

Perception is the Primary Barrier to Women Empowerment

1: Introduction

Thesis Statement: Perception is an primary obstacle in achieving women empowerment, coupled with stereotypes, biases and societal norms which hinder women's progress in various aspects. Holistic efforts ^{are} needed from society and state to reduce the perceptions.

2: Historical linkage of women Empowerment and perception

3: How Perception is a primary Barrier to women Empowerment

- a) Women cannot manage high positions.
- b) Women are weak for difficult tasks.
- c) Women are not good leaders.
- d) Women are unable to manage home and office together.

- e) women bring social taboos in home.
- f) They are not good decision makers.
- g) Women are economic burden and produce less economic outcome.

4: Impacts of Perception on Women Empowerment

- a) Perception leads to limited access to education
- b) Perception produce less economic opportunities to women
- c) It leads to underrepresentation in leadership position.

5: strategies to overcome perception about women

- a) Raising awareness in the community
- b) Highlighting the success stories of women
- c) strict implementation of gender friendly legislations

6: Conclusion

Constructivism, a primary theory of international relations states that "Perception is bigger than reality." In post-truth era, perception overtakes the objective reality. It shapes the narrative about everything.

Similarly, perception also shapes the discourse about women. Unfortunately, not in a good way. It is hindering the women's empowerment in every sphere of life. Women are considered that they cannot manage top-positions, not able to lead, weak for difficult tasks, and cannot manage home and office together.

Similarly, it is perceived that women bring social taboos in home, they are emotional and not good decision makers. Moreover, there is notion that women are economic burden on the family and on organisations. These perceptions negatively impacts women in education, economic domains and leadership roles. However, women's perception can be improved by raising awareness, highlighting success stories

and strict implementations of gender friendly laws.

Therefore, Perception is a primary obstacle in achieving women empowerment, coupled with stereotypes, biases and societal norms which hinder women's progress in various aspects. Holistic efforts are needed from society and state to reduce the perceptions.

Throughout history, women have faced discrimination due to societal perceptions.

Before 1920 suffrage movement, they were not allowed to cast votes. Similarly, in ancient Roman and English civilization, they were treated as commodity and slave. In Hindus' society, manu Smriti dictates that women are weaker individuals which require lifelong protection. First from their fathers, then their husbands, and after from sons. Even in 21st century, patriarchal societies are still dictating women to not pursue education.

and employment. These perceptions having women are emotional, inferior, weaker and private are not limited to any one sphere of life but in every domains.

The following paragraphs will discuss how perception is a primary barrier to women empowerment.

Firstly, there is a perception that women cannot hold high positions. They are not made for higher bodies. Top-positions require grit and agency and women lacks in them. This shows in statistics that women are behind in attaining top positions. According to UN estimates from 2023, women only holds 20% of top executive posts and rest are hold by men. Therefore, societal perception stops women in achieving excellence in hierarchy. Secondly, women cannot manage home and office together. This perception is widely common in the corporate sectors. Office colleagues believe that

women are low-performers because they have to manage home too. Similarly, family thinks they are not good because they are doing job. Ultimately, perception is developed that women cannot perform in second-shift. They are failed creature in achieving excellence in multi-tasking.

Thirdly, women are not good leaders. They are not able to lead the office. Consider the case study of Talyn F. Rehman, a UK diplomat, was once sent to Azerbaijan as ambassador, but she received negative backlash from male officials who stated on their national television that UK actually downgraded the importance of Azerbaijan by sending a female ambassador.

Similarly, it is perceived that women face difficult tasks. Society stops women in taking society accepted difficult jobs like journalism, practising law and politics. According to UN Women 2024, women only account

26% in national Parliaments

Even in some areas of Asia and Africa, it is less than 20%. Main reason is that it is general perception that politics is not for women.

Moreover, women bring social taboos in home. This perception is widely accepted in conservative societies of Asia, Africa and Middle East. For example, love marriage is a social taboo for these societies. Giving freedom to women in education and employment will ultimately leads to accepting this in home. Therefore, a survey conducted by Egyptian Center for Women's Rights found that 60% Egyptian believed that a woman who chooses her own husband without family approval has brought shame to her family. Thus, fear of societal taboos also stopped women in achieving growth. In addition, women are not good decision makers.

There is perception that women are emotional. They are away from rationale and logic. This perception stops them in growth and development. Consider the case study of Pakistan's judiciary, There are more than 510 judges in Supreme court and High courts but only 31 are women. This data shows the significant gender imbalance because of societal perception about women empowerment.

Also, women are considered as economic burden. There is perception that women require more financing but produce less financial outcome. In family, Parents prioritize the education of boys as compared to daughter as they think that investing in boys education will ultimately pays off. Similar cases with organization, these organization does not prioritize women. Considering the case study of ICC's cricket worldcup, ICC glorifies the ICC men's world cup because they

Produce more financial outcome. The ICC Men's world cup 2019 generated \$2.5 billion in TV rights, while ICC women's WC generated only \$60 million. Therefore, women are considered liability for organisations as they does not produce enough economic resources.

Following paragraphs will also discuss the impacts of perception on women empowerment.

First, perception leads to limited access to education. women are major victim. societal perception stops women in getting equitable education. According to UNICEF, 122 million are out of school, ratio is much higher in asia, africa and latin america." There is reason in high proportion of out-of-school primarily in patriarchal societies because women are expected to perform domestic chores as compared to education. Secondly, perception produce less economic opportunities to women.

There is false connotation
attach with women that
they produce less, therefore
they deserve less. According
to Pew Research Center,
women earned an average
80 cents for every dollar
earned by men in the
same age and group.

This gap is much higher
in particularly tech companies.
Thirdly, this perception
also leads to underrepresentation
in leadership positions. There
is perception that women
are not good leaders. This
impacts overall status of
women empowerment. Considering
the world's largest companies,
only 15% of board seats
are occupied by women,
rests with old-boys-hands.
Therefore, perception is a
primary barrier in achieving
equality in leadership roles.

Aforementioned paragraphs
discussed about perception as
primary barrier to women
empowerment and impacts
on women's growth. Following
paragraphs will discuss the

Strategies to overcome the perception about women

Raising awareness in the community can be important strategy to improve the perception about women in the society. State actors along with local social and religious stakeholders can hold advocacy campaign like workshop, which emphasizes the women empowerment. Local and social stakeholders can directly impacts the mindset of the community.

Another strategy can be the highlighting the success stories of women. Media can play important role in shaping the narrative about women.

Media should highlights the achievements of Margret Thatcher Benazir Bhutto and Arfa karim. Through this way, women empowerment can also be sensitized.

Similarly, strict implementation of gender-friendly legislation can also be a

fruitful strategy to improve the some societal constraints. Legislation like Beijing Declaration 1995, UN Gender Parity law, EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020 must be implemented in true spirit. Similarly, states at their own develop strict mechanism to improve the pathways which ultimately leads to women empowerment.

In a nutshell, Perception is key obstacle in achieving women's growth and mindset. Perceptions about women like irrational creature, illogical, emotional, spontaneous, weak, submissive and private are not limited to any one domain of life. It is

stopping them in achieving excellence and prosperity.

This perception negatively impacting women in education, economic spheres and leadership roles.

However, Perception can be improved by raising awareness in community through involving all stakeholders.

It can also be improved by creating positive discourse about women through media by highlighting the success stories of women—who are high achievers. Similarly, it can be improved by the strict reinforcement of gender friendly legislations done at global as well as national level.