

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE ECONOMIC SECTOR AND THE ROLE OF EDUCATION: (A STUDY IN THE CONTEXT OF DISTRICT KARAU LI)

Manoj Sharma, Research Scholar (Education), Jayoti Vidyapeeth Women's' University, Jaipur, India

Prof. (Dr.) Manju Sharma, Director, Faculty of Education & Methodology, Jayoti Vidyapeeth Women's' University, Jaipur, India

Abstract

In today's world, empowering women isn't just a buzzword, it's a burning necessity. It's about creating a society where they can make vital decisions, choose their paths, and drive social transformation. Empowerment isn't just handed out, it's built upon knowledge, power, and experience. And at the heart of this rise to equality lies education. As Jawaharlal Nehru famously said, "Educate a man, and you educate an individual. Educate a woman, and you educate a whole family." Why? Because empowered women – mothers, daughters, sisters – empower society as a whole. They challenge limitations, redefine their roles, and create a ripple effect of progress within families, communities, and even nations.

While agriculture and self-employment remain vital, the research goes beyond, showcasing the rising presence of women in diverse professions like banking, teaching, medicine, and law. They are no longer just figures in statistics, but driving forces in service delivery and economic development. The paper acknowledges the importance of micro-enterprises, but also explores how women are leading successful businesses across various sectors, exceeding limitations and generating income and employment opportunities. Recognizing the critical link between education and empowerment, the paper advocates for increased access to quality education for Karauli's women. Education equips them with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to navigate diverse professions, manage businesses, and become influential leaders. In essence, this paper paints a powerful picture of women's agency and the ripple effect their empowerment creates. By investing in their education and recognizing their diverse talents, we can unlock a future where women are not just participants, but architects of progress.

Keywords: Women's empowerment, Gender equality, Education and empowerment, Social transformation, Economic development

Introduction

Since its independence, India has made significant strides in achieving development goals, yet gender inequalities remain a persistent challenge. One key area to address this disparity is women's economic participation, where education emerges as a powerful tool for transformation. As Amartya Sen (1999) states, "The education of girls...leads to higher productivity and incomes, lower fertility rates, better child health, and greater involvement in community affairs." Educated women are not only empowered to make informed choices about their lives and families, but their increased participation in the workforce translates to substantial economic benefits for the nation as a whole. This paper analyzes the multifaceted role of education in fostering women's economic development in India, recognizing the challenges and outlining potential solutions.

Education: The Key to Agency and Livelihoods: At the individual level, education empowers women with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to navigate their lives and participate actively in the economy. It strengthens their agency by fostering critical thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving abilities. As Kabeer (2003) highlights, "Education for girls can become a powerful mechanism for promoting their agency and building their capabilities to challenge gender inequalities." Equipped with relevant skills, women can access better-paying jobs in various sectors, from healthcare and education to IT and manufacturing. Education empowers them to break free from traditional roles and pursue entrepreneurial ventures, contributing to overall economic diversification and growth. A World Bank study (2018) found that in India, each additional year of schooling for a woman raises her wages by 5-15%.

Beyond Individual Benefits: Education's Ripple Effect: The positive impact of women's education extends far beyond individual livelihoods. Educated mothers are more likely to invest in their children's education and health, creating a positive ripple effect that benefits future generations. According to UNESCO (2017), a 1% increase in female literacy can boost a country's GDP by 3%. Furthermore, empowered women have a greater voice in household decision-making, promoting better resource allocation and improved family well-being. As Duflo (2012) notes, "Investing in girls' education...can have knock-on effects on poverty reduction, child health, and economic growth."

Education as a Catalyst for Social Progress: Investing in girls' education is not just an economic strategy, but a crucial step towards achieving gender equality and social progress. When women are economically empowered, they have a greater say in community affairs and participate more actively in decision-making processes at all levels. This fosters a more just and inclusive society, breaking down gender barriers and promoting human rights. As Kabeer (2008) argues, "Education can equip women with the voice and the tools to challenge their subordination and claim their rightful place in society." Educated women are also better equipped to challenge harmful social norms and advocate for change, leading to a more equitable and prosperous future for all.

Methodology

Adopting a descriptive research design, this study gathered secondary data from a variety of sources, including scholarly journals, academic books, government reports, reputable news publications, and relevant working papers. To extract key insights and themes, the data was subjected to rigorous content analysis. To maintain the highest data quality, meta-analyses, systematic reviews, and literature reviews relying on non-verified data were excluded from the analysis.

