

Impact of Gender Equality on Sustainable Development

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Abstract

In order to achieve social and institutional change that promotes equitable and growth-oriented sustainable development, gender equality is regarded as a crucial component. Men's and women's differences show up in every aspect of development. The following areas show the greatest disparities: social attitudes, gender stereotyping, economic development, participation in public life and policymaking, violence against women, health, and education. Gender equality is one of the most sophisticated and rapidly growing social movements of the twenty-first century. The sustainable development goals, if gender is not taken into consideration, represent a critical approach to building a more sustainable and better future for all. Gender equality is necessary for sustainable development because it ensures that men and women have equal access to opportunities and resources. Therefore, there is a link between gender equality and attempts to advance sustainable development. Its foundations include democracy, the rule of law, and observance of basic rights including equality of opportunity and freedom. Sustainability cannot exist unless there is equity in the distribution process. In order to implement, contribute to, and reap the benefits of sustainable development, girls and women are essential. As a result, developing sustainable routes and eliminating gender inequality are urgent problems. This study examines the relationship between gender equality and sustainable development objectives.

Keywords: Gender inequality, gender gap, sustainable development, gender development index, gender empowerment measure

INTRODUCTION

Gender inequalities have an impact on the relationship between men and women and are a major global concern. It is critical to acknowledge the contribution of women to sustainable development. Women are more likely to raise educated children, which helps them grow into better individuals who use and protect their natural resources responsibly [1]. A fair allocation of resources for both short-term and long-term needs is necessary to realize sustainable development. One strategy to achieve sustainable development is gender equality. Advancements in socioeconomic status depend on women's economic participation.

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Many other benefits of economic success follow from reducing the gender gap in participation in economic activity, such as increased child survival, better family health, and lower fertility. There is often a distinction between the official and informal sectors of economic activity, whether organized or not. Gender disparity is one of the main obstacles to maintaining an economy from experiencing social growth [2]. Gender discrimination affects the majority of women in ways that are detrimental to their academic performance, political decision-making skills, labor force participation, and health. It is crucial to identify the underlying causes of gender inequality and examine the reasoning behind

the demand for gender equality in sustainable development after assessing sustainable development in the context of gender inequality.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender Inequality and Sustainable Development

Global advancement is hampered by gender disparities, especially in sustainable development. Women's efforts are essential for resource management and sustainability, particularly when it comes to rearing responsible and educated children. Sustainable development requires gender equality, because it increases women's engagement in the economy, which improves family health, lowers fertility rates, and increases child survival. To ensure long-term sustainability and equitable resource allocation, gender inequities in education, political empowerment, and economic engagement must be addressed.

Gender Gap

- Gender differences, especially in terms of views and accomplishments in the fields of politics, society, arts, culture, and economy. The Global Gender Gap metric was created by the World Economic Forum to examine four significant areas of gender inequality.
- Economic participation and opportunity:
- Results for earnings, levels of involvement, and access to high-skilled jobs.
- *Educational attainment*: results in getting into basic and higher education.
- *Political empowerment*: results in representation in structures that make decisions.
- *Survival and health*: effects on life expectancy and gender ratio.

The Gender Gap Index assesses countries according to how well they distribute these opportunities and resources to their male and female populations, regardless of how much of each may be overall. India was ranked 123 in terms of economic participation, 121 in terms of educational attainment, 17 in terms of political empowerment, and 134 in terms of health and survival. India has more women participating in local governance than any other Asian nation, surpassing its own 33% participation rate. Reserve, where 1.3 million women were selected to represent them. In a study of Indian local governments, it was discovered that although women held these positions with substantially lower levels of education and job experience [3], they were more skilled at securing resources and achieved better fiscal outcomes for their communities. These arguments support the benefits of political empowerment for women.

Gender Pay Gap in India

The Indian Constitution contains several articles that aim to prevent gender pay gaps. Specific laws also address the gender pay gap. Article 14 of the Constitution states that men and women have equal rights and opportunities in the political, economic, and social spheres.

