A STUDY ON GENDER DISCRIMINATIONS IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Gender inequality is everywhere. According to the World Economic Forum, it could take another 131 years to achieve global gender parity. Inequality affects the treatment, rights and opportunities of women, girls and transgender and gender-diverse people the most, but everyone deals with negative effects. Crises like war, climate change and pandemics can make things worse. Gender inequality in India encompasses disparities in health, education, economic opportunities, and political representation between men and women. Women have faced discrimination since ancient times and even today. In this study high light on history, causes, types and effect of gender discrimination.

KEYWORDS: *Gender inequality, Indian Economy, Causes, Effect, Health, Education*

INTRODUCTION

During ancient Vedic civilization, women held a highly respectable position in society. They were part of Sabhas and Samitis, and there were very learned women like Gargi, Lopamudra, etc. Manusmriti also regards women as it declares in verses 3.55- 3.56 that "Women must be honored and adorned" and that "where women are revered, the god rejoices; but where they aren't, no sacred rites bears any fruits."

But with the advent of the later Vedic period, women's condition started deteriorating due to various practices like early marriages, polygamy, and being banned from being part of Sabhas and Samitis.

During the medieval period, women in India were subjected to cruel practices such as dowry, sati, purdah system, and the prominence of polygamy. The dowry system remains a serious problem in urban and rural India, and it has even led to the loss of women's lives. Unfortunately, modern technology and science have led to the widespread occurrence of female foeticides. The 2001 census revealed a sex ratio of 927 females per 1,000 males, highlighting the deep-rooted nature of gender inequality in Indian society.

Nowadays, rape, molestation, domestic violence, eve-teasing, and sexual harassment at workplaces have become a common threat to the life of women. As per some reports, every 42 minutes, some women are sexually exploited, and every 93 minutes, a woman is burnt for dowry.

Gender Inequality

Gender inequality is the unequal treatment of individuals or groups based on their gender identity or expression. It can manifest in many different ways, including discrimination, violence, and exploitation.

Causes of Gender Inequality in India

Undoubtedly, gender discrimination in the society is a grave concern, and a host of personal, societal and cultural aspects are at the core of this development. Our Experts have found several causes of gender inequality in India and some of them are discussed here.

Poverty

Poverty stands as one of the primary drivers of gender inequalities. According to the World Bank, approximately 70% of the world's impoverished population is female. Poverty restricts access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, thereby reinforcing a vicious cycle.

Child Marriage

Child marriage is another alarming aspect of gender inequality, disproportionately affecting girls. UNICEF estimates that 12 million girls are married before the age of 18 every year. Such practices hinder their personal development and perpetuate gender disparity across generations. Lack of education is one of the key causes of gender inequality that significantly exacerbates the problem. UNESCO reports that 132 million girls are out of school globally, with less access to learning opportunities than boys. Right to education is crucial in empowering girls to make informed choices, pursue careers, and challenge societal norms. ***Poor Medical Health***

Poor medical health also plays a pivotal role in maintaining gender discrimination in the society. In regions with inadequate healthcare facilities, girls face higher maternal mortality rates, limited access to family planning, and health-related biases.

Lack of Awareness & Patriarchal Norms

Lack of awareness and ingrained patriarchal norms further contribute to gender inequality. When societies perpetuate gender stereotypes and discrimination, it becomes challenging to break free from the shackles of inequality. Patriarchal norms hold back many girls from striving for their dreams by receiving a quality education, medical facilities and overall awareness for their well-being. To address gender inequality effectively, we must tackle these interconnected causes of gender inequality and work towards establishing sustainable change patterns that will successfully eradicate this vicious cycle of gender inequality.

Uneven Access to Education

Globally, women still have less access to education than men. One-fourth of young women between 15 and 24 have yet to finish their primary education. Around two-thirds of women are illiterate of all illiterate people worldwide. In India, parents prefer their male child to go to school and involve their girl child in household chores.

Lack of bodily autonomy

Many women don't have rights over their bodies when they become parents. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), over 200 million women who don't want to get pregnant are not using

contraception due to opposition from their male counterparts, limited access, cultural/ religious beliefs, etc. Globally, around 40% of pregnancies are unwanted, while 50% end in abortion, and 30% result in the birth of a child.

Political and legal reforms against gender inequality in India

Here are some of the political and legal reforms that can be taken against gender inequality in India:

Political reforms

- **Increase the representation of women in government and politics:** This can be done by reserving seats for women in legislatures and by providing financial and other support to women candidates.

- **Promote gender-sensitive budgeting:** This means ensuring that government budgets are allocated in ways that benefit women and girls.

- Implement policies that support women's empowerment, such as equal pay laws, affordable childcare, and paid parental leave.

Legal reforms

- Strengthen laws against gender-based violence, such as domestic violence, sexual assault, and child marriage.

- Ensure that women have equal access to property and other resources.

- Reform personal laws that discriminate against women.

Effects of Gender Inequality in India

- **Domestic Violence**: Gender Inequality can manifest in different forms, and it concerns both men and women. One of the effects of Gender Inequality in India is Domestic violence. According to National Crime Record Bureau(NCRB) 2019 data, the majority (30.9%) of all 4.05 lakh cases of crime against women are registered under Section 498A of the IPC, which saw a sudden increase in the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Women's health**: As discussed above, women have no bodily choices, so their medical health further deteriorates. Rajasthan and Haryana are seeing lower infant mortality rates due to sex determination, and it has become one of the causes that many girls cannot survive until their 15th birthday.

- Sex determination and sex-selective abortion a crime in India, but various cases have been reported where women are forced to abort if it's a female fetus.

- Due to gender inequality, girls receive poor-quality education, affecting their economic status.

- Women also hesitate to participate in politics, so issues like violence against women, childcare, and maternal health remain unaddressed.

Possible Solutions for Gender Inequality in India

- Enhancing the value of girls through investment and empowerment is crucial, including education, life skills, sports, and more.

- By increasing the value of girls, we can achieve short-term results such as improved access to education and reduced anemia, medium-term results like ending child marriage, and long-term goals such as eliminating gender-biased sex selection.

- Changing the value of girls requires the involvement of men, women, and boys and mobilizing multiple sectors of society. Only when societal perceptions change can the rights of all girls and boys in India be fulfilled.

- Empowering girls necessitates targeted investment and collaboration, providing them with the necessary services, safety, education, and skills to reduce the risks they face and enable their full development and contribution to India's growth.

- Tailored programs that focus on education, life skills, ending violence, and inclusivity for girls from vulnerable groups, including those with disabilities, can strengthen their resilience. Long-term solutions designed with and for girls can create lifelong opportunities.

- Girls, especially adolescents, need platforms to voice their challenges and explore solutions that work for them, enabling them to build better futures for themselves and their communities.

CONCLUSION

Every problem has a solution, so gender inequality can also be addressed through proper solutions. Government can make more efforts through policies to reduce gender inequalities in India. The government should provide free higher education to girls to empower them. Government should also develop various policies for gender equality in India to prevent sex identify   cation   and   sex-selective abortions. In India, NGOs can play an important role in reducing and finally eliminating gender inequality in India.

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