Study Area

Karauli: A Land Steeped in History and Heritage: Karauli, a district nestled in northeastern Rajasthan, carries within its name a rich tapestry of history and legend. Named after its namesake town, Karauli itself is an echo of "Kalyanpuri," its ancient moniker, signifying a blessed land. But before it became known as Karauli or Kalyanpuri, it was Karkralagiri, a mountain-ringed kingdom founded in 1348 CE by Yaduvanshi King Arjun Dev, a descendant of the revered Lord Krishna. The Kalyanrai temple, dedicated to the deity, stands as a testament to this legacy. Today, Karauli occupies a strategic location, bordered by Dholpur, Sawai Madhopur, Gangapur City, Dausa, and Bharatpur districts, and brushing against the state of Madhya Pradesh. Its 5524 sq. km. expanse ranks 23rd in Rajasthan in terms of landmass, while its population of 14,58,248 (as per Census 2011) places it 22nd in the state.

Karauli's past is a saga of resilience and conquest. From its early days as part of Matsya Pradesh to its rule under dynasties like the Mauryas, Malwas, Yodheyayas, and Guptas, the land has witnessed a kaleidoscope of power shifts. The Yaduvanshis, despite facing losses and reclaiming territories like the Mandrayal fort, ultimately established their princely state in 1348 CE under King Arjun Dev. Twenty-seven rulers graced the throne during this period, until Karauli came under British rule in 1817 through a treaty with King Harbakshpal. Independence brought a new chapter for Karauli. In 1948, it joined Alwar, Bharatpur, and Dholpur to form the Matsya Union, which later merged into the United States of Greater Rajasthan in 1949. Finally, in 1950, it became part of the modern state of Rajasthan. Karauli's present-day form emerged in 1997 when five tehsils – Todabhim, Nadauti, Hindaun, Karauli, and Sapotra – were carved out of the then-larger Sawai Madhopur district. This new district, carrying the legacy of its past, stands as a vibrant testament to its rich history, cultural heritage, and enduring spirit. The district has a population of 1,458,248 (Census, 2011), with the majority of residents residing in rural areas. The distribution of the population by gender and residence type is given in the following table.

Population by gender and residence type (2011)

Population	Total			Rural			Urban		
	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female
Total	1458248	783639	674609	1240143	668185	571958	218105	115454	102651
Percentage Distribution	100%	54%	46%	85%	54%	46%	15%	53%	47%

Historical Aspect of Education System

In this section, we will explore the state of Education in the district. Education is a lifelong journey that transcends the barriers of age, sex and religion. It is crucial for enhancing human potential, advancing civilization and enriching culture. In 1906-07, the girls school in Karauli town had only 20 students enrolled. By 31st October, 1907, the total number of students in all the schools across the state had reached 827. However, the progress of women's education in the state was hindered by the indifference of the people. The Report on the Administration of Karauli State, 1907-08, states "The people of this state are naturally opposed to education, they have not yet realized its importance. They are reluctant to send their boys to schools, let alone their girls.

Literacy rates as per rural and urban location and gender in the district (2011)

District	Types	Literacy Rates			Gap in Male Female Literacy Rates
		Persons	Males	Females	
Karauli	Rural	65.05	80.93	46.52	34.41
	Urban	72.77	84.14	60.05	24.09
	Total	66.22	81.41	48.61	32.80

The district has an Educational Development Index (EDI) of 0.48, which is lower than the state average of 0.544. EDI is a composite indicator that measures the quality, access, and equity of education in a region. The district has a gender parity index (GPI) of 0.88 for primary level, 0.86 for upper primary level, and 0.79 for secondary level⁴. GPI is the ratio of female to male values of a given indicator.

