

GENDER INEQUALITY: IN PRESENT SCENARIO

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ABSTRACT

Gender comes into play along with a number of different aspects such as sex, role expectations and mindset of concerned people. Each of these aspects plays a significant part when speaking of the different social problem encountered by men and women. Sex makes up the biological difference while the male and female inequality begins during the history as how evolution caused as to be segregated into two groups of male and female. As an outcome of these gender roles come the effect of gender inequalities which is visible in families as well as the workplace. Gender roles are mainly learned and taught by those who have raised them, namely their family in particular and the so called patriarchal society in general. Gender roles constitute the attitude and behavior that are expected of male and female in a given culture of society. Gender inequality in various ways effects the lives of women. Even today, women are treated as subordinates and are not given due freedom. Thus, an analysis of women status in present scenario in terms of the discrimination being faced by them needs to be done.

INTRODUCTION

Egregious gender inequality have made major strides since 1990, still exists globally despite of substantial national and international measures that have been taken towards gender equality. Gender inequality remains a major barrier to human development. 'Gender' is a socio-cultural term referring socially defined roles and behaviors assigned to 'males' and 'females' in a given society; whereas, the term 'sex' is a biological and physiological phenomenon which defines man and woman. Only four out of over 135 nations have achieved gender equality. Measures of gender equality include access to basic education, health and life expectancy, equality of economic opportunity, and political empowerment. Although National and international measures are at work but

they are not sufficient to minimize and eliminate gender inequality.

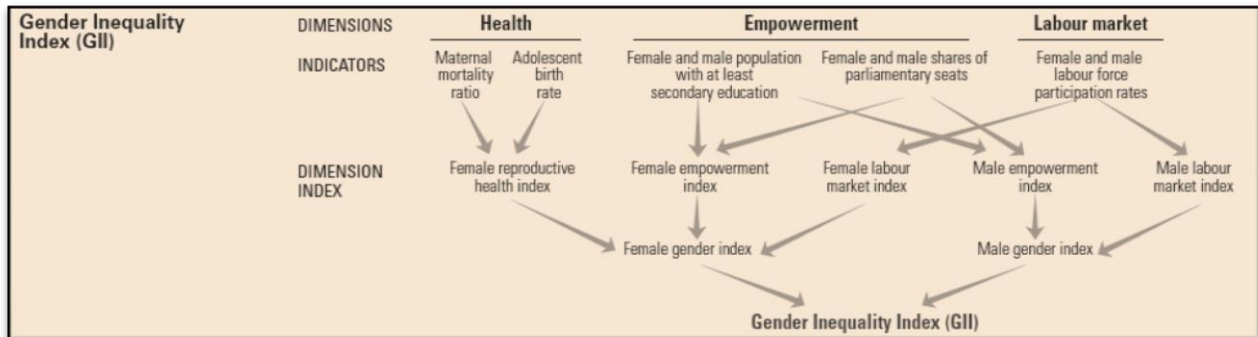
Gender inequality refers to unequal treatment or perceptions of individuals wholly or partly due to their gender. It arises from differences in socially constructed gender roles. Gender inequality stems from distinctions, whether empirically grounded or socially constructed. Gender inequalities, and its social causes, impact India's sex ratio, women's health over their lifetimes, their educational attainment, and economic conditions.

The Constitution of India ensures gender equality in its preamble as a fundamental right but also empowers the state to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favor of women by ways of legislation and policies. India has also ratified various international conventions and human rights forums to secure equal rights of women, such as ratification

of Convention on elimination of all forms of discrimination against women in 1993.

GII is an inequality index. It shows the loss in potential human development due to disparity between female and male achievements in two

dimensions, empowerment and economic status, and reflects a country's position relative to normative ideals for the key dimension of women's health.



<http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-index-gii>

Reports and studies propose that bridging gender gaps is imperative not only from an equity perspective, but also from an economic one. Gender equality is also important to national competitiveness as human talent-the skill, education and labour productivity is essential determinants of competitiveness. There are numerous studies during the last decade that have confirmed that reducing gender gap enhances productivity and economic growth. According to a new report of IMF (2015) on 'Catalyst for Change: Empowering Women and Tackling Income Inequality', eliminating gender gap could boost GDP by 5 per cent in US, 9 per cent in Japan and 27 per cent in India. Closing the gender gap promotes economic development, largely through the impact of female education on fertility, child mortality and the creation of human capital in the next generation.

