participation and opportunity index. There is a need for improvement in the global gender gap index (<https://www.weforum.org/reports/global->

gender-gap-report-2023/in-full/benchmarking-gender-gaps-2023/).

**Table 2. Position of India in Global Gender Gap.**

Year	2023	2020	2017	2014
Global Index	127 (0.643)	112(0.6 68)	108(0.6 69)	114 (0.6455)
Economic Participation and Opportunity	142 (0.367)	149(.35 4)	139(0.3 76)	134 (0.4096)
Educational attainment	26 (1.000)	112(0.9 62)	112(0.9 52)	126 (0.8503)
Health and survival	142 (0.950)	150(0.9 44)	141(0.9 42)	141 (0.9366)
Political Empowerment	59 (0.253)	18(0.44 1)	15(0.40 7)	15 (0.3855)

*Source: Compiled by Author based on Global Gender Gap Report 2014, 2017 and 2020, 2023 by World Economic Forum*



**Figure 4. Literacy rate in India.**

**Word Frequency**

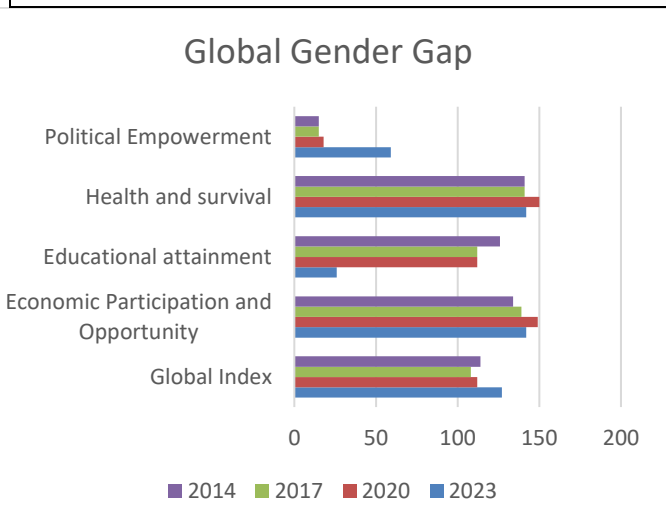
Of the 50 most frequently used keywords, women, empowerment, education, development, and gender are the most frequently used keywords for research.



**Figure 5. Word Frequency.**

**Table 4. Word Frequency table.**

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage (%)
access	6	597	0.19
among	5	400	0.13
analysis	8	489	0.16
children	8	499	0.16
decision	8	768	0.24
development	11	1684	0.54
different	9	411	0.13
discrimination	14	474	0.15
economic	8	1537	0.49
education	9	2386	0.76
employment	10	1358	0.43
empowerment	11	4101	1.31
equality	8	493	0.16
family	6	887	0.28
female	6	970	0.31
gender	6	1615	0.51
government	10	509	0.16
health	6	588	0.19



**Figure 3. India's position in Global Gender Gap**

**Literacy Rate in India**

Literacy rate in India is improving but at a slow rate now. In 2021, the overall literacy rate was 77.7%, male literacy rate was 84.7%, and female literacy rate was 70.3%. Literacy rate for both males and females are increasing but a gap is found in the literacy of male and Female. There should be improvement in literacy rate and no gap should be in male and female literacy rate (Sindhu, 2012 and <https://www.findeasy.in/indian-states-by-literacy-rate/>).

