



Gender Equity and Gender Equality in India: Need & Importance, Status and Govt. Initiatives

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Abstract:

This paper aims to discuss the major issue regarding Gender Equity and Gender Equality in our country. The social structure of India has been traditionally male dominant one. Women always have to depend on men and in their family, outside and throughout their life. From historic situation we can see different kind of gender inequality issues exist and women are facing those issues. For this study the sample comprised of 180 primary school teachers of govt. schools and 30 teachers of education colleges. Data collected by using qualitative method conducted focus group discussion and interaction sessions. The paper also explains the adopted measures to discuss Gender Equality Measures for development of any society. In this paper focuses to explain the key difference between Gender Equity and Gender Equality, status, need and importance to enhancing Gender Equality in present time. Furthermore, the article highlights some facts about gender inequalities and the UNESCO Agenda for ensuring gender equality in Indian context. The study also describes various types of Gender Inequality stated by Prof. Amratya Sen mentioning special focus on responsible factors which affects the development of our society. This paper also explains Govt. initiatives to be taken for removing Gender Inequality and ensuring equality to people. As a result by practical implementing of these policy initiatives, we can see a reforming change in the women's social status in relation to every aspect.

Keywords: Gender Equity & Gender Equality, Gender Equality Measures, UNESCO, Gender Inequality, Policy Initiatives.

Introduction:

Men and women are the basic structural components of any human society. Both are different in terms of biological, emotional, mental and social behaviours. Our society has been traditionally is male dominant. Women in Indian society have had a difficult position (Paria. & Maity. 2020). In the Vedic era, they were highly esteemed and on par with men; but, in the post-Vedic era, their prestige declined, and they were obliged to elevate themselves to par with men.

India's women are discriminated against their related issues which is unparalleled in developed and in developing nations in the world. Indian society is still extremely male-dominated, patriarchal and unequal.

Female foeticide, infanticide, early marriages, slavery are the some issues reflecting the gender inequality situation in society (Loomba, & Loomba, 2020). Gender Inequality is a kind of behaviour that shows favouritism towards one gender over another. All sorts of gender inequalities continue to exist, some of these seem resistance to change, and they exist in a completely different context of cultural norms, political and social rights and institutionalized rules.

Objective:

This study aims to explaining the need of Gender Equity for achieving Gender Equality. It seeks to highlight the comprehensive understanding of gender inequality with its kinds, focusing on responsible factors gender imbalances in India. The study also highlights the UNESCO agenda for removing existing gender inequalities in India. It also explores the implementing steps under practical policy initiatives to enhance the status of women has improved and their role in national emergence.

Method:

In this research article mixed-methods approach combining quantitative with qualitative to comprehensively understand the complex dynamics of Gender Inequality considering intersectional factors was adopted. I analysed historical and contemporary sources fact basis information and explored an extensive literature review. I emphasized statistics on employment rates, health conditions, education levels and in-depth the focus group discussion, addressed in the study.

Sample:

For this study, I collected primary data from 180 Primary level teachers working in govt. primary schools located rural areas in Tarntarn Distt. of Punjab state. I also contacted with 30 college teachers of both gender working in education colleges in Tarntarn Distt. Selected sample population discussed gender equality measurements, key differences between gender equity and gender equality and various relevant factors responsible for gender inequality, status, gender inequalities and role of govt. to take progress steps for gender equality.

Procedures:

On the selected sample, employment, health and education statistics along with group discussion conducted for collection data about the status of gender inequality in society regarding attitudes, perspectives, and experiences up to what extent. To get relevant facts on the issue data collection procedure adopted ethically, ensures informed consent and confidential. For this study, adopted protocols culturally appropriate also kept in mind. For result drawn the collected information must record in written and descriptive way and also considered national and international reports.

Measures:

Concept of Gender Equity and Gender Equality:

Gender equity refers to the elimination of discrimination based on gender and the correction of inequalities in access to resources, programs, and decision-making processes. Treating men and women fairly in accordance with their individual requirements is what we mean when we talk about gender equity (Singh, 2024).

