



Breaking Barriers: Women Empowerment Transforming Societies in Modern Times Building a Better Future.

Rashed AHMED

Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences, North South University, Bangladesh

*Corresponding author: rashed.ahmed@northsouth.edu

Abstract

In the contemporary era, the movement for women empowerment is not merely a social cause but a transformative force reshaping societies across the globe. It also delves into the transformative impact of women's empowerment on societies, highlighting successful initiatives, case studies, and personal narratives that illustrate the journey towards gender parity. The aims of this study is examine the challenges and opportunities in this ongoing struggle, emphasizing the need for continued advocacy, education, and policy reform. By fostering an environment where women can thrive, societies can unlock unprecedented potential and build a better, more prosperous future for all. Methods this study is examining key areas such as education, economic participation, political representation, and social inclusion, the article elucidates how empowering women leads to more equitable, prosperous, and resilient communities. It underscores the importance of dismantling historical and cultural barriers that have long hindered women's potential, while celebrating the strides made towards gender equality. Furthermore, the narrative showcases inspiring stories of women leaders, entrepreneurs, and change-makers who are spearheading efforts to build a better future for all. This exploration not only emphasizes the moral imperative of gender equality but also its critical role in driving sustainable development and global advancement.

Keywords: Women Empowerment Transforming

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Introduction

In the contemporary world, the empowerment of women has emerged as a critical driver of social transformation and progress (Naguib, 2024); (Ogbari et al., 2024). This shift is breaking long-standing barriers and redefining societal norms, paving the way for a more inclusive and equitable future. Women empowerment is a multi-faceted concept that promotes the rights and capabilities of women, enabling them to lead more fulfilling and self-determined lives (Hegde, 2023); (Monje-Amor et al., 2021). It involves providing women with access to education, healthcare, employment opportunities, and legal rights, ensuring they can make informed choices and participate fully in societal, economic, and political arenas. Empowering women not only enhances their well-being but also contributes to the overall development and progress of communities and nations. By breaking down barriers and challenging gender stereotypes, women empowerment fosters equality, enriches cultural and social dynamics, and drives sustainable growth and innovation (Jesús Carrasco-Santos et al., 2024); (Zabaniotou et al., 2022).

Women's empowerment encompasses a multitude of dimensions, including economic participation, political representation, educational opportunities, and social rights. By addressing these areas, societies not only enhance the quality of life for women but also stimulate broader economic growth and development. In many parts of the world, women are taking on leadership roles, influencing policy decisions, and contributing significantly to various fields such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) (Parmaxi et al., 2024); (Qadhi et al., 2024); (Verdugo-Castro et al., 2023); (González-Pérez et al., 2020). This growing presence of women in diverse sectors underscores the importance of gender equality in achieving sustainable development goals. Moreover, empowered women serve as role models and catalysts for change, inspiring future generations to pursue their ambitions regardless of gender-based limitations.

Women empowerment is a vital process that seeks to enhance the social, economic, political, and legal strength of women, ensuring they have equal rights and opportunities. The necessity of women empowerment arises from the pervasive gender inequality and discrimination that women face globally, which limits their potential and affects their quality of life. Empowering women is essential for achieving gender equality, improving family health and well-being, reducing poverty, and fostering economic growth. The aims of this study is examine the challenges and opportunities in this ongoing struggle, emphasizing the need for continued advocacy, education, and policy reform.

Methodology

1. Online Research: Online research involves using the internet to gather information and data for your research project. It includes collecting data from websites, databases, online publications, and various digital sources. I used search engines, academic databases, and various online tools. I reviewed existing online sources, academic articles, and relevant websites to gather background information.

Steps:

- Identify research objectives and questions.
- Use search engines and databases to find relevant sources.
- Evaluate the credibility and reliability of online sources.
- Extract and compile data from websites, articles, or digital resources.
- Analyze and synthesize the gathered information for your research.

2. Surveys: Surveys are a structured data collection method where researchers design questionnaires or interviews to gather information from a sample of respondents. Surveys can be conducted through various mediums, including paper, online forms, or in-person interviews.

