

## **Gender Inequality in Indian Scenario: Issues, Challenges and Initiatives**

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### **Abstract**

Gender Stereotype is a long-term problem in our society and females are discriminated against in various ways in India, although legally women have equal rights. So, there is a great need to focus the society on gender issues so that there would be no discrimination based on gender. Women empowerment through gender stereotypes is one of the key factors to unlock the potential of women. This paper elaborates strategies that should be adopted in our society to promote gender equality. As we know “Power of women as the greatest potential for the growth of the economy”. To achieve the empowerment of all women and girls will establish policies and institutions to build a society where men and women support each other. Many activities need to focus where we lack gender responsive indicators and sex disaggregated baseline data and having limited monitoring information. There should be study on some constraints to assess possible differences in participation, benefits and impact between men and women.

**Key Words:** Gender inequality, Women, Empowerment, Stereotype, Gender.

### **Introduction**

“One is not born, but becomes a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society: it is civilization that produces this creature, intermediate between, male and eunuch, which is described as feminine. Only the mediation of someone else can establish an individual as another”-**De Beauvoir (1949) says on gender inequality**

**Gender:** It refers to social attributes that are learned or acquired during socialisation as a member of given the community. Gender is therefore an acquired social aspects and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men. These opportunities, attributes, and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man, a girl or a boy, in a given context. They are time-specific and changeable. In most societies there are differences and inequalities between women and men in responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, as well as decision-making opportunities.

**Gender Analysis:** A critical analysis of how differences in gender roles, activities, needs, opportunities and rights affect men, women, boys and girls in certain situations or contexts. Gender inspection examines the relationships between females and males and their access to and control of resources and the constraints they face relative to each other. A gender analysis should be integrated into all sector assessments or situational analyses to ensure that gender-based injustices and inequalities are not intensified by interventions, and that where possible, greater equality and justice in gender relations are promoted.

*“Aurateinkamkartihain*

*to*

*purushonkolagatahaikiunkishaankamhojaygiaurparivarkimaryadakhathmhojayega*

**Gender Equality:** When women and men, girls and boys enjoy the same status in society; have the same entitlements to all human rights; enjoy the same level of respect in the community; can take advantage of the same opportunities to make choices about their lives; and have the same amount of power to shape the outcomes of these choices. It does not mean that women and men, or girls and boys are the same. When there is gender inequality, it is women and girls that are more likely to be disadvantaged and depreciated; but we should not ignore the negative impact that gender inequality can have on men as well.

**Women’s Empowerment: Women across the world have fought legal battles for equality and justice. Against all odds they have emerged triumphant on more than one occasion.** It consists process of acquiring the skills to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability has previously been denied. Women’s empowerment has five components, including both civil and political as well as cultural, economic and social dimensions: (i) women’s sense of self-worth; (ii) their right to have and to determine choices; (iii) their right to have access to opportunities and resources; (iv) their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; (v) and their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally.

Gender equality and the empowerment of women lie at the heart of the Sustainable Development Goals, and they are vital to fully realizing the rights and potential of all persons. The fundamental right to the highest attainable standard of life, including mental, physical and social well-being has been recognized in many regional, global, and national declarations and charters. Inequalities between men and women present themselves in all areas of development. Most common inequalities are in: economic development, health and education, violence against women, participation in public life and policymaking and social attitudes and gender stereotyping. In the education sector, the inequalities observed are: Around 285 million Indian women cannot read or write and they form the world’s largest number of unlettered women. Female literacy is 53.7%, and there are wide disparities within states. Enrolment and retention of girls in education is poor and the average years of schooling for girls is only 1.2 years as against 3.5 years for boys. Girls miss school because they have to look after siblings. A look at the economic development sector indicates that, official data does not reflect the amount of work that women actually do to enable their families to survive, collecting fuel, fodder or water, keeping poultry, working as unpaid labour on family farms. One-third of agricultural workers are women and many crops depend on extensive labour provided by agricultural labour, yet when it comes to wages, on an average, their wages are 30% lower than men’s wages. Women also work in home-based industries, bidi and agarbatti-rolling,

bangle-making, weaving, etc. without social security benefits and are lowly paid for this informal work which forms an important part of the family's income. The present study analyses the issues, challenges and initiatives taken by the government of India for removing gender inequality. The Twelfth Plan aims to increase women's employability in the formal sector as well as their asset base. It aims to improve the conditions of self-employed women with a focus on women's workforce participation particularly in secondary and tertiary sectors, reaching out to women in agriculture and manufacturing, financial inclusion, and extending land and property rights to women. One of the major barriers affecting women's participation in the workforce is the lack of skills. The Twelfth Plan foretells a major scaling up of skill development to promote skill development of women from traditional skills to emerging skills, which help women break the gender stereotypes and move into employment requiring higher skill sets.

