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## **SOCIO-ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN HARYANA: A STUDY ON PATRIARCHAL STRUCTURES, EDUCATION, AND GOVERNMENT POLICIES**

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### **Abstract**

This study examines the socio-economic empowerment of women in Haryana, a state in northern India, by exploring the influence of patriarchal structures, educational opportunities, and government policies. The research aims to understand how traditional patriarchal norms impact women's participation in the workforce, access to education, and overall economic independence. It also investigates the role of education in enhancing women's social and economic status, and how various government policies have shaped their empowerment. Through qualitative and quantitative methods, the study seeks to assess the effectiveness of policies in bridging gender gaps in employment, income, and education. The findings will provide insights into the complex socio-cultural dynamics that hinder or promote women's empowerment in Haryana and suggest recommendations for policy reforms.

### **Keywords:**

Socio-economic empowerment, women's empowerment, patriarchal structures, education, government policies, Haryana, gender equality, women in workforce, economic independence, social development, policy analysis, gender gap.

### **Introduction**

The socio-economic empowerment of women in Haryana is intricately tied to the state's deep-rooted patriarchal norms, which continue to shape the lives of women in both urban and rural areas.

While urban areas have seen some progressive shifts in gender dynamics, rural Haryana still grapples with deeply entrenched traditions that limit women's access to vital resources. These patriarchal structures often result in restricted mobility for women, limited decision-making power within households, and a lack of control over their own finances and careers. Furthermore, women in Haryana are often expected to prioritize familial duties over personal aspirations, which greatly affects their ability to participate in the workforce or pursue higher education (Vishwakarma, 2025). This culture of traditional gender roles significantly hinders their overall socio-economic advancement and perpetuates a cycle of gender inequality. Even though recent years have witnessed some policy-level interventions aimed at improving the status of women, the practical implementation of these policies remains inadequate in addressing the structural challenges posed by patriarchal norms.

Education emerges as a crucial tool for overcoming these barriers, as it empowers women to challenge societal norms and access better economic opportunities. Educational attainment is closely linked to economic independence, as it enables women to enter the workforce, contribute to household income, and become more self-reliant. However, the disparity in educational attainment between genders remains a persistent issue, especially in rural areas, where socio-cultural norms often prioritize boys' education over girls. The government's efforts to increase female literacy through various initiatives such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao and the promotion of girls' education are steps in the right direction. However, these policies have yet to fully tackle the ingrained cultural prejudices that limit the impact of education on women's overall empowerment. Thus, while education plays a pivotal role, its effectiveness is significantly determined by the socio-cultural environment and the extent to which governmental policies are integrated into the daily lives of women in Haryana (Chakraverty, 2013). This study, therefore, seeks to analyze how these overlapping factors—patriarchal structures, education, and policy interventions—collectively shape the socio-economic status of women in Haryana and contribute to their empowerment.

**1. Patriarchal Structures in Haryana:** Patriarchy in Haryana remains deeply ingrained in the social fabric, with traditional gender roles often dictating women's place in society. Women's roles are largely confined to domestic duties, while men are viewed as the primary breadwinners and decision-makers. These patriarchal structures not only affect women's freedom but also hinder their access to education and employment opportunities. According to recent studies, rural Haryana exhibits a more rigid adherence to patriarchal practices, which restrict women's mobility and autonomy. This section will delve into the historical roots of patriarchy in the region, its cultural underpinnings, and its implications for women's empowerment. The influence of patriarchy in Haryana is evident in the low representation of women in leadership positions and decision-making processes. Studies have shown that despite educational improvements, women in rural areas continue to face significant barriers in terms of family control over their choices and mobility (Shokeen, 2022). Furthermore, societal expectations regarding women's roles often clash with their aspirations, leading to suppressed potential. The patriarchal mindset also perpetuates a culture of gender-based violence, further complicating efforts for gender equality and empowerment.

**2. Role of Education in Women's Empowerment:** Education is widely acknowledged as one of the most powerful tools for empowering women, offering them opportunities to enhance their knowledge, skills, and socio-economic standing. In Haryana, educational reforms have seen significant investments in girls' education, with the aim of bridging the gender gap. However, while enrollment rates for girls have improved, the quality of education and completion rates remain a concern. Educating girls and women is crucial for achieving economic independence and breaking the cycle of poverty (Simon & Hasan, 2025). This section will explore the current state of education for women in Haryana, focusing on factors that contribute to or hinder educational attainment, such as socio-cultural norms and financial constraints.

