

Women Rights Legal Awareness among Adolescents: Impact and Challenges A Preliminary Study

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ABSTRACT--Adolescence is the age of several beginnings physical, psychological, social and emotional. It is the phase when the human body and mind evolves to lay the foundation of the adult one becomes in the coming years. Hence it becomes a significant part of one's upbringing and life philosophy. This research was done on one such aspect of the adolescent's awareness of women rights as provided by the Indian Constitution for the upliftment of Indian women. Considering the new Indian social structure, women are budding in their roles professionally and personally, but it has been observed that not all are aware of their rights. This research is centered on adolescents because when they become aware of women rights at an early age, they can be vigilant and productive adults who ensure judicious implementation of these rights. Random sampling method was used to draw the sample from the given population of adolescents of schools from New Delhi. Data was collected from 100 adolescents studying in government and private schools. The data was analysed through the triangulation of qualitative and quantitative techniques. The researcher analyses awareness about women rights as stated in the Indian constitution and how well the adolescents are informed about them. The paper investigates about the dimensions of legal awareness and draws inferences from the opinions shared by the adolescents about what new needs to be done in the education system for greater impact and dissemination of legal provisions and acts for the larger good of Indian social fabric.

Keywords--Adolescents, Legal Awareness, Constitution, Women Rights

I. INTRODUCTION

“To awaken the people, it is the woman who must be awakened. Once she is on the move, the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves.”Jawahar Lal Nehru

Gender inequality is a global phenomenon, only the manifestations vary in form and degree in different cultures. The concept of Women Empowerment was voiced in the International Women's Conference in Nairobi in 1985. In this conference women's empowerment was considered as 'a distribution of social power and centre of resources in favour of women.' But without improving their educational participation of women this is not possible. This educational participation begins with the educational journey of a woman right from childhood, adolescence and then adulthood.

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Very few understand the crucial impact adolescence has on future of human resource. The quality of knowledge, learning and awareness imparted at this stage presents extraordinary significance in answering the question – What are the goals of education in preparing the youth of tomorrow? Even though the education provided equips the learner with basic facts and skills of livelihood, we need to see how socially stable does it make an individual.

The essence of education is to provide the learners with knowledge and skills for a better tomorrow. What we teach today reaps its benefits in the coming years. This fact stands true not only for education but every aspect of one's personal and professional development.

In the phases of life from infancy to old age, adolescence is one phase which gives innumerable experiences which in turn form the base to our youth. It is during adolescence that an individual roots his personality and thinking process. The right education, values, skills and awareness about aspects of human existence help in constructing a well balanced and sound individual.

Legal Awareness as the name suggests refers to the knowledge, perception and awareness of a situation, fact or an issue related to the law of the country as stated in the constitution and other legal documents. It depicts how well informed an individual is about the legal provisions given to the citizens of a country in terms of their social, economic, political and family development.

Basic knowledge of Fundamental rights and duties finds a visible space in the Indian curriculum for secondary education but there is no greater emphasis given on specific areas of women rights.

Women Rights is an area which draws a lot of attention all across the world. Women are the key pillars of any civilization or society. Their contribution in the growth and upliftment of human race is immense and hence they deserve to be treated and honoured in the most respectable fashion/order. Unfortunately this is not the case in certain sections and regions of this world. They are not given the status, position and privileges they deserve. Hence arises the need of women rights in the patriarchal ecosystem observed in these parts of the world all across the globe.

The evolving economies of the world demand new developments in the role of women. The women of the weaker sections of the world still do not enjoy the civil liberties as their peer in the middle and upper sections of the society do. Delivery of justice can be possible only when awareness of provisions happens. The United Nations also lays great emphasis on ensuring access to justice and providing legal awareness and services through its dedicated thematic areas.

One such thematic area is specifically for women – UN women, which ensures women's engagement on rule of law. Its key function is to study good practices to resolve issues related to sexual and gender based violence all across the globe. It strongly recommends women's access to justice through legal awareness campaigns and hence elimination of discrimination against women. Its office of legal affairs engaged in strengthening the rule of law particularly aims at ensuring coordination and coherence of the legal approaches all across its entities.

