



ANALYSIS OF GENDER INEQUALITY IN INDIAN SOCIETY WITH REFERENCE TO PUNE CITY

Jagan Karade¹ & Asha Suratkal²

¹Professor and Head, Shivaji University, Kolhapur

²Asst. Prof. Sinhgad Law College, Pune

Abstract

Traditional patriarchal norms have relegated women to secondary status within the household and workplace. Gender inequality means treating men and women differently on the basis of sex. Traditionally women are considered to be weak. Therefore, she has been considered to be subordinate to men. Gender discrimination is a very serious problem in Indian society. Generation after generation we are practicing patriarchal norms in the household and even at the workplace. This gender discrimination adversely affects the health of the women, her financial status, and education and even in the political involvement. The gender discrimination is blatantly seen in various forms e.g. sexual harassment, working women are getting unequal pay for the same job, pregnancy discrimination and male get more promotional opportunities as compared to men. Even in the matter of making career even the educated woman takes a back seat and sacrifices her potential for her better half. Even in educated families too, while investing on child's education, boy gets preference. The Indian Constitution apart from providing equality to women it also authorizes the State to initiate positive steps to neutralize the cumulative socio economic, education and political adversities faced by them. What is needed is to change the mindset of the society which is a time consuming process. Mere by enacting legislations this cannot be achieved. In order to bring about positive change about the gender discrimination there is need to have greater participation of the women in the parliament and also in the political positions as well as executive authority. Indian women have made gradual progress in recent years—but gender discrimination is still rife. There are no quick fixes. When we go to the root cause of the gender discrimination we observe that Indian society is dominated by men. It is because of the patriarchal system that we follow in India.

Methods: *It is student population-based study covering 200 students from of both college and school going boys and girls of Pune city selected through a systematic random sampling strategy. Interviews were conducted using separate pre-piloted structured questionnaires for girls and boys. Girls were asked how women in their family were treated and the status of women in the society. Boys were asked whether their female family members had been the victim of violence and how boys were treated at home compared to their sisters. The young girls were asked how they were discriminated in the family with their male siblings. The variables like family education, marriage, gender and economic status were the response to a set of questions for each variable. In addition, data on socio-economic characteristics were also collected. Descriptive statistics analyses were done.*

The overall perception about gender inequality in our society revealed by both boys and girls is almost same. However, girls revealed that the inequality meted out to married women is much more at the in-laws place than it was at maternal side. 90-95% of students from educated family expressed that they haven't experienced inequality because of their parents being educated and economically well off. Unfortunately girls belonging to the weaker economy and educated background did not have the same opinion as students of educated background.

Conclusion:

The study has revealed that gender discrimination is more in the economically weaker section. Education is also having a bearing on the gender discrimination i.e. where the family is educated there is negligible gender discrimination while in the uneducated families it is more. Therefore the twin problem of gender discrimination needs to be addressed by educating the women and make them self reliant. There is also need to change the mindset of the society for which digital media be used as it influences the viewers.

Keywords: gender inequality, gender discrimination, poverty, women's education,



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Introduction

Traditional patriarchal norms in India have relegated women to secondary status within the household and workplace. The discriminatory attitudes towards men and women have existed for generations and affect the lives of both genders. Although the constitution of India has granted men and women equal rights, gender disparity still remains. The first and foremost cause that leads to discrimination in India is the mental makeup. We are living in a male dominated society, where men take all the decisions and women just have to accept everything silently. From bread earning to running the house, a man is the sole decision maker. Even in 21st century many women still don't have any say in decisions pertaining to themselves. From marriage to starting a family- it's the man who dictates and the woman just follows. Lack of education is the root cause of all evils. Therefore many social reformers like Jyotiba Phule, Nana Jagannath Shankar Seth, Maharshi Dhondo keshav Karvey says that, Education is basic instrument for social change. And Jyotiba Phule started first girl school in Pune in the year of 1848 and result is Maharshi Karve has started a university for women. And Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar made a bill as Hindu code Bill for right of women.