**Table 3. Literacy Rate in India.**

Years	Person	Male	Female
2021	77.7	84.7	70.3
2011	74	82.1	65.46
2001	62.38	76.0	54.0
1991	52.1	63.9	39.2
1981	36.2	46.9	24.8
1951	16.7	24.9	7.3
1941	16.1	24.9	7.3

*Source: Literacy rate in India compiled by Author based on survey by National Statistical Office in 1941, 1951, 1981, 1991, 2001, 2011 and 2021*

higher	6	710	0.23
household	9	569	0.18
impact	6	401	0.13
important	9	452	0.14
income	6	397	0.13
India	5	1468	0.47
international	13	593	0.19
journal	7	849	0.27
labour	5	446	0.14
level	5	701	0.22
making	6	758	0.24
national	8	401	0.13
opportunities	13	456	0.15
Pakistan	8	607	0.19
participation	13	867	0.28
political	9	754	0.24
power	5	603	0.19
process	7	479	0.15
research	8	977	0.31
resources	9	434	0.14
rights	6	619	0.20
rural	5	779	0.25
social	6	1552	0.49
society	7	839	0.27
status	6	697	0.22
study	5	992	0.32
table	5	428	0.14
university	10	443	0.14
urban	5	507	0.16
women	5	11817	3.76
working	7	624	0.20
world	5	557	0.18

Source: Created by Author in NVivo

### Discussion and Conclusion

Women's Empowerment is the need of society because it is not beneficial for women only. Women empowerment is a most effective tool for the development of society as well as country. Research has shown that women are now doing better in every field and are more empowered. Various legislation measures have been taken for women's empowerment. There are various acts for equal treatment of women, protection of women against domestic violence and to promote women's empowerment. Various schemes and programs are also going on for women's empowerment (Mandal, 2003).

Various NGOs are also working for women's empowerment but despite so many efforts, Women are facing lots of challenges. Gender-based discrimination, especially in the family and society, domestic violence, and lack of resources available for women are the major problems of women empowerment faced by women. Women are facing various crimes, especially in UP, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Assam, Odisha, Telangana and Haryana, and less reporting of crime cases is observed (National Crime Records Bureau report, 2021). There is a significant global gender gap. India has 127 ranking

out of 146 countries in global gender gap in 2023, which is not satisfactory. Political empowerment Index is 59 out of 146 countries, Health and survival index is 142 out of 146 countries. India is the 5<sup>th</sup> last country in Health and survival index. The educational attainment index is 26, and Economic participation and opportunity index is 142 out of 146 countries. India is 4<sup>th</sup> last in the Economic participation and opportunity index (Global gender gap report, 2023). Female literacy rate is still less than the male rate as per the report of the literacy rate in India (Literacy rate in India, 2021). Various rules and regulations have been formulated, but the government must ensure that these rules are followed properly. Women do not even know their rights. Education can improve these inequalities. So, more efforts need to be made for women's empowerment so that women can use their full potential and contribute to themselves, family, society, and country. India also lacks health care. Only healthy women can use their full potential. Healthcare facilities should be provided to them and regular healthcare check-ups and camps should be organized for them. Female population rate is decreasing in India. Girls are killed in the womb of a mother. People checked the gender of the child before birth, although it is illegal. Government must ensure that rules should be followed strictly. Women can be empowered by teaching them the income-generating skills like gardening, sewing etc. Women and other members have raised their voices for women. Women themselves do not take steps for themselves. The number of registered cases against crime against women is much less in comparison to actual cases. Women also need motivation that they can do anything. Family members must boost their morale and trust in them. Women should not be discriminated against based on age, caste, colour, race etc. Family members must give them examples of ideal women to motivate them. Women entrepreneurship is very challenging. Usually, women do not have money for business and family members also do not give a female financial support compared to a male. Government must support women's businesses financially. Women are not aware of their rights in society. So, awareness programs should be organized to make people aware of gender discrimination, crime against women etc. Women are still fighting for equal job opportunities. They should get job opportunities. Sometimes, they do not get equal pay for equal work. Women must raise their voices against such types of discrimination.

### Limitations and future scope of studies

The research findings highlight the scope for policy discussion and intervention for the empowerment of women. But, this research was based only on secondary data, so future research can also be conducted based on primary data also. So, the actual problems of women can be identified despite several provisions, schemes, and legislative measures for women's empowerment.

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### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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