EMPOWERING WOMEN BY ENHANCES THEIR DECION MAKING CAPACITIES USING ICT TOOLS

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Abstract: With the growing need of human, it has become a challenge for women to fulfil all her responsibility and perform all roles at the same time. Therefore, her dependency has been increased over family members, helpers/maids, friends, neighbours and Media. Media here include print media i.e. newspaper, magazine, tabloids, electronic media i.e. television, radio and new media i.e. internet and mobile technology. Women still have to do the lion's share of housework despite going out to work in ever increasing numbers. Previous Researches have found that they spent three times as long on domestic chores, such as cooking, cleaning and washing, as their husbands or partners. Women are the breadwinners, however, have to shoulder the burden of all the housework. Women empowerment generally refers to the process by which women enhances their capacity to take control over decisions that shape their lives, including in relation to access to resources, participation in decision making and control over distribution of benefits. Empowerment of women in the context of knowledge societies is understood as building the ability and skills of women to gain insight into actions and issues in the external environment, which influence them. If the women will be empowered, it will build their capacity to get involved and voice their concerns in these external processes, make informed decisions, participate in the economic and political processes, and bring about an overall improvement in their quality of life. ICT empower women in various areas like social, educational, psychological, political, technological and economical and well as few degree of disempowerment due to some internal and external reasons. A survey conducted in Vadodara city mentioned in the present study too has similar concern.

Keywords: ICTs, Women, Empowerment

Introduction: Across the globe, countries have recognized Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as an effective tool in catalysing the economic activity in efficient governance, and in developing human resources. There is a growing recognition of the newer and wider possibilities that technology presents before the society in the modern times. IT together with Communication Technologies has brought about unprecedented changes in the way people communicate; conduct business, pleasure and social interaction. The evolution of new forms of technologies and imaginative forms of applications of the new and older technologies makes the lives of the people better and more comfortable in several ways. There is even greater realization that instead of a single-track technology, lateral integration of technologies can deliver startling results and the world seems to be moving towards such converged systems. With the emergence of IT on the national agenda and the announcement of ICT policies by various state governments have recognized the "Convergence of core technologies and E - Governance" as the tool for good governance, sustainable development, globalization of economy and social empowerment. Information is the key to democracy. With the advent of ICT, it has become possible for the common man to access global information. The realm of electronic communication encompasses telecommunication, broadcasting, information technology, enabled services and industries, to undergo profound changes leading to a

Global Information Infrastructure (GII), which will be capable of carrying any type of information, be it text, data, voice or video. Information is now broadly defined to embrace voice in telephony, text in fax and newspapers, images in video and television broadcasting, and data in computers. All information can be digitized, transported, stored, retrieved, modified, and then distributed. All of these are getting transportable over common infrastructure viz. high-speed, broadcast, digital electronic highways. Emerging digital techniques, new network alternatives (Intelligent Networks), high bandwidth communication technology, and state-of-the-art software for network functions and services, are the new technology trends evident in the development of electronic communication systems.

Women and ICT: A large group of workingwomen of India is in the rural and unorganized sectors. Socially the majorities of Indian women are still tradition bound and are in a disadvantageous position. Inequality in women's access to and participation in all communications systems, especially the media, and their insufficient mobilization to promote women's contribution to society.

Since globalisation is opening up the Indian economy suddenly at a very high speed, during the past decades, advances in information technology have facilitated a global communications network that transcends national boundaries and has an impact on public policy, private attitudes and behaviour, especially of children and young adults. Everywhere

the potential exists for the media to make a far greater contribution to the advancement of women.

More women are involved in careers in the communications sector, but few have attained positions at the decision-making level or serve on governing boards and bodies that influence media policy. The lack of gender sensitivity in the media is evidenced by the failure to eliminate the gender-based stereotyping that can be found in public and private local, national and international media organizations. The continued projection of negative and degrading images of women in media communications - electronic, print, visual and audio - must be changed. Print and electronic media in most countries do not provide a balanced picture of women's diverse lives and contributions to society in a changing world. In addition, violent and degrading or pornographic media products [are also negatively affecting] women and their participation in society. Programming that reinforces women's traditional roles can be equally limiting. The worldwide trend towards consumerism has created a climate in which advertisements and commercial messages often portray women primarily as consumers and target girls and women of all ages inappropriately.

Causes of Gender Inequality: The causes of gender inequality is quite complex but there are many cultural factors which are responsible for gender inequality. Some of them are: Patriarchal society, Son preference, Discrimination against girls, Dowry, Marriage laws, Lack of awareness, Low educational Status, Poverty.