Indian women have a long tradition of women in the education field. A few of them who have made benchmark are: Late Dr. Anandibai Joshi – was the first Indian Woman Doctor, Dr. Kamala Sohoni was the first Indian woman to get Ph. D. in Science discipline, Rajeshwari Chatterjee was the first woman engineer from Karnataka. Late Dr. Chitra Naik –

an eminent educationist. The list is just illustrative.¹ With the advent of education in the second of the 19th century the Indian women are now getting good opportunities in almost all fields including services, aviation. Today, a few prominent Indian women have achieved enviable position in the International organizations and have proved themselves that the women are no less than the men in any of the field. To name a few, Mrs. Arundhati Roy – Chairperson of State Bank of India, Mrs. Chanda Kochhar, Managing Director of ICICI Bank, Indra Nooyi, Chief Executive Officer of PepsiCo, Kiran Muzumdar Shaw, chairperson of IIM-Bangalore, Kiran Bedi Lieutenant Governor of Puducherry, so on and so forth.² Ekta Kapoor, creative head of Balaji Telefilms, Ranjana Kumar, currently Vigilance Commissioner in Central Vigilance Commission.³

Women have also made inroad in the manufacturing field which was so far considered to be men's domain. The rural women which are not educated work as agriculture labour and some are also engaged in the traditional domestic economic activities. Knowing full well the role that the women play in the economic development; the government is also keen in providing health care facilities for the women. In almost all the urban areas world class medical facilities are available but that is not the case in the rural and semi urban areas. Therefore, the govt. has given thrust in opening Rural Health Centres in the various five year plans and the situation is improving. The need of the hour is to ensure that these health care facilities should be within the reach of the rural women both physically and financially. On the one side we find world class health care facilities and on the side there are rural women who are under fed and they are not getting nutritious food even during the pregnancy. Therefore, the govt. has launched a special programme for the pregnant women in the rural areas who are living below the poverty line.

This is an area where Indian women irrespective of the fact that one is educated or uneducated, rural or urban, have made headway. Today, in the rural areas because of the reservation policy of the Govt. we find numbers of local self governemnts are headed by the women. There is a fair representation in the Gram Panchayats and Zilha Parishad. In the

¹ http://ethw.org/Rajeshwari_Chatterjee.

² Times of India Pune dated 5th February 2013, Article by Samidha Sharma of TNN, titled 'Women hold only 5% of top 100 posts in 27 companies.'

³ http://www.abhinavjournal.com/images/Management_&_Technology/Jan13/3.pdf

urban and metropolitan areas women are coming forward to actively participate in the political field.

Constitutional Provisions

The Indian Constitution apart from providing equality to women it also authorizes the State to initiate positive steps to neutralize the cumulative socio economic, education and political adversities faced by them. Equal treatment for both the genders is a fundamental right. Before the law both are equal and get equal protection. In the article no. 14 state that, there should be no gender discrimination against any citizen on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth and the constitution also guarantees equal opportunities to both the genders. The government has enacted several legislations to safeguard the interest of the working women.

Both the Central as well as State Governments have launched various schemes to improve upon the current state of affair so far as the gender discrimination is concerned. These initiatives have been discussed hereunder in brief:

National Commission for Women

- 1) In January 1992, the Government set - up this statutory body with a specific mandate to study and monitor all matters relating to the constitutional and legal safeguards provided for women review the existing legislation to suggest amendments wherever necessary, etc.
- 2) Reservation for Women in Local Self Government The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Acts passed in 1992 by Parliament ensure one third of the total seats for women in all elected offices in local bodies whether in rural areas or urban areas now extend to 50 percent.
- 3) The National Plan of Action for the Girl Child (1991-2000): The plan of Action is to ensure survival, protection and development of the girl child with the ultimate objective of building up a better future for the girl child.
- 4) National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, 2001 - The Department of Women & Child Development in the Ministry of Human Resource Development has prepared a "National Policy for the Empowerment of Women" in the year 2001. The goal of this policy is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women.

5) The Govt. of India has now increased the maternity leave for the employed women to six months (earlier it was 12 months) and that even the private sector employees are also to get this facility.

