

Gender Inequality: Causes, Consequences, and the Way Forward

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Boys will be boys is the most commonly used phrase in today's and ancestral world to validate men's violent actions and misogynist perceptions. Gender, a socially constructed concept, is an identity of an individual which describes one as man, women or transgender. One perceives itself as man through socialization from the very start of his life where he learns to be a boy through preexisting narratives. These narratives make or break oneself and give rise to a distinguishing line between genders. This stratification of gender gives birth to gender inequality where one gender is prioritized and considered supreme to the other. It is evident from the fact that women are mainly reserved for household chores and men go outside to earn bread and butter for their families. These deeply en-rooted stereotypes reflect partiality against genders and give rise to gender-based violence and hatred. While there are several causes like Patriarchal led system, illiteracy, preexisting gender norms which result in increasing gender-based violence, poverty, overpopulation that can be addressed if provocative measures are taken in form of gender-based policies and empowerment through media.

The foremost cause of gender inequality is the patriarchal social structure. This system is based on male-dominated society where men are responsible for earning, while women are forced to stay at home taking care of kids and household chores. This creates financial dependence on male and women are not allowed to work but stay at home. These stereotypes are most prominent in feudalism in rural settings where women are not allowed to go outside but stay at home. It has been reported that Pakistan rural areas are affected by feudal lords who restrict their women. Sindh is the top in this list where women literacy and women workforce is the lowest in Pakistan. This marginalization of women is one of the reasons of gender inequality in Pakistan and developing countries in South Asia.

Illiteracy is the other factor in promoting gender inequality in Pakistan and worldwide. Education provides enlightenment and the ability to work harder to achieve your goals. Barring this basic right hinders women growth in society and restricts them at home with limited authority. Third Gender is also barred from taking schooling due to ridicule and mocking of society towards them. In Pakistan women literacy rate stands at 42% while men literacy rate is 58% according to the reports published at DAWN. This presents an alarming state where women's basic right to education is stripped off by getting them married at early age. High drop out rate due to marriage is the one example of high female illiteracy rate. This conservative mindset is the other cause of gender inequality.

Society norms and practices reflect gender inequality at the most. These norms are inherent and traditional to the society. If a family gives birth to third gender they out of shame abandon them on streets which affects their upbringing making them adopt profession of beggary, dance and other while other genders don't experience this kind of life. Practices such as giving men freedom to education, profession and lifestyle while women having limited access to education and are forced to live by the expectations of family which include arrange marriage, no work, participating in household chores, cooking and obedient to their male guardians be it father, brother or husband are common in the society. A survey conducted showed that almost 80% women are restricted at home in Pakistan and are housewives. This limits gender roles and women are succumbed to being at home taking care of kids and their husbands. These stereotypes against women and in favor of men are the other reason of gender inequality.

Denial of Legal and political rights is the cause of gender inequality. Misuse and influence in voting rights of women by men reflects the denial of political rights. Legal frameworks lack gender equality policies and gap between the implementation of these policies. A survey conducted in 2024

Pakistan general elections concluded that women who voted were heavily influenced by their male guardians. This influence can affect the women understanding of politics and hinder their rights which are exclusive to them . Women are also victim of domestic violence with their legal right to report is obstructed by the males . This denial of rights in legal , political aspects clearly depicts the inequality of gender in society.

Women are also financially dependent to men in today's society . The reason can be the lack of economic opportunities for women . Men are employed at leadership positions in both academics , management , and administrative arenas with a high wage and allowances while men have low opportunities and are concentrated at education departments as teachers , Even there are low women professors than men . A study reported that about 22% of female are working class and 88% of men in Pakistan. This represents low opportunities at different department and also low wages as compared to male for the same position. Unless equal opportunities are granted to both genders and trans gender inequality will persist as long it is ignored.

Misinterpretation of religion is another factor of gender inequality in Pakistan and worldwide. This result in the conservative mindset among people who believe women being restricted and isolated at houses. While the religion like Islam promotes gender equality and appreciates working women in different domains with hijab and proper covering of their bodies. Hazrat Kadija was the prominent women trader of Islam . Islam do not restricts women but empower them .The conservative mindset is instead the misinterpretation of Islam and cause of gender inequality in Muslim countries like Pakistan , Iran and Afghanistan where women workforce is critically low than the developed countries like US, Canada where women are equally represented in different forums and have equal opportunities as males. Such misinterpretation of religion is the factor behind gender inequality.

Several factors like this are the causative agents of gender inequality in Pakistan and worldwide . This gender inequality can result in severe consequences such as gender based crimes in form of assault and hate against specified gender. There are many consequences of gender based inequality which are clearly evident in today's world where every second crime is gender related .

Increasing gender based violence is one of the alarming consequence of gender inequality. This includes , child rape, Sexual assault , marital rape , acid burning, honor killing are most common types of violence against women . Honor killing of Qandeel Baloch is one example of Gender Based Violence. Another Murder of a 17y old tiktoker Sana Yousaf by a 22y old boy reflects how hate against one gender result in killing of it . This misogynist perspective of men against women is the concept learned from society where every men subordinates and objectify women as being frail and possessed. Child rape and murder of a 6 y old Zainab is an other example of Gender Based crimes brewed largely from objectification of women.

Another result of gender based inequality is the inadequate policies . These policies stem from male dominance assemblies which lack female perspective . These policies are favorable to men and do not threaten their existence and leadership. Every state matter or bill passed in assemblies are drafted by male senators and law makers. This represents ignoring women rights being violated and not drafting any law against it. One example is the late conviction of Zahir Jaffar after 4 years of murder of Noor Makhdum . These inadequate policies and policy implementation are one the result of gender based inequality prevalent in society.

