
CONCEPT OF GENDER INEQUALITY

Sourabh Batar*

* Teerthanker Mahaveer Institute of Management and Technology,
Teerthanker Mahaveer University, Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh, INDIA

Email id: battarsourabh@gmail.com

DOI: [10.5958/2249-7315.2021.00197.0](https://doi.org/10.5958/2249-7315.2021.00197.0)

ABSTRACT

Gender inequality occurs in many aspects of our life, and they reinforce each other. Inequality in terms of health, for example, may have an impact on education, which in turn can have an impact on job possibilities, and so on. Even when laws are put in place, attitudes do not change, which is why gender inequality is a significant issue that has to be addressed. To comprehend gender inequality, one must first comprehend the distinctions between terms like gender, sex, gender identity, binary, and non-binary. Recognizing the relationship between sex and gender, as well as the difference between the two, may help to clarify the complicated discussion over topics like gender identity. Even in nations that have passed laws to encourage gender equality, changes in attitudes, particularly regarding the roles women may play, have been gradual, which explains why sexism persists throughout the globe. This article will examine the complexity of gender inequality and associated topics such as sex, gender, binary, non-binary identities, and sexism. This article will also look at how the gendering of behavior and the maintenance of stereotypes in society are influenced by our daily speech.

KEYWORDS: *Equality, Feminism, Gender, Inequality, Sexism.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Gender equality means that everyone, regardless of gender, is treated with the same respect, rights, and opportunity. In essence, gender equality means that everyone, regardless of gender, should have equal access to opportunities, resources, decision-making power, and the capacity to work. It is applicable to all social, economic, and political endeavors. It would involve guaranteeing that both dads and mothers had equal access to time off to care for their children. This seems to be pretty clear and easy on the surface, but there are many historical, cultural, traditional, and other reasons why gender equality may not always be attained. Some of the causes may be hidden because they are so firmly entrenched in our cultures[1].

Gender equality is the term used to describe equality between the sexes (male and female). Many scales of gender disparity, on the other hand, are labeled as 'gender' rather than 'sex.' At the organizational, national, and global levels, inequality is measured[2]. At a global level, gender inequality manifests itself in many ways across cultures, with certain issues being more persistent and urgent than others. Gender inequalities in health exist, such as high maternal mortality rates and female genital mutilation.

Other inequities include underage marriage, human trafficking, inadequate political representation, and educational disparities. As a consequence, women have fewer chances than males. According to UN figures, 27% of Indian girls are married off before they reach the age of 18. This is particularly common in impoverished families, when girls are 'married off' so that they are no longer a financial burden. They are then expected to be devoted and industrious spouses. Their job description includes managing the home and caring for youngsters and the elderly.

This disparity is not limited to low-income nations. For example, Japanese women spend four times as much time on domestic chores as males. It reveals inequalities in women's prospects outside the house, as well as the fact that males in Japan are more likely to have economic power. This disparity exists in almost every country on the planet.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 Movements of Feminists:

For decades, gender equality has been a source of concern. Gender disparity has been the focus of concern for more than a century. It has received recent attention as a result of feminist movements.

The suffrage movement, which aimed to combat gender disparity in fundamental rights, was the first 'wave of feminism.' It acknowledged women's independence from males and their status as equals in the eyes of the law.

This global movement spanned the second part of the nineteenth century and the first four decades of the twentieth century, resulting in nations granting women the right to vote.

The focus of the so-called "second wave of feminism" was on legal and social equality. It was dubbed the 'sex wars' because it focused on topics such as reproductive rights, domestic abuse, and sexuality and pornography.

In the 1990s, feminist activism resurfaced, culminating in the so-called "third wave" of feminism. It concentrated on identity diversity, especially "intersectionality." Intersectionality is a concept that acknowledges that individuals have many identities, such as gender, race, class, sexuality, and religion, which constantly overlap and intertwine.

The fourth wave is similarly linked to intersectionality, but it focuses on social media movements such as the #MeToo movement. Generally speaking, the various 'waves of feminism' have seen 'patriarchy' as a fundamental problem that perpetuates gender inequality. As per, Allan Johnson, patriarchy is a system reflecting an uneven allocation of power that renders male privilege probable under systems of male domination[3].

2.2 Gender Equality Approaches:

Gender equality may be approached in two ways. The first is the liberal approach, which emphasizes equality of opportunity and depends on legal safeguards to ensure it. Giving women equal political and legal rights, such as the ability to vote and work, is one example. The radical approach, on the other hand, contends that patriarchy must be fought and that just granting equal rights would have little impact on gendered behaviors. It's because the actions, attitudes, and socialization that happen on a daily basis have a lot of influence over people.

2.3 Gender:

Gender is a social construct based on the identity of a person. It's a method for categorizing individuals and assigning them jobs and responsibilities. It expresses how someone is seen or how they feel. Genders are generally divided into two categories: male and female. They're meant to be attracted to both male and female sex. Gender is a cultural interpretation of the sexed body, according to Judith Butler. As a consequence, certain expectations are imposed on how one should behave himself/herself in order to meet gender norms in terms of clothing, actions, speech, and so on. The term a woman being "lady-like" promotes society's aspirations and expectations for how women should behave themselves. Similarly, the term "lads will be lads" reinforces disparities in men's expectations. Women, for example, are often assumed to be gentler, more sympathetic, meek, and kind than males[4].