CAUSES AND TYPES OF GENDER INEQUALITY IN INDIA

If we highlight ancient India, an Indian woman was in the position of high esteem and was pronounced by the word of maata (mother) or Devi (goddess) in the Vedas and Upanishads. Same as Manu Smriti,

woman was considered as a precious being and in the early Vedic age, girls were looked after with care. Then practice of polygamy deteriorated the position of woman and in the medieval period, the practices of purdha system, dowry system, and sati system came into being. But with the passage of time, the status of woman was lowered.

According to Nobel Laureate Prof. Amartya Sen (2001), there are seven types of gender inequalities at present in India are:

- 1) Mortality Inequality
- 2) Natality Inequality
- 3) Employment Inequality
- 4) Ownership Inequality
- 5) Special Opportunity Inequality
- 6) Basic-Facility Inequality
- 7) Household inequality

LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL SAFEGUARDS AGAINST GENDER INEQUALITY IN INDIA

Indian Constitution provides for positive efforts to eliminate gender inequality; the Preamble to the Constitution talks about goals of achieving social, economic and political justice to everyone and to provide equality of status and of opportunity to all its citizens. Further, women have equal right to vote in our political system. Article 14 of Indian Constitution says that the state shall not deny to any person equality before or equal protection of the law, Article 15 says that no women can be discriminated against on the ground of sex, Article 15 (3) emphasis that the state shall make special provisions for women and children and Article 16 provides equality of opportunity in matters relating to employment by the state.

In Article 39(a) emphasis that the citizens men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood, in Article 39(d) it says that the state should secure equal pay for equal work for both men and women and in Article 34 it provides that the state shall make provision for securing just and humor humane for work and for maternity relief. Moreover, the Directive Principles of State Policy also provides various provisions which are for the benefit of women and provides safeguards against discrimination.

Other than these Constitutional safeguards, various protective Legislations have also been passed by the Parliament to eliminate exploitation of women and to give them equal status in society. For instance, the Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987 was enacted to abolish and make punishable the inhuman custom of Sati; the Dowry Prohibition Act,

1961 to eliminate the practice of dowry; the Special Marriage Act, 1954 to give rightful status to married couples who marry inter-caste or inter-religion; Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Bill (introduced in Parliament in 1991, passed in 1994 to stop female infanticide and many more such Acts. Furthermore, the Parliament time to time brings out amendments to existing laws in order to give protection to women according to the changing needs of the society, for instance, Section 304-B was added to the Indian Penal Code, 1860 to make dowry-death or bride-burning a specific offence punishable with maximum punishment of life imprisonment.

So there are varied legislative safeguards and protection mechanisms for women but the ground reality is very different. Despite all these provisions women are still being treated as second rate citizens in our country; men are treating them as an object to fulfill their carnal desires; crimes against women are at alarming stage; the practice of dowry is still widely prevalent; female infanticide is a norm in our homes.

GENDER INEQUALITY IN INDIA: IMPORTANT DATA

The following table compares the population wide data for the two genders on various inequality statistical measures, according to The World Bank's Gender Statistics database for 2012.

Gender Statistics Measure	Females (India)	Males (India)
Withdrawals in a typical month, (% with an account, age 15+)	18.6	12.7
Unemployment, youth (% of labour force ages 15–24, ILO method)	10.6	9.4
Unemployment, (% of labour force, ILO method)	4	3.1
Self-employed, (% employed)	85.5	80.6
Secondary school education, pupils (%)	46	54
Secondary school education, gender of teachers (%)	41.1	58.9
Ratio to males in primary and secondary education (%)	0.98	1.0
Ratio to male youth unemployment rate (% ages 15–24, ILO method)	1.13	1.0
Primary school completion rate, (%)	96.6	96.3
Outstanding loan from banks to purchase a home, (% age 15+)	2.26	2.35
Outstanding loan from banks for health or emergencies, (% age 15+)	12.6	15.7
Lower secondary school completion rate, (%)	76.0	77.9
Loan from a financial institution in the past year, (% age 15+)	6.7	8.6
Life expectancy at birth, (years)	68	64.5
Life expectancy at age 60, (years)	18.0	15.9
Infant mortality rate, (per 1,000 live births)	44.3	43.5
Expected years of schooling	11.3	11.8
Employees in industry, (% of total labour)	20.7	26
Employees in agriculture, (% of total labour)	59.8	43
Deposits in a typical month, (% with an account, age 15+)	11.2	13.4
Cause of death, by non-communicable diseases, ages 15–34, (%)	32.3	33.0
Account at a formal financial institution, (% of each gender, age 15+)	26.5	43.7

In India Over the years, violence against women in various forms has reached epic proportions. An estimated 30 to 70 million girls are “missing” in India since 1950, i.e., they don’t make it out of the birth canal. In 2011, the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) on gender attitudes showed that 68 per cent of the Indian men surveyed (n=810) agreed that women should tolerate violence

to keep their families together, while 65 per cent believed that sometimes a woman deserves to be beaten; 37 per cent of men (n=929) had physically assaulted their intimate partner at least once; 24 per cent had committed an act of sexual violence against someone in society and 20 per cent had committed sexual violence against their partners. The most interesting finding from the Trust Law study was this

one-2 per cent of those surveyed knew of the laws pertaining to violence against women. What does this figure tell us about what is happening in India to women?