At the international platform the 2030 agenda for sustainable development also recognises the need to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies which provide equal access to justice and are based on respect for human rights of which women rights becomes an important aspect. The inclusion of access to justice in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) may well give further thrust to indoctrination for legal empowerment of women and the poor. SDG 5 on gender equality and women's empowerment further adds to the significance of making

provisions to acquaint women and the youth about their laws for ensuring timely justice and access to justice especially for the poorest and more vulnerable sections of the society.

Although India has the fastest growing youth population in the world, its gender disparities pose as barriers for the future of girls. The patriarchal society of our country unfortunately is quite strong and evident in its reactions even in the modern set ups irrespective of the innumerable initiatives undertaken by the government.

Keeping in mind the changing demands of the growing new world makes it imperative for us, the educators, to empower our youth, our children with the awareness of their rights and duties as a future human resource of the country.

Coming back to adolescents, this study is focused on how legally aware are these adolescents about the rights of women in our country. The study has been conducted in the national capital region and depicts a glimpse of the existing situation of legal awareness amongst the adolescents of government and private schools of Delhi. The need and significance of such a research was felt post an analysis of the current areas of development in the education of adolescents for a more practical and judicious society. This paper highlights how the knowledge of law gives the power and confidence to the citizens and helps them in self-realisation of their actions and its consequences in terms of country's law. Legal awareness hence helps the young minds know the law, recognise and challenge injustices leading to the transformation in people's lives.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to understand the research and studies conducted in the field of Legal Awareness an extensive literature review was done to answer the question fundamentally important for the significance of legal awareness in our society and to understand the ramification of the laws being made for the safety, security and upliftment of the society.

As a developing nation it becomes necessary for its future citizens to gain knowledge and study the internal (internalized thought processes) and external factors (overt behaviour) leading to the manifestation of the law dimensions of legal phenomenon or occurrences. It is these internal dimensions which can be made credible to the elucidation of the individual's legal consciousness or awareness. In such a situation both empirical studies and general findings reflect upon the current position of legal awareness in our country and the world over.

Drobnik, Jakob B. (2019), in his paper on Legal awareness as a factor to establish entrepreneurship, emphasises on the role of legal awareness in the economic market and associates it to the independent functioning of the people as not only good citizens but successful entrepreneurs. He lays light on the fact that the ability to use legal knowledge of the area of interest quickly turns out to be one of those factors that are of significant progressive or regressive importance for the functioning of the entrepreneur and his business. His research focuses on the meaning and dependence of legal regulations for education with the point of gravity being centered around the empirical analysis of the universality of legal knowledge and its impact on shaping entrepreneurial attitudes as well as functioning on the economic market.

Lukmanova, R., Pozdyaeva, S., Khramova, K., Afanasyeva, O., Starshinina, S (2019) in their article The Application of International Standards and Creative Projects in the Formation of Legal Awareness suggest the means and ways which influence the legal conscience of states and communities representative of the legal

relations in different countries. The findings achieved for their study are that the formation of legal awareness must base on the level of existing knowledge and the target audience (depending on such parameters as age or profession). In conclusions they state that the formation of legal awareness in contemporary globalized risk society should include the impact on both thinking and perception; both on legal consciousness itself, and the moral consciousness.

Shabbir Akbar (2019) aims in his paper on “Awareness of Teachers towards Child Rights Provision, Protection and Participation in framework of United Nation Child Rights Convention” to explore the awareness levels of teachers towards human rights with special emphasis on child right. The paper investigates the problems with reference to the local perspective and was limited to teachers only. The main idea of the study was based on the knowledge, attitude and practice in terms of provisions, protection and participation about child rights. The findings displayed that the teachers had shown statistically different views about the three aspects as mentioned above.

Dutta Sikha (2019) in a comparative study of women empowerment awareness level of Adolescent Girls in rural and urban higher secondary schools of Assam, India reveals that rural adolescent girls are less aware and empowered about the legal rights as compared to the urban adolescent girls.

Waldorf, Lars (2018) in the research “Legal Empowerment and Horizontal Inequalities after Conflict” explores whether legal empowerment and legal awareness can address horizontal inequalities in post conflict settings. It highlights how legal knowledge strengthens the identity of the vulnerable groups, reduces social cohesion of those who ill-treat the weaker sections and helps navigate between peace and equality. It is an exploratory and conceptual effort to think through the opportunities and challenges of enhancing legal empowerment and awareness in order to address the inequalities spread horizontally across the social fabrics of the world especially the post conflict settings, an issue which has received scant attention in the past.