1. *Article 15(1)*: Prohibits treating any person unfairly on the grounds of caste, sex, religion, or any other distinction.
2. *Article 15(3)*: Special provision allowing affirmative action discrimination in favor of women by the state.
3. Article 16 guarantees all citizens equal opportunity when it comes to governmental posts.
4. *Article 39(a)*: The State shall ensure that every citizen, male and female alike, has an equal right to a means of subsistence.
5. *Equal pay for equivalent labor performed by men and women (Article 39(d))*. *Article 42*: Fair and equitable working conditions and maternity leave are mandated by the state.

An examination of data from Paycheck India's voluntary online Salary Survey, which comprised 16,500 online observations (13,729 males and 27,71 women), revealed a sizable gender pay discrepancy in the country. The average gender wage gap between 2006 and 2011 was approximately 54% [4]. Additionally, the study showed that the gender pay gap has progressively closed. It was above 70%

before 2008, and less than 40% in 2011. As earnings climb, the gender pay gap narrows and becomes negligible for salaries under Rs.1 lakhs and beyond Rs. 50 lakhs. However, in the wage range of Rs 1 lakh to Rs 50 lakh, the gender pay disparity is greater than 40%. Pay disparities according to age are noted; the gender pay gap reduces to 38 for people in the 20–30 age group and peaks at 157% for those in the 50–60 age range.

Approaches to Measuring Gender Disparity

Several indices have been devised to measure gender disparity and to distinguish between males and females. To quantify gender inequality, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) created the Gender Development Index (GDI) and Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) in 1995.

The Gender Equality Index (GEI), Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI), Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI), and Gender Inequality Index (GII) were later established by the Social Watch, World Economic Forum (WEF), OECD Development Center, and UNDP in 2004, 2006, 2007, and 2010, respectively. GDI uses the same dimensions and variables as the Human Development Index (HDI) to address gender differences in life expectancy, income, and education.

Therefore, GDI is not a trustworthy way to measure gender disparities on its own. Moreover, it ignores the issues related to empowerment [5]. GEM determines the level of gender inequality based on evaluations of women's income, access to professional and legislative responsibilities, and proportionate involvement in well-paying jobs with economic significance. The GEM ignores issues related to gender inequality and socioeconomic difficulties among the underprivileged. In other words, it evaluates only the differences between the sexes among the group of women who are the wealthiest and most educated. It is predicated on the empowerment, education, and economic involvement components of gender inequality indices. Health inequality is one of the main aspects of gender inequality, and the GEI is accused of being ignored.

The World Economic Forum initially developed the Global Gender Gap Index in 2006 to gauge differences between men and women. It considers the differences between men and women in four sub-indices: economic opportunity and engagement, political empowerment, health and survival, and educational attainment [6]. The indices for the sub-index of economic participation and opportunity are the ratio of female-to-male labor force participation, salary equality for equivalent employment, ratio of female-to-male estimated earned income, and ratio of female professional and technical workers to male value. Indicators for the sub-index also show that female legislators, senior officials, and managers are more valuable than their male counterparts. The ratios of female gross tertiary enrolment to male value, female literacy rate over male value, and female net primary enrolment over male value serve as indicators for the sub-index of educational attainment. Net secondary enrolment for females above male and male values. The ratio of women to men at birth and the percentage of women who think they will live healthier lives than men are indicators of the sub-index of health and survival [7]. The number of female members of parliament, the proportion of women holding cabinet positions in relation to the value of men, and the length of time a female head of state has ruled over the last 50 years in comparison to the value of a male head of state are among the indicators of the political empowerment sub-index. Each sub-index is assigned a maximum score of one (1) for equality and a minimum score of zero (0) for inequality. Similar to the sub-indices, the ultimate value also represents inequality and ranges from zero (0) to one (1). Although this statistic is the most complete, it has drawn criticism for being overly generalized. The SIGI is a composite measure of gender inequality that accounts for four aspects of the family code: physical integrity, ownership rights, civic liberties, and gender equality-affecting social institutions. SIGI has been criticized for having less value in wealthy nations, despite being a useful tool for developing nations. Furthermore, the SIGI authors clarify that it is only a supplement rather than a replacement for earlier efforts [8]. The UNDP introduced the gender inequality index, a statistic for measuring gender differences, in its 2010 Human Development Report.