### **Theory and Evidence related to gender inequality:**

A lot of empirical studies have been done to find gender inequality in different sectors. The main review from the literature, which are discussed in detail as given below:

- **Mbale, Glayds Tamela and Madalitso, K. Banja (2021) worked on -Politics of gender in sports administration and leadership in Zambia.** Their study sets out to find out the reasons for the low rate of female involvement in sports administration and leadership in Zambia. This involved finding out roles played by females in administration and leadership of sports, difficulties that they face and how they mitigate the challenges faced. Purposive sampling involved 13 coaches, 8 physical educators, and 20 sports administrators. Semi-structured interviews and documentary studies were used to collect data from participants. Findings indicate that the sports industry was male-dominated. Female sports leaders faced challenges including gender stereotyping, lack of education and other capacity building opportunities and lack of gender sensitive policies that impeded women from taking up administrative and leadership roles.
- **Mavhuthu Musetsho, Nicoleta Isac and Cosmin Dobrin (2021) surveyed on-Gender Inequalities in the Workplace: Case Study of South Africa,** worked to review whether there has been any progress after implementing these legislative mechanisms, this paper empirically analyses the advancement of gender equality in the South African workplace as of 2020. It also provides an overview of different legislative mechanisms implemented by the government of South Africa as an endeavour to achieve gender equality in the workplace and equal opportunities for all regardless of gender.
- **Rosa Belen Castro Nunez, Pablo Bandeira and Rosa Santero Sanchez (2020) research on -Social Economy, Gender Equality at Work and the 2030 Agenda: Theory and Evidence from Spain-**The goal of this paper is to analyse the specific contribution of SE entities to the reduction of gender inequalities in the labour market. We conduct an impact analysis with quasi-experimental counterfactual techniques, in which we compare one experimental group (the SE) with a control group (profit-seeking firms) using labour data from Spain for the period 2008–2017. The results indicate that social economy entities significantly contribute to the achievement of SDGs, showing higher female participation, more stable jobs, and a lower degree of the glass-ceiling phenomenon.
- **K. I. Uresha , S.G. Obeyesekere (2020) research on- Role of Employee Gender on Customer Delight in the Sri Lankan Tourism Industry.** Their systematic empirical study was

carried out to identify the effect of employee gender on customer delight to address the contextual and empirical gap and intellectual curiosity of authors. The study is aimed at discussing whether there is a significant difference in service provided by male and female employees which affects customer delight. Nature of the study is analytical, and the unit of analysis was individual customers while the time horizon was cross sectional. Survey method was utilized in the study where a self-administered questionnaire was used to gather primary data. A sample of 84 customers were considered utilizing a convenient sampling method. Major findings of the study reveal that there's a high preference of Sri Lankan customers to be served by female employees in the Tourism industry yet, there is no significant difference between the service provided by male and female employees on customer delight.

- **Damiano Uccheddu, Anne H Gauthier, Nardi Steverink and Tom Emery (2019)** worked on-**Gender and Socioeconomic Inequalities in Health at Older Ages Across Different European Welfare Clusters: Evidence from SHARE Data, 2004-2015**. This study takes a comparative approach to assess whether the association between socioeconomic status (SES) and health in later life differs by gender in a sample of individuals aged 50 and above living in nine European countries. They apply linear hybrid regression models using panel data (50,459 observations from 13,955 respondents) from five waves of Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe between the years 2004-2015. SES measures included education, income and wealth.

- **Armin Falk and Johannes Hermle (2018) research on- Relationship of Gender Differences in Preferences to Economic Development and Gender Equality**, was examined in a global investigation of gender differences in six fundamental preferences. Their data consist of 80,000 individuals in 76 representative country samples with measures on willingness to take risks, patience, altruism, positive and negative reciprocity as well as trust. Gender differences in preferences were positively related to economic development and gender equality.

- **Devinder S Hooda (2021) research on – Gender inequality in India: Status and Determinants**, done their study on underline determinants of women inadequacy across basic indicators of development. Though there are several other measures too for ascertaining the degree of gender inequalities but as per the need of this study, the indicators such as access to education, health, economic participation, and potency of decisions making among the marginalised groups are being analysed. The level of disproportions in these parametric framework replicates all those basic areas of propensities inadequacy that have an adverse effect on women empowerment, country's productivity, distribution, efficiency and economic growth.

