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Gender equality: For better society

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Abstract

Healthy development of a society in Particular and nation in general depends upon the gender equality. The difference in sex and physical form denotes no difference in status. Men and Woman are complementing of each other. The origin of gender inequality is the root cause of male dominance society. At least in India, a woman still needs the anchor of a husband and a family. Men's dominating nature was all practiced from the beginning and is followed till date.

Some argue that Gender inequality in India is a multifaceted issue that concerns men and women. And say gender equality indices place men at a disadvantage. However, when India's population is examined as a whole, women are at a disadvantage in several important ways. In India, discriminatory attitudes towards either sex have existed for generations and affect the lives of both sexes. Although the constitution of India grants men and women equal rights, still gender disparities remain. As per UNDP report, India ranks 132 out of 187 countries on gender inequality index (GII). India ranks low partly because of its skewed ratio, with only 914 females for every 1000 males, according to Indian government data. As per UNDP report, only 29% of Indian women above the age of 15 in 2011 were part of labour force, as compared to 80.7% men. In parliament, only 10.9% of law makers are women, 80% of Indian women didn't have bank account in 2016 as per UNDP report Every day 39000 girls are forced for early marriage i.e. 27 girls are married a minute.

This paper highlights the multi-dimensional context of gender inequalities prevalent in India. Overall, the study indicates the inequality in economic, social, cultural and legal biasness which are of a great challenge for policy-makers and social scientists to establish proper equality in the entire social field. An attempt has been made to find out those factors and suggestions which are responsible for this problem in India.

Keywords: Gender differences, infanticide, undignified treatment, sexual harassment, occupational hazards

Introduction

The origin of the gender inequality is the root cause of male dominance society. In India, a woman still needs the anchor of a husband and a family. It was all practiced from the beginning and is followed till date. In many parts of India, women are viewed as an economic and financial liability by their families despite contribution in several ways to our society, economy. The crime against women is increasing day by day. Domestic Violence, Rape, Sexual harassment, molestation, eve-teasing, forced prostitution, sexual-exploitation at work places are a common affair today. So, it is an alarming issue for our country. The reality of gender inequality in India is very complex and diversified, because it exists in every field like education, employment opportunities, income, health, cultural issues, social issues, economic issues etc.

Objectives

Following are the objectives aimed through this platform of national seminar:

1. Create an environment changing the societal attitude for women to realize their full potential.
2. Provision of Equal access to participation and decision making of women in social, political and economic life of the nation.
3. An awareness of Provision of Equal access to women to health care, education at social security.
4. Raising the voice through this may strengthen legal systems aimed at elimination of all forms of gender inequalities.

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Research methodology

This paper is basically descriptive and analytical in nature. In this paper an attempt has been taken to analyze the causes of gender inequality in India and measures to improve it. The data used in it is purely from secondary sources according to the need of this study.

Inequality in India

The Indian census 2011 state wise shows that Kerala represent the highest sex ratio with 1084 females per 1000 males while Haryana represents the lowest sex ratio with just 877 women per 1000 males. The dowry which became popular was the starting period of female infanticide practices in few areas. In India, a sex-selection phenomenon has been in place since the 1980s, then the urbanization since the 1990s where a lot of families and men have moved to cities to look for work. People are much wealthier but at the same time there is pressure to produce sons as an heir, so educated, wealthy families are now more likely to have sex selection. These entire factors are coming to play and creating this toxic mixture, which has turned violence against women into a bigger issue today.

Facets of inequality

At work, this disparity is visible through a different working environment for women, unequal wages, undignified treatment, sexual harassment, higher working hours, engagement in harmful industries, occupational hazards, working roughly twice as many hours as men and a nearly 27 percentage of women are accounted by unpaid activities. Violence against women is also prominent in India which leads to every 42 minutes a sexual harassment occurring.

World Economic Forum (WEF) has recently released Gender Gap Index-2019 that shows India has slipped to 112th position. The report said all countries in South Asia, with the exception of Afghanistan, were a better place for women than India, with Sri Lanka (75) topping them all. Nepal ranked 102nd and Bangladesh 111th.

On November 2, 2019 the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security (GIWPS), America in collaboration with The Peace Research Institute of Oslo (PRIO), Norway, released its 2nd edition of the report titled Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Index for the year 2019. India was ranked 133rd out of 167 countries. Gender inequality is especially tragic not only because it excludes women from basic social opportunities, but also because it gravely imperils the life prospects of future generations. Indian families often prefer boys to girls, and female feticide is tragically common. Only 29% of Indian women above the age of 15 in 2011 were a part of the country's labor force, compared to 80.7% men. In Parliament, only 10.9% of lawmakers are women, while in Pakistan 21.1% are women. In United States which ranks 42nd on the list, 57.5% women and 70.1% men are a part of the labor force. China fared even better, landing 35th. Only 26.6% women above 25 years received a secondary education in 2010, compared to 50.4% of men. In the U.S., 94.7% women have received a secondary education – a figure slightly higher than for men (94.3%). In China, this figure was 54.8% for women and 70.4% for men. In India, 200 women died for every 100,000 childbirths, says the report. In China, the number was considerably lower (37 deaths) and in the U.S. even lower than that (21.)