Recently in India, a 20-year-old Santhal tribal woman was raped by 12 men in West Bengal on the orders of a kangaroo court called a salishi sabha. Her crime was to have fallen in love with a man outside her community. The couple were tied up and “tried” and asked to pay Rs.25,000 as payment. The man was able to pay but the woman could not. The headman reportedly decreed that she could be “enjoyed” by several men and that they could “have fun” with her.

GLOBAL RANKINGS

India's Global Rank on various Gender Inequality Indices. These indices are controversial.

Various groups have ranked gender inequalities around the world. For example, the World Economic Forum publishes a Global Gender Gap Index score for each nation every year. The index focuses not on empowerment of women, but on the relative gap between men and women in four fundamental categories – economic participation, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment. It includes measures such as estimated sex selective abortion, number of years the nation had a female head of state, female to male literacy rate, estimated income ratio of female to male in the nation, and several other relative gender statistic measures. It does not include factors such as crime rates against women versus men, domestic violence, honor killings or such factors. Where data is unavailable or difficult to collect, World Economic Forum uses old data or makes a best estimate to calculate the nation's Global Gap Index (GGI).

Indicator	India's Global Rank (year)	Source
GII: Gender Inequality Index	132/148 (2012)	United Nations Development Program (UNDP)
GGI: Gender Gap Index	101/136 (2013)	World Economic Forum (WEF)
SGI: Social Institutions and Gender Index	56/86 (2012)	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

According to the Global Gender Gap Report released by the World Economic Forum (WEF) in 2011, India was ranked 113 on the Gender Gap Index (GGI) among 135 countries polled. Since then, India has improved its rankings on the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index (GGI) to 105/136 in 2013. When broken down into components of the GGI, India performs well on political empowerment, but is scored to be as bad as China on sex selective abortion. India also scores poorly on overall female to male literacy and health rankings. India with a 2013 ranking of 101 had an overall score of 0.6551, while Iceland, the nation that topped the list, had an overall score of 0.8731 (no gender gap would yield a score of 1.0).

Alternate measures include OECD's Social Institutions Gender Index (SIGI), which ranked India at 56th out of 86 in 2012, which was an improvement from its 2009 rank of 96th out of 102. The SIGI is a measure of discriminatory social institutions that are drivers of inequalities, rather than the unequal outcomes themselves. Similarly, UNDP has published Gender Inequality Index and ranked India at 132 out of 148 countries.

HOW WE CAN ELIMINATE GENDER INEQUALITY

The list of legislations as well as types of discriminations or inequalities may go on but the real change will only come when the mentality of men will change; when the male species of human beings would start treating women as equal and not subordinate or weaker to them. In fact not only men but women also need to change their mindset as through cultural conditioning they have also become part of the same exploitative system of patriarchy and are playing a supportive role in furthering men's agenda of dominating women.

Gender Inequality eradicate by:

1. Offering high level education
2. Social integration

3. Increasing women employment
4. Involving them in active politics and social activities
5. Arranging social protection programmes
6. Generating awareness among parents
7. Giving scholarships to girls
8. Spreading awareness against child abuse and violence
9. Stopping sex identification and abortions
10. Social welfare developments by politicians

Therefore, what is needed is the movement for Women's empowerment where women can become economically independent and self-reliant; where they can fight their own fears and go out in the world fearless; where they can snatch their rights from the clutches of men and they don't have to ask for them; where women have good education, good career, ownership of property and above all where they have freedom of choice and also the freedom to make their own decisions without the bondages of age old saying of Manu.

In the light of above discussion it can be concluded that countries like India has a long way to go to call itself a 'gender neutral' country. However, no simple and direct solutions are available to minimize gender inequality as gaps are rooted in norms, cultural and social practices and are further consolidated by poor infrastructure and service delivery. Possibly, the change will come only with awareness, cultural/fundamental restructuring, mindset shifting and through widening the access to public service delivery without discrimination on gender basis. Government authorities, donor community, private sector and civil society should come together to act for strengthening the gender gap and accountability should be fixed for the aid they provide.

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