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ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN AWARENESS OF SANITATION FOR INDIAN WOMEN

Dr. Bharti M. Patel

Abstract:

This research examines the role of the sanitary problems women in India confront on their independence and self-respect and the level of awareness due to social media. Particularly in rural regions, where open defecation is still common, the lack of access to safe and sanitary sanitation facilities is a major issue. It's not uncommon for women to be put in precarious situations due to their inability to find safe, quiet places to retreat to. They risk being harassed or attacked while looking for private places to defecate due to the absence of bathrooms. Limited knowledge, price, and access to period products contribute to unsanitary practises and prejudice, adding to the difficulty of managing menstrual hygiene. Women are disproportionately responsible for sanitation-related work and are often silenced during policy debates because of societal norms and gender inequality. There are significant health concerns associated with these difficulties, including an increase in the likelihood of infection and problems during childbirth. Infrastructure development, menstrual hygiene management programmes, behaviour change communication, and women's empowerment through participation in decision-making processes are all vital to finding solutions to these problems. By increasing the availability of clean sanitation services, India can help advance gender equality and protect the human rights of its female citizens.

KEY WORDS: Social Media, Sanitation, Awareness, Role, Outcomes

Introduction

Sanitation is a fundamental human right that is necessary for ensuring the public's health as well as the long-term viability of the environment and society. Women in India continue to confront particularly difficult obstacles when attempting to gain access to facilities that are both safe and clean, despite the substantial progress that has been achieved in recent years to improve the country's infrastructure for sanitation. This article goes into the difficulties that women in India experience with regard to sanitation, stressing the influence that these difficulties have on their health, safety, and dignity. We can have a better understanding of the complicated dynamics at play if we look more closely at the underlying

variables that are contributing to these issues. In addition, we investigate alternative solutions and the significance of tackling these concerns in order to promote gender equality, give women greater power, and make our society more welcoming to people of all backgrounds.

1. Poor Sanitation Infrastructure

One of the most pressing problems facing the sanitation industry, particularly with regard to women, is a dearth of facilities that are both clean and secure for their use. According to the Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) of the World Health Organisation and the United Nations Children's Fund, a significant section of the population of India defecates in the open, particularly in rural areas. This is a practise that is particularly prevalent in India. As a consequence of this, it may be difficult to find discrete locations where women may properly clean up after themselves in an appropriate manner. In addition to infringing on their right to privacy, denying them access to sanitary facilities puts such individuals at risk of developing diseases and infections.

When women in rural areas have to go long distances to find quiet areas where they can defecate in the open, they put themselves at danger of being subjected to sexual assault, harassment, and animal attacks. Women are more likely to avoid going out after dark as a result of these risks, which are compounded by the lack of adequate lighting and safety measures. This puts their safety at risk and restricts their ability to freely participate in social, educational, and economic activities.

2. Menstrual hygiene

In Indian culture, despite the fact that menstruation is a fully natural part of a woman's life, there is still a great deal of ignorance and shame associated with it. Menstruation and maintaining proper hygiene can be challenging for women. Because of a lack of information on and access to appropriate menstrual hygiene products, many women resort to using unsanitary materials during their periods, such as rags, newspapers, or even leaves. This puts the health of the women at danger.

In addition, the stigma that is attached to menstruation leads to an environment that is characterized by shame and secrecy. Because to period discrimination, women and girls are being denied entrance to public facilities such as restrooms, locker rooms, and schools. Inadequate facilities, such as a lack of separate bathrooms that are clean in schools, further impede girls' access to education and jeopardize both their health and their safety.

3. Cultural and Gender Barriers

The sanitary issues that women in India face have been exacerbated for a very long time by gender inequity as well as by traditional societal standards. Women, according to the standards of the past, have always been expected to take care of things like cleaning and maintaining the restroom. This expectation has been consistent throughout history. They are the ones who are required to shoulder the majority of this obligation, which reduces their opportunities for pleasure, productivity, and career growth.

In addition, long-standing patriarchal attitudes and practises continue to perpetuate imbalances in power dynamics, the allocation of resources, and the provision of services. In many cases, the viewpoints and worries of women are not taken into consideration throughout the process of developing and implementing sanitation initiatives, which results in solutions that do not satisfy the specific requirements that women have. It is imperative that these norms be questioned, that women be empowered to play a key role in partnership, and that they be included in the design and execution of sanitation initiatives.

4. Health and Sanitation Implications

Because of India's inadequate sanitation infrastructure and practises, the health of its female population is especially at risk. When people do not have access to appropriate sanitation facilities, they are at an increased risk of contracting infections of the urinary system, the genitourinary tract, and other waterborne disorders. Due to the fact that poor

sanitation can raise the risk of disease during pregnancy as well as after delivery, pregnant women are at an especially high risk.

Because of a lack of access to clean water and sanitation facilities, poor menstrual hygiene management practises can also lead to reproductive health concerns. Inadequate sanitation and a lack of privacy during menstruation have a negative impact on women's mental health, feeling of self-worth, and overall quality of life. This is especially true for younger women.

