

IMPACT OF GENDER INEQUALITY ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This paper attempts to analyze the issues and challenges face by women due to gender inequality in India. Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls are decisive factors in transforming this vision into a reality. The purpose of this paper is to offer a new gender – aware framework to provide a springboard for furthering a holistic understanding of women empowerment affect the economic development. Gender equality and female participation in all sectors (primary, secondary and tertiary) are key factors in economic development. Particularly India has slipped to rank 140 among 156 countries in Global Gender Gap Report 2021, by World Economic Forum. In order to study the relationship between gender equality and the economic development this paper investigates how women actively participation are related to economic development.

Key words: Gender inequality, Women Empowerment, Economic Growth & Development.

INTRODUCTION

Gender inequality is persistent and takes on many forms in India, rooted in socio-economic-cultural practices. As a result, women are disproportionately under-represented in economic and other activities. In recent years, the empowerment of women has been recognized as the central issue in determining the status of women. The National Commission for women was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1990 to safeguard the rights and legal entitlements of women. India has ratified various international conventions and human rights instruments and hence committed to empowering its women.

Traditionally, women have been expected to perform most of the work in the home. This traditional attitude is still an important explanation of the differences in women's labour participation (considerably greater than men's) found in different part of country. Another argument is that gender gaps in employment impose a serious distortion on the economy. They artificially reduce the pool of talent from which employers can draw, thereby reducing the average ability of the workforce. Gender inequality can affect economic growth in various ways. Hence this study concentrates on the impact of gender inequality in education and labour force participation on economic development.

“Gender equality is more than a moral issue; it is a vital economic issue. For the global economy to reach its potential, we need to create conditions in which all women can reach their potential.”

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Various studies have been done so far in different countries on impact of gender inequality on economic growth. Some of the significant studies are summarized below:-

Impact of gender inequality on economic development: A study of developing countries

Name & Author	Objectives	Finding
Seguino, S. (2000), Gender Inequality and Economic Growth: A Cross Country Analysis	To find out whether gender inequality which contributes to women’s relatively lower wages was a stimulus to economic growth through its impact on semi industrialized export oriented sector.	GDP growth is positively related to the gender inequality.
Fatima, G. (2010), Female Education as a Determinant of Economic Growth- A Case Study of Pakistan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Examine the causes of gender inequality in education. 2. Investigate how gender inequality in education impacts economic growth and development. 3. Draw suitable policy Implications for minimizing the gender-based adverse effects on economic development. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There is no strong relationship between female education & economic growth. 2. The critical link between status of women in society, particularly literacy level & a nation’s economic growth is well understood. 3. The low socio-economic status of women in Pakistan is beginning to be recognized as a potentially significant drag on the country's growth.
Rasouli, Z. (2013). Economic growth & Gender inequality in India	To find out how and to what extent does engagement with global economy in India increased gender inequality.	Indian economic growth does not have a big impact on increased gender inequality.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To identify obstacles behind gender equality in the society.
- To analyze Factors that act as barrier to gender equality for economical development.
- To identify empowering women has so important to achieving gender equality for sustainable development.

- To state the need of 5 pillars of women empowerment to achieve economic development.
- To identify various government schemes for women empowerment.
- To offer useful suggestions in the light of finding.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is based on secondary data. The data has been collected from journals, newspapers, magazines and from web sites.

OBSTACLES BEHIND GENDER EQUALITY IN THE SOCIETY PROPAGATORS

	Intimate Partner	Family Members	Others
Pre-birth Infancy/Adolescence		Female Infanticide Sex-selective Abortion	
Reproductive Age	Differential access to food/ medical care Violence in pregnancy Psychological abuse Physical violence Sexual violence	Physical violence by family members Coerced sex/rape Psychological abuse by family Dowry death/ honour killing	Rape/harassment Acid throwing Forced prostitution Trafficking for sex violence
Elderly			Abuse of widows/elder abuse

FACTORS ACT AS BARRIER TO GENDER EQUALITY FOR ECONOMICAL DEVELOPMENT

As per the 2011 census, when there are 343.8 million male workers, there are only 129.1 females in the work force. There are some factors have the potential to transform women's role in the economy and in society more broadly:

Sex segregation in families: Gender Inequality starts from the family itself. The men are allotted with outdoor economic activities, fulfilling the material needs of the family, taking vital decisions are the unwritten duties of males, while women have a feeble role in all this. The women's reproductive ability imposes them to become good wives, mothers, caregivers and family managers. Cooking, cleaning, carrying fuel, fodder, and water are their earnest duties. Their physical power is glamorized in providing difficult jobs, but within four walls of their household. They lack bargaining power and are denied to demand for any economic return. The social norms and patriarchal values restrict women's entry into the labour market.

