

# AN ANALYTICAL STUDY ON AWARENESS OF INDIAN POLICIES OF WOMEN EMPLOYMENT AND EMPOWERMENT

**Nilima Vinodkumar Gupta**

{M. A (Political Science), B.Ed.}  
Assistant Professor  
KES Shri Jayantilal H. Patel Law College

## Abstract

*In scriptures of Indian society there is a mention of Ardhanarineswar which means a combination of three words "Ardha," "Nari," and "Ishwara" meaning "half," "woman," and "lord," respectively, which emphasizes equal importance to both man and a woman without one the another is incomplete. During Vedic age, women were considered equal but with the passage of time from later Vedic age there was infringement of women rights turning India to patriarchal society. Women are now considered secondary, restricted to households and not allowed to work after marriage and look after their home. This phenomenon is the same from higher economic class to lower economic class.*

*India has achieved an overall rank of 127 out of the 146 countries in the 2023 edition of the Gender Gap Index report published by World Economic Forum (WEF). India has closed 64.3% of the overall gender gap. But the country has reached only 36.7 % parity in economic participation and opportunity. But still there are a lot of gaps to achieve women employment especially post-delivery of the child also termed as Motherhood penalty. Parenting being a full-time job and mostly considered a job of a woman in which those who come back to the society lose 60% of their income. This paper the researcher has conducted primary survey to know the awareness about the policies in the Indian society and tries to critically analyse the awareness of various policies of women with respect to their employment and accessing benefits from these policies on ground applicability.*

**Keywords:** Women Empowerment; Gender Equality; Government Schemes; Policies; Education

## INTRODUCTION

Women's empowerment is part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by the UN in 2015. Previously also mentioned in Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for education in Goal 2 to achieve universal basic education. In which India has actively been a part of it. When we drive back in time women employment and empowerment is not a new concept. India is a society where women were given equal status thousands of years ago. In all spheres of life women participated equally and competed with great men of those time from education to becoming a queen and ruling the nation. Vedic age was a time when women enjoyed equal freedom and equality. Unmarried women were required to attend school since only educated women were capable of performing Vedic ceremonies correctly. Women were permitted to participate in the Upanayana (educational entrance rite) process. After the age of 16, women were allowed to marry and have the right to choose their life partners. There were great leaders, educators who were women from Vedic age till now namely Gargi, Maitreya and Lopamudra to Lilavati, intelligent daughter of Bhaskar Acharya. Since education is the ladder to be aware of their rights and achieve success in all spheres of life. employment, and others. This right was infringed with changing times of history and moving from Vedic age to later Vedic age. This made women vulnerable to the knowledge and education which plays a vital role in employment and empowerment of a person. Not just India but overall, in the world the status of women was made vulnerable, for example in the words of famous philosopher Aristotle, "In the differences between sexes men are considered better and more in nature while women are underestimated". Over a period of time subjugation of women continued in medieval India and Modern India as well. This turned India to a traditional patriarchal society given a secondary status which is reflected in the economic, social and political spheres. Today even when they are equal to half of the population, we still have to make special policies for women for their employment and empowerment. This need of the hour is creating more awareness and for which education is the basic requirement.

### Education a key component for Empowerment

"When girls are educated, their countries become stronger and more prosperous."