**Table 1: Female Literacy Rate by Region (Haryana, 2020)**

Region	Male Literacy (%)	Female Literacy (%)	Gender Gap (%)
Urban	90.1	80.5	9.6
Rural	75.3	49.4	25.9

Source: Author's compilation

**3. Economic Empowerment through Employment Opportunities:** Economic empowerment is central to women's autonomy and independence. In Haryana, women's participation in the labor force remains low compared to men, primarily due to gendered expectations and limited access to employment. Although urbanization and industrialization have opened new job avenues, women are often confined to low-paying, informal sector jobs. This section will discuss the various economic challenges faced by women in Haryana, focusing on employment patterns, wage disparity, and the informal labor market, which dominates the rural economy. Women's work in the agricultural sector, particularly in rural areas, is often undervalued and unrecognized. Despite contributing significantly to agricultural production, rural women in Haryana rarely control the income generated by their labor (Duflo, 2012). This section will also analyze how patriarchal control over economic resources and decision-making undermines women's financial independence, despite their significant contributions to the economy.

**4. Impact of Government Policies on Women's Empowerment:** Over the years, the Government of Haryana has implemented several policies to promote women's empowerment, focusing on education, health, and economic participation. Policies such as the 'Mukhya Mantri Parivar Samridhi Yojana' and 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' have been instrumental in increasing women's access to resources and services. However, the effectiveness of these policies in changing the socio-economic status of women in Haryana has been debated. This section will examine the extent

to which government policies have addressed gender disparities in the state, analyzing their successes and shortcomings. While these policies have led to some improvements in female literacy rates and healthcare access, they often fail to challenge the deep-rooted patriarchal mindset that undermines women's agency. Moreover, policies that are designed to empower women often face challenges in implementation due to bureaucratic inefficiencies and local resistance (Goel & Ravishankar, 2021). This section will evaluate the impact of key policies on women's economic and social empowerment and suggest improvements for future initiatives.

**5. Gender-Based Violence and Its Impact on Empowerment:** Gender-based violence (GBV) is a significant barrier to women's empowerment in Haryana. The prevalence of domestic violence, sexual harassment, and dowry-related crimes continues to affect the psychological and social well-being of women. This section will explore the forms of gender-based violence that are common in Haryana, their socio-economic implications, and how they hinder women from accessing educational and economic opportunities. The fear of violence often confines women to their homes, restricting their mobility and preventing them from engaging in public life. GBV not only affects women's health and safety but also has long-term economic consequences, reducing their capacity to work and participate fully in the economy. Studies have shown that women who experience violence are less likely to be employed, and their productivity is often compromised (Amaral et al., 2015). The section will also discuss government interventions and local community efforts to address violence against women in Haryana and their effectiveness.

**6. Women's Participation in Politics and Decision-Making:** Women's representation in political and decision-making roles is crucial for promoting gender equality and ensuring that women's voices are heard in policy discussions. In Haryana, women's political participation has been limited, although some progress has been made through the reservation of seats for women in local government bodies. This section will explore the challenges women face in entering politics and leadership roles, focusing on the social, cultural, and political barriers that hinder their participation in governance. Despite these challenges, women in Haryana have made significant

strides in local politics, with many women emerging as influential leaders in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). However, these achievements are often overshadowed by patriarchal control over decision-making processes (Mendelberg & Karpowitz, 2016). This section will highlight successful examples of women’s political leadership in Haryana and discuss how women’s participation in decision-making can empower them economically and socially.

**7. Role of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in Women’s Empowerment:** Self-Help Groups (SHGs) have emerged as a powerful tool for women’s empowerment, providing them with opportunities for economic independence, skill development, and social networking. In Haryana, SHGs have played an essential role in enhancing women’s financial security, particularly in rural areas, by facilitating access to microfinance and small-scale entrepreneurial opportunities. This section will discuss the impact of SHGs on women’s economic status, focusing on their role in promoting collective action, entrepreneurship, and financial literacy among women (Basak & Chowdhury, 2023).