Issues and problems of gender inequality in India

There are various issues and problems which women generally face in the society in India. Some of the problems are mentioned and described below:

1. Selective abortion and female infanticide: It is the most common practice for years in India in which abortion of female fetus is performed in the womb of mother after the fetal sex determination and sex selective abortion by the medical professionals.
2. Sexual harassment: Women face sexual exploitation of a girl child at home, streets, public places, transports, offices, etc. by the family members, neighbors, friends or relatives.
3. Dowry and Bride burning: It is another problem generally faced by women of low or middle-class family during or after the marriage. Parents of boys demand a lot of money from the bride's family to be rich in one time. Groom's family perform bride burning in case of lack of fulfilled dowry demand. Though apart from the various stir action against dowry harassment. Still we could find 7634 cases in 2015 and in 2016, 3877 cases.
4. Disparity in education: The level of women education is less than men still in the modern age. Female illiteracy id higher in the rural areas. Where over 63% or more women remain unlettered.
5. Domestic violence: it is like endemic and widespread disease affects almost 70% of Indian women according to the women and child development official. It is performed by the husband, relative or other family member.
6. Child marriages: Early marriage of the girls by their parents in order to be escaped from dowry. It is highly practiced in the rural India.
7. Inadequate nutrition: Inadequate nutrition in the childhood affects women in their later life especially women belonging to the lower middle class and poor families.

Challenges of gender inequality

There are several constraints that check the process of gender inequality in India. Social norms and family structure in developing countries like India, manifests and perpetuate the subordinate status of women. They are:

Preference for male child: The society is more biased in favor of male child in respect of education, nutrition and other opportunities. The root cause of this type of attitude lies in the belief that male child inherits the clan in India with an exception of Meghalaya. Women often internalize the traditional concept of their role as natural thus inflicting an injustice upon them.

Poverty

It is the reality of life for the vast majority women in India. It is the factor that poses challenge in realizing women's empowerment. There are several challenges that are plaguing the issues of women's right in India.

Education

While the country has grown from leaps and bounds since independence where education is concerned. The gap between women and men is severe. While 82.14% of adult men are educated, only 65.46% of adult women are known

to be literate in India. The gender bias is in higher education, specialized professional trainings which hit women very hard in employment and attaining top leadership in any field.

Health and Safety

The health and safety concerns of women are paramount for the wellbeing of a country and are an important factor in gauging the empowerment of women in a country. However, there are alarming concerns where maternal healthcare is concerned.

Due to gender bias in health and nutrition there is unusually high mortality rate in women reducing their population further especially in Asia, Africa and china. Significant manners all across the globe, more so, in India e.g. sharing burden of housework, childcare and menial works by so called division of work. Women face countless handicaps in male customized and dominated environs in Government Offices and Private enterprises.

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Strategies to overcome barriers of women empowerment

There are many laws and their aspects of life, but all these laws and amendments have become toothless as the fundamental problems lies in the attitude of the society which is highly biased against women. Today there are lots of things that are happening in the name of gender equity in India and lot of resources are spent in this direction. Keeping this in mind it is crucial to have a reality check on what is happening on paper and what is the actual ground situation.

The following strategies can be considered for bringing phenomenal change in the plight women's education and empowerment in India:

1. Since the prevailing situation of poor or less enrolment of girls in schools closes the doors for development and prosperity of future generation of women, concerted efforts must be initiated jointly by the government, parents and civil society to achieve universal enrolment for girls without any compromise. The enrolment can be made even mandatory for every girl by the government in the realm of compulsory education.
2. The Ministry of Education both at Centre and State level should work out strategic steps to stop firmly the ongoing high drop-outs among girls especially in rural, tribal and slums areas with the serious involvement of voluntary organizations in every locality to realize zero drop-out among girls.
3. The poverty-stricken families can be identified through proper research and necessary poverty alleviation services is provided to strengthen the income thereby to enable the families to send their children to schools and colleges without much financial difficulties.
4. Appropriate steps should be taken by the educational authorities with the participation of communities in order to bring the girl children to the main stream of education and development at every level including family and community.
5. The Midday meal scheme and other educational supportive services like free text books, Notebooks, Fee uniforms, Free Bicycles, Free bus, scholarships free bus

pass and so on as done in the state of Karnataka can be provided in all states and union territories to lift up the literacy level among girls.

6. The electronic and print media can play significant role in building a good and positive image about girls and women in general in the society by giving no focus for such advertisements and news fetching commercial gain at the cost of depicting women as an object.
7. The parents of children belonging to poor, underprivileged families must be specially educated with proper social formula to help them to understand the significance of education for their girl children as foundation for empowerment.
8. As social evils like dowry, child marriage, caste system and other practices deprive rights of education for children belonging to poor and underprivileged families and communities, they should eliminate through well-designed packages of mass awareness programmes and social welfare measures with full support of public, political parties, NGOs and government agencies.

Findings of the study

1. There are several Government programmes and NGOs in the Country, there is still a wide gap that exists between those under protection and those not.
2. Poverty and illiteracy add to these complications, The Empowerment of Women begins with a guarantee of their health and safety.
3. Empowerment of Women could only be achieved if their economic and social status is improved. This could be possible only by adopting definite social and economic policies with a view of total development of women and to make them realize that they have the potential to be strong human beings.
4. . In order to create a sustainable world, we must begin to Empower Women.

Conclusion

The attainment in the field of income/employment and in educational front, the scenario of women empowerment seems to be comparatively poor. The need of the hour is to identify those loopholes or limitations which are observing the realization of empowerment of women gender equity and this initiative must be started from the women folk itself as well as more importantly policy initiative taken by the state and society. Let us take the oath that we want an egalitarian society where everybody whether men or women get the equal opportunity to express and uplift one's wellbeing and wellbeing of the society as whole. Gender equity is not a Northern concept woman all over the world, including countries in South, have been challenging and changing gender inequalities since the beginning of the history.

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