



Role of Women Empowerment in Achieving Sustainable Development Goals with Specific Reference to Fashion and Interior Design

*Dr. Vijeta Bhatore

**Mrs. Afroz Adil

*Fashion Technology Dept.

**Architecture & Interior Design Dept.

Govt. Women's Polytechnic College

Indore, Madhya Pradesh, India

Abstract

Women are the foundation of a society. Strong and educated women can bring the desired change in any social system. The influencing qualities of a woman give her an advantage to spread the light of education and development to the underprivileged segment. Nature has made women strong mentally as well as emotionally. Women should get her freedom and equal rights and then she can contribute completely in the progress of a nation. And so there arises a strong need to empower women for the overall healthy development of the society. Since their childhood days women are taught to live their living using the given limited resources and so they are the ones who bring creativity into day-to-day life. If these women are empowered and are given a chance, they can bring positive changes in the society. For the overall progress of a nation natural resources are being used in all the industrial development. All countries use a large amount of their natural resources which are in a limited quantity for their progress. But also, this stands true that as the natural resources are rapidly running short, there is a dire emergency to switch over to sustainable development. Innovations in technology and production process have to be brought into existence for achieving sustainability. Sustainability is the need of an hour as it is required in each and every stream. This research paper concentrates on the two most creative and growing disciplines viz. a) fashion designing and b) interior designing. Both these streams deal with the basic requirements of a human being, but at the same time these both can be very luxurious too. These disciplines use a lot of natural resources and so innovations should be made and creativity should be developed to switch over to sustainability. This paper emphasis on the various ways in which women empowerment can lead to a sustainable future in the streams of fashion and interior design.

Keywords : *Women Empowerment, Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), UN (United Nations), Fashion Design, Interior Design, NGO (Non-Governmental Organization), MNC (Multinational Company), 5R (Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Repurpose and Recycle)*

Introduction

The SDGs developed by the UN to conserve the earth for the future generations is the dire need of the whole world and for the women empowerment plays a vital role. But women around the world including the developed countries too are till date facing problems related to their day-to-day survival and safety. Since the very beginning women have been kept deprived of their basic human rights and have been looked upon as a mere piece of beauty. This right of equality can bring an end to many problems like violence against women, illiteracy, poverty, unemployment, and many more. It has been seen that women are more affected by these problems, and they possess ideas and leadership to resolve them. The gender inequality that holds women back is also responsible for the underdevelopment of the world too.

To obtain the all-round development of everyone, the world leaders have made seventeen Sustainable Development Goals that have to be achieved by the year 2030. Women empowerment and gender equality is an integral part of each and every goal. Justice can be



done to all these goals by empowering women and thus issues like economy crisis can be solved and a brighter sustainable environment can be designed for the future generations.

To attain sustainability women play a very powerful, intelligent and innovative role where they raise their voices and warn the world about the consequences of its action on the environment.

The two disciplines where sustainability is needed the most and also can be achieved easily are Fashion and Interior Design. Both these creative streams are more women oriented and so it becomes easy to attain the environmental sustainable goals. To accomplish the Sustainable Development Goals worldwide, women have to be given the rights they deserve. Women have to be placed in decision making and execution positions so that these goals can be attained in time.

1.1 Women Empowerment

Women empowerment deals with a vast variety of subjects. It may talk about the view point of women, educating women, creating awareness, training them or giving them gender equality. It also means to promote the self-worth of women, the ability to pursue their own choices for their social and economic development and their right to influence the society. This empowerment can be gained through education and leadership. This research deals with the two major disciplines (Fashion Design and Interior Design) where more women leaders and entrepreneurs are stationed.

1.2 Fashion and Interior Design

These two fields are fast developing in terms of production, technology and sales. Fashion and Interior design both are very creative and innovative fields. Fashion design deals with the appearance of an individual whereas interior design caters to the build spaces of mankind. In fashion design field ideas and concepts of new clothing, accessories and styles are created with the help of drawing and sketching either manually or computerized. Fashion designing involves creating a specific garment that includes the shape, color, fabric, cutting and trimming, of the outfit. Fashion designing involves skills ranging from market survey and innovation to sketching and fabric selection. On the other hand, interior designing is a concept of designing built spaces that comes to life after proper planning. It involves providing visual effects through colors, shapes and styles and thus it creates specific moods. It can be summed up as the art, profession and business of executing the design of a house, office, apartment or any other built-up space with the use of appropriate color scheme, fittings, furnishings, flooring, ceiling, lighting, etc.