Steps:

- Define research objectives and formulate clear research questions.

- Design a survey instrument, including questions and response options.
- Determine the survey sample and method of distribution (e.g., online, phone, in-person).
- Administer the survey to respondents.
- Collect and analyze the data to draw conclusions and insights.

Designing the Survey: I designed a structured set of questions that are administered to a group of respondents via Google Form. The question was open-ended, closed-ended, and a mix of both.

Sampling: I selected a representative sample of the target population. This was done through random sampling.

Data Collection: The data of this survey was collected from the respondents based on the survey design via Google Form and Phonic Conversation.

Data Analysis: The collected data was analyzed using statistical methods to draw conclusions and insights.

Ethical Considerations: I obtained the information and data through informed consent, ensured confidentiality, and handle data in compliance with relevant ethical and legal standards.

3. Phonic Conversation: Phonic conversations, or phone conversations, are verbal interactions with participants conducted over the phone. This method is often used in qualitative research to collect in-depth information through interviews or discussions.

Steps:

- Establish research objectives and design a conversation guide or interview script.
- Identify and select participants (interviewees) who fit the research criteria.
- Schedule and conduct phone interviews, following the guide.
- Record the conversations (with consent) or take detailed notes.
- Transcribe and analyze the data for patterns and insights.

Participant Selection: I identified individuals and groups to engage in phone conversations. These participants was chosen based on specific criteria and as a random sample.

Script or Protocol: I prepared a script or a set of questions to guide the conversation. This can included both open-ended and closed-ended questions.

Conducting the Conversation: I was engaged in phone conversations with participants, asking questions and recording responses.

Data Analysis: The recorded conversations were transcribed, and the data was analyzed to identify patterns, themes, and insights.

Ethical Considerations: I obtained the information and data through informed consent, ensured privacy and confidentiality, and followed ethical guidelines during the conversations.

Research Objective: To address the research objective, a combination of Online Research, Surveys and Phonic Conversation was conducted where these methods employed to gather quantitative data and qualitative data insights into specific incidents and their outcomes on the prevalence and characteristics of cyber harassment. I evaluated the credibility and relevance of online sources. This involved assessing the authority of the source, checking for bias, and ensuring that the information is up-to-date. After collecting relevant information, I analyzed the data to draw insights, identify trends, and support their research objectives. I ensured and followed ethical guidelines, including proper citation of online sources and respecting copyright laws.

Results and Discussion

WOMAN IN TOP POSITIONS:

- In the last four years, the number of woman in top positions rose 4 times.

- Around 14,000 women held top-tire positions in public and private organizations at the end of 2017.
- During 2013, the number was around 5,000.

Employment generation programmes:

Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MOWCA) has been implementing various programmes for creating employment and welfare of the rural destitute and insolvent women under its revenue and development budget.

- Currently, The Department of Women Affairs (DWA) provides training to rural disadvantaged poor women through its women training centres (WTC) located in 64 district headquarters. Every year, 200 women receive training on 5 trades in these WTCs.

Since 2017, government has been implementing Income Generating Activity (IGA) project for rural women to make them self-reliant through income-generating training at upazila (sub-district) level across the country.

- The project is being implemented in all 426 upazilas of the country.
- Rural women are receiving a four-month training on various trades including tailoring, tourism, handicraft, mushroom growing, carpet making, salesmanship, mobile phone repairing, computer handling, etc. So far 2,17,440 women received training.

Urban Based Women Development Project implemented by MOWCA provides training to poor, destitute and asset less women of urban areas and engages them in productive and income generating activities. It creates marketing facilities for the products made by the trained women.

- Government financed \$ 2.4 million in the project for the year 2017-18 which beneted fty-three thousand women.

Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB) runs Comprehensive Rural Employment Support Programme for the poor women in 59 Upazilas under Khulna and Barisal Division. The main objective of the project is to reduce poverty of the poor as well as helpless women and empower them socio-economically. The project mobilizes local resource for capital formation and provide training support to build human capital.

- Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) programme, one of the largest under Social Safety Net, enables the poorest rural women and their family members to overcome food insecurity and poor social and economic status.
- “One House, One Farm Project”, which gives priority to female households in every village. Government has revised the project for the 3rd time which was introduced in 2009. Its coverage extended to some 40,950 wards, under 4,550 unions of 490 sub-districts in all the 64 districts.

SKILL TRAINING:

- Women Training Centres (WTC) located in 64 district headquarters
- Income Generating Activity (IGA) project for rural women in all 426 upazilas.
- Government nanced \$ 2.4 million in Urban Based Women Development Project in 2017-18

Promoting girl’s education:

In the past decade, under HPM Sheikh Hasina’s leadership, Bangladesh has gained unprecedented success in girl’s education. Much has been done at national levels to promote the agenda of gender equality in education. Her government has put necessary policies, plans, programs and resources in place to achieve gender equality in the education sector. Concerted efforts from the government, development partners, private sector and NGOs have produced a signicant result in the eld of girls’

education in Bangladesh. The girls' stipend programme is an outstanding effort to address the issues of access, retention and completion of girls' education.

- In primary schools, girl's dropout rate was 24.20 percent in 2012 it got down to 17.00% in 2015. Coverage of stipend program for girls has been extended manifold and this strategy resulted in almost 100 percent enrollment rate and gender parity.

Secondary and higher secondary education is critical to development as a whole; it provides insight, skill and capability to participate in economic activity and live a decent life. Gender disparity has narrowed in this level of education than before. A major project undertaken by the government is Female Secondary School Assistance Project which is playing a key role in retaining girls in schools. Another project in Bangladesh is providing educational stipends for girls, building separate toilets, and introducing a girls' empowerment curriculum that promotes health and hygiene.

- Currently in secondary schools, 53 percent of the learners are girls which is a sharp departure from even just a few years ago when male was 65 percent and female was 35 percent.
- 2.7 million girls are receiving stipend at secondary and higher secondary level (Figure 1).

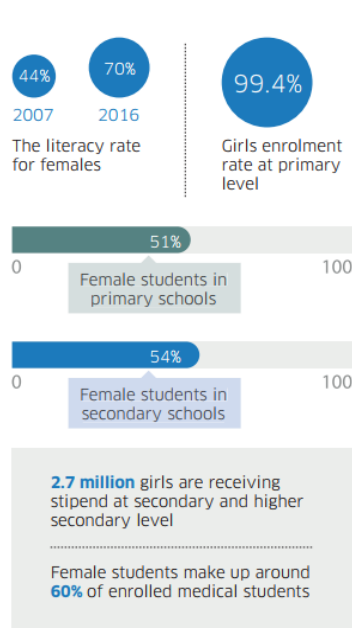


Figure 1. 2.7 million girls are receiving stipend at secondary and higher secondary level

- Bangladesh is also well on track to achieve gender parity in tertiary education too, which has increased from 0.37 in 1990-91 to 0.66 in 2016.
- Since 2010, enrolment of girls in technical education increased by 44 percent.
- Education of girls up to degree level in public schools is free. Female are encouraged to take teaching as profession and currently 60 percent primary school teachers are women.

Improved health care for women:

- Significant progress has also been made in reducing the maternal mortality ratio (MMR) from 242 in 2010 to 176 in 2016 with an average annual reduction of 4.7 percent. The current government plans to reduce MMR to 63 per 100,000 live births by 2030.
- During HPM Sheikh Hasina's 1st tenure at the office, she introduced Maternal Health Voucher Scheme. The Scheme provides a voucher package of three ante-natal checkups, safe delivery under skilled birth attendants, one post-natal checkup and transport cost.

