

Impact of Women's Education on Societal Development: A Study on The Role of National Education Policy in Empowering Women in Maharashtra

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ABSTRACT

Education for women is instrumental in the development of society by promoting economic growth, gender empowerment, and social development. In this research, the influence of women's education on the development of society is analyzed in Maharashtra, with a specific emphasis on the contribution of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 to empowering women. Using a descriptive and analytical research design, the study is based solely on secondary data sources such as government reports, census data, policy documents, and research by international organizations. The results show a steady increase in female literacy rates from 75.48% in 2011 to 85.40% in 2023, with a decreasing gender literacy gap from 12.9% to 7.5%. Women's enrolment in tertiary education has also grown substantially, with undergraduate attendance increasing from 42.3% in 2015 to 52.5% in 2023, and postgraduate attendance from 35.1% to 45.3%. It is also observed that participation in STEM and vocational studies has increased, which shows attempts to place women in a variety of academic fields and career options. The research also reveals a close linkage between education and work, where women with higher education have substantially higher employment (74.1%) and a higher share in the formal sector (56.3%). Analysis of NEP 2020 identifies its role in promoting better enrolment, retention, skill acquisition, and employability and thus contributing to women's economic and educational empowerment. The research concludes that sustained policy backing, proper implementation, and targeted intervention are needed to optimize the effects of women's education on social development. The research adds to the general discussion on gender-inclusive policy for education, highlighting the importance of sustained governmental and institutional initiatives to bridge education and economic gaps for women in Maharashtra.

Keywords: *Women's Education, Societal Development, National Education Policy, Empowering Women, Maharashtra*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental driver of social advancement, and women's education, in turn, has a transformative impact on communities, economies, and governance. Globally, countries that invest in women's education experience increased socio-economic development, lower poverty levels, and better health outcomes. In India, there has been a growing focus on women's education with each passing decade, as each subsequent policy and reform was focused on augmenting female literacy and access to higher education. There are regional variations, and Maharashtra and similarly placed states, although having improved literacy levels, still face issues of gender equality of education. The effects of women's education on social development and, in a more restricted sense, the effects of the National Education Policy (NEP) on women's empowerment in Maharashtra are the topics examined in this study.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is an overhaul by the Government of India in an attempt to remodel the education system on the lines of inclusivity, flexibility, and skill-based training. Elimination of gender disparities in education is one of the bare minimum aspirations of the NEP, and it arrives at this on the premise of the provision of equal opportunities to women in achieving quality learning inputs. In the compound demographic and economic profile of Maharashtra, policy implementation is necessary to overcome the structural barriers to education for women. From increasing enrollment levels to changing skill-based education, the NEP can empower women to a large degree by improving access to education, lowering costs, and making it relevant on the lines of the needs of the times.

Women's education has numerous ways in which it develops society. Educated women will be more likely to be employed, contribute to the improvement of the economy, and enhance their family and community. Women are empowered by higher education to make decisions regarding health, family, and finances, leading to lower child mortality rates and overall household well-being. Second, educated women will be more politically and socially active, agitating for gender justice, legal equality, and social justice. In Maharashtra, which has both rural and urban fissures that interfere with access to education, schemes like the NEP aim towards a more equitable system of education that will admit women from across socio-economic levels.

Despite the enhanced literacy rate of women, social norms, early marriage, economic constraints, and lack of infrastructure continue to deter women's education in Maharashtra. Rural areas also have certain issues of poor educational institutions, gender biases, and security concerns that discourage

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families from investing in girls' education. The NEP seeks to address these issues through interventions like gender-sensitive curriculum planning, scholarships, distance learning, and vocational training schemes that encourage lifelong learning. The policy also facilitates the induction of women in leadership roles in educational institutions, ensuring that women's perspectives are represented in decision-making forums.

1.1. Research Objectives

- To assess the impact of NEP 2020 on women's education in Maharashtra, focusing on literacy, enrolment, and skill development.
- To examine the link between women's education and socio-economic advancement, analyzing employment trends and workforce participation.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Chaudhari and Kendre (2024) investigated the intersection between caste system and gender dynamic and English language teaching infrastructure in Vidarbha India to understand both impediments and possibilities for women's English language learning achievement. Their study showed how structural limitations affected marginalized women through their economic status together with cultural roles and prejudices within institutions. Women who mastered English could achieve higher jobs along with better social advancement yet language learning opportunities were suppressed because of caste and gender-specific discrimination. Officials failed to spread English fluency among women because problems with infrastructure alongside challenges in implementation reduced the effect of their initiatives.