Economic Activities

Economic activity involves the production, distribution, and utilization of goods and services to meet every day needs. It encompasses any action that involves monetary transactions or the exchange of goods or services. The level of economic activity in a region influences its economic growth. The fundamental economic activities in an economy are production, consumption, and capital formation. The production process involves combining resources like land, labor, capital, and entrepreneurship. These resources are compensated with rent, wages, interest, and profits for their productive contributions. Consumption refers to the use of goods and services to satisfy individual or collective needs. A portion of the current production is saved and added to the existing capital stock, such as machinery and buildings, each year to enhance future production potential. Therefore, the produced goods are either consumed or used for capital formation, or both. These three activities - production, consumption, and capital formation - are interconnected. An increase in production leads to higher levels of consumption and capital formation. Increased consumption indicates an improved standard of living, while increased capital formation is crucial for the country's growth. More consumption is possible with more production, and more production is possible with more capital formation. Thus, these three economic activities influence each other and drive the economy towards development.

Economic activities are further divided into three main sectors: primary, secondary, and tertiary. The primary sector includes activities related to the extraction and production of natural resources, such as farming, fishing, and mining. The produced output can be directly consumed or undergo additional processes to make it consumer-ready. The secondary sector involves activities related to

the processing of materials extracted in the primary stage. For example, mining gold is a primary industry, while manufacturing of jewelry from it is a secondary industry. The tertiary sector provides support services to the primary and secondary sectors, including transportation, banking, insurance, warehousing, communication, advertising, etc., to facilitate the flow of goods. The quinary sector involves ideation, evaluation, rearrangement of existing concepts, creation of new ideas, policy-making, etc., impacting other economic sectors. People engaged in the service sector contribute to these activities.

Types of Worker

1. **Main Worker:** A 'Main worker' is someone who has engaged in an economically productive activity for at least six months within the year leading up to the enumeration date."
2. **Marginal Worker:** A 'Marginal worker' is someone who worked for less than six months in any economic activity during the last year prior to the enumeration date.
3. **Cultivator:** A person is classified as a cultivator if he or she is engaged in cultivation on land owned or held from government or held from private persons or institutions for payment in money, kind, or share. Cultivation includes effective supervision or direction in cultivation.
4. **Agricultural Labourer:** An agricultural laborer is someone who works on another person's land for wages in money, kind, or share. They lack any risk in cultivation, solely laboring for compensation, and have no rights of lease or contract on the land they work on.
5. **Household Industry Worker:** The household industry is an economic activity managed by the head of the household or its members within the home or village in rural areas and limited to the house premises in urban areas.
6. **Other Workers:** An individual involved in economic activity during the reference period but not as a cultivator, agricultural laborer, or in household industry is called an 'Other Worker (OW).'
7. **Non-Worker:** A 'Non-worker' is an individual, who has not engaged in any economically productive activity throughout the reference period, which is the last year preceding the date of enumeration.

Role of Women in Economic Activities

So, much research has been done on women's economic empowerment. Previous researchers have emphasized the importance of the economic independence of women. Women play a significant role in economic activities. Their contribution to the economy is important for the development of a country. Women's economic activity is crucial in providing family resources and their involvement in manufacturing and service activities is essential for the growth of developed countries (Hazheer and Ehsan, 2022). Women entrepreneurship has emerged as a dominant force in economic development, making significant contributions to the economy (Shivani, 2022). Women entrepreneurship has emerged as a dominant force in economic development, making significant contributions to the economy (Eswari, 2019). Women entrepreneurs have a significant impact on the economies of the world, supporting family income and contributing to economic development and social well-being (Sajjad and Kaleem, 2020). Women's economic empowerment through entrepreneurship leads to socio-economic opportunities, personal rights, and community development (Ali and Cook, 2020). Women entrepreneurs in India should be provided with specific training facilities to overcome challenges and develop their skills and talents.

For centuries, women have faced societal challenges with resilience, contributing significantly to India's economic growth (CII, 2022). Presently, 343 million women drive the unorganized sector, showcasing their immense potential. Despite pandemic setbacks disproportionately affecting women's formal workforce engagement, a shift is occurring. Rural women are breaking barriers, building businesses, and asserting financial independence. Initiatives like the 'National Rural Livelihood Mission' and 50% reservation in panchayats offer crucial leadership opportunities. Unlocking women's economic potential demands a multifaceted approach. Recognizing the burden of unpaid care work is crucial. Investing just 2% of India's GDP in public-sector care infrastructure can create 11 million jobs, enabling women to pursue higher education and entrepreneurship.

Women-centric policies, easier access to financial institutions, and tax incentives are vital for fostering their entrepreneurial spirit.