Akmal Akmal (2018) in his study on Strengthening Students’ Characters Education through Legal Awareness Policies Analysis maps the condition of character education of junior high school students to know the effectiveness of character education policy implementation through the process of legal awareness and works on finding out an effective model to strengthen students’ character through legal awareness. He concludes that the effectiveness model for strengthening character education based on legal awareness needs to be adjusted to the condition of the learning process of students at school and outside school. Supervision actions by local government and school need to involve parents, religious figures, and intelligent outposts that exist in the school environment.

Pathania Sudershan Kumar (2018) in his Study of Legal Rights of Non-Working Women and Gender Discrimination in District Kangra of Himachal Pradesh, India has clearly highlighted that Equal rights are given to women but equality is not implemented. The findings of his study reveal that the factors responsible for lack of equality and implementation of laws are patriarchal structure, restricted mobility of women and girls, less access to education, health facilities, lower decision making power and higher rates of violence.

V. Manjula Devi 1, Mrs. Ranjithamani (2017) in their research a study of legal awareness among women teachers state that the need of the hour is to have basic knowledge of laws should be imparted to a large section of educated population especially women who are the mostly affected section of the society. The findings of the study

reveal that there is a significant difference between awareness of legal rights among women school teachers on the basis of their subject and locality.

Stankevich, V. Galina et al. (2017) in their paper on Modern paradigms of legal consciousness and development of legal awareness in post-socialist space strongly recommend legal awareness of population for development of successful democratic institutions in a country. They connect legal consciousness to the legal reality of the modern world.

III. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of the study was to find out the Legal Awareness of adolescents about Women Rights as stated in the Indian Constitution.

IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Do the adolescents of secondary schools of Delhi have Legal Awareness about Rights of Women in India?
2. Is there a significant difference between the levels of legal awareness amongst the adolescents of private and government schools of Delhi?
3. Does legal awareness amongst boys and girls differ significantly?
4. What perspective do the adolescents hold about the existing condition of women rights implementation practices in India?

V. METHODOLOGY

The population of the study comprised of secondary school adolescent students in the national capital region of Delhi, India. This included both government and private school students. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. Random sampling technique was employed in selecting a total of 100 adolescents from 10 schools comprising five private and five government schools. Data was gathered with a self prepared Legal Awareness Scale.

The reliability of the tool was established using the split –half method and Spearman Brown Correlation correction was applied. The reliability coefficient was found to be 0.78 for the Legal Awareness Scale.

Triangulation method was adopted in analysing the data. First a descriptive analysis was done of the demographic and socio economic backgrounds of the adolescents. Second the levels of legal awareness were established using the score from the Legal Awareness scale. Third the adolescents' perception of the current situation of the implementation of these rights in our country were investigated.

VI. FINDINGS

Table 1 shows the background characteristics of the respondents. The percentage of respondents was equal from government and private schools. Similarly the gender distribution of the sample was kept at an equal of 50 per cent each for uniformity. The results show that majority of the respondents were from grade XI – 45 per cent , followed by 30per cent from grade XII and 155 Grade X, leaving only 10per cent with grade IX respondents. It

was quite evident from the data collected that 81per cent of the respondents came from nuclear families, 13per cent from joint families and 6per cent of the respondents were from single parent families.

TABLE 1: Distribution of Background characteristics of Respondents

Characteristic		Frequency (N=100)	Percentage (%)
I	Type of School		
	Government	50	50 %
	Private	50	50 %
II	Gender		
	Boys	50	50 %
	Girls	50	50 %
III	Grade		
	Class IX	10	10 %
	Class X	15	15 %
	Class XI	45	45 %
	Class XII	30	30 %
IV	Type of family		
	Nuclear	81	81 %
	Joint	13	13 %
	Single parent	06	06 %

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for the selected variables of Legal Awareness about women rights and adolescents. The first variable is the type of school and shows the result of the score obtained through the Legal Awareness Scale for the adolescents of government and private schools. It is found that only 4per cent (02) of government schools adolescents and 6per cent (03) of private schools have scored high on the scale for Legal Awareness about women rights.