This composite score represents the amount of accomplishment lost as a result of gender inequality in a country. The study employs three distinct dimensions: the proportion of female parliamentary seats held by each gender and their educational attainment; the labor market dimension, which determines the empowerment dimension; and the reproductive health dimension, which gauges women's involvement in the workforce by utilizing statistics on reproductive health and the ratio of maternal death to adolescent fertility [9]. One (1) represents 100% inequality and zero (0) represents 0% inequality in GII [9], which runs from zero (0) to one (1). GII is a thorough assessment, but it leaves out certain crucial elements, such as asset ownership, support for childcare, gender-based violence, and involvement in local decision-making.

Theoretical Framework of Gender Issues

Discrimination against women in the workplace is not a recent trend. This has been the focus of economists for some time. Holding that “men and women ought to be perfectly coequal as well as a woman ought not to be reliant on a man, whereas a man on a woman, except that there is no natural inequality between sexes [10], perhaps in physical strength” so far as economists such as John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill proposed the idea that “their affections make them so” as early as the eighteenth century. It is more crucial to have put an end to the absurd demand for “full equality” because women only make up less than 50% of males and any future significance or unique ability they may have come from that male portion of them. Approximately 50 years later, Weiniger, another economist, made the same claim. The division of workers according to gender is one of the most obvious and enduring aspects of the global labor market. This phenomenon manifests in two different ways: vertical and horizontal segregation [11]. The former refers to the concentration of men and women in various job categories without mentioning job hierarchies, whereas the latter concerns the concentration of males in higher-level jobs and women in lower-level positions, both within and between occupations and industries. Another prevalent phenomenon in a segregated labor market is that women tend to cluster in fewer occupations than men, which adds up to the large picture of inequality, explaining why women are paid less.

The inequality between the sexes in terms of political empowerment, health and survival, educational achievement, economic involvement and opportunity, and the gender gap is calculated using the global gender gap index. One of the few developing countries in which the important goals of social progress and economic growth India are closely linked to women's positions and gender equality [12]. The disparity between the social, political, intellectual, and cultural lives of men and women and the gender gap in economic accomplishment. The Global Gender Gap Report provides a ranking of 144 countries based on their progress toward gender parity in politics, economics, education, and health. In the 2017 and 2018 Gender Gap Index, India came in position 108. India dropped to the 112th overall when the global gender gap index of 2020 was announced in 2019.

Gender Gap in Literacy Status in India

When men and women show systematic variations in their educational attainment, there is a gender gap in the literacy rate. According to the 2011 census, there is an approximately 16% literacy disparity between men and women (Table 1).

Table 1. Gender inequality based on global gender gap in India.

Indicators of inequality	2018	2020	2021	2022	2023
Economic participation and opportunity	142	149	151	143	142
Educational attainment	114	112	114	107	26
Health and survival	147	150	155	146	142
Political empowerment	19	18	51	48	59
Gender gap index	108	112	140	135	127

Source: *Global Gender Gap Report, 2018-2023*

Development programs are impacted by the significant issue of illiteracy, particularly among women, which affects them not only in India but also globally [13, 14]. In India, there are notable differences in the educational, cultural, social, and economic opportunities afforded to men and women. Literacy and educational level are crucial markers of gender advancement. For census reasons, children under the age of five were deemed illiterate before 1991.

Children under the age of six were by definition deemed illiterate according to the 1991 census, but those seven years of age and beyond were classed as either “literate” or “illiterate.” Since then, the 2001 and 2011 censuses have used the same approach. India's overall literacy rate, as reported by the 2011 census, is 74.04%, and the rates for men and women are 82.14 and 65.46%, respectively (Table 2).