Both the fashion design and interior design are women dominated streams. These fields go through very frequent changes depending on the changing fashion trends. These frequent changes lead to a lot of waste and high production costs. More awareness regarding the SDGs needs to be spread amongst the women involved in these fields.

1.3 Sustainable Development Goals

United Nations, for the conservation of the environment and the betterment of the future generations has developed seventeen sustainable development goals. These goals are stated below:

- 1 No poverty
- 2 No hunger
- 3 Good Health and Well being
- 4 Quality Education
- 5 Gender Equality
- 6 Clean water and sanitation
- 7 Affordable and clean energy
- 8 Decent work and economic growth
- 9 Industry, innovation and infrastructure



- 10 Reduced inequality
- 11 Sustainable cities and communities
- 12 Responsible consumption and production
- 13 Climate action
- 14 Life below water
- 15 Life on land
- 16 Peace, justice & strong institutions
- 17 Partnerships for the goals

To attain these 17 SDGs women empowerment is needed in each and every sector of the society. Empowered women can help attain these goals at a faster pace as they can bring drastic changes in the society through their creativity, sensitivity, innovation, empathy and sympathy.

Review of Literature

The below given researches were studied for the completion of this study.

1 Santosh Kumar Behera (2020) – Women empowerment a major prerequisite for sustainable development–

This research defines sustainability and its approach in development with concern to human fundamental problems like poverty, equality, environment, peace, development and democracy. The SDGs were adopted by the UN in 2015 and their agenda was to fulfill them by 2030, but even after a decade the process has not paced up so the UN has mobilized finance and other national implementations. For this active participation of women is needed, where gender equality is one of the SDGs. The paper says that women play a vital role in educating and socializing their children keeping in mind the conservation of natural resources. The research states that women should be given the power to make their own decisions and this should be implemented as early as possible to achieve the SDGs.

2 Dr. Meenakshi Lohani and Prof. Loai Aburaida (2017)-Women empowerment : a key to sustainable development

This research states that women play an important role in the development and management of environment. It also says that to attain sustainable development complete women participation is required. There exists a dual rationale to promote gender equality. The first thing is equality between men and women in matters of equal rights, equal opportunities and equal responsibilities related to social justice and human rights. Secondly for sustainable people centered development a greater amount of gender equality is preconditioned. Also the interests, needs, perceptions and priorities of men and women both should be considered equally for attaining social justice and also to enrich development processes. (OSAGI 2001)

3 Dr. (Smt.) Rajeshwari M. Shettar (2015)-A Study on Issues and Challenges of Women Empowerment in India-

This research deals with the current status of women empowerment in India and focuses on the problems and challenges of women empowerment. One of the most important concerns of the 21st century is to empower women. Daily there are enormous cases of women being victimized by different social evils. The research states that women empowerment is an important instrument to expand a woman's ability to have the required resources and also to make her own life choices. Women empowerment here means to uplift the traditional and underprivileged women economically, socially and politically. It also means to guard women from all forms of violence. This study is based purely on secondary resources. The study reveals a shocking fact that Indian women are relatively disempowered and they also somehow enjoy their lower status as compared to men, despite of the various efforts taken up by the Indian Government. The research concludes by stating that the factors that can bring women empowerment into existence in education, employment and change in the social structure.

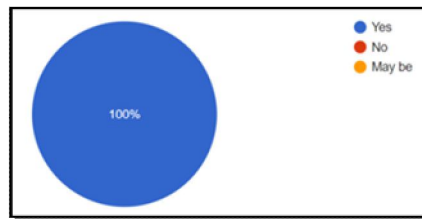
Research methodology

This research is based on primary as well as secondary data collection. For the secondary data different researches done on women empowerment and its co relation with the SDGs and also the contribution of women in the fields of fashion and interior design were studied. This study is described in the literature review section. As for the primary data a questionnaire of 14 questions related to women empowerment and their role in achieving the SDGs was developed. This questionnaire was distributed amongst 70 national as well international professional women out of which around 57 feedbacks were obtained. The responses were collected through Google form, face to face and telephonic interview. Majority of the women were Fashion designers or interior designers. Based on these 57 feedbacks the primary data was analyzed. The responses have been compiled and presented in this research paper.