In the second level of Good Legal Awareness we have 12per cent (06) and 18per cent (09) of government and private schools adolescents respectively. Majority of the adolescents, 46per cent (23) government and 62per cent (31) private have been scored to have moderate knowledge and perception of the women rights in the country. The next level is categorized as low legal awareness with the result of 22per cent (11) government and 10per cent (05) adolescents falling under it. The last is poor levels of adolescents and the figures obtained here are 16per cent (08) and 4per cent (02) for the government and private school adolescents respectively. The chi square value is obtained to be 7.842.

TABLE 2: Descriptive statistics for the Variable

Variable		Levels of Legal Awareness (Frequency & %)					Chi-square value	Status of Significance*
		High	Good	Moderate	Low	Poor		
I	Type of School						7.842	Not Significant
	Government	02	06	23	11	08		
		4%	12%	46%	22%	16%		
	Private	03	09	31	05	02		
6%		18%	62%	10%	4%			
II	Gender wise						10.52	Significant
	Boys	02	07	21	12	08		
		4%	14%	42%	24%	16%		
	Girls	03	08	33	04	02		
6%		16%	66%	8%	4%			

The second comparison of legal awareness based on the gender of the sample. From the table we can see that 4 per cent (02) and 6 per cent (03) of boys and girls respectively fall under the category of high legal awareness of women rights, while 14 per cent (07) and 16 per cent (08) of them in the same order fall under good. Like before, in this variable too the majority of the sample i.e 42 per cent of boys and 66 per cent of girls fall under the category of moderate legal awareness score. The next two categories have quite a contrast in the percentages. It is found that in both low and poor levels it is the boys who lead with 24 per cent (12) of them in low and 16 per cent (08) in the poor levels. Girls on the other end are less in these two categories with just 8 per cent (04) in the low and 4 per cent (02) in the poor.

Table 3 depicts the adolescents' knowledge of the women's rights in different domains like – Fundamental Rights in constitution, Rights of women for their Education and well being, Social and domestic rights, political and economic rights and FIR related special provisions for women. The data was collected on a five point Likert Scale with responses ranging from strongly agree (SA), agree (A), Neutral (N), disagree (DA) to strongly disagree (SDA).

TABLE 3: Knowledge of Women rights in the Indian Constitution

S. No	Number of questions in each domain	Domain of the scale	Mean percentage of the responses				
			SA	A	N	DA	SDA
1.	10	Fundamental Rights	45.25	26.25	23	04	1.5

2.	05	Education and Well Being Rights	41.5	41.5	9.5	06	1.5
3.	10	Social and Domestic Rights	34.5	34.5	20	7.75	3.25
4.	04	Political and Economic Rights	40	40.62	13.75	3.125	2.5
5.	03	FIR related provisions	28.33	22.5	15.84	13.33	20

It can be inferred from the table that 45.25 per cent of the sample strongly agreed to the fundamental rights, 26.25 per cent agreed to the rights in constitution while 23 per cent of them were neutral about them. Only 4 per cent of them disagreed to the rights being given by the constitution and 1.5 per cent strongly disagreed.

In the second domain of the legal awareness scale it was found that 41.5 per cent of the respondents strongly agreed and the same percentage of them agreed to the rights provided for the educational and overall well being of women. 9.5 per cent of them though were neutral, with 6 per cent disagreeing and 1.5 per cent of them strongly disagreeing to the same.

The third domain of the scale was social and domestic rights. The figures show that 34.5 per cent strongly agreed and 34.5 per cent agreed to these rights, while 20 per cent of them were neutral. Those who disagreed were 7 per cent of the respondents and 3.25 per cent of them strongly disagreed to the knowledge of such rights. In the political and economic domain, 40 per cent of the adolescents as sample strongly agreed to know the rights and acts for women upliftment while 40.62 per cent just agreed to them. 13.75 per cent were neutral about any such rights, 3.125 per cent disagreed and 2.5 per cent strongly disagreed to the knowledge of these rights.