Low female male ratio: Amartya Sen has written about the “missing women” in India, highlighting the low female male ratio in the country’s population. The issue of missing women in India’s population has a parallel relation with the problem relating to the missing women in India’s work force.

Split labour market: Labour market itself has its gender orientation. It takes the production, reproduction prescriptions to favour males on the pretext that they are economically more vibrant and contributing than the females. The labour market holds women’s socialization is for child rearing, domestic management and they have low aspirations in comparison to the males. Women’s commitment to the family is an accepted value while males devotion to and innovations in the work place are given better vintage. So, labour force accommodates more men for heavy, non-traditional and technical activities. Further, women become the ultimate victim of labour displacement. Man’s displacement has given a second thought with idea that he is the bread winner and upon his labour force participation depend the survival of the entire family.

Earning discrepancies: The labour market is hostile to women in India. It denies equal wage for equal work for the women and positions of prominence for the women. This discourages women’s participation. The sex based division of labour produces earning discrepancies between men and women. Men are conceived to be the pivot of production while women as central of reproduction. Though mainstreaming efforts are on for women in the labour market, but the traditional mind set has not been completely eroded. Till now women are fitted into lower paid jobs, devote less time to production and concentrate more on domestic management and due to reproductive responsibilities, lack adequate skill and training which fetch them lesser pay than men.

Disparities in security coverage: Women are least covered by security measures. As women are less accommodated in organized sectors, they fail to enjoy social security. Women are accommodated in large numbers in informal sectors where social security is absolutely absent. Further, hire and fire, vulnerabilities and exploitation are maximum for women which they accept because of their informal sector work. They have seldom a union for collective bargaining.

Lack of education: Lack of education, training and skill of women due to poverty and household burdens becomes the preventing forces for women’s entry into the labour market.

High fertility rates: High fertility rates among women in India affect their joining in the employment market. Due to recurrent child births and due to lack of spacing women in India not only become physically weak, but also overburdened with child care responsibilities which prevent them to enter into the work force.

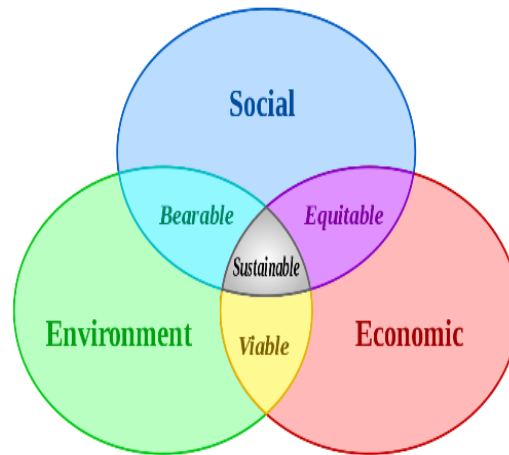
Decline of household industries: The gradual decline of the agricultural and handicraft sectors, have closed down the employment opportunities for women in rural India. Low level of access and control over resources among women also keep them disempowered and they fail to join the labour force.

Social norms and standards: Social norms of our country also restrict women to work. Husbands and in-laws often discourage women from working, while in many parts of country restrictions are imposed even on their movement outside the household. That is why labor participation is particularly low in India among urban educated women. Social variables play a significant role in this direction. Labour force participation is more among a middle aged, lower cost and lower educated women from low income families.

There is needed to take significant steps to make women integrated into the labour market. As work participation is beneficial for women as well as society. Women's full integration into the economy is a desirable goal of equity and efficiency considerations for economical development.

EMPOWERING WOMEN FOR ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable development: Sustainable development is the development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. There are three core elements that need to harmonise in order to achieve sustainable development: **economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection.**



Source: <http://www.thesustainableleader.org/>

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL NO.5 (SDG 5): "ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS"

It includes the following targets:

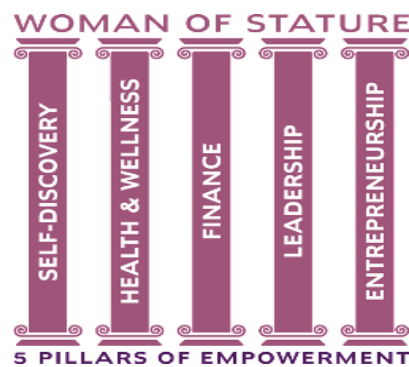
- End all form of discrimination against all women and girls.
- Eliminating all form of violence against women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking, sexual and other types of exploitation.
- Eliminating all harmful practice, such as early and forced child marriage and female genital mutilation.
- Recognize and value of unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies.
- Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision – making in political, economic, and public life.
- Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of properties

PILLARS OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT TO ACHIEVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Women Empowerment: There is a wide gender gap between men and women around the globe. Despite comprising of half of the world's population, women have been deprived of their basic rights for centuries. They acquire a very little portion of

wealth and power. Very few women are in the leading position in different companies and firms. They are deprived of education and health care facilities and they are rarely a part of major decision making processes. In few part of country they are not even allowed to take birth. In a progressive world, these are really alarming situations. To narrow this wide gender gap, Women empowerment is really needed to achieve economic development.