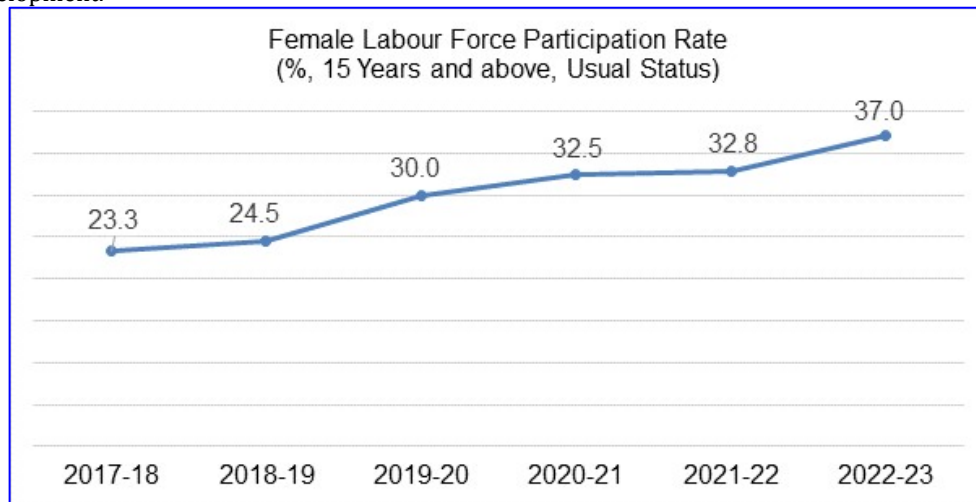
-Michelle Obama

In order for any nation to become successful it is necessary to educate women, once a woman is educated, they better aware of their rights and benefits they can avail. Savitribai Phule was one of the first female teachers in

India, a social reformer, and poet. Along with her husband, Jyotiba Phule in Maharashtra, she played a vital role in improving women's rights in India. She is considered to be the pioneer of India's feminist movement. It was only because of her education that she is recognized forever. Education has given us great women in our society who have reached a great success only after gaining education. To name a few, **Kalpna Chawla** first Indian born American woman to fly to space, **Sunita Williams**, **Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit** is the first woman president of the United Nations General Assembly, **Sucheta Kripalani** is the first woman Chief Minister who studied at Indraprastha College and Punjab University before becoming a professor of Constitutional History at Banaras Hindu University. **Soumya Swaminathan** former chief scientist at the World Health Organization, **Mary Kom** only woman to win the World Amateur Boxing Championship six times, the only female boxer to have won a medal in each one of the first seven World Championships, and the only boxer (male or female) to win eight World Championship medals. **Kiran Bedi** is the first woman officer in the Indian Police Service. Ashapurna Devi is the first Indian woman to win the Jnanpith Award. Leila Seth to become first woman Chief Justice of a State High Court in year 1991. These examples show us how with help of education women have brought so much glory to the nation and are able to lead the world.

Periodic Labour Force Survey Report 2022-23 released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation on 9th October 2023 shows that the Female Labour Force Participation Rate in the country has improved significantly by 4.2 percentage points to 37.0% in 2023, as per 'usual status' concept of measuring labour force participation. Which mentions the That a significant jump in labour force participation as a result of policy made by the government and initiatives for girls' education, skill development, entrepreneurship facilitation and safety in the workplace.

Table 1: Female labor workforce participation rate posted as on 13 OCT 2023 by PIB, Ministry of women and child development.



### Policies made by Government

1947: Industrial Disputes Act provides equal wages and other facilities like the provision of crèche to women workers.

1956: Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act meant to check trafficking of women and children.

1961: Dowry Prohibition Act.

1961: Maternity Benefit Act protects the employment rights of women during pregnancy.

1972: Working Women Hostel Scheme implemented to provide accommodation to working women.

1976: Equal Remuneration Act states that the employer has to give equal pay to men and women workers.

1997: Supreme Court issues Vishaka Guidelines that widen the meaning of sexual harassment.

1998: Supreme Court rules that maternity benefit is applicable to all casual and daily wage workers.

2005: Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act.

2013: Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act to supersede the Vishaka Guidelines.

2015: Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme is launched to spread female literacy.

2015: Sukanya Samridhi Yojana is launched to encourage parents to educate their girl child.

### Relationship between Elections and Policies making and awareness.

India has made lot of policies for development of women over a period of time since the time of Independence and continuing. All these major policies have transformed India to a greater level. It has helped women tremendously in providing good employment prospectus and empowered them from not facing any kind of discrimination and ill treatment from the society. But there is one common phenomena in nearly all the Policies that are made with respect to the year in which they were made. To note a few below is the list of policies year

made and preceding or the succeeding year of elections. Notable it is difficult to find any policies in between the two elections. If any policies are even made in between the elections, it is hard to find and rarely people are aware of such policies. So even if great policies are existing there is hardly any awareness since it was not during the time of elections and mass population remains unaware and are unable to take benefits from the same. But the fact cannot be denied that all major transformational policies are made when elections are near.