Dhoke (2024) examined the researcher how NGOs help women gain empowerment throughout Bhokardan Taluka located in District Jalna through extensive research. The research evaluated the ways non-governmental organizations enhanced female socio-economic status through their work in education and vocational training and self-help programs. According to Dhoke non-governmental organizations filled an essential void that existed between government policy formation at upper levels and local implementation by providing resources along with awareness programs and training improvements. Various obstacles like insufficient funding along with societal opposition and administrative delays emerged as key factors to reduce the effectiveness of these programs according to the research findings. To effectively empower women the research suggests departments of the government together with NGOs and civil society organizations should establish better coordination through interdepartmental collaboration.

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George (2024) evaluated the study of entrepreneurial demands among tribal female business owners in the Palghar district through analyzing their socioeconomic business participation factors. The majority of tribal women possessed traditional skills which could become potential for entrepreneurial ventures yet they faced key barriers from inadequate financial backing alongside insufficient market access and insufficient business management training. The investigation by George showed tribal women received positive effects from government programs and microfinance organizations yet cultural standards intersected with societal gender roles to limit their business growth. The study established that tribal women's entrepreneurship needed intensive solutions such as financial literacy programs joined with networking support from their communities to thrive.

Ingole and Mandal (2025) investigated the educational barriers that Warli tribe girls in Maharashtra encounter when they try to continue their studies beyond primary school. The research examined both Warli community views about education and the obstacles which made young women avoid continuing their education. The authors established that economic limitations together with traditional beliefs along with insufficient educational facilities presented enormous barriers to Warli girls' pursuit of higher education. Early marriages combined with attitudes from parents proved to be major reasons why girls dropped out of school. The study revealed authorities have succeeded in advancing education access by giving scholarships and setting reservation policies yet insufficient community knowledge and supporting methods continue blocking educational advancement.

Kamble (2024) investigated the social reforms tracing their influence on Indian women's education and analyzing the function of previous combined with present movements in developing women's educational possibilities. The study analyzed how legal reforms together with policy implementations and activist efforts contributed to raising female reading skills while making tertiary education more accessible. The social reform movements showed vital impact in combating male dominance and elevating female education regarding equality yet socioeconomic disparities together with regional imbalances persisted. The findings showed that India needed both policy-based interventions and people's level advocacy for the complete educational empowerment of women.

Kapoor (2021) performed an analytical review of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's activities which enhanced women's empowerment across India through educational initiatives. Research demonstrates that Ambedkar defended gender equality and was active in the Constitution drafting process while striving for women's educational and job-related rights. Through his policies Dr. Ambedkar made it possible for marginalized women to benefit from progressive educational and legal reforms. The

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study adds that although progress has been made the structural inequalities which Ambedkar pursued to eliminate continue to constrain Indian women's educational opportunities in the present day.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

The present research relies on analytical and descriptive approaches using secondary resources while determining the impact of women's education on social structures. This research evaluates the National Education Policy 2020 for understanding its impact on women's empowerment across Maharashtra. The main objective of this study includes exploring policy analysis and education trends together with evaluating how changes in women's education affect social development. Through analysis of available literature together with government reports and statistical data this study examines the role that education reforms play in promoting empowerment for women and social progress.

3.2. Data Collection

The study has been carried out with exclusive dependency on secondary sources of data, collected through reliable academic and institutional sources. The data is also derived from government reports, e.g., NEP 2020 policy reports, census reports, and education reports submitted by the Ministry of Education, Government of India. Reports are also analyzed for international bodies like UNESCO, UNICEF, and World Bank to understand global trends concerning women's education.

The analysis of research papers and articles together with books examines theoretical and empirical connections between women's education and gender equality along with social development. The findings from this research stem from reports created by both non-governmental organizations and research institutions that work with women's education within Maharashtra. The assessment of education policies and implementation weaknesses uses these methods.