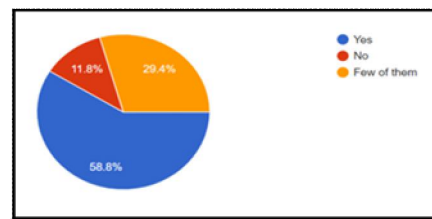
Data Analysis and Interpretation

The graphical representation of the four multiple choice questions is given below in the form of pie charts. Remaining 10 questions were descriptive type and so they are briefly discussed in the table 1.1. The questions were answered by women professionals from different disciplines and majority of them were fashion designers and interior designers and so a variety of opinions are obtained.

1 Role of Women Empowerment (2) Awareness of SDG's

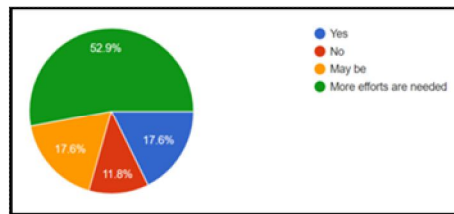


Graph 1.1

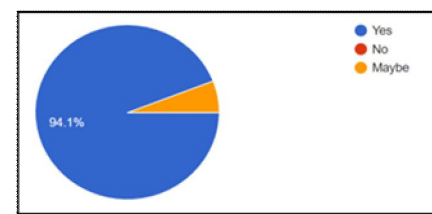


Graph 1.2

Sufficiency of Government efforts (4) Government collaboration with the women organization for achieving SDG's



Graph 1.3



Graph 1.4

Graph 1.1 shows that 100% of the respondents believe that women empowerment does play an important role in achieving the SDGs.

Graph 1.2 shows that about 58.8% women are aware of the 17 SDGs whereas around 11.8% are still not aware of them and 29.4% of the responses say that they are aware of a very few of the SDGs.

In Graph 1.3 around 52.9% of the respondents say that government has to make more efforts in achieving the SDGs, whereas 17.6% of them are not sure of the scenario and on the other hand 17.6% also say that the government efforts are sufficient and 11.8% of them say that government is not making sufficient efforts regarding the same.

Graph 1.4 shows that 94.1 of the respondents believe that government should collaborate with the women organizations to achieve the SDGs whereas 5.9% of them say that may be the government can collaborate with the women organizations to achieve the SDGs.



The other subjective responses are enlisted in the table 1.1 below.

Sr. No.	Topics of questions covered	Responses
1.	Your contribution in any of the SDG's	Majority of responses show that they can contribute in the following SDGs a) Quality Education b) Gender Equality c) Employment d) Reduce consumption and thus reduce production of new articles. e) More entrepreneurs can provide employment, and women designers associated with academics can educate other women and develop their skills.
2.	Suggestions to increase the literacy level	Very interesting and varied following feedbacks were obtained on increasing the literacy level: a) Need to focus more on uplifting rural area education level b) By educating women c) By increasing women employment d) Word of mouth publicity e) Need to create a common platform for suggestion to increase the literacy level f) Use of new and innovative techniques for teaching g) Skill and interest-based education h) Conducting part time night classes for working people. i) Reducing the cost of basic education. j) Industrial entrepreneurs should provide free education to the children of their employees.
3.	Ways to conserve the environment	Various following feedbacks related to different fields were obtained: a) Adopt sustainable cooking, waste management, save resources and avoid water wastage. b) Use renewal energy resources. c) Teach kids about the 5 R's. d) Organize seminars and spread the importance of conservation. e) More emphasis on paperless work f) More campaigns should be brought for tree plantation; also trees should be planted on the river banks. g) Hunting should be banned all over the world. h) Common men should turn off their vehicle on traffic signals, should get the PUC on regular basis and should follow all the traffic rules. i) The concept of less is more should be incorporated in building interiors as well for clothing. j) A practice of reusing the household articles should be observed. k) Opt for carpooling for commuting to the workplace.