The last part of the scale dealt with questions about special provisions being made for filling of first information reports (FIR) in the police stations for women. 28.33 per cent of the respondents strongly agreed, 22.5 per cent agreed, 15.84 per cent were neutral, 13.33 per cent disagreed and 20 per cent of them strongly disagreed to knowledge of such provisions.

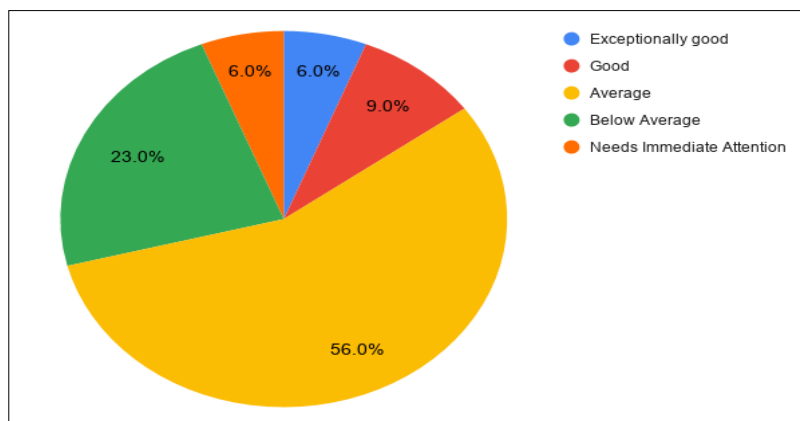


Figure 1: Perception of respondents about implementation of Women Rights

Figure 1 shows the perception of the respondents about the status of implementation of women rights in our country at the grass root levels. 6per cent of them feel the rights have been put into practice in an exceptionally good way, with 9per cent keeping them in the good category. Majorly 56per cent of them find the efforts as average, 23per cent perceive it as below average and 6per cent feel immediate attention is needed to execute these rights across the country.

VII. DISCUSSION

The analysis in table one shows that equal number of respondents has been taken as sample from the government and private schools. This is done to ensure any biases in terms of thinking patterns and perceptions about the rights of women in different school settings. Also it has been ensured that equal distribution of boys and girls is maintained to avoid gender bias. The sample distribution across the age group of 13 to 19 was taken from different grades of the school ranging from grade IX-XII. On approaching the schools they were more willing to provide students of higher grades pertaining to sensitivity of the issue of women rights in our country and the comprehension levels of the adolescents. The type of family analysis gives us an idea of the background of the adolescent's home environment. Most of the respondents come from nuclear families, which have small number of family members to interact with and hence one gets more time to share their learning and experience with each other. In joint family set ups the child has more people to interact other than the parents, so it depends how much time he/she spends with grand parents or uncle- aunts etc.

Do the adolescents of secondary schools of Delhi have Legal Awareness about Rights of Women in India?

The analysis of the score obtained by the sample makes it quite evident that adolescents do have legal awareness about the women rights in our country. Table two presents a comprehensive view of the varying degrees of legal awareness amongst the adolescents. This makes it clear that there is more number of respondents in the high to moderate levels as compared to low or poor.

Is there a significant difference between the levels of legal awareness amongst the adolescents of private and government schools of Delhi?

The analysis of table two is based on the scores obtained by the respondents on the Legal Awareness Scale. The highest score possible on this scale is 171 and the lowest is 39. The High legal awareness range is from a score of 166 to 177. A total of five adolescents fell under this category which shows that there are not many who have high knowledge of the rights and acts stated for the welfare of women in the Indian society. Out of these five two students are from government school and three are from private schools set up. Which leads us to the conclusion that the levels of legal awareness at the high end are almost the same in both set ups.

The next category of good legal awareness has six government and nine private school adolescents making a total of fifteen students who have good knowledge of the rights for women empowerment. The score ranges from 136-165. Here also the number of students in government and private schools differs from a very low margin. Showing that the variance in both set ups remains almost the same. The moderate level of legal awareness has the

majority of students from both the set ups and constitutes the highest percentage of the sample. Fifty four adolescents in total fall under this category with 23 and 31 adolescents from government and private schools respectively. This leads us to the conclusion that most of the adolescents have scored between the range of 106-135 in the Legal awareness scale and possess acceptable knowledge of the laws and acts constituted for the Indian women in the constitution. They need more exposure to these rights so that they can help build a stronger and safer society for the future generations.