3.3. Data Analysis

Qualitative analysis methods apply to secondary data sources that also require statistical interpretation as needed. Policy documents and reports serve as the basis to study enrolment patterns alongside literacy rates and employment statistics of women. The evaluation of NEP 2020's impact utilizes thematic document analysis together with expert opinions to define essential provisions that help women's education and their societal consequences. Statistical data about literacy rates

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alongside gender parity rates and employment levels enables useful conclusions regarding the social progression from education.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The discussion details the effects of women's educational progress on Maharashtra's social advancement while describing NEP 2020's function in women's empowerment. This study utilizes government reports alongside educational institutional and international organizations' statistical data along with policy documents as secondary data sources for analysis. The research findings appear within four numerical tables alongside graphical representations that strengthen the study's analytical substance.

4.1. Trends in Female Literacy in Maharashtra (2011–2023)

Women literacy is a key indicator of educational development and empowerment. Maharashtra has witnessed steady rises in female literacy rates over the years, along with the reduction of the gender literacy gap. The rise is due to steady efforts by policymakers in implementation, enhanced access to education, and education sensitization campaigns for women. Table 1 illustrates the trend in female literacy rate for the period 2011-2023 and decreasing male-female literacy level.

Table 1: Trends in Female Literacy Rate in Maharashtra (2011–2023)

Year	Female Literacy Rate (%)	Male Literacy Rate (%)	Gender Gap (%)
2011	75.48	88.38	12.9
2015	79.32	90.12	10.8
2019	82.70	91.76	9.1
2023*	85.40	92.88	7.5

The statistics of Table 1 reflect a persistent rise in women's literacy in Maharashtra from 75.48% in 2011 to 85.40% in 2023, reflecting an impressive improvement in women's education. At the same time, the gender disparity in literacy declined from 12.9% in 2011 to 7.5% in 2023, which is an encouraging trend towards educational equality. This trend reveals the success of government initiatives, campaigns, and increased access to educational facilities by women. The consistent

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increase in male literacy rates also contributes to overall educational development, but the narrowing gender gap underscores specific efforts to improve female education and close existing gaps.

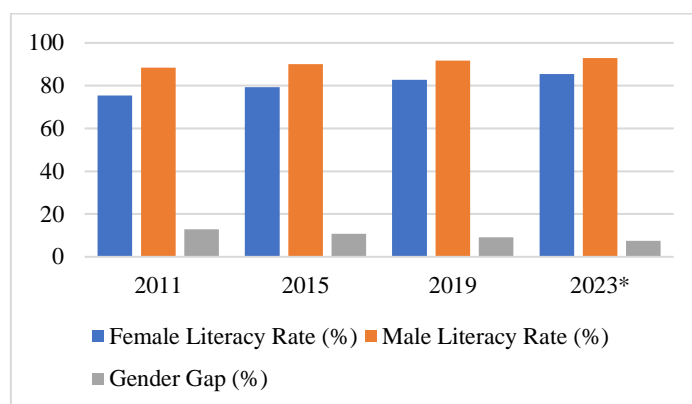


Figure 1: Graphical Representation of Trends in Female Literacy Rate in Maharashtra (2011–2023)

Graphic representation of the trend of literacy illustrates the trajectory of women's education over the years. Figure 1 illustrates a graphical representation of the female literacy rate in Maharashtra between the years 2011 and 2023, showing fluctuations in literacy rates and the gender gap that narrowed. The graph draws a definite contrast between the male and female literacy rates and projects the role of education policy and programs initiated to empower women through enhanced access to education.

4.2. Enrolment of Women in Higher Education

Higher education is the key driver of women's empowerment as it opens doors for gainful employment and higher social mobility. The table below gives the increase in the number of women enrolment into undergraduate and postgraduate studies over the years. A higher education opportunity is a key aspect of women's empowerment because it boosts professional prospects and social mobility. Table 2 portrays data on female enrollment in undergraduate and postgraduate programs in Maharashtra from 2015 to 2023, and in STEM and vocational studies. The table is marked by the increasing pattern of higher education enrolments and reflects efforts made towards gender sensitization in studies and working life. The data brings out the new face of education and policy interventions towards promoting women's enrolment in all disciplines of study.