With a 93.91% total literacy rate, Kerala has the highest percentage of any state; the rates for men and women are 92.02 and 96.11%, respectively. In Kerala, the literacy rate among rural residents is 96.73% female and 95.35% male. In contrast, the proportions of literate men and women in urban regions were 96.55% and 101.99%, respectively. This is amazing. Furthermore, the “northern states of India” (Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, and Bihar) had extremely low literacy rates [15, 16]. Bihar had the lowest total literacy rate (63.82%). Haryana has a total literacy rate of 75.55 %, with 84.06% of men and 65.94% of women. Years of women were literate. The general literacy rate in Punjab is 75.84%; for men and women, it is 80.44 and 70.73%, respectively. Additionally, the general literacy rate in Rajasthan is 66.11%; for men, it is 79.11%, and for women, it is 52.12%.

According to the population census, male and female literacy rates improved from 8.86% and 27.15%, respectively, to 64.63% and 80.9%, respectively (Table 3). India's overall literacy rate increased steadily from 18.32% in 1951 to 72.98% in 2011. There was a greater gender difference in literacy in rural areas than in urban areas when comparing gender disparities in literacy between the two.

Table 2. The gender gap in literacy rate is based on various census years.

Year	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
1951	4.87	19.02	12.10	22.33	45.60	34.59	8.86	27.15	18.32
1961	10.10	34.30	22.50	40.50	66.00	54.40	15.35	40.40	28.31
1971	15.50	48.60	27.9	48.80	69.80	60.20	21.97	45.96	34.45
1981	21.70	49.60	36.00	56.30	76.70	67.20	29.76	56.38	43.57
1991	30.17	56.96	36.00	64.05	81.09	67.20	39.29	64.13	52.21
2001	46.70	71.40	59.40	73.20	86.70	80.30	53.67	75.26	64.83
2011	57.93	77.15	66.77	79.11	88.76	84.11	64.63	80.88	72.98

Source: Census report of various years.

Table 3. Gender inequality in the labor force participation of India.

Year	Male	Female	Gender gap
1901	61.1	31.7	29.4
1911	61.9	33.7	28.2
1921	60.5	32.6	27.9
1931	58.3	27.6	30.7
1941	NA	NA	NA
1951	54.1	23.3	30.8
1961	56.2	27.9	28.3
1971	52.8	14.2	38.6
1981	52.6	19.7	32.9
1991	51.6	22.3	28.9
2001	51.9	25.7	26.2
2011	53.26	25.51	27.75

Source: Census of India Reports for various years

Gender Inequality in the Labor Force Participation in India

The Work Participation Rate (WPR), which calculates the percentage of workers in the population, has a major influence on gender relations [17, 18]. Gender dynamics in the home and society are affected by the social effects of the job. The overall picture of India's labor participation rate for men and women from 1901 to 2011 is presented in Table 3, where women's rates have consistently outpaced those of men.

Gender Inequality in Educational Attainment

Certain measures of educational attainment for both boys and girls in India show gender differences. Table 4 presents the gross attendance ratio [19]. This contrasts the overall number of attendees with the entire population of a particular age group based on matching levels of education [20, 21]. The gender gap in literacy between males and females has shrunk over time, despite the fact that it continues to expand above primary education, indicating unequal access to higher education.

Gender Inequality in Political Participation in India

Differences in the representation of men and women in political leadership are seen in India's political environment. The percentage of women voting in Lok Sabha increased from 4.4% in 1952 to 7.9% in 1984. From 11.4% in 2009 to 11.9% in 2014, the gender gap in parliament's political participation rates narrowed over time.

Policy Implications of Gender Inequality and Sustainable Development

A gender-responsive approach to reviewing and revising public policies will expedite the process of accomplishing and implementing broad-based developmental objectives [22, 23]. To address the varied needs and interests of men and women, it is necessary to consider the various socially defined roles, responsibilities, and capacities of both genders, as well as the power dynamics and cultural contexts in which their activities are conducted [24, 25]. To achieve inclusive and sustainable economic growth and full and productive employment (SDG 8), current models of economic growth must incorporate initiatives that (i) provide good quality employment to all; (ii) improve women's ability to access productive assets and resources, especially in developing countries; (iii) remove discriminatory barriers that prevent women from entering the labor market; and (iv) eliminate gender gaps in education.

One of the most crucial strategies for lowering informal employment is to create jobs in the formal sector. In addition to enhancing pay and working conditions and expanding social security, it is critical to defend and advance the rights of both men and women who work in the unorganized sector [26–30].