The next category of low legal awareness counts for those who scored in the range of 71-105. The number of such cases was only five in private schools while it went up to 11 in the government schools. Similarly in the last category we have poor awareness levels with the score range of 39-70 and the number here too is more in government schools i.e. eight adolescents as compared to the private schools i.e. two adolescents only. These two categories prove that there are students who lack the knowledge of these rights and hence cannot contribute much in times of need for such laws.

The chi square value obtained at 0.05 per cent levels of significance and df-4 is found to be less than the critical values, hence there is no significant difference in the levels of Legal Awareness amongst the adolescents of government and private schools of the state.

Does legal awareness amongst boys and girls differ significantly?

Findings in terms of gender as the variable for difference in legal awareness has shown that the number of girls are more in each category of the levels of legal awareness irrespective of what schools they are from. The chi square value obtained from this data at 0.05 per cent levels of significance and df-4 is found to be more than the critical values, hence there is significant difference in the levels of Legal Awareness amongst the adolescent girls and boys of the state. During the process of data collection as well it was observed that the girls were found to be more diligent in their responses and their attitude towards providing answers was more open as compared to boys. There were a few who had to be counseled about the significance of the study and hence encouraged to provide responses sincerely.

The rapport building phase of interacting with the adolescents was found to be fruitful and it was apparent that many are willing to learn more about the laws, acts and initiatives undertaken by the Indian government towards the upliftment and empowerment of women. It was observed that most of the students were open to discussing issues related to social and domestic violence and some even shared a few that they have either experienced or witnessed in their families or neighborhood.

Existing condition of women rights implementation practices in India: Adolescents' Perspective

"An essential part is the right of women to have access to information and Know-how." (Claessen, J. & Wesemael, 1992)

India as a country has an impressive set of laws for women and girls especially but the irony is that they are less known to not only women but men as well. Awareness and understanding of the laws is the first step towards change. All sections and categories of the society need legal awareness in order to build a healthy and peaceful foundation to their homes, colonies, community, state and country.

Figure one depicts what the adolescents perceive of the current situation of implementation practices in our country to ensure judicious environment to women of all sections of the country. Most of them find the initiatives being put into action at an average level. Which points us towards the fact that irrespective of the equality ensured in the constitution the same is not being observed at grass root levels. In addition to this almost a quarter of the sample feels that the outcome of these initiatives is below average and as many as six percent of the sample has indicated immediate attention of the authorities and public about the fair execution of women rights in our country.

These findings are an echo of the reality of status of women safety in the largest democracy of the world. These perspectives all point towards the weaknesses encountered in harmonizing the essence of the constitution with the social practices. These sentiments point towards the shortcoming within the education system in failing to align the policies for the benefit of adolescents in gaining knowledge and awareness of women rights. Theoretical information should be integrated with skill based activities within the school environment in order to motivate the adolescents to internalize the practice of legal awareness in their self conduct so that they stay connected to the empowerment of women in their families, communities, social organisations and the country on the whole.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This study was necessitated by the growing concern over the treatment of women in the country especially in cases related to social and domestic disparities in the Indian household based on gender. There is hardly any study found based on the legal awareness of adolescents about women rights, rather there are plenty to be found centered on the health and nutrition of the adolescents. Women rights too have been researched more on women as sample and not adolescents.

Findings from this study through the qualitative and quantitative analysis have revealed moderate to low levels of legal awareness among the adolescents of the state. This calls for a conscious involvement of schools, teachers, parents and the society in equipping, broadening and deepening the adolescent's knowledge, perception and practice about the rights of women as in the constitution of India which in turn would foster an increase in the competence, skill and progressive attitudes of these adolescents in handling life situations related to women rights. Greater legal awareness will equip them with the necessary expertise to function as an aware citizen who can envision the desired implementation of these rights in all spheres of social responsibilities and not just when the need arises. It would help women get over their fear of societal isolation and come out to seek justice if encountered with undesirable life situations of self or any other woman in need.

This study is evidence that we have yet to attain the objective behind the construction and phrasing of these laws on paper. An extensive longitudinal need analysis, outcome centered trainings and practice oriented legal literacy platforms are called for in order to assess the impact of the women rights in our society.

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