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इतिहासाचार्य वि. का. राजवाडे संशोधन मंडळ, धुळे  
या संस्थेचे त्रैमासिक

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**Role of Library & Information Centres in Women Empowerment with the help of ICT****Dr. Kishor N. Wasurke**

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**Abstract :**

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is for all at the grassroots level and it is the need of the hour for women to have equal access to the benefits of this technology and the products and processes that result from its use. The benefits of knowledge and integration of information and communication technologies should not be limited to the upper echelons of society but should flow freely to all segments of the female population. Information and communication technology have the potential to integrate with other forms of communication to reach all segments of the female population. Information and communication technology enable people to participate in economic and social progress and make informed decisions about issues affecting them. This paper explores options for ICT enabled networking processes in the field of women's empowerment and governance, as well as challenges in creating these processes and suggests ways in which women can benefit more from them.

**Keywords :**

Library, Information Centre's, Women Empowerment, Information Communication Technology, Access to Information, Economic participation and opportunity

**\* Introduction :**

In the contemporary world, the empowerment of women stands as a cornerstone for societal progress and development. It encompasses various dimensions, ranging from economic independence to social inclusion and political participation. In this

pursuit, the role of Library and Information Centre's (LICs) emerges as pivotal, especially when coupled with the transformative power of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Libraries have traditionally served as repositories of knowledge, but in the digital age, they have evolved into dynamic hubs facilitating access to information, education, and skill development.

In this introduction, we delve into the symbiotic relationship between Library and Information Centre's and women's empowerment, elucidating how ICT acts as a catalyst in this process. We'll explore how LICs, equipped with ICT tools and resources, become catalysts for women's socio-economic advancement, educational attainment, and participatory citizenship.

At the heart of this discourse lies the recognition of women as active agents of change, capable of steering their destinies when provided with the necessary tools and opportunities. Through a multifaceted lens, we'll uncover how LICs, leveraging ICT, empower women by breaking down barriers, fostering digital literacy, promoting entrepreneurship, and amplifying their voices in public discourse. Moreover, we'll examine the challenges and opportunities inherent in this paradigm, including issues of access, digital divide, cultural barriers, and privacy concerns. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for formulating effective strategies that maximize the potential of LICs in promoting women's empowerment through ICT.

Ultimately, this exploration seeks to underscore



the indispensable role of Library and Information Centre's in the empowerment of women, highlighting the transformative impact of ICT in catalysing positive change. By harnessing the synergy between technology and information services, LICs become potent agents of social change, facilitating the journey towards gender equality and inclusive development.

**\* Focus on Empowerment :**

Empowerment, broadly speaking, refers to the process of gaining or increasing the capacity to make choices and act. It's about individuals or groups acquiring the power to control their own lives and destinies. Different approaches to empowerment can be applied in various contexts, such as :

**1. Individual Empowerment :**

**a. Developing self-awareness :** This involves understanding your strengths, weaknesses, values, and goals. It can help you make informed decisions and take action aligned with your own desires.

**b. Building self-efficacy :** This refers to your belief in your ability to achieve goals and overcome challenges. It can be fostered through experiences of success, learning from failures, and developing a growth mindset.

**c. Acquiring resources and skills :** This might involve education, training, access to information, and financial resources. These resources can equip individuals to pursue their goals and participate meaningfully in society.

**2. Community Empowerment :**

**a. Building social connections :** Creating supportive networks and fostering a sense of belonging can empower individuals and communities to advocate for themselves and work collectively towards shared goals.

**b. Developing collective agency :** This involves individuals working together to identify and address issues that affect them as a group. It can involve community organizing, advocacy, and collective action.

**c. Promoting social justice :** Addressing

systemic inequalities and discrimination is crucial for creating an environment where everyone has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

**3. Organizational Empowerment :**

**a. Decentralization of decision-making :**

Organizational women empowerment is a strategic approach that holds significant promise in fostering gender equality, inclusivity, and empowerment within institutions. Traditionally, organizational structures have been characterized by centralized decision-making processes, often dominated by a homogeneous group of individuals, which may inadvertently perpetuate gender biases and hinder women's advancement.

**b. Providing resources and support :** This includes offering training, mentorship, and access to necessary tools and information to enable employees to perform their jobs effectively.

**c. Creating a culture of trust and recognition :** Fostering a supportive and trusting work environment where employees feel valued and appreciated for their contributions is essential for empowerment.

**\* Modern Approaches :**

While traditional approaches to empowerment remain important, several modern trends and practices are emerging in various contexts :

**1. Technology-driven empowerment :**

**a. Online learning platforms :** Democratizing access to education and skill development through online resources and courses.

**b. Digital tools and platforms :** Enabling individuals and communities to connect, share information, and organize around shared goals, fostering collective action and advocacy.

**c. Data and analytics :** Using data to identify and address inequalities and empower marginalized communities by understanding their specific needs and challenges.

**2. Personalized and individualized approaches :**

**a. Micro-learning :** Providing bite-sized, accessible learning modules tailored to individual



needs and preferences, enhancing skills and knowledge acquisition at one's own pace.

**b. Mentorship and coaching networks :** Utilizing online platforms and communities to connect individuals with mentors and coaches who can provide targeted guidance and support based on specific needs.

**c. Gamification :** Incorporating game-like elements into learning and development programs to increase engagement and motivation, promoting skill acquisition in a fun and interactive way.