4.	Inculcate the values of good health and hygiene in family and surroundings	<p>Following responses from the respondents were obtained:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Drink more water, eat green vegetables, avoid junk food and maintain personal hygiene.b) Exercise, walk.c) Proper segregated waste disposal.d) Reduce plastic usage.e) Equal Emphasis on mental as well as physical health is needed in present timef) Time management and disciplined life styleg) Concept of kitchen garden and organic farming needs more acceptanceh) Need of more strict rules for packed, street and outside food to maintain purity standards.i) Use of non stick utensils should be reduced and earthenware utensils should be used.j) Well ventilated buildings should be designed for the sufficient availability of natural air and light.k) Proper water supply and sanitation should be planned while designing of buildings and colonies.
5.	Suggestions to reduce gender inequality in working places	<p>Following suggestions for reducing the gender inequality were obtained:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Appoint equal number of male and female employees.b) Educate children about gender equality.c) Women should face and fight for their rights.d) Awareness is needed to understand the importance of gender equality for the betterment of the society.e) Equal rights, salary and perks should be given to both male and female employees.
6.	Innovations to increase the use of 5 R's	<p>Following day to day life lessons were highlighted as responses for this question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Explain its importance to children and family.b) Practice and then preachc) Use food waste to make manure.d) Ban single use plastic at home.e) Use locally available materials for design and construction.f) Design more green buildings using old traditional and vernacular methods.g) Used fabrics should be innovatively used to design new garments or may be decorative articles for interior designing.h) Interschool and inter college design competitions should be conducted for spreading awareness regarding the 5 R's.
7.	Eradicating hunger and poverty through women empowerment	<p>As per the respondents hunger and poverty can be eradicated in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Employ more women, so their family will not be hungry anymore.b) Through her organizational skills.c) Women educationd) Women skill developmente) Need of motivation for Women entrepreneurs



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> f) Women organizations should collaborate with the food industry so that their daily surplus can be provided to the needy and poor. g) Empowered women can help in upgrading their house helps and also their office subordinates.
8.	Means to encourage women to opt for industrial and field jobs	<p>Following means were suggested by the respondents for encouraging women to opt for field jobs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Government should make good policies for women b) Ensure women safety and provide healthy work environment c) Parents and family should encourage their daughters. d) Women should be made aware of her inner strengths. e) Quoting examples of Role models. f) Women should get health and hygiene facilities at their work place. g) Women should get facilities like pregnancy and childcare leave. h) Co-workers need to be compassionate for their female counter parts.
9.	Women leaders and entrepreneurs bring economic balance in society	<p>Women leaders and entrepreneurs can bring economic balance in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Inculcate the values of women empowerment since early childhood. b) Family support. c) By up skilling and training women. d) Need to accept women as a leader e) More earning is possible if the whole family works for a living. f) Women leaders can make policies and strategies to support other weaker women of the society.
10.	Innovative suggestions to increase the awareness of SDG's amongst women	<p>Awareness of SDGs can be spread in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Simplify the term SDG. b) Mass education. c) NukkadNatak, school projects, word of mouth publicity and social media. d) Government should tie up with NGO's and MNC's to spread the awareness. e) As a syllabus content in schools and colleges. f) More visual presentations on SDGs g) Activities related with SDGs need be on held on regular basis for general public. h) People following or achieving the SDG's in any form should be rewarded by the government or society. i) NGO's and government should run drives for environment protection and cleanliness j) Environment day, good health day, tree plantation day, water conservation day should be celebrated throughout the world. k) Renowned celebrities should advertise on social media for spreading the awareness of SDG's.

Table 1.1



The descriptive questions were regarding how women empowerment can be helpful in spreading the concept of SDGs, how can women help reduce poverty and hunger, how can empowered women influence other women to work and how can they conserve the environment. A variety of innovative ideas came up as feedbacks for these questions, though there were some common links in majority of them. Women professionals strongly believed that by educating women, giving them equal rights and opportunities can itself eradicate a number of problems which are being faced in achieving the SDGs. Also educating children, especially boy child may boost in fulfilling the goal of women empowerment. Educated and empowered women can inculcate the values of good health, hygiene and even the 5 R's in their family as well as their surroundings.