- Currently .15 million women are receiving support under this scheme.
- Steps have been taken for the delivery of primary healthcare services through community clinics to rural, marginal and vulnerable women. They now get primary healthcare at the 18,000 Community Clinics (CCs).
- The construction of CCs started in 1998. On average 10 million patients visit in CCs per month and among the service seekers about 80 percent are women and children.
- At the beginning of HPM Sheikh Hasina's second tenure in 2009, the government initiated a project called 'Revitalization of Community Health Care Initiatives in Bangladesh (RCHCIB)' to further develop the Community Clinics (CCs) and strengthen their operations in delivering primary health care.
- Moreover, another 13,000 maternity centers are established across the country which have been providing service and advice to disadvantaged women on education, healthcare, nutrition, maternal and child care, and interest free microcredit. Her government has also extended social safety net to bring disadvantaged women under health coverage. Due to some effective legislative measures, women now get six months of paid maternity leave.
- 18,000 community clinics established where 80% service seekers are women and children.
- 3,000 midwife positions in government jobs. Government introduced international standard midwifery course since 2010.
- 6 months paid maternity leave for government job holders.
- 152 operating government hospitals to provide 24/7 emergency obstetric care service.
- 13,000 maternity centers established.
- 1,50,000 women receiving support under Maternal Health Voucher Scheme.
- 30,000 satellite clinic for child and maternal health care.
- The government has set up 41 new tribunals across Bangladesh to expedite trials in cases led over the torture of women and children. Already 41 posts of district and sessions judges and 205 posts of assistants have been created for the Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunals (Figure 2).

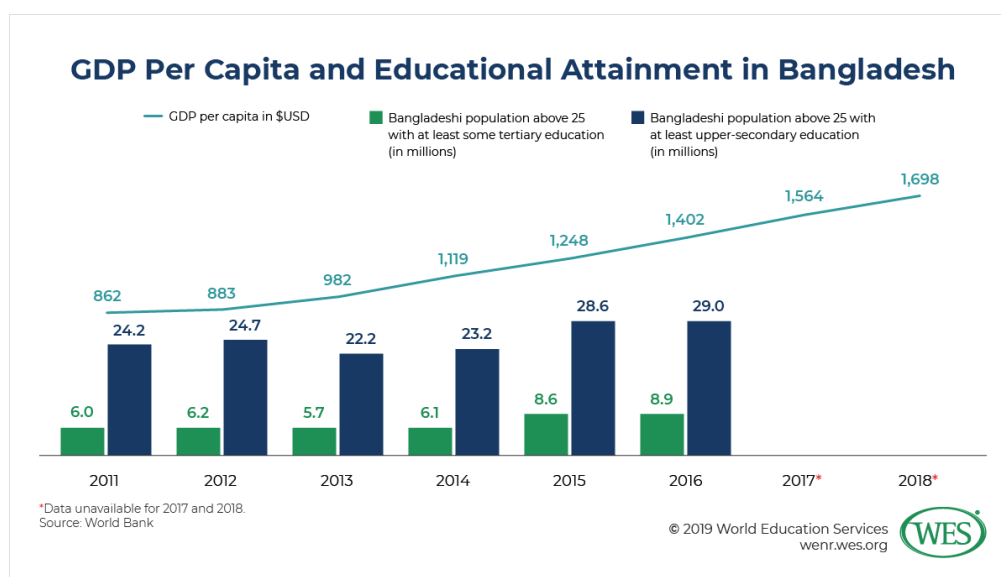


Figure 2. GPT per Capita and educational attainment in bangladesh

Analytical Discussion:

In the contemporary global landscape, the empowerment of women stands as a pivotal force driving societal transformation and fostering a more promising future. This article explores the multifaceted impact of women's empowerment across various dimensions, emphasizing its role in reshaping socio-economic, political, and cultural norms. "Women Empowerment Transforming Societies in Modern Times Building a Better Future" highlights the transformative impact of empowering women on societal progress. It underscores how empowering women economically, socially, and politically can lead to more equitable and prosperous societies globally.