Policy year and name	General Election year	General Election Number
1956: Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act meant to check trafficking of women and children.	1957	Second
1961: Dowry Prohibition Act. 1961: Maternity Benefit Act protects the employment rights of women during pregnancy.	1962	Third
1972: Working Women Hostel Scheme implemented to provide accommodation to working women.	1971	Fifth
1976: Equal Remuneration Act states that the employer has to give equal pay to men and women workers.	1977	Sixth
1997: Supreme Court issues Vishaka Guidelines that widen the meaning of sexual harassment. 1998: Supreme Court rules that maternity benefit is applicable to all casual and daily wage workers.	1996 & 1998	Eleventh & Twelfth
2005: Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act.	2004	Fourteenth
2013: Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act to supersede the Vishaka Guidelines.	2014	Sixteenth
2015: Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme is launched to spread female literacy. 2015: Sukanya Samridhi Yojana is launched to encourage parents to educate their girl child.	2014	Sixteenth
2023: Women Reservation Bill	2024	Ninetieth

**Why we need policies for Women Employment and Empowerment?**

“Women are soul of progress and their right and freedom should be protected”

-Swami Vivekanand

**Motherhood penalty:**

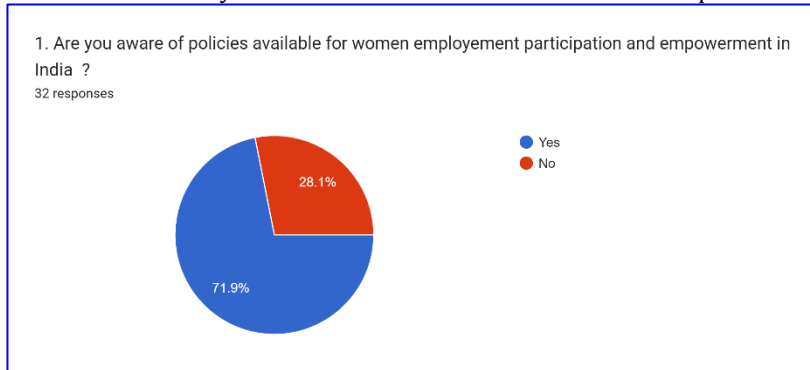
Both men and women start schooling, then work and pay equally. But as life moves towards 30's a gender pay gap appears. After marriage and children's women loose out 60% of their income in the first 10 years after their child birth. Which is also termed as motherhood penalty, where they miss on their pay, promotions and growth in career. And when they wish to rejoin, they are less likely to be rehired back in the workforce. According to a study women age 25 to 54 only 52% women are in the labour force compared to 95% men. And the study states that the gender pay gap is largely because of motherhood. A new study measured it across 134 countries and it found that, after birth of the first child 24% of the women leave the workforce in the first year, five years later after childbirth 17% don't rejoin the workforce. Ten years later after the childbirth 15% woman still don't rejoin the workforce. 73% of Indian women leave the workforce after the childbirth. In order to maintain an equilibrium in the society which gives minimum guarantee, their need policies to be made so that they get equality in the society. But government policies alone cannot enforce workforce equality we need a change in mentality, at workplace and homes. This is unpaid labour for which they are neither paid nor compensated. Hence government need to make such policies which gives them a scene of commitment that they will be paid equally and hence government came up policies such as, 1961: Maternity Benefit Act protects the employment rights of women during pregnancy, 1947: Industrial Disputes Act provides equal wages and other facilities like the provision of crèche to women workers, 1972: Working Women Hostel Scheme implemented to provide accommodation to working women. Because it is the policies only which makes a bond on the employer and society for implementation and giving justice to women who are been treated as vulnerable for a very long time in the society.

**Societal norms:** Still working with old fashioned and traditional mindset where women are not allowed to study and work and are restricted to their home. The tradition and customs of the society ask women to sit at home and sometimes women are considered a burden or liability to the family since even if they are educated and employed they don't bring back the money back home after marriage so it is not fruitful to invest in a woman.