When men and women are treated with respect and dignity regardless of their gender, we say that there is gender equality. Having equal access to resources, opportunities, protections, and rights for men and women is what we mean when we talk about gender equality.

Definitions of Gender Equity:

According to World Health Organisation, “Gender Equity is ‘fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities’ between men and women.”

According to UNESCO, “Gender Equity is a process being fair to men and women to ensure fairness, measures must be often put in place to compensate for the social and historical disadvantages.”

Definitions of Gender Equality:

According to Cambridge Dictionary, “Gender Equality does not imply that women and men are the same but they have equal value and should be accorded equal treatment.”

According to Kofi Annan, “Gender Equality is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance to promoting the status of men and women.”

Gender Equality Measurements

Sr. No.	Measurement	Perspective	Areas
1.	Gender Gap Index	Gender Equality	Health, Education, Economy and Politics
2.	Gender Equity Index	Gender Inequality	Education, Economic Participation and Empowerment
3.	Gender Development Index	Gender Differences	Health, Education and Economic Resources
4.	Gender Empowerment Index	Gender Inequality	Economic Participation, Political Participation and Power over Economic Resources

Key Differences between Gender Equity and Gender Equality:

Sr. No.	Comparison Basis	Gender Equity	Gender Equality
1.	Meaning	The virtue of being fairness in the manner of treating individual	A state where everyone is at the same level
2.	Concept	Treatment fairness for individuals acc. to their respective needs	About equal opportunities, rights and responsibilities for both men and women
3.	Goal	To provide full range of opportunities and benefits- the	Focus on creating the same starting line for women and men

		same finish line	
4.	Nature	Is a process and means to achieve gender equality	It is the outcome
5.	Approach	Represents impartial	Indicates uniformity
6.	Access	All the people can have access to what they need	Providing get the same thing

Status of Gender Equality in India:

India ranked 87th out of 144 on the Global Gender Gap Index 2016 by the World Economic Forum, with a ranking of 136 in the economic sphere, 113 in educational attainment and on 142 in health and survival. These figures reflect the state of gender disparity in the country and the lack of effective measures to address the issue (Sharma, 2019). Even though the govt. of India has launched several programmes such as Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao, Women Helpline etc. to further this cause the scope for corporations to contribute is immense. To further the cause of women's equality, India has ratified a number of international agreements and human rights forums, including the 1993 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. After years of discrimination, more and more women are gaining positions of power at the municipal level. As a direct consequence of a constitutional reform that mandated the reservation of one-third of the elected seats to local governing bodies for women in 1993, more than one million women have been elected to Panchayats. Another milestone in the fight against sexism was the passage of the Prenatal Diagnostic Technology Act in 1994. By making it illegal for physicians to perform operations whose only goal is to ascertain the foetal sex, this law aims to put a stop to female foeticides and sex-determination tests. As part of its efforts to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, the government launched the National Policy for Empowerment of Women in 2001.

Need and Importance to enhancing Gender Equality in Present Times:

The importance of Gender Equality in our society rises every single moment when men realise how hard is "to hold the other part of the sky." Women equality is a precondition for solving many problems. Gender Equality works as the foundation for peaceful and sustainable world, men and women are equal valued to society, helpful to eradicate domestic violence ensuring equality, to get rid of poverty, making democracy powerful, for development of worthy citizens, creating healthy environment, must for economic and social development, for ruling out under-employment and unemployment, development of worthy citizens, to facilitate National development. **Gender Inequality** causes to prove girls and women everywhere deserve to live in a better world than exists today. In India, gender disparity between men and women in different health, social, political, cultural and legal and aspects etc. Here are describing some facts regarding Gender Inequality:

- Women own only 12. 4% of all farmed land, which is equivalent to 9. 9% of all farmed area. (Agricultural Census of 2005–2006)
- While 78% of males can read and write, only 55% of adult women can. (National Family Health Survey-3, 2005–2006)
- For 85 percent of rural households, biomass is still the principal fuel for the cooker. (64th Round of the National Sample Survey, 2007–2008)

- A toilet is available to 81% of urban families but just 34% of rural households. (District Level Household Survey-3, 2007–2008)
- In rural regions, women earn 68% of men's average income, but in metropolitan areas, the figure drops to 57%. (64th Round of the National Sample Survey, 2007–2008)
- The percentage of women working in non-agricultural wage occupations is low, at 18. 6%. (National Sample Survey 66th Round, 2009–2010)
- Commercial bank deposits held by women are less than one-third of the total. (Basic Statistical Returns from the Reserve Bank of India, 2010)
- 79% of women vs. 63% of men continue to be engaged in agriculture. (2009-2010, National Sample Survey 66thRound)

In September 2015, the world agreed to 17 Global Goals to build a sustainable more equal world including a goal to ensure a quality education for all.

The UNESCO Agenda for ensuring Gender Equality

- Encourage learning that empowers women across all disciplines and levels of society.
 - Especially in the realms of science and technology, advocate for universal access to information.
- Back efforts to end discrimination against women by making the Convention on Discrimination Against All Forms a reality.
- Integrate gender considerations into the planning, execution, and assessment of development, peace, and security initiatives.
 - By highlighting women's strengths in leadership and peaceful conflict resolution, we can help create a more peaceful world.
- Work for the eradication of gender stereotypes and the promotion of gender parity by ensuring that women are fully recognised as citizens, have equal say in policymaking, and that all expectations and duties are equal.
- Underlying the long-term benefits from the societal shift towards gender-sensitive societies, we must encourage cooperation and conversation while also developing new forms of gender interaction.
- Support cultural events, research, training, capacity development, networking, information sharing, and women's NGOs to encourage women's creativity and freedom of expression.

Different Types and Responsible factors of Gender Inequality:

According to Nobel Laureate **Prof. Amratya Sen (2001)** describes **seven** types of gender inequalities including responsible factors and existing examples are present in India.

Sr. No.	Type of Inequality	Responsible Factor	Examples
1.	Mortality	Differences in Socioeconomic Status, Unequal Access to	A higher Death Rate among Low-Income Individuals Compared to High-

	Inequality	Healthcare	Income Individuals of Infant & Maternal
2.	Natality Inequality	Unequal Birth Rate due to Social Factors including Gender Preferences, Particularly Favouring Boys over Girls	Sex-selective Abortion, Preference to Male Children
3.	Employment Inequality	Unequal Access to Quality Education and Training	A Significant Gap in Leadership Positions, Limited Job Prospects for Individuals with disabilities
4.	Ownership Inequality	Unequal Access to wealth due to inheritance, Discriminatory Practices	Disparity in Land Ownership, Unequal Access to Housing based on Socioeconomic Status
5.	Special Opportunity Inequality	Gender, Race, Ethnicity, Socioeconomic Status, Geographic Locations	Unequal Access to Quality Education based on Geographic Locations & Healthcare Access in certain Regions
6.	Basic Facility Inequality	Gender Discrimination, Poverty, Lack of Awareness	Education Disparities, Nutritional Deficiencies, Housing Disparities
7.	Household Inequality	Less Pay Income to Women than Men for Same Work, Low level of Education can Limit Access to Income, Minority Status	When One Partner in a Relationship takes on Significantly Larger Share of Domestic Chores and Childcare Responsibilities Compared to Another

Govt. Initiatives on Promoting Gender Equity and Gender Equality:

1. Increasing Women's Employment Opportunities

- Rough Draft of the National Employment Policy for 2008 (Promoting Workplace Equity and Expanding Opportunity)
- The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, which has achieved gender parity in salary and participation at 33%.
- Public policies implemented at the state level (such as the 33% reservation in Madhya Pradesh and the 30% in Karnataka for government positions).
- Demonstrate advancements that promote women's business.