Table 2: Women's Enrolment in Higher Education in Maharashtra (2015–2023)

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Year	Undergraduate Enrolment (%)	Postgraduate Enrolment (%)	STEM Courses (%)	Vocational Courses (%)
2015	42.3	35.1	28.5	18.4
2018	45.8	38.2	31.6	21.7
2021	48.9	41.7	34.2	24.3
2023*	52.5	45.3	37.9	27.8

The figures in Table 2 reveal a steady increase in the enrolment of women in higher education in Maharashtra from 2015 to 2023, an indicator of rising opportunities and consciousness about female education. Enrolment at the undergraduate level rose from 42.3% in 2015 to 52.5% in 2023, while enrolment at the postgraduate level went up from 35.1% to 45.3%, indicating rising access to higher studies. Most importantly, the number of enrolments in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics courses rose from 28.5% to 37.9%, indicating efforts in fostering women scientists and technologists. The number of enrolments in vocation courses rose from 18.4% to 27.8%, indicating diversification into professional courses in preparation for employment. These trends indicate the efficiency of education policies and programs focusing on gender equity in different areas of study.

Monitoring trends in women's enrolment in higher education gives important information about the rising enrolment of women in institutions of higher learning. Figure 2 graphically depicts the percentage of women's enrolment in higher education from 2015 to 2023, outlining the general growth over time. The chart displays the success of policies and programmes that ensure gender equality in higher education, demonstrating the improvement in encouraging more women to advance their studies.

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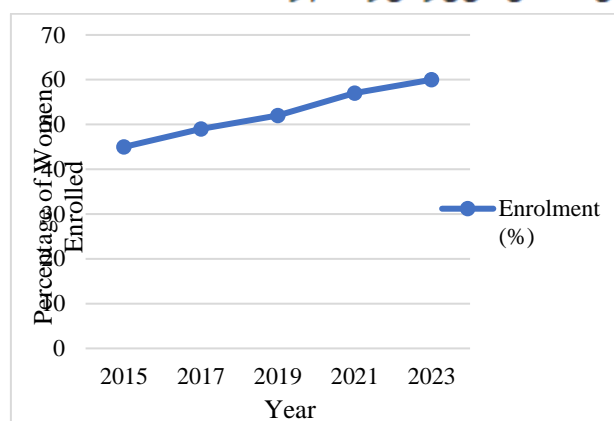


Figure 2: Women’s Enrolment in Higher Education (2015–2023)

The information in Figure 2 shows a consistent increase in women's participation in higher education in Maharashtra from 45% in 2015 to 60% in 2023, showing substantial improvement in women's involvement in advanced studies. The persistent increase indicates the influence of government initiatives, scholarship schemes, and sensitization drives promoting women's education. The steep increase from 52% in 2019 to 57% in 2021 and to 60% in 2023 is an indication of increased social acceptance and institutional support for girls' education. This development demonstrates sustained attempts at closing gender gaps in tertiary education and enhancing women's career prospects.

4.3. Impact of Women’s Education on Employment Rates

The relationship between female education and jobs is essential when considering how advancement in education equals economic empowerment. Education is highly important in elevating women's job opportunities as well as financial independence. Data on the proportion of women engaged in employment for different levels of education is revealed in Table 3, revealing the proportionate distribution of labor in the informal and formal sector. The table depicts how educational attainments play a major role in acquiring stable and remunerative employment, whereas low education levels end up with work in the informal sector. This statistic gives an overview of how education affects the participation of women in the labor force and informal to formal employment transition.

Table 3: Employment Rate of Women Based on Education Level

Education Level	Employment Rate (%)	Formal Sector Jobs (%)	Informal Sector Jobs (%)
No Formal Education	19.2	6.1	13.1

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Primary Education	34.8	12.4	22.4
Secondary Education	52.3	28.7	23.6
Higher Education (UG/PG)	74.1	56.3	17.8

The statistics in Table 3 illustrate a high level of correlation between the education of women and their employment, with higher education having a significant impact on job opportunities. Women with no education have the lowest rate of employment at 19.2%, with only 6.1% finding formal sector employment, while most work in the informal sector (13.1%). As educational levels go up, so does labor force participation, as 34.8% of women with a primary education work, although most are still working in the informal sector (22.4%). Women with a secondary education experience a significant increase in formal work (28.7%), making the overall rate of employment stand at 52.3%. The greatest impact is seen in women with more education (UG/PG), where 74.1% are working, with most (56.3%) finding employment in the formal sector. The trend indicates the pivotal role played by education in enhancing women's labor force participation and moving employment from informal to formal sectors, leading to higher economic empowerment.

Education is also important in increasing women's job opportunities by providing them with the skills and qualifications needed for the labor market. Figure 3 demonstrates the connection between women's education and employment, indicating how increased education translates to higher workforce participation. The chart points to the increasing rates of employment as women become more educated, signifying the role of education in obtaining stable and lucrative career jobs. The data demonstrates the unmistakable influence of education on economic independence and occupational opportunities among women.