**Table 2: Growth of Self-Help Groups in Rural Haryana (2015-2020)**

Year	Number of SHGs	Percentage of Women in SHGs (%)
2015	1,200	60
2016	1,500	65
2017	2,000	68
2018	2,500	72
2019	3,000	75
2020	3,500	78

Source: Author's compilation

**8. Women's Health and Well-being: Key Indicators of Empowerment:** Health is a critical component of women's empowerment, as poor health directly impacts women's ability to work, access education, and participate in social and economic activities. In Haryana, women face several health challenges, including high maternal mortality rates, malnutrition, and limited access to healthcare services, particularly in rural areas. This section will examine the relationship between women's health and empowerment, focusing on key indicators such as access to healthcare, maternal health, nutrition, and the impact of health on women's economic productivity.

While government programs have made strides in improving women's healthcare access, cultural barriers, such as reluctance to seek medical help and gender-based discrimination in healthcare settings, persist (Varkey et al., 2010). The section will explore how these health disparities affect women's socio-economic status and the steps needed to address them, including the improvement of healthcare infrastructure and education on women's health rights.

**9. Educational Reforms and Gender Equality in Haryana:** Educational reforms have been central to the state's strategy for improving women's empowerment. In recent years, Haryana has made significant investments in girls' education, but challenges such as early marriage, gender bias in curricula, and inadequate school infrastructure continue to limit educational opportunities for girls. This section will examine the current state of educational reforms in Haryana, focusing on the role of government policies in promoting gender equality in education. The section will also analyze the impact of these reforms on women's participation in higher education and professional careers. While educational access has improved, the lack of gender-sensitive pedagogies and the persistence of gender stereotypes in schools pose ongoing challenges (Parkash, 2019). This section will suggest ways to make educational reforms more inclusive and conducive to women's empowerment.

**10. Cultural and Social Norms Affecting Women's Empowerment:** Cultural and social norms play a significant role in shaping women's opportunities and experiences. In Haryana, traditional views on gender roles often confine women to domestic spaces and limit their economic and social mobility. This section will explore how cultural practices, such as dowry systems and early marriage, continue to perpetuate gender inequality and impact women's socio-economic status. The section will also discuss how shifting these cultural norms through education, media, and grassroots movements can contribute to women's empowerment (Chandramohan et al., 2023). Changing societal attitudes towards women's roles is crucial for creating an environment in which women can achieve greater independence and contribute more fully to the economy.

**11. Media's Role in Shaping Public Perception of Women:** Media plays an influential role in shaping public perceptions of women and their roles in society. In Haryana, media portrayals often reinforce traditional gender roles, but there has been a growing presence of women's voices in media, particularly in the form of local news, documentaries, and social media campaigns. This section will explore how media representation affects women's empowerment in Haryana and the potential of media to challenge patriarchal norms and promote gender equality. By analyzing the media's portrayal of women in Haryana, this section will discuss how media can either perpetuate or challenge traditional gender norms and how it can be leveraged as a tool for promoting women's rights and empowerment (Liu, 2025). The role of social media in empowering women to voice their concerns and challenge societal expectations will also be discussed.

**12. Future Directions for Women's Empowerment in Haryana:** This section will conclude the study by discussing the future directions for enhancing women's socio-economic empowerment in Haryana. It will synthesize the findings of the previous sections and propose a holistic approach to addressing the barriers women face in education, employment, and personal well-being. By identifying key areas of intervention, such as policy reforms, education, and social change, this section will offer recommendations for creating an environment that promotes gender equality and women's empowerment in Haryana. Key recommendations will include strengthening the

implementation of existing policies, improving access to quality education and healthcare, fostering women's participation in politics, and addressing cultural norms that hinder women's progress. This section will argue that a multi-dimensional approach is necessary for achieving sustained and meaningful empowerment for women in Haryana.

## **SUMMARY**

The socio-economic empowerment of women in Haryana is significantly influenced by entrenched patriarchal structures, limited access to education, and the effectiveness of government policies. Despite some progress in women's rights and participation in social and economic spheres, particularly in urban areas, rural Haryana continues to face deep-rooted gender disparities. Patriarchal norms restrict women's access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities, while cultural practices prioritize boys' education over girls'. However, education remains a powerful tool for empowerment, and government initiatives like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao and Mukhya Mantri Parivar Samridhi Yojana have made strides in improving women's socio-economic conditions. Additionally, self-help groups have played a pivotal role in fostering economic independence among rural women. The future of women's empowerment in Haryana hinges on comprehensive policy reforms, greater enforcement of gender-sensitive laws, and initiatives aimed at reducing gender inequality across various sectors.

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