5. Possible Answers and Moving Forward

The issues that women in India confront in terms of sanitation necessitate a strategy that encompasses education, the creation of new infrastructure, the modification of existing policies, and changes in behaviour on the part of individuals. The following are some potential ideas that might contribute to enhancing women's access to sanitary facilities that are safe and dignified:

➤ **Infrastructure Growth:**

Particularly in rural and underserved regions, gender-responsive toilets should be a building priority for both the government and non-governmental organisations. In order to ensure users' safety, these restrooms have to be furnished with amenities such as fresh running water, trash removal systems for menstruation products, and sufficient lighting.

➤ **Menstrual hygiene programmes:**

It is imperative that schools, communities, and places of employment all establish comprehensive menstrual hygiene management programmes. The primary focuses of these programmes should be eliminating financial barriers to obtaining menstrual hygiene products, teaching young women and girls about menstrual health, and combating the social stigma that is associated with having a period.

➤ **Communication for Behaviour Modification:**

Through the use of public education projects, it is critical to both promote healthy menstrual hygiene practises and remove negative stereotypes and stigmas relating to menstruation. Community outreach programmes such as seminars, street plays, and the media may be used to debunk falsehoods and assumptions as well as encourage open dialogue. These goals can be done simultaneously.

➤ **Women's Empowerment:**

It is critical to provide women with opportunities to assume leadership roles and participate in the formulation of sanitation-related policy. The issue of sanitation may be brought to more people's notice through women's self-help organisations and other local organisations, which can also play a significant role in influencing policy reform and keeping an eye on its implementation.

Social Media

In India, the distribution of knowledge about the need of having adequate sanitation has been significantly aided by the use of social media. The role that social media has had in bringing attention to the urgent need for the nation to improve its sanitation

- To begin, the proliferation of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube has resulted in an increase in the number of individuals who have access to information concerning initiatives linked with sanitation and hygiene. They make it possible to disseminate informational content, raise awareness about the value of cleanliness, and stimulate the development of new habits.
- The actions that have been taken in the realm of social media have been of critical importance in raising interest in and debate of sanitation issues among the general community. The #SwachhBharat hashtag, which was initially developed as part of the government's Clean India project and has now achieved broad popularity, has been a significant contributor to the success of cleanliness initiatives being run throughout

India. These sorts of campaigns are helpful for getting people enthused, for bringing them together, and for encouraging them to take action.

- People from all walks of life are able to come together on social media platforms to discuss issues related to sanitation and propose potential solutions to these issues. Individuals are now able to communicate with one another through a broad variety of online organizations, forums, and communities, all of which have the same purpose of enhancing cleanliness and sanitization.
- There is access to information that is up-to-date via social media on the efforts, successes, and challenges associated with maintaining cleanliness. Because of this transparency, there is a greater sense of trust and accountability among all of the individuals and organizations involved. It is an excellent method for government agencies and non-profit organizations working in the sanitation sector to disseminate information on the construction of new toilets, the expansion of existing facilities, and other advancements in the industry as a whole.
- Making people aware of the positive outcomes of cleanliness efforts The proliferation of social media has provided a forum through which success stories on sanitation may be discussed. It is possible that others will feel motivated or inspired to begin adopting improved sanitation practices themselves as a result of reading these experiences. People from all walks of life and different corners of the world will share their experiences in order to motivate and encourage one another to make behavioural changes, which will result in a positive domino effect.
- One potential solution to sanitation issues is to solicit original ideas from the general public via social media. Users of social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook can interact with one another in the context of forums on sites like Twitter and Facebook. This body of knowledge has the potential to be put to use in the development of novel ways, the promotion of technical advancement, and the resolution of the sanitation issues that are specific to particular communities.

It is important to note that despite the effectiveness of social media in increasing awareness about the need for better sanitation, a number of challenges still need to be overcome. Issues such as a lack of internet access, digital literacy, and language difficulties may cause social media efforts to have a smaller audience and a lower impact than they otherwise would. In order to stop the circulation of false information, it is essential to check the credibility of everything that is posted on social media. In spite of these challenges, organizations and individuals in India need to work together to raise major awareness about the need of sanitation.

Conclusion

The problems of sanitation that women in India experience are strongly established in the country's cultural standards, as well as in the gender inequality that exists within those norms. It is necessary to make coordinated efforts in order to increase access to sanitation facilities that are both safe and sanitary in order to protect the health, safety, and dignity of women. It is necessary for the government, civil society organisations, community leaders, and people to work together in order to prioritise the sanitation requirements of women, overcome cultural obstacles, and address structural deficiencies in infrastructure and legislation. India can lead the way for a future in which every woman will have the right to access sanitation facilities that maintain her health, dignity, and well-being if it empowers women, promotes gender equality, and invests in sustainable sanitation solutions. This future will be possible if India takes these steps.

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