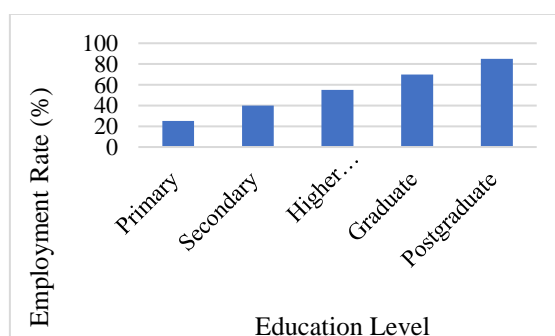


Figure 3: Women's Education and Employment Rate

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The statistics in Figure 3 explicitly show a positive correlation between education levels of women and their rate of employment. Women with primary education have the lowest rate of employment at 25%, meaning they have fewer job opportunities. With education progression to secondary, employment participation is 40%, meaning better access to employment. Those with higher secondary education register an increase to 55%, meaning higher employability with extra qualifications. There is a dramatic leap among graduates, where the rate of employment stands at 70%, reflecting the influence of higher education in achieving better employment opportunities. The rate of employment is highest (85%) for postgraduates, suggesting that further studies give the best chance of well-paying, secure employment. This pattern supports the role of higher education in increasing women's participation in the workforce and long-term economic empowerment.

4.4. Policy Evaluation: NEP 2020 and Women's Education

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 seeks to reform the education system by encouraging inclusivity, quality, and skill development. Figure 4 illustrates the impact of NEP 2020 on women's education in terms of major areas like skill development, retention, enrolment, and employability. The graph reflects how policy reforms are expected to improve the quality of education, raise enrolment levels, and enhance the career prospects of women through skill-based education. These reforms are anticipated to make education more conducive for women, eventually contributing to increased empowerment and labor force participation.

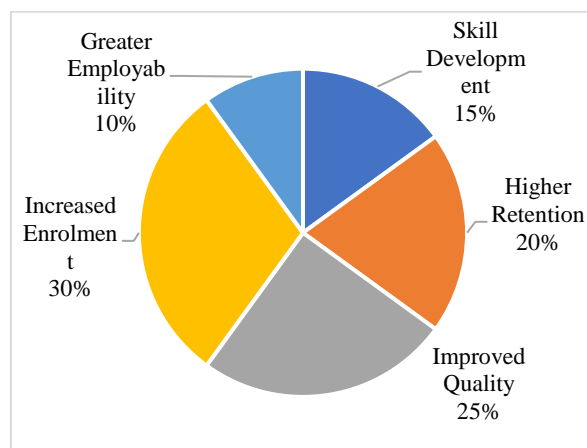


Figure 4: Expected Impact of NEP 2020 on Women's Education

The statistics in Figure 4 depict the expected effects of NEP 2020 on women's education, with significant improvements in several areas. It is anticipated that the policy will exert the most pressure on greater enrolment (30%), which is an effort to make education more inclusive and accessible.

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Better learning outcomes (25%) and higher retention (20%) reflect the fact that NEP 2020 wants women to not just enrol in school but also continue studies to good learning levels. Skill development (15%) is also a major factor, training women with actionable knowledge for career advancement. Finally, higher employability (10%) emphasizes the role of the policy in filling the gap between the labor market and education, creating more professional prospects for women. Generally, NEP 2020 is set to make substantial contributions to economic and educational empowerment for women.

5. CONCLUSION

The research emphasizes the pivotal position of women's education in propelling the development of society in Maharashtra, reflecting remarkable gains in literacy levels, higher education enrolment, and labor force participation. The research shows that the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has been instrumental in fostering gender-sensitive education by improving accessibility, skill acquisition, and interdisciplinary learning. Yet, socio-cultural impediments, economic limitations, and infrastructural deficits continue to hinder the maximum potential of these reforms. For further consolidating women's empowerment, policy interventions with specific targeting, incentives, awareness campaigns, and better educational infrastructure are suggested. Industry-academia linkages and the promotion of STEM education among women will also boost employability and leadership opportunities. In total, though much has been achieved, more efforts are needed to achieve a genuinely inclusive education system where women's education is a driver of long-term social and economic change.

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