

Extension Activity on Women Empowerment: A Best Practice

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Extension work is an out of school system of education in which adult and young people learn by doing. It is partnership between the government and the people, which provides service and education designed to meet the people. Its fundamental objective is the development of the people. Extension is a programme and a process of helping people to help themselves, increase their production and to raise their general standard of living. We can define extension as the increased dissemination of useful knowledge for improving rural life. Extension is a two – way channel, it brings scientific information to the needy people and takes the problems of the people to the scientific institutions for solution. It is thus a continuous educational process, in which both learner and teacher contribute and receive.

The Bombay Teachers' Training College, Mumbai, has undertaken the extension activity offered by the Department of Life Long Learning (DLLE), University of Mumbai, and cent per cent student teachers of the college have been participating every year in this activity. There are topic areas provided by the DLLE for extension activity. However, as most of the student teachers are women, they naturally opted to undertake the issues of women; hence women empowerment topic was selected. Women Empowerment is a very broad topic requiring a lot of attention since ages. When we discuss about empowering women we just don't focus on the deprived rights that a woman is facing in general in her day to day life, we also focus about how we can impart the basic power to women to generalize her day to day things and have an equal social power in the society.

'Equality' and 'Equity' are two words having similar destinations but two different journeys. When equality comes under role it generally means sharing the responsibility or giving equal status irrespective of the gender. It is a man or a woman. But equity has a different story to tell; it means fairness that you give in the reality rather than just distributing it equally. Women Empowerment is more of the Equity component rather than the Equality component.

Women empowerment means empowering women with all their rights they should have in the family, society, school, college and country just like

a man. It is to make them able so that they can make own independent decisions for their personal development. The status of women in the Indian society is still backward because of the gender inequality. Women also should be given equal rights like men to really empower them. They should not be treated as weak gender of the society as they occupy almost half population of the country, so they are half strength of the country. Women have more patience and effort; they can better develop their country.

Background of the Study:

Gender Equality describes the absence of obvious or hidden disparities among individuals based on gender. Disparities can include the discrimination in terms of opportunities, resources, services, benefits, decision-making power and influence. It is important to note that gender as a social construct is based on social roles, not sexual differences per se. The dichotomous nature of gender lends to the creation of inequality that manifests itself in numerous dimensions of daily life. Equality in education is an important issue, as gender equality guidelines improve education for both men and women. The goal of providing better education for women does not mean neglecting or suppressing men. By placing men and women on an equal level, the relatively increased valuing of women will also benefit men by informing them of the strengths, capabilities and contributions of members of the opposite sex.

Aim of the Study-

The aim of the present study was to find out and review the status and situation of women related to various aspects of women empowerment.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To study the effectiveness of the extension work activity.
2. To study the status of women in terms of Career, Education, Gender Roles, Family, Inequalities, Media, Stereotyping, Technology, and Workplace issues under the extension activity.
3. To review the issues of the women related to Career, Education, Gender Roles, Family, Inequalities, Media, and Stereotyping,

Technology, and Workplace issues under the extension activity.

After the selection of this topic, the researchers selected nine sub-topics for forty-five students, which were Career, Education, Gender Roles, Family, Inequalities, Media, Stereotyping, Technology, and Workplace related to women. A study was conducted to understand the women's status and views on these topics and how they felt if same topic were applied to men, thereby giving gender equality thoughts of women.

A brief description of the sub-topics is as follows:

- Women face lot of problems when they become goal oriented towards their Career. Categories like job stability, happiness factor, factors like boss, networking were also accounted for and evaluation was done on these.
- Women should be educated is advocated by all but followed by few, to assess how much equal chance women felt they were given towards education Women and men are the pillars of society and each one of them have a certain role to play in the society. Gender roles were hence selected to assess what women felt were roles related to the given sex.
- Women are great multi-taskers and the biggest task they face is handling of Family life. Keeping this aspect in mind the researchers evaluated the thought process women have on the new family structures evolving in the society.
- Women face adverse Inequalities in the society, we choose to assess this aspect in our survey. Review was done on the different aspects like justice, power, rights, positions which minority group according to women faced most inequalities like senior, children etc. these aspects were put to know the views women had in general about inequalities people face.
- Media plays a vital role in building of self-esteem for the women; hence the effect of the same had to be reviewed. Media portrays a lot of stereotypical products for men and women, points were discussed from the women point of view. Evaluation was done on few aspects like, brand following based on actor, recognition of women as same level as that of men etc.
- Stereotyping of both genders have been long done by the society. To assess the level of thinking on these lines few factors were taken into consideration for the evaluation like where usually women face stereotyping like, work, school, office, in society, by parents in law etc.
- Technology is a very essential part of life in the new era, hence the knowledge for the same needed to be evaluated to know how women felt for technology in general. The factors used for assessing and evaluating were like, how good is their knowledge of technology, how well can they use technology, what they feel is better of two genders at technology etc.
- Workplace is one of the places where women feel inequality is prevalent. Workplace needs to be safe

and secure, to assess this we set few parameters for evaluation like, maternity leave, office hours, salary, better pay scale, leadership roles etc.

Keeping these things in mind the researchers divided the whole class into nine categories of five student teachers in a group. As a part of extension work activity maximum student teachers selected topic related to women empowerment as all student teachers were women themselves.

Research Methodology:

The Research Design:

The research design was a survey-based exploratory descriptive design study. Cluster sampling was chosen since the population was divided into clusters according to several places of the city of Mumbai. The characteristics of this cluster sampling are heterogeneous as the respondents are from different areas. The population of this study included all women of low and middle class strata of the society.