Firstly, the article emphasizes the economic benefits of women's empowerment. When women have equal access to education and employment opportunities, economies can experience significant growth (Pervaiz et al., 2023); (Elsayed & Shirshikova, 2023); (Klasen & Lamanna, 2009). This is supported by evidence showing that increasing women's participation in the workforce boosts GDP and reduces poverty rates. Secondly, the article addresses the social dimensions of empowerment. By challenging traditional gender roles and promoting gender equality, societies become more inclusive and just. Women's empowerment leads to improved health outcomes, lower fertility rates, and better educational achievements for future generations. Politically, empowering women enhances democratic governance and decision-making processes. When women are involved in political leadership, policies tend to be more reflective of diverse societal needs. This fosters a more stable and responsive political environment. However, the article also acknowledges persistent challenges. Deep-seated cultural norms, discriminatory laws, and lack of access to resources continue to hinder women's full participation and empowerment. Addressing these barriers requires concerted efforts from governments, civil society, and international organizations. "Women Empowerment Transforming Societies in Modern Times Building a Better Future" argues persuasively for the integration of gender equality into development agendas worldwide. By empowering women, societies can unlock their full potential, leading to a more sustainable and prosperous future for all.

Socio-Economic Empowerment:

Women's empowerment contributes significantly to economic growth by expanding the labor force, enhancing productivity, and promoting entrepreneurial endeavors (Rahman et al., 2023). Through increased access to education, employment opportunities, and financial resources, women are empowered to break free from cycles of poverty and contribute actively to their communities' economic development. This economic independence not only improves household incomes but also leads to broader societal benefits such as better healthcare and education for future generations (Haleem et al., 2022).

Political Participation and Leadership:

The article underscores the critical importance of women's representation in decision-making processes and leadership roles. When women participate in politics and governance, they bring diverse perspectives and priorities to the forefront, leading to more inclusive policies that address gender equality, social justice, and sustainable development (Krause et al., 2018); (Brady et al., 2020). Moreover, as political leaders, women serve as role models and inspire younger generations to engage actively in civic life, thereby strengthening democratic institutions and fostering greater social cohesion.

Cultural Shifts and Normative Change:

Women's empowerment challenges entrenched cultural norms and stereotypes that perpetuate gender inequality. By advocating for equal rights and opportunities, women contribute to reshaping societal attitudes towards gender roles, promoting respect for diversity, and combating discrimination and violence against women. These cultural shifts are essential for creating

inclusive societies where every individual can thrive irrespective of their gender identity or socio-economic background.

Building a Better Future:

Ultimately, the empowerment of women is not merely about achieving gender parity but also about creating a more just and sustainable world (Bayeh, 2016). By investing in women's education, healthcare, and economic participation, societies can unlock their full potential and harness the talents and creativity of half of their population. This inclusive approach not only enhances economic growth but also fosters peace, stability, and resilience in the face of global challenges such as climate change and pandemics.

Challenges and Barriers: Despite progress, the article acknowledges persistent challenges such as discriminatory laws, cultural resistance, and lack of access to resources. Addressing these barriers requires multifaceted strategies involving legal reforms, grassroots activism, and international cooperation.

Global Implications: It explores how advancements in women's rights in one region can inspire and influence progress globally. International frameworks and partnerships play a crucial role in promoting gender equality agendas across borders, ensuring a more interconnected approach to societal development.

Steps Taken to Implement and Improve women Empowerment :

In an era of globalization, the necessity to involve women in the mainstream of society and state activities has become imperative for the establishment of a progressive society. The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) in Bangladesh is at the forefront of this transformative movement, aiming to ensure women's rights, empowerment, and a work-friendly environment as part of the nation's development agenda. This article explores the extensive efforts and accomplishments in women's empowerment in Bangladesh, illustrating how these initiatives are breaking barriers and building a better future for all.

A Commitment to Comprehensive Development

The Government of Bangladesh, driven by constitutional mandates and international commitments, has placed significant emphasis on women's development. Articles 27, 28, 29, and 65(3) of the Bangladesh Constitution explicitly underscore the importance of gender equality and women's development. Additionally, Bangladesh is a signatory to major international conventions, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). These commitments are reflected in national policies such as the National Women Development Policy 2011 and the Seventh Five-Year Plan (2016-2020), which aim to create a society where men and women have equal opportunities and rights.