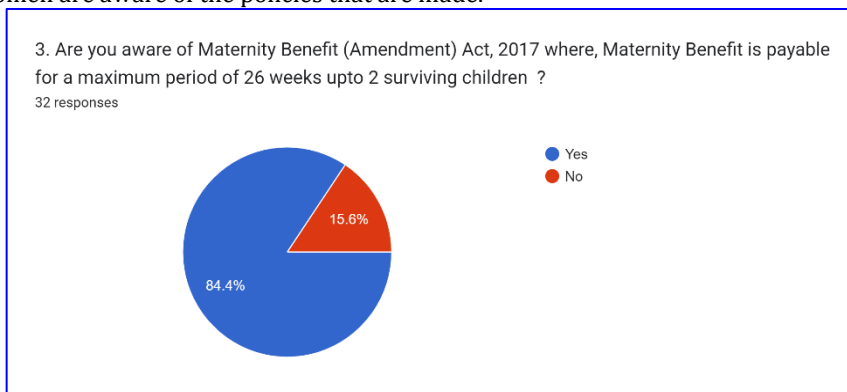
**Violence and Harassment:** Women are subject to both physical and mental violence at home and at workplace hence there is a need for justice to be done and guarantee women that no injustice will be done to them. Hence policies such as the SHWW Act and Domestic violence act are needed to create a just and fair society.

**Analysis of the survey conducted**

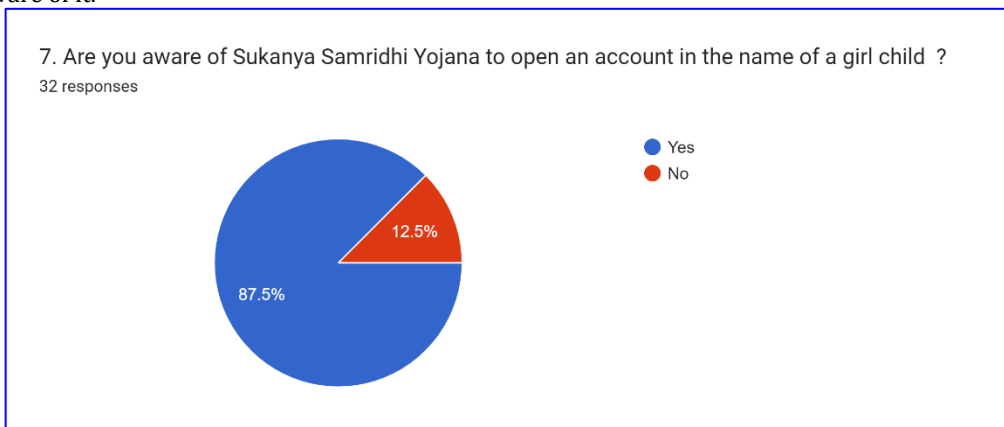
The researcher has conducted a survey on women to know their awareness about policies existing in India



The study shows that in the present era of Education and technology where we can access all the data and updates on one click still 28.1% of the women are not aware about any policies made by the government for them. 71.9% women are aware of the policies that are made.

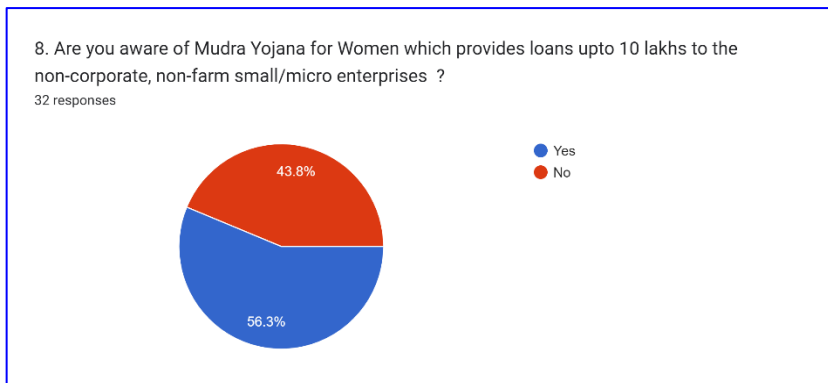


The study shows that, one of the well-known policies made for women Maternity benefit act in 1961 is known to people but the amendment made in 2017 is not well known to the people about 15.6% women are still unaware of the changes made, since this change is done in between the elections year. Only Policies that are made during preceding or succeeding years of elections are well know to the people. Since the elections were in 2019 hence the policy was not wide spread through advertisements, campaigning and hence people are not much aware of it.