Concept of Gender Discrimination

Gender is a socio-cultural term. It refers to social roles and behaviours expected of males and females to be performed in the society. It differs from 'Sex' which is a biological and physiological phenomenon. Gender is also defined as a function of power relationship between men and women. Traditionally men are considered superior to women. Gender is a man made concept while sex is a natural and biological concept.⁴ Gender inequality means treating men and women differently on the basis of sex. Traditionally women are considered to be weak. Therefore, she has been considered to be subordinate to men. This different treatment is given in homes, and in the world outside. This gender discrimination is not peculiar to India it prevails in almost world over, only the degree differs from country to country. In India it is conspicuously seen in every walk of life.

Gender discrimination is a very serious problem in Indian society. Generation after generation we are practicing patriarchal norms in the household and even at the workplace. This gender discrimination adversely affects the health of the women, her financial status, and education and even in the political involvement. The moment a woman gets married and in a short period she bears a child she carries domestic and financial responsibilities. If we compare the literacy percent of men and women we find that as against 82.14 per cent male, only 65.46 per cent women are illiterate.⁵ The plight of the illiterate woman is miserable.

It is most unfortunate that the women have also accepted this position and continue to profess it irrespective of their educational background. In fact the women should particularly educated women should change up their mindset at the earliest as she alone can ensure the change in the mindset of the society faster.

Forms of Gender Harassment

⁴ Budhwar, P. S., Saini, D. S., & Bhatnagar, J. (2005, June). Women in management in the new economic environment: The case of India. *Asia Pacific Business Review*, 11(2), 179-193

⁵ www.censusindia.gov.in gender sensitization

The gender discrimination is blatantly seen in various forms e.g. sexual harassment, working women are getting unequal pay for the same job, pregnancy discrimination and male get more promotional opportunities as compared to men. Even in the matter of making career even the educated woman takes a back seat and sacrifices her potential for her better half. Even in educated families too, while investing on child's education, boy gets preference.

At the international level there are several organizations which study this vital aspect of gender discrimination in various countries of the world and publish the data. One such organization is United Nations Development Programme. (UNDP) These organizations apply various criteria and parameters to work out the inequality index. The areas in which this gender discrimination studies are carried out are; Availability of opportunities for women, Participation in the economic activities, Achievements in the educational field, Health care facilities for women and life expectancy, Access for making a political career.

According to UNDP's Gender Inequality Index of 2014, out of 188 countries India ranked 130th position which can well be considered as too low a position.⁶ According to World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index -2015 out of 145 countries studied India ranks 108. This also is a deplorable state of affair which needs to be addressed urgently.⁷

On the above areas the India's position out of 142 countries, is as follows, Economic participation and opportunity: 134th, Educational achievements: 126th, Health and life expectancy: 141st, Political empowerment 15th⁸

It is interesting to observe that compared to the other parameters, India has fared well so far as political empowerment. In fact if we improve the first parameter that is economic participation and opportunity naturally the second and the third parameters will also show improvement. This is because strengthening the financial position of the women her position in the family gets changed. This has been amply proved by the improvement in the rural women empowerment where the Self Help Group scheme is implemented in true spirit. Rural women themselves are getting a feel of this change. Now they are being consulted even while taking financial decision. Even they can independently meet some of their requirements on priority basis from their own earnings. Various research projects have brought out this achievement of the SHGs.

⁶ <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/GII>

⁷ <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2015/the-global-gender-gap-index-results-in-2015>)

⁸ <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/10/28/world/asia/india-gender-gap/>)

Causes of Gender Discrimination

When we go to the root cause of the gender discrimination we observe that Indian society is dominated by men. It is because of the patriarchal system that we follow in India. According to Sylvia Wably – a famous sociologist, patriarchy is “ a system of social structure and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women”.⁹ This women exploitation is not a new phenomenon but an age old one. Irrespective of religion whether one is Hindu, Muslim or any other religion it prevails even today.

When we think of the causes of the women discrimination the first cause that occurs to our mind is poverty and lack of education which leads them to have a lower status in the society. Because of lack of education large number of rural women has to perform low paid jobs just to make both ends meet. The women are getting low skill jobs. For the same amount of work, women get less payment than the men. This is the major form of inequality in the rural area. Naturally this reflects on her physical conditions.