Women empowerment means emancipation of women from the vicious grips of social, economical, political, caste and gender-based discrimination. It means granting women the freedom to make life choices. Women empowerment does not mean ‘deifying women’ rather it means replacing patriarchy with parity. In this regard, Nedbank and WOS launch the first 5 pillars of women empowerment to achieve economic development.



	SELF DISCOVERY	HEALTH & WELLNESS	FINANCE	LEADERSHIP	ENTREPRENEURSHIP
TOPICS	Self Awareness and Personal Mastery	Stress and Conflict Management	Basic Financials I	Women in Leadership programme	Knowing your business (Business planning)
	Emotional Intelligence	Health Consultation	Basic Financials II	Leading Teams	Managing your Business
	Unlock your creative Image (Paintertainment)	Health Coaching and Supplements	Funding and Sponsorships	Assertiveness and Presentation skills	Marketing and the Sales Cycle
	Personal/ Professional Grooming	Nutrition and Fitness		Business Ethics	Social Media Marketing
					Labour Relations

These key topics are presented as part of a career path journey or personal self discovery journey and also available as individual short courses, should there be a need of women empowerment to achieve economic development.

The history of Indian women is full of pioneers, who have broken gender barriers and worked hard for their rights and made progress in the field of politics, arts, science, law etc. There is some example of women that I wanted to highlight whose achievements changed the course of history:

- **Laxmibai:** Rani of Jhansi (1828 - 1858) prominent personality in India's first war of PIndependence (1857)
- **Mira Nair:** who introduced Indian culture to a global audience.
- **Anandi Gopal Joshi:** She was the first female doctor in India and the first Indian woman to obtain a medical degree in the United States.
- **Indira Gandhi:** She was the first and only woman to be the Prime Minister of India.
- **Justice Anna Chandy:** She was the first female judge in India.
- **Kalpana Chawla:** She was the first Indian woman in space and died tragically in the Space Shuttle Columbia disaster.
- **Mother Teresa:** She dedicated her life to helping the poor and was the first woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979.
- **Indra Nooyi** - one of the worlds's most powerful women chairman and chief executive officer of PepsiCo.
- **Arunima Sinha** is the first female amputee to climb Mount Everest. She is also the first Indian amputee to climb the Everest. She was a national level volleyball player who was pushed from a running train by thieves in 2011 as she was resisting them. After meeting this accident, one of her legs had to be amputated below the knee.
- **Lata Mangeshkar:** Most-awarded Indian singer; Bharat Ratna recipient; Legion of honour recipient.

Recently India's Prime Minister Sh. Narendra Modi set an example by an archaic and medieval practice had finally been confined to the dustbin of history! Parliament abolishes triple talaq & corrects a historical wrong done to Muslim women. This is a victory of gender justice and will further equality in the society.

VARIOUS GOVERNMENT SCHEMES FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

The Indian government has also recognized women issues and their contribution to the country's economy. Some of the women empowerment initiatives are:

- **Mahila E – Haat:** It is a direct online marketing platform launched by the Ministry of Women and Child Development to support women entrepreneurs, Self Help Groups (SHGs) and Non – Governmental Organisations (NGOs) to showcase products made and services rendered by them. This is a part of the 'Digital India' initiative.
- **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao:** This is a social campaign aimed at eradication of female foeticide and raising awareness on welfare services intended for young Indian girls. Launched on 22nd January, 2015 it is a joint initiative run by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the Ministry of Human Resource Development.
- **One Stop Centre Scheme:** It was implemented on 1st April, 2015 with 'Nirbhaya' fund. The One Stop Centres are established at various locations in India for providing shelter, police desk, legal, medical and counselling services to victims of violence under one roof integrated with a 24 hour Helpline. The toll free helpline number is 181.
- **Working Women Hostels :** The objective of the scheme is to promote availability of safe and conveniently located accommodation for working women, with day care facility for their children, wherever possible, in urban, semi urban, or even rural areas where employment opportunity for women exist.
- **STEP :** The Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP) Scheme aims to provide skills that give employability to women and to provide competencies and skill that enable women to become self-employed/entrepreneurs. Sectors include Agriculture, Horticulture, Food Processing, Handlooms, Tailoring, Stitching, Embroidery, Zari etc., Handicrafts, Computer and IT enable services along with soft skills and skills for the workplace such as spoken English, Gems & Jewellery, Travel & Tourism, Hospitality, etc.
- **Nari Shakti Puruskars:** These are national level awards recognizing the efforts made by women and institutions in rendering distinguished services for the cause of women, especially vulnerable and marginalized women.