- **Alexander Durai Raj and K.S. Shoba Jasmin (2018) worked on-Gender inequality in India: An Analysis**. Their study considers the gender difference that exists among each region, class and prevents the expansion of Indian economy from up the lives of Indian folks. the truth of gender difference in India is extremely advanced and heterogenous, as a result of it exists in each field like education, employment opportunities, income, health, cultural problems, social problems, economic issues etc. an effort has been created to seek out those factors that square measure to blame for this problem in India. So, this paper highlights the multi-dimensional context of gender inequalities prevalent in India. Overall, the study indicates the difference in economic, social, cultural and legal biases that square measure of an excellent challenge for policy-makers and social scientists to ascertain proper equality within the entire social field. The researchers have tried to

counsel some relevant strategies and policies implication for reducing this gender difference and to market the dignified position for Indian ladies

- **Vinay. Ch (2017) worked on -Gender inequality in Indian society and role of Women's education in removing gender inequality.** They have done their study on gender inequality in Indian society. Gender is a function of power relationship between men and women where men are considered superior to women in Indian society. Traditionally women are considered as weaker section and kept in a subordinate position to men. The level of discrimination differs from society to society, community to community; it depends upon the development stage of a particular society or nation. Patriarchy system is the root cause of gender inequality.

- **Prerona Bura Gohain (2016) research on-Gender Inequality and Development in Indian Scenario: Consequences, Causes, Challenges and Cures.** Their paper is an attempt to analyse the role of gender inequality in India, with specific focus on issues that might be expected to be the most critical for overall development of the country.

- **Ratika Sharma (2015) done their study on-Gender inequality in India: Causes and Remedies.** Her study will be using secondary data from newspapers and various authentic organizations as base of analysis. The paper will investigate various aspects of gender inequality prevail in India. The paper will also suggest some remedies for the upliftment of status of women in society.

- **Objective of the study:**

1. To study the key factors related to gender inequality.
2. To analyse different factors which are responsible for gender inequality.
3. To assess various initiatives taken by the government of India.

- **Analysis and Interpretation:**

This paper is based on secondary data research. This involves data assimilation from different studies, that is, using available research material instead of creating a new pool of data using primary research methods. This study includes data collection through the internet, libraries, survey report, archive and organizational reports

In this study, we also collect information about each subject's perceptions of their own and their partner's task performance, as well as their attitudes towards men and women generally. This paper contains different key issues related to gender inequality and their impact on social, economic and political growth of the economy. The study also evaluates whether the scope conditions of the paper were met and whether the gender mistake manipulation was successful.

**Key factors and challenges with respect to Gender Inequality:**

Gender inequality has been a historical worldwide problem, a human invention and based on gender assumptions. It is linked to kinship rules rooted in culture. Equality between women and men that organizes human social life, human relations, as well as promotes subordination of women in a form of social strata. There is a need to focus on the socio-cultural influences that promote gender inequalities In India, cultural influences favour the preference for sons for reasons related to affinity, lineage, inheritance, identity, status, and economic security. These choices cut across class and status lines, and it discriminates against girls. In extreme cases, the discrimination takes the form of homicides where families kill daughters or daughters-in-law who fail to conform to gender

expectations about marriage and sexuality. When a woman does not conform to expected masculinity. She is shamed and humiliated because it impacts both her and her family's honor, and perhaps her ability to marry. The causes of gender inequalities are complex, but a number of cultural factors in India can explain how son preference, a key driver of daughter neglect, is so prevalent.

### **Maternal system**

This is a social system of privilege in which men are the primary authority figures, occupying roles of political leadership, moral authority, control of property, and authority over women and children. Most of India, with some exceptions, has strong patriarchal and protective customs, where men hold authority over female family members and inherit family property and title. Examples of patriarchy in India include prevailing customs where inheritance passes from father to son, women move in with the husband and his family upon marriage, and marriages include a bride price or dowry.

### **Son preference**

A key factor driving gender inequality is the preference for sons, as they are deemed more useful than girls. Boys are given the exclusive rights to inherit the family name and properties and they are viewed as additional status for their family. In a survey-based study of 1990s data, He found that sons are believed to have a higher economic utility as they can provide additional labour in agriculture. Another factor is that of religious practices, which can only be performed by males for their parents' afterlife. All these factors make sons more desirable. Moreover, the prospect of parents 'losing' daughters to the husband's family and the expensive dowry of daughters further discourages parents from having daughters. Additionally, sons are often the only person entitled to performing funeral rites for their parents. In turn, emotional support and old age security were the main reasons for daughter preference.