Present Scenario of Economic Activities in District Karauli Rajasthan SDG Index Score (2023)

Inspired by the SDG India Index, Rajasthan introduces its state-specific District SDG Index. The Rajasthan SDG Index focuses on measuring district-level progress on specific Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As per the fourth version released in 2023, district Karauli received an Index Score of 58.71 (Ranked 21) for overall performance. Goal 4 ensures inclusive and equitable quality education and promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all. The performance of district Karauli for quality education can be seen as an index score under 71.37. Goal 8 promotes sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all. The economic growth of the district can be seen as an index score of 50.93 under Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth).

Profile of Workers

The district has a total of 628,726 workers, comprising 371,058 males and 257,668 females. The work participation rate (WPR) in the district is 43.1 percent. The number of main workers is 438,337, while marginal workers amount to 190,389. The categorization of workers into main, marginal and non-workers in the district is as follows:

Gender wise details by types of workers in the district (Census 2011)

S. No.	Category	Females		Males		Total	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1.	Main Workers	1,29,248	50.16	3,09,089	83.30	4,38,337	69.72
2.	Marginal Workers	1,28,420	49.84	61,969	16.70	1,90,389	30.28
Total		2,57,668	100.00	3,71,058	100.00	6,28,726	100.00

Livelihood Scenario in the District

A livelihood is the means of earning income and engaging in activities necessary to secure life's necessities. It becomes sustainable when it empowers individuals to cope with and recover from shocks and stresses, such as natural disasters or economic and social upheavals, while also enhancing their well-being and that of future generations. This sustainability should occur without undermining the natural environment or resource base. Livelihood revolves around the people, the covered area, and the population density of the district. In the past, the primary traditional occupations in the state of Karauli included pastoralism and agriculture, involving cultivation and stock-raising. Mining was also a significant occupation in the district, alongside activities such as fishing and hunting. The district's mineral resources played a crucial role in fostering industrialization, as well as contributing to the social and economic development of both the district and the state.

Based on the 2011 census, the district is ranked 22nd in population, 23rd in terms of area, and 13th in population density. In the district, the distribution of workers by category is as follows: 53.3% are cultivators, 18.3% are agricultural laborers, 1.5% are workers in the household industry, and 26.8% fall into the 'other workers' category. This translates to 335,302 cultivators and 115,367 agricultural laborers in the district. The livelihood pattern varies between rural and urban locations in the district as outlined below:

Livelihood pattern in the district (census 2011) (in numbers)

S. No.	Category	Rural		Urban		Total		Total
		Males	Females	Male	Females	Males	Females	
1.	Cultivators	176391	151422	4508	2981	180899	154403	335302
2.	Agriculture Labourers	40805	69461	2219	2882	43024	72343	115367

The main and marginal workers are further classified based on the type of occupation. Cultivators constitute the primary workforce in the district, comprising 53.33% of total workers, with 48.75% being males and 59.92% females. Other workers account for 26.81%, followed by agricultural laborers at 18.35%, and so on.

The table below illustrates the gender distribution at the district level, where the number of male cultivators (180,899) exceeds females (154,403). However, in the category of agricultural laborers, the percentage of females (28.08%) is higher than males (11.59%). The distribution of male and female workers across various categories in the district is as follows:

Number and percentage category of workers as per gender in the district (Census 2011)

S. No.	Category	Total		Males		Females	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1.	Cultivators	3,35,302	53.33	1,80,899	48.75	1,54,403	59.92
2.	Agricultural Labourers	1,15,367	18.35	43,024	11.59	72,343	28.08
3.	In Household Industries	9,521	1.51	5,594	1.51	3,927	1.52
4.	Other Workers	1,68,536	26.81	1,41,541	38.15	26,995	10.48

In conclusion, the district exhibits a total workforce of 628,726 individuals, with a notable gender distribution of 371,058 males and 257,668 females. The work participation rate stands at 43.1%, showcasing significant economic engagement. Further analysis reveals 438,337 main workers and 190,389 marginal workers, each contributing to the district's economic landscape. Cultivators play a pivotal role, constituting 53.33% of the workforce, with noteworthy gender variations. While the number of male cultivators surpasses females, the category of agricultural laborers sees a higher percentage of female participation. These insights into occupational patterns and gender dynamics underscore the multifaceted nature of the district's workforce.