2.4 The difference between gender and sex:

Sex refers to a person's biological features. It particularly relates to a person's reproductive anatomy. Gender is more often thought of as a social construct. Society places a high value on an individual's ability to identify his or her sex and gender with each other, associating male with masculinity and female with femininity.

An person is classified as either a male or a female at birth. However, many individuals are labeled as "intersex" because of their physical and hormonal characteristics, as well as the fact that their bodies do not fit into the traditional categories of male and female bodies. As a consequence, such individuals are subjected to a tremendous degree of pressure to identify as either male or female. Due to these pressures and expectations, many individuals seek medical therapy in order to conform to the socially given sex categories of male and female. However, in today's world, non-binary gender or sexual identity is becoming more widely accepted.

As a result, sex is regarded as a biological rather than a social construct, but it remains closely linked to gender. A male sexed body and male gender, for example, are often believed to be inextricably linked.

2.5 binary and non-binary mean:

Non-binary implies not conforming to the gender binary's set norms, i.e. gender identities that are neither masculine nor feminine. Historically, it was assumed that the majority of individuals fit into this dichotomy, but this is no longer the case. This gender binary may be seen in everyday life, such as on public restroom signage. Nonetheless, there is a growing awareness that people cannot be classified only by their gender, and that there are many other genders with which people identify. Individuals who identify as queer or gender fluid are included in this category, in addition to those who are classified as intersex. The word "queer" refers to those who do not identify as heterosexual or cisgender and instead identify with "nonnormative" gender and sexuality categories. Individuals whose gender corresponds to the sex assigned to them at birth are referred to as cisgender[5].

2.6 Reason behind gender so complicated:

Gender is a difficult concept to grasp for a variety of reasons. The gender binary is very restrictive, and gender identity may shift not just through time, but also between people. Some aspects of gendered behavior may be accepted, and the relationship between specific behaviors and gender identity can be divided. It can be shown by the fact that females dress pink while boys wear blue, and that girls play with dolls while guys play with weapons. This means that there is no essential connection between gender and the sexed body, and that a person may identify with any gender identity regardless of his or her sexed body. The connection between sex and gender, on the other hand, is more complicated. For starters, there are significant historical and ongoing connections between gendered bodies and gendered behaviors. Second, some people believe that their gendered physique corresponds to their gendered identity. Studying transgender identity is one approach to grasp this complexity[6].

2.7 Transgender:

The word "transgender" refers to a person whose gender identification differs from the conventional gendered behaviors associated with the sexed body at birth.

If gender is socially created, then anybody may live as the gender they identify with without undergoing surgery or taking hormone supplements to change their physique. However, the word "transgender" includes transsexuals who have their bodies physically and in other ways, such as how they dress. As a result, their sexed body corresponds to the gender with which they identify. This has to do with the sexed body and its gender. As a result, some individuals feel compelled to

have their sexed bodies match their gender.

Is gender, therefore, a social construct? Yes, gender is socially created, but variables such as power and biological connection are crucial in this process.

2.8 Power:

Men and women are often required to fulfill a variety of behavioral standards. These expectations affect and control our conduct because we either comply to them or reject them, resulting in us being labeled as "odd." Judith Butler, an American philosopher and gender theorist, has described how humans perform gender identities to establish, re-create, and maintain them, leading to the belief that these gender identities represent the fundamental essence of gender (men are like this, women are like that)[7].

This is what she refers to as 'gender performativity,' in which the way a person moves, speaks, dresses, and acts on a daily basis is just an act or performance through which we develop and maintain conventional gender identities. Judith Butler also discusses how we must conform to various gender identities in order to be recognized as acceptable subjects. While it may seem that we have the freedom to select or reject gender norms, if we reject what is considered "normal," we are branded "abnormal" or "different," a stance that may be isolating. This categorization forces us to act in the 'correct' and so-called 'normal' gender. For example, we use the word 'iron' to characterize a lady who has traits more often associated with males, such as confidence and dominance.

2.9 Sex-Gender:

The identification of individuals based on their sex, as well as the connection of gendered behaviors with each sex, demonstrates that, although gender and sex are distinct, it is very difficult to divorce gender from its connotations with sex, according to Judith Butler. In general, we expect men to exhibit masculine characteristics and women to exhibit feminine characteristics. We often use the words sex and gender interchangeably in daily speech. The relationship between gender and sex, on the other hand, is much too important. It's because a lot of the issues around gender disparity are sex issues, and biological distinctions are necessary to grasp the core of the problem.

2.10 Othering:

Stereotypes have developed as a consequence of the female and male sex being connected to certain gender roles. As a result, society has created specific expectations on people to behave in a certain way based on their gender. The gender binary is built on this foundation. We accentuate one characteristic at the expense of others when we categorize individuals according to their sex. This is difficult for persons who do not identify with this category, such as intersex people and those changing their gender. It forces such people to stand out from the crowd and attracts unwanted attention to them. This is referred to as 'othering.' Persons with certain characteristics are recognized as being distinct from the majority group that forms the 'norm' when they are 'othered'[8].'