Gender Inequality can be assumed from the fact that gender based discrimination exist in professional setting . Due to inequality against women , they are discriminated and are forced to be compliance to rules and regulation while males don't face

this and are given authority over women even when they are at lower ranks than women. This can be reflected by a gender based wage gap that exists in every domain . One Actress reported of a lower wage being the main lead as compared to the actor . This is so common that no one even raise their voice and accept it . This type of discrimination can result in gender parities.

The other consequence of gender inequality is the deterioration of health including physical and mental health. Women are ignored of their health based issues are avoided taken hospital. Even a pregnant women is not allowed to be touched by male gynaecologist in their labour and are died due to negligence from their male guardians. In south Punjab , 8 out of 10 women die in labour due to lack of access to female gynaecologist. Being emotionally neglected by their husbands women are also affected mentally . This emotional and physical toll on women is the big depiction of gender based inequality.

Inter generational poverty is one consequence of gender based inequality. When women are struck from education and employment , the family is succumb to poverty. A man cant nourish six individuals by own in the inflation led world. This creates undernourishment of children and women affecting their health and lifestyle. More families are dying in rural areas due to this poverty . Many countries are affected by this including Pakistan . The areas of balochistan , south punjab are the prominent examples of intergenerational poverty where men are the sole earner and provider of a large family . Gender based inequality results in inter generational poverty.

Hindrance to national development is the other consequence of this inequality.Low GDP is the result of sole earner in the society. When a society only provides opportunities to males pushing back females, it may affect national progress and may affect economy leading country to inflation and poverty .

Countries like Pakistan are most affected where gender based inequality is frequently observed . Global Gender Gap Index by World Economic Forum (WEF) reported Pakistan is 145/146 in gender equality . This low number and high gender inequality can be assessed by its declining economy . Canada , US on the other hand are at top 50 and have stable economy and GDP. A nation cant progress as long as women are discriminated. So national development is clearly linked to Gender Inequality.

While these challenges exist on the way to gender equality , there are ways out to handle them and promote gender equality . That can be in the form of legal protection of all genders without any discrimination, ensuring justice , by inculcating them their rights . in that way these consequences can be reversed and a society with equal rights will be born.

One way in which gender stability can be ensured is by legal protection . Law should be bound to protect all its citizens irrespective of gender . There shall be laws that protects women by their education , employment and other rights . A bill was passed in May 2025 by National Assembly to culminate marriage registration below age 18 . This is a breakthrough in country like Pakistan where early marriages are the reason of women oppression and illiteracy . Laws like these protect the women and prevent men to oppress them . So , by making laws and providing legal protection gender inequality can reduce .

Gender based violence can only be culminated if there is severe punishment to the one who commit it . By enforcement of laws and by ensuring transparency in justice , these crimes may reduce in society . There are existing laws and regulations which provide severe punishments for the crimes but their enforcement is delayed due to political interference . Zahir Jafir sentence was delayed because of the same reasons . This delay in justice gives rise to more crime like these then reduce it . Effective and Quick justice should be ensured in case of these gender based violence.

Education is the effective tool to get rid of poverty and likewise gender inequality . Illiteracy is one of the reason of gender inequality . While the constitution of 1973 gives equal right of education to all genders in article 26(A) “ Education is made free and compulsory for all children up till age 16” By making a committee that ensures equal education for all and by effective developments by Ministry of Women Development , Pakistan can fill the literacy gap between male and female . By providing equal access to education , there will be tolerance between genders and will learn to co exist in the society which will further open opportunities for both in country and abroad.

Media is a powerful tool to raise awareness of issues and gender based violence . Media in form of electronic , print and social can have a huge significance in promoting gender equality and empowering women who are oppressed. TV channels should create Dramas and Shows which promote gender equality , tolerance , empowered female concept just like the drama of “ Zindagi Gulzar Hai” in which protagonist was empowered to become an official in the patriarchal and misogynist family. This would urge women to take stand for themselves and pursue their aspirations and professions. Social Media can highlight issues and gender based crimes for rapid justice. Through the wise use of media , this platform can help in mitigating gender inequality and promoting equality

Women are the least included in country affairs and policy making . This creates inadequate policies resulting in gender inequality . If women are equally part of assemblies , policy making and in other administrative posts where they can lead could be instrumental in making gender inclined policies where every gender is equally considered and their reservations are addressed. Benazir Bhutto is the promising example of leadership who promoted gender equality and took reforms for the betterment of Pakistani women . Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) was the one reform taken for the women who

are oppressed and are dependent on males for every necessity . Programs like these only stem from Female leadership who are aware of the social standing of women .

One other method that can help in reducing inequality is by inculcating gender based curriculum in schools and universities . This will create awareness of one gender and society impact on gender . Teaching is the best strategy to cope up with the traditional norms which are hindering the progress of country . Gender Sciences as a subject instills knowledge about gender related issues and violence and help in understanding how society promotes it . This inclusion in curriculum is the best strategy to cope up with gender based inequality

Several causes breed gender inequality with patriarchy being the prominent cause resulting in gender based crimes and violence and hence by effective measure this can be prevented. Societies are made and not born .With education and empowerment of women through several platforms like social media , gender inequality would be reversible and a society with equal standing could born. Government and policy makers should play active role in mitigating this and promoting inclusion of women then excluding it for the progress of country.