In the rural area the approach towards girl’s education by the rural families is biased and they carry a notion that any way after the marriage she is going to the husband’s place and then why to invest in her education. In the process women are deprived off the education. The govt. has already made education upto the XII standard free. Despite this position the rural families are not keen to enroll their daughters for high school education. An educated woman will get to know as to what is happening around her and then she will be able to safeguard and protect her interests as well as family.

The gender inequality results in poor performance of the Indian society on the various fronts which is revealed from the statistical data which as fallows Female Feticide, Female infanticide, Child sex ratio in the age group of 0 to 6 years: 919, Sex Ratio 943, Female literacy 46 per cent, Maternal mortality rate: 178 deaths per 1,00,000 live births.¹⁰

Gender Inequality Index (GII)¹¹

Gender inequality remains a major barrier to human development. Girls and women have made major strides since 1990, but they have not yet gained gender equity. The disadvantages

⁹ <http://www.indiacelebrating.com/social-issues/gender-inequality-in-india/>

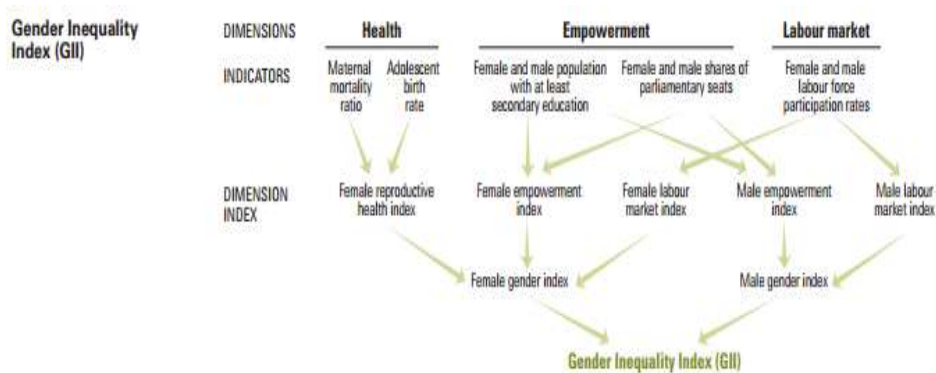
¹⁰ <http://dcyp2016.org/site/pdf/Ad%20Hoc%20Committee%20Study%20Guide.pdf>

¹¹ United Nations Development Programme Human Development Reports

facing women and girls are a major source of inequality. All too often, women and girls are discriminated against in health, education, political representation, labor market, etc — with negative repercussions for development of their capabilities and their freedom of choice.

The GII is an inequality index. It measures gender inequalities in three important aspects of human development—reproductive health, measured by maternal mortality ratio and adolescent birth rates; empowerment, measured by proportion of parliamentary seats occupied by females and proportion of adult females and males aged 25 years and older with at least some secondary education; and economic status, expressed as labor market participation and measured by labour force participation rate of female and male populations aged 15 years and older. The GII is built on the same framework as the IHDI — to better expose differences in the distribution of achievements between women and men. It measures the human development costs of gender inequality, thus the higher the GII value the more disparities between females and males and the more loss to human development.

The GII sheds new light on the position of women in 155 countries; it yields insights in gender gaps in major areas of human development. The component indicators highlight areas in need of critical policy intervention and it stimulates proactive thinking and public policy to overcome systematic disadvantages of women.