Sample and Tools of the study:

The sample of the study consisted of 300 women across western region to central region of Mumbai. For the purpose of the study nine tools were prepared by the researchers with the help of the student teachers. The researchers also prepared open ended questions for interviews. All the nine tools were related with the nine aspects of the women issues specifically related to gender equality, which were Career, Education, Gender Roles, Family, Inequalities, Media, Stereotyping, Technology, & Workplace related to women.

Data Analysis:

Data was analysed using descriptive statistics, with the help of percentages and qualitative analysis was done for analysing the interview data.

Major Findings of the Study:

After the survey was conducted, the responses from each group were collected and analysed in the form of pie-chart for each item. The major findings of the study are as follows:

1. Choice of the Career group for Women:

- 45% women had stable jobs in their career,
- 70% women felt they could do better in career as compared to men,
- 56% women felt it was difficult for them to switch jobs,
- 70% felt having a good boss was essential factor in career growth,
- 43% women were indecisive about satisfaction in their salary etc.

53% women felt it was easier for men to switch their jobs, 41% women felt that men were not satisfied with their salaries, 60% women felt men needed a good mentor for having a smooth career.

2. Education of Women:

72% women felt they had freedom to choose their course for graduation, 83% felt designing, home sciences were women friendly courses, 65% women felt education successfully impacted them their rights and duties, 41% women felt they couldn't pursue their studies after marriage, 84% women felt there should be more schools n colleges for women etc. 86% women felt that men could easily be educated in engineering, architecture, 72% women felt that men could easily pursue studies after marriage.

3. Gender Roles:

78% felt they were competent of performing household tasks, 61% women felt they we not violent than men, 43% women felt that women are likely to take part in politics, 48% felt women had higher life expectancy then men etc. 71% women felt that men are willing to make career for themselves, 66% women felt men are likely to take part in politics, 77% felt men are likely to take part in business ventures.

4. Family Structure:

45% women preferred single family structure, 92% women preferred to have children, 69% women wanted grandparents around their children, 80% women felt it was their duty to fulfil the emotional needs of the family, etc. 49% women felt that men preferred single family structure 89% women felt men preferred children in their families, 67% women felt men were inclined towards family planning, 92% women felt it was the duty of the men to look after the financial needs of the family.

5. Equal Status of Women:

57% women felt they don't get equal power positions in business and politics, 78% women felt single women parent faces gender inequalities, 62% felt working women faced gender inequality, etc. 82% women felt that men get equal rights and power positions in business and politics, 65% women felt elderly men faced gender inequalities , 52% women feel male migrants face gender inequality.

6. Media Exposure of Women:

60% women felt they were influenced by media advertisement, 50% felt that different sized

women were not portrayed well in media, 48% felt that women were portrayed as victims in serials, etc.

48% women felt that men did not tend to buy products of their favourite actor, 67% felt that men were not portrayed as victims in serials, 50% women felt that men got better recognition in media as compared to women.

7. Stereotyping Role of Women:

59% felt women were stereotyped in workplace, 45% felt women were not stereotyped in school, 60% felt women were stereotyped in society, 57% women felt that Stereotyping existed, etc. 52% women felt that men were not stereotyped at workplace, 60% felt that men were not stereotyped in politics, 49% felt that men did not face stereotyping in society.

8. Use of Technology by Women:

66% women felt they were updated about the latest technologies, 59% did not women tend to use technological platform only for ease of shopping, 65% disagreed to use technology just as a way of entertainment, 60% women upgraded their devices more often, 60% women preferred to study in technological related fields, etc. 74% felt men were updated about the latest technologies, 82% felt men upgraded their technological devices more often, 80% felt that men easily take up technological fields as occupation.

9. Workplace Treatment of Women:

43% women did not ask for raise more frequently, 48% felt women did not get paid more than men, 90% felt women should be granted paid maternity leaves, 62% felt women should be given flexible timings, etc. 56% felt men should be given paternity paid leaves, 58% felt men were not scrutinized as harshly as women, 80% felt men were given chance of leadership roles.

Conclusion and Implications of the Study:

In the light of the research objectives, this study shows that all the aspects of this research were studied thoroughly. The study indicates the effectiveness of the extension work activity undertaken by the college. This activity has been institutionalised as a best practice of the college. It has been consistently proven to be effective and has received appreciated by the NAAC Peer Team members visiting the college.

First and foremost, this study has developed main social work core values amongst the student teachers, which comprises of service, social justice,

dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence among the student teachers.

Secondly, helping others is a primary goal of all the extension activities. Service is the value from which all other social work values stem. Our student teachers could develop the value of helping people thereby achieving the objective of extension work.

Thirdly, every person is different, with different cultural and social values. Our student teachers became mindful of those differences, treating each person with dignity and respect and promoting their clients' capacity and opportunity to address their own needs and improve their personal situations.

Fourthly, while working for this survey, our student teachers got connected to people who needed assistance with organizations and individuals who could provide the appropriate help.

Fifthly, our student teachers also developed their interpersonal skills as result of interactions for the research study.

Sixthly, the importance of ethics and values in extension work is more than just compliance with regulations and requirements. Our student teachers became aware about various moral and social responsibilities and supporting these values in their future career, thereby empowering themselves as an individual.

Last but not the least, the survey of women status and review of these issues has given our student teachers, lots of insight and awareness, which they were eager to apply in their daily lives and thus desired to contribute their knowledge and awareness towards the progress of the country.

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