

A STUDY OF GENDER INEQUALITY IN INDIA

“Gender in the 21st Century Fighting Dangerous Stereotypes”

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Abstract:

This study considers the gender inequality that exists among every region, social class and prevents the growth of Indian economy from improving the lives of Indian people. The reality of gender inequality in India is very complex and diversified, because it exists in every field like education, employment opportunities, income, health, cultural issues, social issues, economic issues etc. An attempt has been made to find out those factors which are responsible for this problem in India. So, this paper highlights the multi-dimensional context of gender inequalities prevalent in India. Overall, the study indicates the inequality in economic, social, cultural and legal biasness which are of a great challenge for policy-makers and social scientists to establish proper equality in the entire social field. The researchers have tried to suggest some relevant strategies and policies implication for reducing this gender inequality and to promote the dignified position for Indian women.

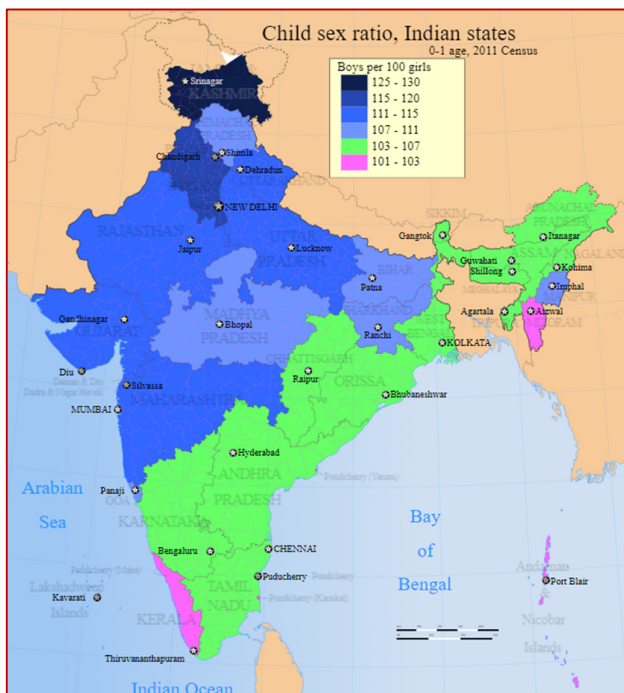
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After the World War-II, in the post modernization era, one of the issues which had attracted the attention of the policy makers and social scientists was gender issues and concerns. Gender issues mean the discussion on both men and women, though women who suffer from gender inequality. From all gender issues, gender inequality is the most prevalent in India. Consideration of gender inequality is now common in Government, Non-Government organizations, and in the politics in India. The policy makers are strongly believed that a positive commitment to gender equality and equity will strengthen every area of action to reduce poverty because women can bring new energy and new sights. A lot of debates are going on women and their development since last few decades. Thus, several national and international organizations are trying to promote the advancement of women & their full participation in developmental process & trying to eliminate all forms of inequality

against women. The importance of feminism has been steadily growing and gaining intellectual legitimacy.

Introduction:

Gender inequality in India refers to health, education, economic and political inequalities between men and women in India. Various international gender inequality indices rank India differently on each of these factors, as well as on a composite basis, and these indices are controversial. Gender inequalities, and their social causes, impact India's sex ratio, women's health over their lifetimes, their educational attainment, and even the economic conditions too. It also prevents the institution of equal rape laws for men. Gender inequality in India is a



multifaceted issue that primarily concerns men, that places men at a disadvantage, or that it affects each gender equally. However, when India's population is examined as a whole, women are at a disadvantage in several important ways. Although the constitution of India grants men and women equal rights, gender disparities remain.

Research shows gender discrimination mostly in favor of men in many realms including the workplace. Discrimination affects many aspects in the lives of

women from career development and progress to mental health disorders. While Indian laws on rape, dowry and adultery have women's safety at heart, these highly discriminatory practices are still taking place at an alarming rate, affecting the lives of many today.

Gender Inequality:

Gender Inequality means disparity between men and women in different social, economic & political, cultural and legal aspects. This problem is simply known as gender biasness, which in simple term means the gender stratification or making difference a male or a female. According to the United Nations Development Programs Human Development Report (2013), India ranks 132 out of 187 countries on the gender inequality

index-lower than Pakistan (123). The report states that all countries in South Asia, with the exception of Afghanistan, were a better place for women than India, with Sri Lanka (75) topping them all.

History of Gender Inequality:

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.

After the development of science and technology, female feticides is being practiced by large number of people. This has also led to a drop in the female ratio. The Indian census 2011 state wise shows that Kerala represent the highest sex ratio with 1084 females per 1000 males while Haryana represents the lowest sex ratio with just 877 women per 1000 males. Then the dowry became popular and it was the starting period of female infanticide practices in few areas.