CASE STUDY

Table No. 1. Gender wise classification of the respondents

Sr. No.	Gender	No.
1	Boys	120
2	Girls	80
	Total	200

Graph NO. 1. Gender wise classification of the respondents

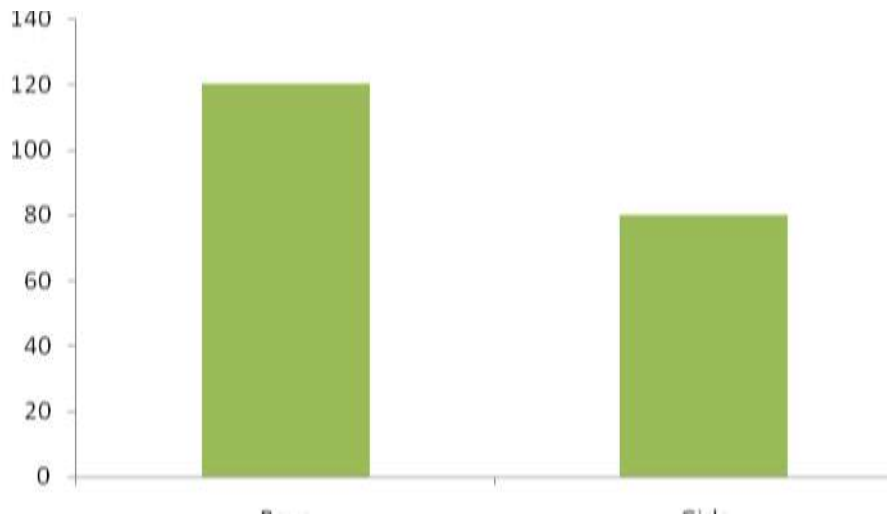


Table and Graph No. 1 shows that, out of 200 respondents, 120 respondents were boys and 80 were girls. This small or negligible sample itself shows the declining sex ratio in India. Reasons are Gender gap and need for stringent Policy. Despite of the ban on ultrasounds for the sole purpose of determining a fetus's sex, in India the problem is spreading, and it is now the richest provinces that have the largest imbalances.

Table No. 2. Classification of the respondents on income basis

Less than Rs.2.5 lakhs	Between 2.6 to 4 lakhs.	Between 5 lakhs to 6 lakhs	Over Rs.6 lakhs	Total
14	86	38	62	200

Graph No. 2.

Classification of the respondents on income basis

■ Less than Rs.2.5 lakhs ■ Between 2.6 to 4 lakhs.
■ Between 5 lakhs to 6 lakhs ■ Over Rs.6 lakhs

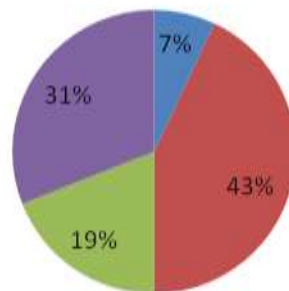


Table No. 2 and Graph No. 2 show that, out of 200 respondents only 14 respondents' economic background is comparatively low compared to the economic background of other respondents, whose income is quite high. Rest of the respondents fall under middle class category. The socio-economic background do affects the perception of the family members.

Table No. 3. Education wise classification of the respondents

Illiterate	Less than std. XII	Graduation	Post Graduation including professional courses	Total
6	24	132	38	200

Graph No. 3

Education wise classification of the respondents

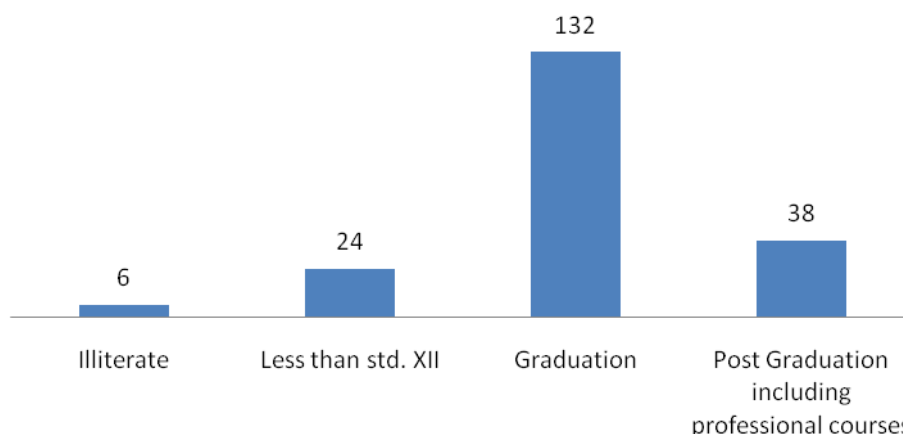


Table No. 3 and Graph no. 3 shows that, out of 200 respondents there are 170 respondent's parents are above graduates 24 are less than 12th standard only 6 are illiterate. The educational background does affect the perception, the gender inequality is not seen among these family and women are respected unlike in the illiterate families.