Policies and Legal Framework

To ensure the development and protection of women and children, MoWCA has formulated several critical policies and laws. These include the Domestic Violence (Protection and Preservation) Act 2010, the National Women Development Policy 2011, the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy 2013, and the Early Marriage Protection Act 2017. These legal instruments are designed to prevent discrimination and violence against women and children, promote their rights, and transform them into capable human capital.

Strategic Objectives and Activities

MoWCA's strategic objectives encompass creating equal opportunities for women in social and economic activities, providing social protection and justice for vulnerable women and children, and promoting social and political empowerment. Key activities include:

Economic Empowerment: Providing technical, vocational, and income-generating training, along with micro-credit facilities, to facilitate self-employment and enhance the skills of women entrepreneurs.

Social Protection: Offering allowances to lactating mothers, food assistance, maternity allowances for ultra-poor pregnant women, medical services, legal assistance, safe shelters, and day care facilities.

Political Empowerment: Training elected female representatives and organizing awareness programs to increase women's participation in the electoral process and prevent trafficking.

Achievements and Success Stories

Bangladesh has made considerable progress in women's education and political empowerment, outpacing many developed countries in some areas. Notable achievements include:

Educational Attainment: Significant strides in women's education have been made, positioning Bangladesh honorably among developing countries.

Political Empowerment: The representation of women in political spheres has increased, contributing to more inclusive governance.

Entrepreneurial Success: Women like Maksuda Akter Koli from Bhola district, who became self-reliant through income-generating training and now earns a significant income as a beautician, exemplify the success of these empowerment initiatives.

Addressing Challenges and Future Plans

Despite these successes, challenges such as nepotism in beneficiary selection, local non-cooperation, and societal prejudices still hinder progress. MoWCA is addressing these issues through comprehensive plans and strategies, including the National Plan of Action to Prevent Violence Against Women and Children (2018-2030) and efforts to end child marriage by 2041. The empowerment of women in Bangladesh is a dynamic and ongoing process that holds the potential to transform societies and build a better future (Akter et al., 2024); (Vitellosi & Claudia Giannelli, 2024). The dedicated efforts of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, supported by government policies and international commitments, are paving the way for a more equitable, prosperous, and resilient Bangladesh. By continuing to break barriers and promote gender equality, Bangladesh is setting a powerful example for the world, illustrating that the empowerment of women is not just a moral imperative but a catalyst for comprehensive societal advancement.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the transformative impact of women's empowerment on societies in modern times is unmistakable. As barriers continue to be broken, women are increasingly recognized as pivotal agents of change, contributing uniquely to social, economic, and political realms. By challenging traditional norms and advocating for equality, women empower not only themselves but also future generations, paving the way towards a more inclusive and prosperous future. It is through these collective efforts that societies can truly harness the full potential of all their members, fostering a world where diversity is celebrated, opportunities are abundant, and progress knows no bounds. The ongoing empowerment of women stands as a beacon of progress in our modern societies. By dismantling barriers and advocating for equal opportunities, women are reshaping cultural and economic landscapes worldwide. Their leadership in various sectors, from politics to entrepreneurship, not only enriches diversity but also fosters innovation and resilience. As we continue to support initiatives that promote gender equality and amplify women's voices, we collectively forge a path towards a more just and inclusive future. It is imperative that we recognize and harness the talents and perspectives of all individuals, regardless of gender, to build societies where every person can thrive. By embracing diversity and upholding equality, we lay the foundation for a better world, where empowerment knows no bounds and every individual can contribute meaningfully to our shared progress. The transformative power of women empowerment in modern societies is undeniable. By breaking barriers and challenging traditional

norms, women are not only achieving personal success but also catalyzing societal progress. Their increased participation in education, workforce, and leadership roles not only enhances economic growth but also promotes social equity and diversity. As we look towards the future, embracing and furthering women empowerment initiatives will be crucial in building a more inclusive and prosperous society for all. Together, we can create a future where gender equality is not just a goal, but a reality that enriches and strengthens our global community.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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