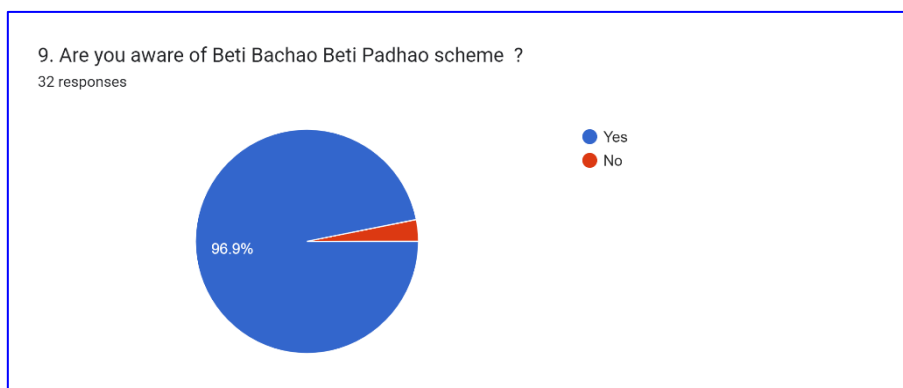


The study shows that 87.5% of women are aware of Sukanya Samridhi Yojana since the policies was brought in 2015 just after the general election year 2014. A lot of advertisements, campaigning was done hence people are aware of it but still 12.5% people are not aware of the policy, and it has not reached to all the mass population on ground realities. Government data says that achievement More than 3 crore accounts were opened. 100% coverage in more than 19,500 villages. Minimum deposit of `250, to open an account in the name of a girl child.

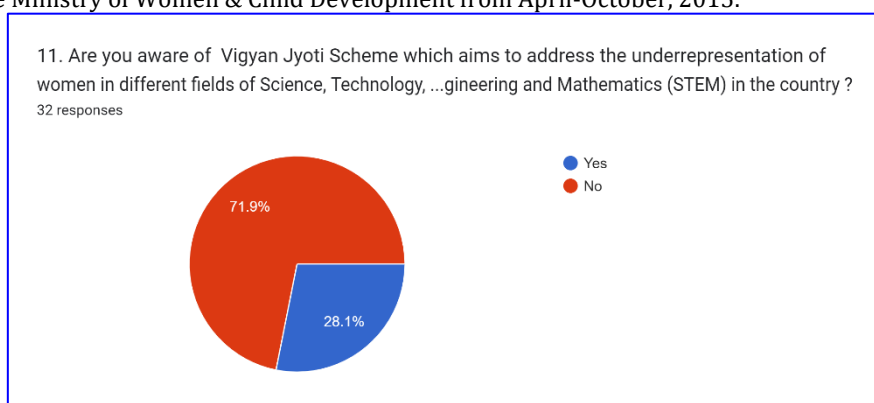
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The study shows that 43.8% women are not aware of the of the scheme only 56.3% women are aware of the scheme. The scheme provides loans up to 10 lakhs to the non-corporate, non-farm small/micro enterprises. This scheme was also launched in 2015 succeeding year of general elections. Hence not much advertisements, campaigning was done. And the scheme is related to entrepreneurship so the awareness is very less compared to others schemes. This shows us that women are not much into business and hence are also not aware of the schemes related to enterprises. Government data says that over 68% of the account holders are women. Which is a great achievement for India. But this 68% data comes only from the population that is aware of the scheme.