### **Prejudice**

While women express a strong preference for having at least one son, the evidence of discrimination against girls after they are born is mixed. A study of 1990s survey data by scholars found less evidence of systematic discrimination in feeding practices between young boys and girls, or gender-based nutritional discrimination in India. In impoverished families, these scholars found that daughters face discrimination in the medical treatment of illnesses and in the administration of vaccinations against serious childhood diseases. These practices were a cause of health and survival inequality for girls. While gender discrimination is a universal phenomenon in poor nations, a 2005 UN study found that social norms-based gender discrimination leads to gender inequality in India.

### **Endowment Gift**

In India, Alms is the payment in cash or some kind of gift given to the bridegroom's family along with the bride. The practice is widespread across geographic regions, class and religions. The dowry system in India contributes to gender inequalities by influencing the perception that girls are a burden on families. Such beliefs limit the resources invested by parents in their girls and limits her bargaining power within the family. Parents save gold for dowry for their daughters since their birth but do not invest so they could earn gold medals.

## **Nuptials**

Men and women have equal rights within marriage under Indian law, with the exception of all men who are allowed to unilaterally divorce their wife. The legal minimum age for marriage is 18 for women and 21 for men, except for those Indians whose religion is Islam for whom child marriage remains legal under India's Mohammedan personal laws. Early age marriage is one of the detriments to empowerment of women

## **Political and legal reforms**

Since its independence, India has made significant strides in addressing gender inequalities, especially in the areas of political participation, education, and legal rights. Policies and legal reforms to address gender inequalities have been pursued by the government of India. For instance, the Constitution of India contains a clause guaranteeing the right of equality and freedom from sexual discrimination. India is also signatory to the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The government maintains some reservations about interfering in the personal affairs of any community without the community's initiative and consent.

- **Analytical studies related to gender gap:**

Various Articles of the Constitution of India attempt to ensure that there is no generality of gender pay gap. Specific legislations also address gender pay gap. These articles of the Constitution are as follows:

Article 14: Men and women to have equal rights and opportunities in the political, economic, and social spheres.

Article 15(1): Prohibits discrimination against any citizen on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex etc.

Article 15(3): Special provision enabling the State to make affirmative discriminations in favour of women.

Article 16: Equality of opportunities in matters of public appointments for all citizens.

Article 39(a): The State shall direct its policy towards securing all citizens, men and women, equally, the right to means of livelihood.

Article 39(d): Equal pay for equal work for both men and women.

Article 42: The State to make provision for ensuring just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief.

Studies have shown that even today, 2.3 crore girls drop out of school at the onset of their periods and 71% of adolescent girls in India remain unaware of menstruation till they get their first period. Adding to the challenges, the global pandemic has impacted 74 crore schoolgirls, and could severely affect their return to school, according to UNESCO. For us to recover from the ramifications of the pandemic, we need to amplify women's voices to further align with human rights. Education is not just a pathway towards a job and a career, but a powerful tool which can create ripples of confidence, zeal, and influence within society.

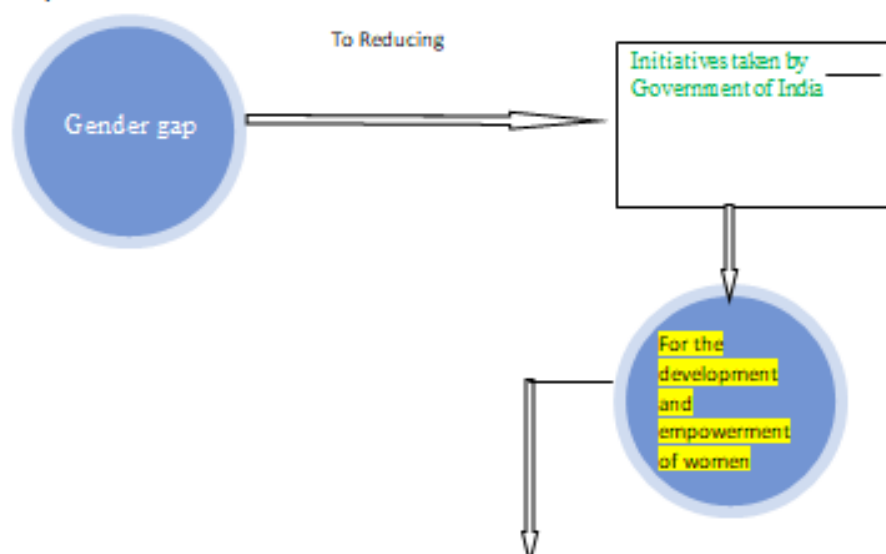
In 2021, Whisper launched the second edition of its flagship program to keep girls in campaign and partnered with UNESCO to shed light on the impact of 2.3 Crore girls dropping out of school - leading to 2.3 Crore unfulfilled dreams - due to lack of period education and protection.