Othering has both official and informal purposes. Formally, it is the result of being regarded differently by the law, such as homosexuality. Othering is increasingly commonly practiced in daily situations throughout the globe, when people designated as the "others" may be treated differently and less favorably. Women may be seen as the "other" in the workplace by males who are oppressed by sexism.

2.11 Sexism:

It is defined as treating someone unfairly or discriminating against them because of their gender or sex. Stereotypes, for example, are the beliefs that males can lead better than women and that

women can better care for their children at home than men. So stereotypes are collective perceptions about an individual's behavior or traits depending on the community to which they belong. In our heads, this occurs all the time. We connect a certain object or thing with a particular category to which we belong. As a result, when we look at someone, our brains instantly associate that individual with a specific group to which he or she may belong[9].

As a result, when we look at someone, we think she's a woman, he's a man, or he's black. This is not an immoral act on the part of our thoughts. It becomes an issue when we overgeneralize, that is, when we expect individuals to behave in a particular manner and then penalize them if they don't. People who do not fall into that stereotype are penalized in that circumstance, even if they are doing their hardest. Women, for example, are often seen to be excellent at raising children and running a home.

This is a stereotype that has become stronger through time. Women were unable to establish themselves in the workplace because they were not recognized. As a result, women are seen as being warmer and gentler, which contradicts the image of a leader. A leader is someone who is confident in their ability to lead and make tough choices, which contradicts the reputation of being warm and gentle. As a result, sexism may still be seen in today's workplace. As a result, even today, women are burdened by preconceptions fostered by sexism[10].

3. CONCLUSION

Gender equality is not just a desirable objective; it is also a need for eliminating poverty, promoting sustainable development, and establishing good governance. Gender roles and stereotypes are created by our culture and society, and these roles are promoted as an archetype or appropriate and acceptable conduct for a person of that sex. The proponents of this theory argue that the differences in how men and women behave are entirely due to societal conventions, while the opponents argue that biological factors influence an individual's conduct. However, since societal norms have a major effect on gendered behavior, the magnitude of such impact may vary.

Gender is a concept created by society. Gender is a social construct that is taught. We have no clue how to behave as a male or a girl when we are born. We rely on others to teach us how to behave appropriately for our gender. As a result, a person's gender is just an act performed to meet societal expectations. As a result, it is not a true expression of a person's gender identity. However, no one should be forced to fit into predefined gender categories. A person should be able to identify their gender as they choose. Humans are not one-dimensional creatures with one-dimensional personalities. If we want to understand people, we need to view them as individuals, not just as gender or sex, but as beings who develop through time as products of the challenging and complex connection between their biology, society, and culture.

REFERENCES

1. Ferrant. How Do Gender Inequalities Hinder Development? Cross-Country Evidence. *Ann. Econ. Stat.*, 2015;117/118:313. doi: 10.15609/annaeconstat2009.117-118.313.
2. Batra R and Reio TG. Gender Inequality Issues in India. *Adv. Dev. Hum. Resour.*, 2016;18(10): 88-101. doi: 10.1177/1523422316630651.
3. Blake KR, Bastian B, Denson TF, Grosjean P, and Brooks RC. Income inequality not gender inequality positively covaries with female sexualization on social media. *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U. S. A.*, 2018 Aug 28;115(35):8722-8727. doi: 10.1073/pnas.1717959115.
4. Palència L. et al. Gender Policies and Gender Inequalities in Health in Europe: Results of the SOPHIE Project. *International Journal of Health Services*. 2017 Jan;47(1):61-82. doi: 10.1177/0020731416662611.

5. Klingorová K and Havlíček T. Religion and gender inequality: The status of women in the societies of world religions. *Morav. Geogr. Reports*, 2015, doi: 10.1515/mgr-2015-0006.
6. Richardson ET. et al. Gender inequality and HIV transmission: A global analysis. *J. Int. AIDS Soc.*, 2014; 17(1):19035. doi: 10.7448/IAS.17.1.19035.
7. Murendo C and Murenje G. Decomposing gender inequalities in self-assessed health status in Liberia. *Glob. Health Action*, 2018;11(sup3):1603515. doi: 10.1080/16549716.2019.1603515.
8. Ghanotakis E, Peacock D, and Wilcher R. The importance of addressing gender inequality in efforts to end vertical transmission of HIV. *J. Int. AIDS Soc.*, 2012; 15(Suppl 2): 17385. doi: 10.7448/IAS.15.4.17385.
9. Anisman-Razin M, Kark R, and Saguy T. Putting gender on the table': Understanding reactions to women who discuss gender inequality. *Gr. Process. Intergr. Relations*, 2018;21(5): 690-706. doi: 10.1177/1368430217744648.
10. Banda PC, Odimegwu CO, Ntoimo LFC, and Muchiri E. Women at risk: Gender inequality and maternal health. *Women Heal.*, 2017 Apr;57(4):405-429. doi: 10.1080/03630242.2016.1170092.