Women at their work and home fronts can bring a lot of changes by inculcating small healthy, hygienic and economical values in their family and friends. Women designers should opt for locally available materials for designing their attires or may be even their buildings. Vernacular design methods should be adopted for design construction. Recycled and reused raw materials should be incorporated in the new designs. Women designers should encourage the concept of climatically designed buildings for the maximum use of sun and natural light.

Empowered women can fight back gender inequality and can also provide employment to other fellow women. Government, NGO's and women organizations should join hands to spread the awareness of SDGs. Renowned women celebrities should step in for the free advertisement of spreading the idea of SDGs to common public. In short women should be empowered themselves rather than someone else providing them their empowerment.

Conclusion

It has been a long period of time since the SDGs were developed by the UN, but since then not much has been achieved. These goals are supposed to be accomplished by 2030 and for this the government and every individual collectively have to take strong measures. Women are great influencers and so can make drastic changes in the world around. Women empowerment is very much needed to achieve the SDGs. Women should be given equal rights and should be provided with good education so that they can spread the awareness of SDGs in whichever way possible. Educated and empowered women can bring the desired changes in the society by educating their children and family, by fulfilling their daily needs or may be by employing other women and thus reduce the problems of illiteracy, unemployment, poverty, hunger and corruption. Also empowered women can give the society innovative and alternative ideas for conserving the non-renewable energy sources and leading a healthy life. Disciplines like Fashion and Interior Design where there is a clear leverage of female employees and employers can be pioneers in achieving the SDGs through women empowerment.

References

- *Kristof D. Nicholas and Wudunn Sheryl, Half the Sky- Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide, Vintage Publishers, June 2010.*
- *Gates Melinda, The Moment of Lift: How Empowering Women Changes the World, Bluebird Publishing, April 2019.*
- *Sharma Ritu, Women Empowerment in India, Chandigadh, New Era Publishing, January 2018.*
- *Ganesamurthy V.S., Empowerment of Women in India, New Century Publications, January 2008.*
- *Ahlawat Ajay, Sustainable Development Goals: Directive Principles for Sustainable India By 2030, Notion Press Publications, October 2019.*
- *Women Empowerment Essay | 500+ Words Essay on Women Empowerment (byjus.com)*
- *What is Sustainability? | UCLA Sustainability*
- *Top Sustainable Fashion Brands in India | Rankings (shilpaahuja.com)*
- *Check Out These 5 Indian Designers Who Believe In Sustainable Clothing - Fashion Diary (livafluidfashion.com)*
- *10 Best Sustainable Fashion Brands In India | magicpin blog*
- *Women and sustainable development - Women's empowerment is a key factor for achieving sustainable economic growth | India Water Portal*
- <https://www.worldvision.com.au/womens-empowerment/#:~:text=Women's%20empowerment%20can%20be%20defined,change%20for%20the%20mselves%20and%20others.&text=In%20Western%20countries%2C%20female%20empowerment,wo%20men's%20rights%20movement%20in%20history.>



- <https://www.gviusa.com/blog/how-does-womens-empowerment-contribute-to-gender-equality/>
 - <https://rothys.com/blogs/the-loop/15-ways-to-empower-women>
 - <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality/>
 - <https://www.unglobalcompact.org/take-action/action/womens-principles>
 - <https://fashinnovation.nyc/empowering-women-through-fashion#:~:text=It's%20a%20way%20of%20expression,without%20the%20need%20for%20words.>
 - <http://everythingexperiential.businessworld.in/article/Can-Fashion-Industry-Boost-Women-Empowerment-09-03-2021-383275/>
 - <https://www.fashionrevolution.org/empowering-women-through-making/>
 - <https://audaces.com/en/women-empowerment-in-the-fashion-world/>
 - <https://amityuniversity.ae/gmj-ae/journals/2021/10%20Nilam%20Kunti.pdf>
 - <https://www.archdaily.com/945451/6-initiatives-that-empower-women-in-the-architectural-and-construction-sectors>
 - <https://www.designerfund.com/blog/10-design-leaders-empower-women-workplace-insights-women-design-2017/>
 - <https://www.lovehappensmag.com/blog/2016/10/18/influential-women-interior-design/>
-