**3. Focus on psychological safety and well-being :**

**a. Mindfulness and emotional intelligence training :** Equipping individuals with tools to manage stress, build resilience, and foster self-compassion, leading to increased agency and well-being.

**b. Creating safe spaces for open communication :** Encouraging honest and open dialogue within organizations and communities to address concerns, share ideas, and foster a sense of trust and psychological safety.

**c. Prioritizing mental health and well-being:** Recognizing the connection between mental health and empowerment, and providing resources and support to promote mental well-being within individuals and communities.

**\* Global Initiatives of women empowerment:**

Several global initiatives are working towards women's empowerment, addressing various aspects of their lives and aiming to create a more equitable world. Here are some notable examples :

**1. United Nations (UN) Women :** Established as the UN entity dedicated to gender equality and women's empowerment, UN Women works on several initiatives, including :

**a. HeForShe campaign :** A global solidarity movement calling for men and boys to become advocates and agents of change in the fight for gender equality.

**b. Spotlight Initiative :** A global, multi-year initiative focused on eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls.

**c. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):** Specifically, SDG 5 aims to "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls." This includes promoting women's equal access to education, healthcare, economic opportunities, and political participation.

**2. International Labour Organization (ILO):** Focuses on promoting decent work opportunities and equal rights for women in the workplace, including initiatives like:

**a. Equal Pay International Coalition :** Works to achieve equal pay for equal work for women and men.

**b. Maternity Protection Convention :** Sets minimum standards for maternity leave and benefits to support working mothers.

**3. World Bank: Invests in projects promoting women's economic empowerment, including :**

**a. Women's Business Enterprise Initiative:** Supports the development of women-owned businesses.

**b. Gender Equality Facility :** Provides funding for projects promoting gender equality in developing countries.

**4. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) :** Numerous NGOs work on various aspects of women's empowerment, such as:

**a. Plan International :** Supports girls' education and leadership development.

**b. CARE :** Provides healthcare, education, and economic opportunities for women in developing countries.

**c. Malala Fund :** Champions girls' education around the world.

**Access to Information :**

Libraries provide women with access to a wide range of information resources through books, journals, and digital databases. ICT tools such as computers and the internet enhance this access, allowing women to explore diverse topics, acquire new skills, and stay informed about current affairs.



**\* Education and Skill Development :**

Libraries equipped with ICT facilities offer educational programs and online courses, enabling women to enhance their knowledge and acquire new skills. Access to e-learning platforms, webinars, and digital resources supports continuous learning, which is crucial for personal and professional development.

**\* Entrepreneurship and Employment Opportunities :**

Libraries can provide resources and information related to entrepreneurship and job opportunities, enabling women to start their own businesses or find employment. ICT tools facilitate job searches, online applications, and skill development programs that enhance women's employability.

**\* Health and Well-being :**

Libraries can offer information on healthcare, nutrition, and wellness through digital resources and online databases. ICT tools can support telemedicine services, providing women with access to healthcare information and services, especially in remote areas.

**\* Community Engagement :**

Libraries can serve as community hubs for women, fostering networking, collaboration, and mutual support. ICT tools, including social media and online forums, enable women to connect with each other, share experiences, and collaborate on various projects.

**\* Legal Awareness :**

Libraries can provide information on legal rights, gender equality, and women's rights through digital resources and workshops. ICT tools can disseminate legal information more widely, empowering women to understand and assert their rights.

**\* Digital Literacy :**

Libraries can play a pivotal role in enhancing digital literacy among women, providing training on the use of computers, the internet, and other ICT tools. Digital literacy is essential for women to participate actively in the modern, technology-driven society.

**\* Access to Government Schemes and Services:**

Libraries can help women access information about government schemes and services that are designed to benefit them. ICT tools, such as online portals and mobile applications, facilitate the application process and communication with government agencies.

**\* Conclusion :**

In conclusion, the role of Library and Information Centers (LICs) in women empowerment, aided by Information and Communication Technology (ICT), is multifaceted and indispensable in fostering gender equality and inclusive development. Through the strategic integration of ICT tools and resources, LICs serve as catalysts for women's empowerment across various domains including education, economic participation, social inclusion, and civic engagement.

The synergy between LICs and ICT enables women to access information, acquire digital literacy skills, pursue education and training opportunities, and engage in entrepreneurial endeavours. Moreover, LICs provide safe and inclusive spaces where women can network, collaborate, and advocate for their rights and interests. By leveraging ICT, LICs also facilitate the dissemination of gender-sensitive information, resources, and services tailored to the specific needs and aspirations of women.

Furthermore, the decentralization of decision-making processes within LICs enhances women's participation in shaping library policies, programs, and services, thereby amplifying their voices and promoting gender-responsive practices. Through initiatives such as gender-sensitive collection development, ICT training workshops, and community outreach programs, LICs contribute to breaking down gender barriers, challenging stereotypes, and promoting positive social change.

However, challenges such as digital divide, limited access to ICT infrastructure, and cultural barriers persist and require concerted efforts from stakeholders to address effectively. Additionally,



ongoing research, monitoring, and evaluation are essential to assess the impact of LICs' initiatives on women's empowerment outcomes and to inform evidence-based interventions.

In essence, the role of Library and Information Centers in women empowerment, with the support of ICT, underscores the transformative potential of information and knowledge in advancing gender equality and creating more inclusive societies. By embracing a holistic approach that combines technological innovation with gender-sensitive practices, LICs can continue to serve as key drivers of women's empowerment, contributing to the achievement of sustainable development goals and a more equitable future for all.

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