The Global Gender Gap Index was first introduced by the World Economic Forum in 2006 as a framework for capturing the magnitude of gender-based disparities and tracking their progress over time. The Global Gender Gap Report, 2013, ranks India at 101 among 136 countries, behind Maldives but ahead of Nepal and Pakistan. Now, India has been ranked 112 in the 'Global Gender Gap Report 2020', recently released by the World Economic Forum. A total of 153 countries have been included in this index released by the World Economic Forum. Iceland ranks first in the Global Gender Gap Report 2020. It is followed by Norway (second), Finland (third), Sweden (fourth), respectively. Yemen (153rd) ranks last in the Global Gender Gap Report 2020. India was ranked 108th in the Global Gender Gap Report 2018 released by the World Economic Forum. The Global Gender Gap Report 2020 is based on 4 key dimensions - (1) Economic participation and opportunity (2) Educational attainment (3) Health and survival (4) Political empowerment. So, there is improvement in the ranking of India comparable to 2013, but more initiatives and improvement should be required to achieve a good scenario at the global level.

It's a well-known fact that women's workforce participation in India has been decreasing rapidly. In 2004-05, the share of working-age women in paid jobs was 43%—the same as in 1993-94. This dropped to 27% in 2015-16. In rural India, the slide has been much worse as women's contribution to agricultural work is largely invisible and the sector has not generated employment for women formally.

- **Various Initiatives taken by GOI:**

There are some measurement tool which provide broad peep regarding gender gap .Some key dimensions of gender inequality alive in complex form in different domain.It is however significant to elaborate some initiatives of GOI towards gender gap in India. To promote human security, peace and safty, growth of economy and society is the main aim of the government. For fulfil ment of the objective, women are contemplate agent of the change in the for development and society.





Program's & schemes	Aim& Initiatives
Beti Bachao Beti Padho (BBBP)	For the protection, survival and education of girl child
Mehila Shakti Kendra (MSK)	
Mahila Police Volunteers (MPV)	Skill development & Employment for rural women
Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK)	Engagement of Mahila Police Volunteers in States/UTs
Working Women Hostel (WWH)	Micro-Credit at concessional terms to poor women for livelihood
Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana(PMAY)	Security & Safety for working Women
Prahan Mantri Ujjwala Yojjana(PMUJ)	Provide housing under the name of Women
Deen Dyal Upadhyay national urban Livelihoods Mission(DAY-NULM)	Providing LPG cylinder free of cost for protection of women health
Sukanya Samridhi Yojana(SSY)	
Prime Minister Employment Generation programme(PMEGP)	Creating opportunities for women in skill development& market based employment Economically empowered by opening their bank accounts for girls
Female Entrepreneurship	Generating self-employment opportunities through establishment of micro enterprises in non-farm sector Stand up India and Mahilla e-Haat(on line marketing platform to support for women

### . Conclusions and Cautions:

The economic growth of a developing country is really a challenge for the society, as suggested above in the paper, to a considerable extent linked to the role played by women in the society. The costs of discrimination toward women in education and employment not only harm the women concerned, but impose a cost for the entire society. To achieve the associated targets which are helpful for the sustainable development of the country. Some key goals consist assign responsibility of Niti Aayog, drafting mapping of the goals and targets which are to be proposed by Nodal & other ministry. Some Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSSs) which are being implemented by the Ministries have been mapped with the respective SDGs. Ministry of Statistics and Program

Implementation (MoSPI) undertook a parallel exercise of interaction with the ministries to evolve the Global indicator framework reflecting the Sustainable Development goals and targets. With education, a woman can be more self-dependent and less dependent on her family or other support systems. This will help to close the gap between social classes and enhances her wellbeing by supporting not just her mental freedom but also financial. An educated girl child contributes to economic growth nationally, bringing up the country's literacy level as well.

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