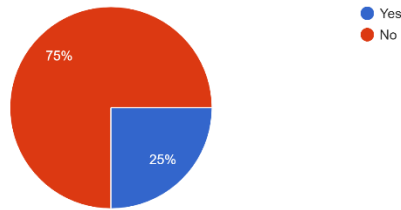


The study shows that 96.9% women are aware of the of the scheme only 3.1% women are unaware of the scheme. The scheme was launched on January, 2015 succeeding year of general elections. A lot of advertisements, campaigning was done, eye catching slogan played a very important role in awareness of this scheme. This scheme was repeatedly used by the Prime minister in this speech on various occasions, wall painting were made in public places all this plays a vital role in awareness of the scheme. Since the launch of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao , the multi-sectoral District Action Plans have been operationalized in almost all states. Capacity-building programmes and Trainings have been imparted to Trainers to further strengthen capacities of district level officials and frontline workers. Nine set of such trainings have been organized covering all States/UTs the Ministry of Women & Child Development from April-October, 2015.



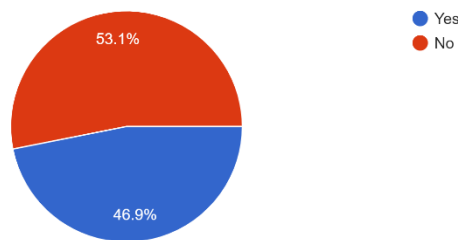
The study shows that only 28.1% women are aware of the of the scheme and 71.9% women are unaware of the scheme. The scheme was launched on January, 2021 which is in between two general elections and is not well known to the people. Very less advertisements, campaigning was done for the scheme. The scheme was launched on the occasion of the International Day of Women and Girls in Science, this program aims to inspire and encourage young girls across India to develop a keen interest in science and pursue rewarding careers in STEM disciplines.

12. Are you aware of Mahila E-haat scheme an online marketing platform for women entrepreneurs to directly sell their products to their buyers ?  
32 responses



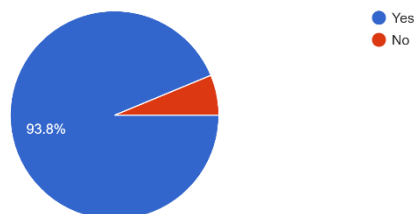
The study shows that only 25% women are aware of the of the scheme and 75% women are unaware of the scheme. The scheme was launched on March, 2016 which is in between two general elections and is not well known to the people. Very less advertisements, campaigning was done for the scheme. Mahila E-Haat is an initiative for meeting aspirations and needs of women entrepreneurs. It is an online marketing platform for women, where participants can display their products. It is an initiative for women across the country as a part of 'Digital India' and 'Stand Up India' initiatives. Again, the scheme deals with entrepreneurship and is very less known to the people which drives us to the conclusion that scheme is related to entrepreneurship so the awareness is very less compared to others schemes. This shows us that women are not much into business and hence are also not aware of the schemes related to enterprises.

14. Have you ever attended a workshop/ seminar for awareness on Indian policies of Women Employment and Empowerment ?  
32 responses

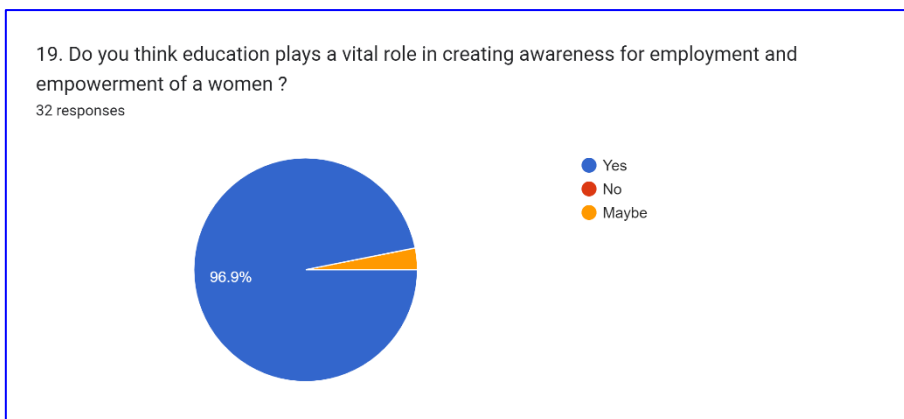


The study shows that only 46.9% women have ever attended a workshop / seminar for awareness on Indian policies of Women Employment and Empowerment and 53.1% women have never attended a workshop / seminar for awareness on Indian policies. This shows that not even half of the respondents have ever attended awareness program which should be changed and increased towards more awareness. Government should launch more awareness programs for women through which people are aware of policies and can access it. If people are not aware they are unable to access benefits of it.