Bridging the Gap: Schemes Driving Women's Economic Participation

- **SHG Programme in Rajasthan:** Initiated in 1997-98, the Self-Help Group Programme aims to economically empower women in all 33 districts of the state. In groups of 10 to 20, women make decisions, foster cooperation, and develop self-dependence through small savings for self-employment. The program encompasses SHG permission, Credit Linkage, Bank Linkage, and Cluster formation. Proven to be a successful tool, the SHG Programme empowers women, fostering self-dependence.
- **Amrita Haat:** Since 2004-05, Amrita Haat, organized by the Directorate of Women Empowerment, Department of Women Child Development, has served as a robust platform for women's economic and social empowerment. This initiative facilitates the display and marketing of products created or enhanced by Self Help Groups. In addition to Amrita Haat, the Directorate extends opportunities for Women Self Help Groups (WSHGs) to participate in events such as IITF, ShilpGram Utsav, and other departmental fairs. The National Amrita Haat takes place annually in Jaipur. In a noteworthy move in the financial year 2015-16, Amrita Haat expanded to 6 Divisional Headquarters, and in 2016-17, it reached 8 Districts, providing SHGs in remote areas a chance to showcase and market their products locally.
- **Priyadarshini Adarsh SHG scheme:** The Priyadarshini Adarsh Self-Help Group (SHG) scheme, launched in 2009-10, focuses on developing 10 exemplary SHGs in each district. These Ideal SHGs adhere to established procedures and standards, setting a benchmark for others in the area. Implemented through various NGOs/Agencies, the scheme designates SHGs that meet specific criteria, such as regular meetings, record keeping, savings, internal transactions, timely loan repayment, discussions on social issues, and participation in income generation activities.

- **Swavalamban:** The primary aim of this scheme is to enhance the living standards of economically disadvantaged rural women, including widows and those separated. RSLDC provides training in both traditional and non-traditional trades to empower these women by offering employment opportunities.
- **Free of cost basic computer training to women with support of RKCL:** Providing free basic computer training, in collaboration with RKCL, aims to make women of all categories computer literate. RKCL offers two identified courses for women's skill development.
- **Income Generating Activity Training:** This scheme offers SHG women opportunities for employment/self-employment through training by RSLDC and institutes like NIFT, FDDI, and CESBM.
- **Allotment of Fair price shops to WSHGs:** Introduced in 2009-10, the fair price shop scheme aims to offer self-employment to women SHGs. These local residents are well-acquainted with the beneficiaries of the public distribution system, ensuring fair distribution. To promote economic sustainability, each SHG receives Rs. 75,000 as seed money from the state. Currently, 90 SHGs have been allotted fair price shops, with 69 receiving the seed money.
- **Interest Subvention Scheme on Bank Loan to SHGs:** Introduced in 2010-11, the State Government's scheme subsidizes 50% of interest on bank loans up to Rs. 50,000 for women SHGs. This initiative aims to encourage SHGs to access bank credit for sustaining their activities and achieving self-dependence. Additionally, it seeks to enhance loan repayment by SHGs, thereby contributing to the reduction of Non-Performing Assets (NPAs).
- **Mission Gramya Shakti:** The Mission, registered under the Rajasthan Society Registration Act, 1958, operates autonomously to enhance women SHGs. It focuses on clustering, capacity building, and handholding, creating links with livelihood programs to empower women. The mission's mandate is to elevate the social and socio-economic status of women in the state by strengthening the SHG movement.
- **Dhan Laxmi Mahila Samridhi Kendra**
The Women Self Help Group Program serves as a vital tool for the social and economic empowerment of women in the state. The government has established Dhan Laxmi Mahila Samridhi Kendra in each Block, with 33 centers sanctioned in the first phase and 67 centers in the second phase. These centers provide a platform for self-help groups to conduct various trainings and market their products.

Conclusion

The government is dedicated to reassessing current programs and policies in the state to reduce gender disparity in socio-economic aspects. Economic independence for women not only instills confidence in decision-making but also enhances their bargaining power within families and society. Additionally, it boosts mobility and exposure to the outside world. Recognizing the pivotal role of education in women's economic empowerment, the state government has implemented various initiatives, including the promotion of Self-Help Groups (SHGs), skill development centers, State Resource Centers, and more. These efforts underscore the government's commitment to empower women across all sectors in the state, reflecting interventions in social empowerment, women's protection, and economic engagements.

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