In India, a sex-selection phenomenon has been in place since the 1980s, with men born during this period now at marriageable age. Then the urbanization since the 1990s where a lot of families and men have moved to cities to look for work. People are much wealthier but at the same time there's pressure to produce sons as an heir, so educated, wealthy families are now more likely to have sex selection. These entire factors are coming to play and creating this toxic mixture, which has turned violence against women into a bigger issue today.

The origin of the gender inequality has been always the male dominance. At least in India, a woman still needs the anchor of a husband and a family. Their dominating nature has led women to walk with their head down. It was all practiced from the beginning and is followed till date. In the case of a woman's reservation in parliament, the opposing parties believe that women are born to do household tasks and manage children and family

Gender Statistics:

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

Table-1
Gender Statistics Measure

Gender Statistics Measure	Females (INDIA)	Male (INDIA)
Account at a formal financial institution, (% of each gender, age 15+)	26.5	43.7
Cause of death, by non-communicable diseases, ages 15–34, (%)	32.3	33.0
Deposits in a typical month, (% with an account, age 15+)	11.2	13.4
Employees in agriculture, (% of total labour)	59.8	43
Employees in industry, (% of total labour)	20.7	26
Expected years of schooling	11.3	11.8
Infant mortality rate, (per 1,000 live births)	44.3	43.5
Life expectancy at age 60, (years)	18.0	15.9
Life expectancy at birth, (years)	68.0	64.5
Loan from a financial institution in the past year, (% age 15+)	6.7	8.6
Lower secondary school completion rate, (%)	76.0	77.9
Outstanding loan from banks for health or emergencies, (% age 15+)	12.6	15.7
Outstanding loan from banks to purchase a home, (% age 15+)	2.26	2.35
Primary school completion rate, (%)	96.6	96.3
Ratio of females to males in primary and secondary education (%)	0.98	1.0
Ratio of females to males youth unemployment rate (% ages 15–24, ILO method)	1.13	1.0
Secondary school education, gender of teachers (%)	41.1	58.9
Secondary school education, pupils (%)	46	54
Self-employed, (% employed)	85.5	80.6
Unemployment, (% of labour force, ILO method)	4	3.1
Unemployment, youth (% of labour force ages 15–24, ILO method)	10.6	9.4
Withdrawals in a typical month, (% with an account, age 15+)	18.6	12.7

Source: World Bank's Gender Statistics database

Review of Literature:

1. **Jayachandran, S. (2014)**, has presented the roots of gender inequality in developing countries. This paper also discussed the several mechanisms through which the economic development could improve the relative outcomes of women & gender gaps can be reduced as country grows.
2. **Dunn, D. (1998)**, has focused on the situation of women in scheduled castes and tribes groups which are considered to as „weaker sections of people“ and granted special safeguards and concessions under the Indian Constituents. This paper represented a descriptive picture of scheduled caste and tribe women’s status in

Indian society and also suggested that socio-economic development plays an important role to reduce the disadvantage of scheduled group women.

3. **Thomas, R.E. (2013)**, has highlighted his paper with the state of gender based inequality in the modern India. It has presented gender inequality with the help of some facts & figures and representing the inequality practiced in India & its comparison with other Asian & Western countries.
4. **Chaudhary, &Sarkar, D. (2012)**, has tried to find out some factors i.e. educational status, work participation, level of gender inequality, of the Cooch Behar, a district of West-Bengal, India and suggested some relevant strategies implication for reducing this gender inequality to promote the deprived women of this district.
5. **Raju, E. (2014)**, has examined the gender discrimination in India on the basis of demographic, social, economic and political context. The paper has broadly discussed the issue of gender inequality, women empowerment& reproductive health among women of India. Some measures under taken the International and national organizations were also discussed in this paper.

Objective of the Study:

1. To identify the factors which are responsible for gender inequality.
2. To give suggestions to reduce gender inequality.

Research Methodology:

The present study is descriptive and analytical in nature. It is based on secondary data which is collected from published data in many website and other research papers, journals, books, newspapers etc.

Global rankings of India:

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 the Gender Inequality Index and ranked India at 132 out of 148 countries.