- **SSA (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan):** For girl child education. It leads to increase in the Gender Parity Index (GPI).
- **The National literacy Mission or Saakshar Bharat:** Literacy of women. Literacy is the critical instrument of women's empowerment.
- **National Rural Health Mission:** Educating women on health care. It has resulted in the decline in fertility rates, Maternal mortality rates (MMR), Infant mortality rates (IMR).
- **SHG (Self Help Groups) :** For economic development in women by giving micro finances.
- **GB (Gender budgeting) :** Identifying the felt needs of women and re-prioritizing and increasing expenditure to meet these needs.
- **NMEW (National Mission for Empowerment of women) :** To ensure economic and social empowerment of women.
- **Swayamsidha scheme:** To ensures total development of women.
- **Swadhar scheme:** Basic necessities to marginalized women & girls.
- **Kishori Shakti Yolanda:** Empowerment of adolescent girls.
- **Mahila Samridhi Yolanda:** for women empowerment.
- **Maternity Benefit scheme:** payment of Rs.500/- to pregnant women for the first tow births only if the belongs to BPL (Below Poverty Line) category.
- **Rastriya Mahila Kosh:** To provide micro loans for women.
- **Development of women & children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) :** Creation of groups of women for income generating activities on self sustaining basis.
- **Women's Reservation Bill (The Constitution 108th Amendment Bill):** It proposes to amend the Constitution of India to reserve one-third of all seats in the Lok Sabha, and in all state legislative assemblies for women. The Rajya Sabha passed the bill but the Lok Sabha has not yet voted on the bill. This will be helpful in increasing the political participation of women.
- **Sukanya Samriddhi Account:** It meant to help families save for their daughters.
- **Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana:** It meant to offer free LPG connections to women living below poverty line.

- **Rajiv Gandhi National Creche Scheme:** It meant for Children of Working Mothers to provide affordable day care services to working women.
- **Women’s Helpline 1091:** It meant to provide emergency assistance to women in trouble, especially those facing violence of any kind.
- These are just some recent government programs for women introduce to make our lives easier.

SOME INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

- Year ‘2001’ was declared as the “women empowerment year”.
- ‘Promoting gender equality and empowering women’ is one of the eight ‘Millennium Development Goals’ (MDGs) and has also been included in SDGs[Sustainable Development Goals (2016-2030) as Goal 5] .

FINDINGS OF STUDY

- The aspirational agenda is built on the idea of “leaving no one behind” in the journey towards inclusive and sustainable development. Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls are decisive factors in transforming this vision into a reality.
- Globalization, liberalization and socio – economic forces have given some respite to large proportion of the population. However, there are still quite a few areas where women empowerment in India is largely lacking i.e., labour force.
- Women should be allowed to work and should be provided enough safety and support to work. They should be provided with proper wages and work at par with men so that their status can be elevated in the society.
- In order to build women as catalyst for sustainable development, their role in family, community and society at large has to free from socio-cultural and religious traditions that prevent women participation. There is need for change of mindset, especially of the males who dominate the scene. So, there is extremely need to eradicate gender inequality for achieving the goal of economic development.

SUGGESTIONS

- **Education attainment:** The first and foremost priority should be given to the education of women, which is the grassroots problem. Hence, education for women has to be paid special attention.

- **Economic empowerment:** Women should be allowed to work and should be provided enough safety and support to work. They should be provided with proper wages and work at par with men so that their status can be elevated in the society.
- **Access to property, assets, and financial services:** Legislation should affirm equal property and asset ownership rights for men and women. As noted in the report, only 15 percent of agricultural landholders in Sub-Saharan Africa are women—and land held by women is often smaller than that held by men. Likewise, measures should be taken to ensure women’s financial inclusion by increasing economic services and training.
- **Political Empowerment:** Increase women’s representation in Parliament.
- **Legal Empowerment:** Awareness programmes need to be organized for creating awareness among women especially belonging to weaker sections about their legal rights.
- **Implement pending policy action:** Strict implementation of programmes and Acts should be there to curb the malpractices prevalent in the society.

CONCLUSION

“There is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women.”- Kofi Annan

Gender equality i.e., Women’s contribution to sustainable development must be recognized. The empowerment of women has become one of the most important concerns of 21st century not only at national level but also at the international level. India has enacted many legislative and constitutional provision and many progressive plans to improve the position of women. Government initiatives alone would not be sufficient to accomplish this objective. Society must take up activity to make a domain in which there no gender inequality so that women have full chances of self decision making and taking an interest in socio – economical, political and financial existence with feeling of equity.

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