The Need ICT for Women: Information needs of women in the new globalized environment are as diverse as the socio- economic scenario. Treating women, as a monolithic group will over simplify their information needs. Within women's group itself, globalisation has created the haves and the have nots i.e those who are in an advantageous position due to globalisation and those relegated further into disadvantaged position under the new economic policy. The information needs will also differ accordingly.

Urban Women and ICT: The urban educated women need information mainly pertaining to: Research, Educational opportunities including prospects abroad, Career advancement facilities, Job/ employment prospects in India and abroad, Matrimonial, Fashion and market values, Health and child care facilities which includes sexual and reproduction activity, Information, Art and entertainment Social support system for working women, Legal rights and provisions. The urban lower middle class women however, specially need information on: Expensive educational facilities, Career advancement and job opportunities in the city itself, Matrimonial within the restrictions of caste and class, Inexpensive health and childcare, Inexpensive social support systems for working women, Legal rights and provisions against social injustice, domestic violence, Dowry system etc.

A large chunk of women who have been adversely affected by the globalization process are the poor urban slum dwellers and women. To say the least they are the most marginalized people in the urban sector. Their information needs are only for subsistence. They may need information on the following ground:

* Health services and child care facilities which are available free of cost.
* Job opportunities in the low paid informal sector including domestic services
* Housing availability specially in slums
* Free educational facilities for their children especially for boys
* Information regarding government programmes for the poor and how to deal with the procedure
* Legal provisions against sexual harassment, domestic violence and social injustice.

ICT and Women Empowerment: ICT has made a tremendous impact in imparting knowledge on modern technology and its uses. NGOs, SHGs working in the field, governmental agencies and other private agencies have also extended their help to promote ICT among the women. ICT empower women in various areas like social, educational, psychological, political, technological and economical and well as few degree of disempowerment due to some internal and external reasons (Beena et al.2012). Empowerment of women in the context of knowledge societies is understood as building the ability and skills of women to gain insight into actions and issues in the external environment, which influence them. If the women will be empowered, it will build their capacity to get involved and voice their concerns in these external processes, make informed decisions, participate in the economic and political processes, and bring about an overall improvement in their quality of life (Nath, 2001). Empowerment is a multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. Women empowerment generally refers to the process by which women enhances their capacity to take control over decisions that shape their lives, including in relation to access to resources, participation in decision making and control over distribution of benefits. Women's empowerment has five components: women's sense of self-worth; their right to have and to determine choices; their right to have access to opportunities and resources; their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and

economic order, nationally and internationally (UNPOPIN, 2010, Morshedi et al., 2012). After looking into the scenario the present study was conducted.

The Role of Internet in Helping Working Women to perform their Household Responsibilities-survey

With the growing need of human, it has become a challenge for women to fulfil all her responsibility and perform all roles at the same time. Therefore, her dependency has been increased over family members, helpers/maids, friends, neighbours and Media. Media here include print media i.e. newspaper, magazine, tabloids, electronic media i.e. television, radio and new media i.e. internet and mobile technology. Women still have to do the lion's share of housework despite going out to work in ever increasing numbers. Previous Researches have found that they spent three times as long on domestic chores, such as cooking, cleaning and washing, as their husbands or partners. Women are the breadwinners, however, have to shoulder the burden of all the housework .The present study was undertaken with an objective to assess the role of internet in helping working women to perform their household responsibilities effectively. The sample of the present study consisted of 110 working women homemakers from Vadodara city. The purposive and Snowball Sampling method were used to select the sample of the study. A Structured Questionnaire was used for the Data Collection. Major findings of the study were: Majority of working women (63.63%) used smartphone as a device used to access Internet. Little more than thirty percent of Working Women (33.64%) spent 1- 2 hours per day on internet. Majority of the Working Women (62.73%) were using internet since 1- 5 years. Most of the time internet was used by the respondents for Emailing, Social networking, Chatting, Getting News, File sharing, Watching Videos, listening to music, checking latest fashion, learning new recipes. Findings related to household responsibilities revealed that: Majority of them (95.45%) cooked meal for the family members. Less than fifty percent responsibility shared responsibility of buying grocery, vegetables, and fruits for the family. More number of the Working women (82.72%) had responsibility regarding gather information regarding the bank accounts. Findings related to internet usage for household responsibilities revealed that: The respondents fulfilled household responsibilities of kitchen management of learning various recipes and preparing breakfast items to high extent. The working women carried responsibilities like helping children in their school projects and homework and providing moral education lessons, science projects, math projects and creative activities of the children to a high extent. Social responsibilities like connecting with family, friends and relatives and remaining updated on social media like Facebook, twitter and Instagram etc. was carried to a higher extent by them. The working women used internet for getting ideas for home décor to higher extent. The working women executed responsibility of managing shares and investments, managing money for bills, online recharges and for net banking and preparing budgets of household and office use to a moderate extent with the help of internet.

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