Table No. 4

Sr. No.	Statement	For	%	Against	%	Don't know	%	Total respondents
1	A woman should tolerate violence in order to keep her family together.	12	6	160	80	28	14	200
2	There are times when a	10	5	150	75	40	20	200

3	woman deserves to be beaten. Changing diapers, giving kids a bath, and feeding the kids are the mother's responsibility.	182	91	10	5	8	4	200
4	There should be a fixed quota for women in educational field particularly in universities.	48	24	60	30	92	46	200
5	Only sister should be asked to assist mother in domestic work	145	72.5	20	10	35	17.5	200
6	Gender equality meaning that men and women are equal and this is practiced at my home.	161	80.5	24	12	15	7.5	200
7	Gender equality is more in well to do families.	146	73	24	12	30	15	200
8	Gender equality has already been achieved.	123	61.5	67	33.5	10	5	200
9	In our family boys get more importance and facilities.	24	12	166	83	10	5	200
10	My father spends reasonable time with me	105	52.5	80	40	15	7.5	200
11	I think boys /gents should	61	30.5	100	50	39	19.5	200

	also share some domestic work without classifying it as women's work.								
12	Influence of liquor is the reason for beating the women	122	61	20	10	58	29	200	
13	Normally in educated family beating women is not seen.	145	72.5	20	10	35	17.5	200	
14	Nonpayment of dowry is one of the major reasons for beating the women.	60	30	88	44	52	26	200	
15	Bad company is a major reason for misbehaving with the women.	135	67.5	20	10	45	22.5	200	

The table no. 4 shows that, the data presented above indicates 80% of the respondents feel that the women should not tolerate the violence to keep the family together, 75% are against beating the women, 91% feel that the changing diapers is the mother's responsibility, 72.5% feel that sister should assist her mother in domestic work. 80.5 % feel that in their home gender equality is not being practiced – perhaps because the majority of the respondents are from educated families, beating the woman is not observed in the educated families. Bad company is a cause for misbehaving with the women. Consumption of liquor is one of the major reasons for beating the women.

Conclusion

The plight of the employed women in the organized sector is day by day improving because of the increased strength of women employees and the general awareness amongst the management. In the IT companies where the women employees are sizable, they are getting priority in conceding their demands related to healthcare, working hours, special type

facilities like work from home, special retiring rooms etc. The women organizations in the urban set up are also trying their best to organize the unorganized women who are pursuing domestic jobs and sorting out their issues. Now trade unions are formed of these domestic women workers and they are now successful in raising their voice and get some demands fulfilled. The need of the hour is to meet the basic requirements of the rural women. In this regard SHGs formed by the women in the rural area are getting good response and they are now addressing their issues. There are number of Non Government Organizations spread all over India who are now looking after the problems of the women and trying to sort out those problems. Whenever there is injustice or gender discrimination these NGOs play a positive role but their efforts are very low.

However, these opportunities are available mainly for the educated women. If we refer to the rural women force they have limited opportunities and hence the thrust of the education policy is to have penetration in the rural area. Definitely there is a gradual improvement. It has been observed in several research studies that after the introduction of the Self Help Groups even the rural women have become bold enough to assert them in all walks of life. However there is a need to have women representation at least to the extent of 33% in the State Assemblies and the Parliament, which is for one reason or the other is being denied by the political parties.

In order to bring about a positive change about the gender discrimination there is need to have greater participation of the women in the parliament and also in the political positions as well as executive authority. What we witness is that all the political parties barring the Samajawadi Party and Lok Dal, every other party express their support to the women reservation bill but unfortunately there is no consensus. This position should be changed. Equal opportunities for both genders is not adequate one should go a step forward and take a lead in canvassing at every platform or channel the need for empowerment of the women. In Indian society gender discrimination is still rife. There are no quick fixes. Women face barriers at home, at work and on the streets. There have been attempts to give them more voice in decisions. The food security law identifies the woman as the head of the household; the ration card will be in her name so that she has a say in household decisions. The proposed Bill to reserve one-third of seats in the Indian parliament for women seeks to do the same thing in collective choice.

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Budhwar, P. S., Saini, D. S., & Bhatnagar, J. (2005, June). Women in management in the new economic environment: The case of India. Asia Pacific Business Review, 11(2), 179-193.

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