Factors behind Growing Gender Inequality:

Here are so many factors which are fully responsible for gender inequality in India. These factors are as follows:

ECONOMIC FACTOR

1. **Labor participation:** There is wage inequality between man and woman in India. A substantial number of women enter the labor market after thirties, generally after completion of their reproductive roles of child bearing and rearing.
2. **Access to credit:** There are large disparities between men and women in terms of access to banking services. Women often lack collateral for bank loans due to low levels of property ownership and micro-credit schemes have come under scrutiny for coercive lending practices.
3. **Occupational inequality:** Women are not allowed to have combat roles in military services. Permanent commission could not be granted to female officers because they have neither been trained for command nor have been given the responsibility in India.
4. **Property Rights:** Although women have equal rights under the law to own property and receive equal inheritance rights, yet in practice, women are at a disadvantage. The Hindu Succession Act of 2005 provides equal inheritance rights to ancestral and jointly owned property, the law is weakly enforced.
5. **Women's inequality in proper inheritance:** Women are insignificantly deprived of their proper inheritance culturally and religiously as well. The religious constitution doesn't give women equal inheritance; there is a segregation of giving the property to women as they will not be given the property as men can have. Though Islamic constitution permits women having at least half of the property as man, society is reluctant to give the desired property to women let alone giving the equal share.

SOCIAL FACTOR

1. **Education:** The female literacy rate in India is lower than the male literacy rate. According to census of India 2011, literacy rate of female is 65.46% compared to males which are 82.14%.
2. **Health:** On health issue, the gender inequality between women's and men's life expectancy and women live compared to men in good health because of lots of violence, disease, or other relevant factors.
3. **Patriarchal Society:** Most of India has strong patriarchal custom, where men hold authority over female family members and inherit property & title. It is the custom where inheritance passes from father to son, women move in with the husband & his family upon marriage & marriages include a bride price or dowry.
4. **Dowry:** The dowry system in India contributes to gender inequalities by influencing the perception that girls are a burden on families. Such belief limits the resources invested by parents in their girls and limit her bargaining power within the family.
5. **Gender-based violence:** Gender-based violence such as rape, sexual assault, insult to modesty, kidnapping, abduction, cruelty by intimate partner or relatives, importation or trafficking of girls, persecution for dowry, indecency and all other crimes are practiced on women. These crimes show the high degree of inequality in India.

CULTURAL FACTORS

1. **Old age support from sons:** A key factor driving gender inequality is the preference for sons, as they are deemed more useful than girls. They are supposed to support the old age security of their parents.
2. **Patrilineality system:** It is a common kinship system in which an individual's family membership derives from and is traced through his or her father's lineage. It generally involves the inheritance of property, names, or titles by persons related through one's male kin.
3. **Role of sons in religious rituals:** Another factor is that of religious practices, which can only be performed by males for their parents' afterlife. Sons are often the only person entitled to performing funeral rights for their parents.
4. **Son Preference:** Boys are given the exclusive rights to inherit the family name and properties and they are viewed as additional status for their family. Moreover, the prospect of parents losing daughters to the husband's family and expensive dowry

of daughters further discourages parents from having daughters. There is a strong belief that daughter is a liability.

LEGAL & POLITICAL FACTORS

According to the Constitution of India, both men and women are equal in the eyes of the laws and hence they have equal rights. But, unfortunately, legal & political bias has prevented the law to attain the success of equality in gender. This is another reason for inequality in gender.

Causes of Gender Inequality in India:

Gender inequality has been a crucial social issue in India for centuries. Census 2011 shows the child sex ratio among children of 0-6 years to be 918 girls for every 1000 boys in India. This statistic speaks for itself and demands urgent and efficient solutions to address the cause of gender inequalities.

The discrimination starts even before the girl child is born. In many instances, she is prevented from being born. The girl child is considered a burden. She is often deprived of the basic rights and equal opportunities to lead a wholesome childhood and adult life. According to the 2011 Census, of the total child population in India, girls account for 48%, many of whom are engaged in child labor, child trafficking and child marriage.

The future of innumerable girls looks grim, as shown by the following statistics:

1. 12.15 million Children are married in India - 8.9 million are girls; married girls are three times the number of boys. (Census 2011).
2. 51% of all trafficking victims were children, of which more than 80% were girls. (NCRB 2018).
3. There are 223 million child brides in India; 102 million were married before turning 15. (UNICEF).

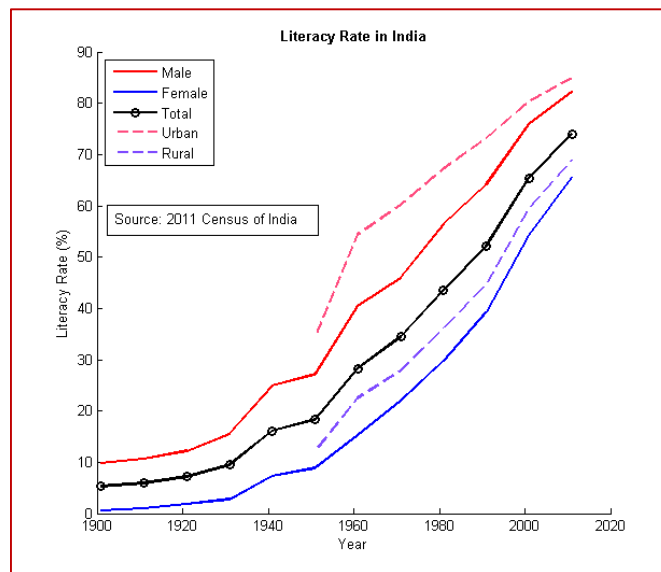
Disparities in Education:

Education is not equally attained by Indian women. Although literacy rates are increasing, the female literacy rate lags behind the male literacy rate. Literacy for females stands at 65.46%, compared to 82.14% for males. An underlying factor for such low literacy rates are parents' perceptions that education for girls are a waste of resources as their daughters would eventually live with their husbands' families. Thus, there is a strong belief that due to

their traditional duty and role as housewives, daughters would not benefit directly from the education investment.

Programs like Ashram schools for tribes, programs for low literacy districts, and scholarships to promote higher education like the Pre-Matric and Post-Matric Scholarship, Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship, etc. have been recently installed to promote education. Traditional beliefs regarding women's education, especially in rural and tribal communities in India prevent women from taking advantage of these resources.

For women in rural or tribal communities the educational disparities are even larger. In 2011, for the state of Jharkhand, male scheduled tribes (STs) had a literacy rate of around 68% whereas female STs had a literacy rate of around 46%. Tribal women lack access to educational institutions and are



isolated from urban society, which restrict them from obtaining economic opportunities and mobility. Tribal women in India are often unskilled and are perceived by general society as chaotic and willing to perform sexual intercourse. As a result, tribal women who attempt to integrate within rural or urban societies end up as sexual workers or take up physical manual labor jobs.

The Need for Awareness:

Women are treated as second-class citizens in India, and the situation is getting worse. The country's record on gender equality is dismal. According to a report by the World Economic Forum (WEF), India ranked 134th out of 145 countries for gender parity in 2018, down from 130th in 2017. Without a doubt, this is a wake-up call for all of us. We all have to join hands and help women overcome these discrimination crises. We need to create awareness among Indian women about their legal rights. There are various organisations that work towards creating awareness about women's rights and equality, like Care India. We need to support such organisations vigorously working to provide women with equal opportunities and rights. Additionally, we need to bring about a change in the mind-set of people, especially men,

who still believe that women are inferior to them. We need to inject the concept of women's empowerment into everybody's minds. We have built a result-oriented process of enhancing and promoting the social, political and economic status of women. Majorly, we have to work on five main concerns:

- Give women access to education just like men.
- Give women opportunities to be in power and achieve economic success.
- Stop the violence and sexual assault against women.
- End child marriages.
- Aware women about women's rights In India.

Analysis & Interpretation:

From the above factors, we can interpret that economic, social, cultural, legal and political factors are responsible for gender inequality in India. India needs to deactivate the gender inequality. The needs of the day are trends where girls are able not only to break out of the culturally determined patterns of employment but also to offer advice about career possibilities that looks beyond the traditional list of jobs. It is surprising that in spite of so many laws, women still continue to live under stress and strain. To ensure equality of status for our women we still have miles to go. Man and Woman are like two wheels of a carriage. The life of one without the other is incomplete.

Steps opted to reduce Gender Inequality in India:

Since freedom for India, we had put large steps in addressing gender disparities, especially in the fields of political interference, schooling, and prison rights. Policies and prison reforms to address gender inequalities had been pursued with the aid of the authorities of India. For example, the Constitution of India consists of a clause making sure the proper of equality and freedom from sexual discrimination. India is witness to the Convention for the removal of all sectors of prejudice towards Women.

The Indian Constitution assures gender equality in its preamble as a fundamental proper. Government has adopted many measures of fine favouritism of women via a number of legislation and policy reforms. India has additionally ratified numerous worldwide conventions and human rights forums to comfy same rights of girls, which includes ratification of Convention on elimination of all styles of prejudice in opposition to women in 1993.

Women had been locating region in local governance forms, overcoming gender disparities. Over 1,000,000 girls were elected to local panchayats as an outcome of 1993 change to the Indian Constitution requiring that 1/3rd of the elected seats to the neighbourhood governing our bodies be settled for women

Suggestions:

There is a solution of every problem. For reducing gender inequality in India, we should offer high level of education to girls and increase women empowerment. We should also give them opportunity in active politics & social activities so that social integration in Indian society can be made. Government should make policies & strategies regarding stopping the sex identification & abortions. In context of above NGOs can also play an important role to eradicate Gender Inequality. Politicians should frame out policies for increasing social welfare development regarding this issue. The Campaign of our Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi “**Beti Bachao Beti Padhao**” can be successful, when the mind-set of Indian society will be changed towards women.

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