To address gender inequalities in the labor market and increase female participation, gender equality provisions should be supported by institutional and legislative frameworks that ensure equal opportunities and rights; ensure equal pay, safety, and security; and prohibit discriminatory behaviors such as lower pension ages for women and workplace harassment. In reality, gender equality can only be attained through gender-neutral legislation and regulations, which do not guarantee that women can fully exercise their rights [31, 32, 33]. Gender stereotypes, discriminatory cultural practices, and power disparities between men and women endure, even in nations where laws supporting gender equality have been put into place. Furthermore, more work is needed to achieve gender equality and women's rights through institutional mechanisms, including political will and financial support.

Table 4. Gender inequality in educational attainments.

Educational attainments	Male (%)	Female (%)
Literacy rate	82.1	65.5
Gross attendance ratio in primary education	101	98
Gross attendance ratio in middle education	90	88
Gross attendance ratio in secondary education	96	85
Gross attendance ratio in higher education	67	54

Source: Census data 2011

Table 5. Gender equality contributions to sustainable development goals.

No.	Sustainable development goals	Gender equality contributions
1	No poverty	Increasing women's income and reducing gender wage gaps.
2	Zero hunger	Women's equal access to productive resources and opportunities.
3	Good health and wellbeing	Better access to quality health services contributes to decreasing preventable morbidity and mortality among women and men throughout the life course.
4	Quality education	Ensuring equitable and quality education strengthens women's capabilities and improves their living standards.
5	Gender quality	Removing gender-based discriminatory norms, Ending gender-based violence. Greater representation and participation of women in decision-making processes.
6	Clean water and sanitation	Availability of safe and affordable drinking water, as well as good quality sanitation.
7	Affordable and clean energy	Better infrastructure such as electricity contributes to decreasing women's unpaid care burden and positively affects intra-household bargaining power.
8	Decent work and economic growth	Reduction of gender gaps in the labor market, Reduce sexual harassment.
9	Industry, innovation, and infrastructure	Women's access to education and employment contributes to industrialization.
10	Reduced inequalities	Eliminating gender discrimination.
11	Sustainable cities and communities	Providing gender-equal access to public spaces and basic services in cities is vital to making human settlements and livelihoods inclusive and sustainable.
12	Responsible consumption and Production	Improving gender equality and women's presence in senior positions fosters the creation of gender-sensitive approaches and initiatives in environmental management and efficient use of natural resources.
13	Climate action	Gender equality in governance structures is associated with reduced carbon dioxide emissions, more land protection, and a greater possibility of ratification of environmental treaties.
14	Life below water	Gender equality in accessing assets including fisheries, aquaculture, and tourism, has a significant role in the conservation of oceans and seas.
15	Life on land	Women play an important role as land stewards and collectors of wood, wild foods, and herbs, and their knowledge of indigenous practices is key to preserving ecosystems.
16	Peace, justice, and strong institutions	Countries with increased women's participation and leadership in politics and civil society tend to be more inclusive, responsive, egalitarian, and democratic.

There are still structural issues that many women experiences, which must be addressed (Table 5). If women want to live decent lives and have more negotiating power in their families and society, they need more access to productive assets, resources, and opportunities, especially in the fields of employment, education, and training [14, 34, 35]. As a result, governance structures are now more gender-responsive, and women's voices and involvement in decisions that impact their lives are enhanced. Apart from tackling harmful gender stereotypes that incite and condone violence against women and girls, these systems can support women's empowerment in political, social, economic, and environmental spheres.

CONCLUSION

Ensuring sufficient funds for the execution of national plans and policies aimed at empowering women, together with promoting and institutionalizing a gender-responsive approach to funding, are critical steps towards achieving gender parity. These include encouraging respectable employment, providing wholesome food, lowering and redistributing family labor and unpaid care, and bolstering social security for all, especially for those employed in the unorganized sector of the economy. Gender-responsive policies and programs need to be carefully developed and implemented, taking into account the unique needs and experiences that women have throughout their lives, as well as the various ways in which discrimination against women intersects with other forms of discrimination.

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