2. Eliminating Discrimination in Wages, Recruitments, and Working Conditions

- Pay equity legislation of 1976 (Equal Remuneration Act)
- Gender parity in hiring, advancement opportunities, and pay for equal or comparable work.

3. Increasing Access by Women to Skills and Training

- The goal of increasing the number of women working in vocational fields to 30% by 2012 is outlined in the National Policy on Skill Development from 2009.
- Proactive initiatives, such as dormitories, scholarships, and transit loans, are also important at the state level; for example, the 11th Five Year Plan of Rajasthan aims to increase women's access to technical training and courses that may help them find work.

4. Improving Women's Employment Opportunities and Wages in the Construction Sector

This is in reference to the 2007 National Urban Housing and Habitat Policy, which addresses topics such as development as contractors, employment in managerial roles, and skill upgrading.

- The provision of sufficient support services and amenities, including crèche and lavatory facilities, by construction firms and governmental bodies.
- Advocating for health, safety, and insurance laws at the state level, with a focus on those that protect women in the construction industry.

5. Increasing Women's Participation in all Government Programmes:

With a minimum of 33% participation, the eleventh five-year plan ran from 2007 to 2012.

- Mentioned again in a few state-level plans covering the same time frame (for instance, in Bihar)
- Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005 (women's inheritance rights)—a law that aims to empower women by enhancing their ownership rights
- Eleventh Five Year Plan, 2007–2012 (programs to combat poverty and resettlement, as well as land reforms that benefit women).

6. Strengthening Women's Participation in Water Resource Management:

- National Policy for Farmers, 2007 (greater role for women as water users, both in access and management)
- Similar issues addressed in state-level policies (e. g. Himachal Pradesh State Water Policy, 2005 Maharashtra Groundwater Development and Management Bill, 2009)
- Chhatisgarh Ground Water Bill, 2012, regarding participation of farmers and all other water users in irrigation management.

7. Increasing Women's Participation in Local Decision Making:

The 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution (which created municipal governments in cities and counties, respectively)

At least one-third of the members must be female.

- The implementation of law is the responsibility of the state governments, and a number of them have raised or are planning to raise the reservations to 50%.

Results and Discussion:

In Indian society, many festivals are celebrated at huge levels to please Goddess. It is believed “God lives there where women are worshipped.” Unfortunately picture of women in society is just opposite of the ideal as above mentioned. After analysing the collected data there are many social issues arises like more importance to male child, biased behaviour towards girls and women, ignorance to providing educational facilities to females, poor health conditions, lack of employment facilities, early age marriage scenario, unequal distribution of wages, domestic violence etc. But this scenario can change through implementing the govt. initiatives in collaboration with rural and local administrative bodies. As it is border area location less access of availabilities to promote gender equality. For change the attitude, behavioural shifts, empowerment outcomes, social impact, improved mental well-being, producing more opportunities for women, improve women’s status the education will play as an active basic component.

Conclusion:

According to UNESCO, “Gender Equality is therefore the equal valuing by the society of similarities and the difference of men and the roles they play.”

Gender Equity is a mechanism through which gender equality may be achieved. Everyone would gain from women having the same opportunities as males when it comes to education, respectable employment, and participation in political and economic decision-making processes. By investigating social intersectional factors affects to Gender Equality extreme dangerous for the sustainable economic growth. Gender Equality in education allocates the equal resources for balance development of society focusing on men and women in every individual and social aspect.

Implications:

By implementing various efforts for Gender Equality to make empowered women will be end all forms of intersectional discrimination basis behaviour toward them It will also be useful in making sure that everyone has a fair chance to lead and participate in decision-making in all spheres of society, including the private, public, and commercial spheres. Equal rights in all areas of life will be reformed as a result. Adopting strengthens and sound policies for promotion of gender equality all women at all levels.

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