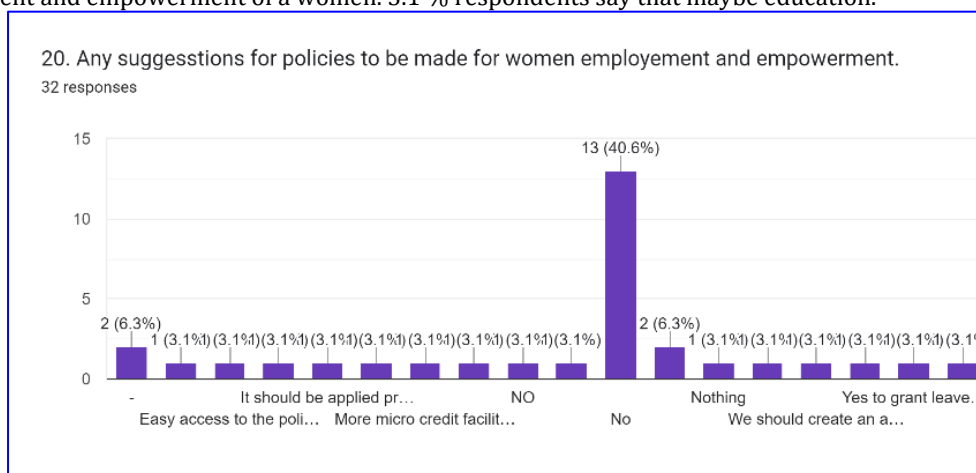
17. Do you think an awareness program should be conducted by all organization with respect to schemes and benefits available by Indian government for women?  
32 responses



The study shows that 93.8% respondents strongly advocate for more awareness program should be conducted by all organization with respect to schemes and benefits available by Indian government for women.



The study shows that 96.9% respondents think education plays a vital role in creating awareness for employment and empowerment of a women. 3.1 % respondents say that maybe education.



Suggestions by the respondents for policies to be made for women employment and empowerment.

- Easy access to the policies so that even uneducated or weaker section women may understand and apply for the same
- Government should give periods leave, and reduce work hours for women
- Yes, to grant leaves for period
- Work life balance is such an aspect where most of working women struggle. Hence, policies and rules must be framed that help women seek work life balance.
- Creating more awareness from grassroot level. Inclusivity of all the women of different age groups and areas.
- We should create an awareness in women residing rural areas
- We need creating awareness for employment and empowerment of a women
- These policies will help country in form of making women as human capital so it's play crucial role.
- More micro credit facility for women entrepreneurs and more social awareness campaign for women empowerment and grassroot promotion of women related government polici
- More awareness drive to know about schemes
- It should be applied properly without any delay.

Overall, the suggestions given by the respondents focus on making policies for periods and leave for the same. Easy access to policies at times, Policies are made but many a time process to access to policies are is so difficult that people don't want to go and access the policy. Awareness for women residing in rural areas, grassroot level need to be made through various awareness drives. And very importantly applied properly without any delay.

## CONCLUSION

Hence policy should be made through out the years in continuity and not just during the preceding or succeeding years of elections. More awareness drive needs to be made by the government to create awareness in school/ colleges etc. even though when government has very good policies and program for people, they are not aware about it. These policies and programmes should be part of the curriculum for students in their syllabus. More practical projects should be allocated to students for the same. These policies should not be

restricted only to the learned people for the sake of knowledge it should be passed on to people. Government can conduct free awareness drive for women's in every 3 to 6 months with the help of local self-government to bring a change in the society.

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