

The Global Role of Women and the Challenges Encountered in Today's World

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Abstract

A woman plays a variety of great roles in everyone's life in various forms by being involved in various relationships. From her birth till her end of life, she plays various roles as a daughter, sister, wife, mother and other relationships. Despite demonstrating proficiency in all their roles, women seem to be lagging behind men in today's modern era. In a male-dominated society, a woman's abilities are often viewed as less than those of a man. Though our government's efforts to run awareness programs, the life of a woman has become more complicated than that of a man. When we compare the condition of women today with that of mythical society, it is clear that there has been some improvement. Women have started working and contributing towards household expenses. In many areas, women have surpassed men. Every day, girls are achieving impressive feats that make their families and society proud and the entire country.

Keywords: Educators, Politics, Works, sports, Culture and sciences, Entertainment, Journalism, Culinary arts)

Introduction

The status of women in India has evolved throughout recorded Indian history. In ancient times, especially in the Indo-Aryan-speaking regions, women's position in society deteriorated, and this subordination continued into India's early modern period. During the rule of the British East India Company (1757–1857) and the British Raj (1858–1947), measures aimed at improvement were implemented. The Indian constitution prohibits discrimination based on sex and empowers the government to take special measures for women. Women's rights under the Constitution of India mainly include equality, dignity, and freedom from discrimination. India also has various laws governing women's rights. Several women have holding senior official positions in the Indian government, including the President of India, the Prime Minister of India, and the Speaker of the Lok Sabha. However, many women in India continue to face significant difficulties.

Objective of the study

Understanding the systemic barriers that women face in various aspects of life involves recognizing the unique challenges they encounter based on their geographic location and social context. It is essential to analyze the impact of gender inequality on societies and advocate for policies and interventions that promote gender equality. Additionally, empowering women includes raising awareness of their contributions and potential. This encompasses crucial areas such as education, economic participation, political representation, access to healthcare, and protection from violence.

Data and Methodology

To study the global role of women and the challenges they face, various data sources were utilized, including the World Bank's Gender Statistics, UN Women's reports, ILOSTAT and national censuses. These sources provide crucial information on key indicators such as female labour force participation, educational attainment, political representation, access to healthcare, economic empowerment, and gender-based violence. The data is often broken down by region and socioeconomic status. The methodologies employed typically involve quantitative analysis of these datasets, as well as qualitative research methods, such as interviews and focus groups, to gain deeper insights into women's experiences and perspectives in different contexts.

Participation of women in various field

Educators

The education of women in India is crucial for improving the overall living standards in the country. Over the years, women's rights and educational opportunities have expanded, leading to a more significant presence of women as educators. Today, women work as teachers, professors, administrators, and in various educational roles. They play a vital role in creating nurturing and inclusive environments in educational institutions, fostering learning and personal growth. Additionally, women educators are instrumental in promoting gender equality and advocating for the rights of women and girls. Their efforts include advocating for equal access to education, implementing gender-sensitive curricula, and challenging gender stereotypes that restrict opportunities for women and girls.¹ In many communities, women also fulfil critical roles as educators, teaching essential life skills such as health and hygiene, parenting, and environmental sustainability. They often play a significant part in preserving cultural traditions and heritage through their teaching and mentorship. Overall, women's unique perspectives and skills, combined with their dedication to education, make them invaluable contributors to building a better and more equitable world. In 2023, 56.67% of primary education teachers in India were female. In 2019, 43.34% of teachers in upper secondary education were female. During the 2019-20 school year, there were more female teachers than male teachers at the pre-primary level. Additionally, 42.9% of teachers in higher education in India were female, which shows an improvement from 42.2% in 2018-19 and 63% in 2014-15.²

Challenges

- Deep-rooted patriarchal beliefs often hinder women's advancement in the education sector, resulting in unequal treatment and fewer leadership opportunities.
- Many rural schools lack adequate infrastructure and qualified female teachers, which limits girls' access to education. Child marriage forces girls to leave school prematurely, negatively impacting their educational attainment.
- Women educators, especially in rural areas, may face threats to their personal safety due to social norms and insufficient security measures.
- The prevalence of sexual harassment in educational institutions can discourage women from pursuing teaching careers.
- Women frequently encounter barriers to achieving leadership positions within the education system.
- Gender inequality, restricts women's access to quality education, which in turn affects their employment opportunities and income levels.

Government schemes and programs specifically designed to promote female teachers, including scholarships, incentives for girls' education, and mentorship programs. Raising awareness about gender equality and the importance of female education through community outreach and media campaigns. Improving school infrastructure, providing access to technology, and ensuring availability of qualified female teachers in rural regions. Enforcing strong policies against sexual harassment and providing accessible reporting mechanisms within educational institutions. Empowering women educators through leadership training programs to equip them with skills necessary for career advancement. Incorporating gender-sensitive content into the curriculum to challenge stereotypes and promote gender equality. Involving local communities in decision-making processes related to education and promoting girls' education. Highlighting successful female educators as role models and facilitating mentorship opportunities for aspiring women teachers.

Politics

The most significant gap in women's political representation is found at the highest levels of power. Today, only 27 countries are led by a woman³, a modest increase from just 18 countries a decade ago, and 107 countries have never had a woman leader.⁴ Women make up only 23 percent of cabinet members heading ministries worldwide, and just 15 countries have cabinets with parity between women and men. In 141 countries, women hold less than one-third of cabinet minister positions, and seven countries have no women represented in their cabinets at all. However, currently, only about 1 in 4 parliamentary seats are held by women. Women still lack significant representation in the highest political positions. As of October 2019, only 10 women were serving as Head of State and 13 as Head of Government across 22 countries. This is an increase from four Head of State and eight prime ministers across 12 countries in 1995. In India, Only four political parties are led by women. From 1970 to 1980, 4.3% of candidates and 70% of electoral races did not have any women candidates. As of 2013, it was reported that 11% of members of parliament were women in the Lok Sabha, and 10.6% were women in the Rajya Sabha.⁵

Challenges:

- Traditional gender roles, gender-based stereotypes, and discriminatory attitudes and norms.
- The male-dominated model of politics tends to undermine the value of women's contributions and their participation.
- Lack of party support and exclusion from decision-making party structures.
- Gender blind legal framework.
- Lack of formal or political education and limited access to information.
- Lack of political experience.
- The dual burden and a disproportionate share of domestic work.
- Lack of media coverage and gender-based stereotypes and bias in the media.
- In countries where candidates are responsible for deploying their party monitors during Election Day, lack of party monitors safeguards the interests of women's candidatures

Women are fighting for their rights, demanding equal representation and opportunities. Digital technology can empower women by providing equal access to information. Political parties need to reserve leadership positions for women and increase their participation at all levels of government. The current communication technology, including mobile phones, the internet, and social media, has empowered women voters to engage in online dialogues and seek better representation for their

concerns. Elected women officials can use these tools to implement political campaign strategies. Social media platforms have become an equalizer for women activists and politicians, allowing them to mobilize support and break their dependency on traditional media. Technology has the potential to increase women's visibility in politics and aid in the implementation of gender-sensitive policies. Electoral gender quotas can mitigate structural discrimination against women and promote diversity in the political sphere. Social media has a positive impact on political participation and can help eliminate barriers preventing women's involvement. India must ensure adequate representation of women in politics

Works

In June 2019, the Fortune 500 reached a milestone with the highest number of women CEOs ever recorded. However, the overall picture remains bleak: Out of the 500 chief executives leading the highest-grossing firms, just under 7 percent are women.⁶ When looking at the entire workforce, the gender gap in labour force participation among prime working-age adults (25 to 54) has remained stagnant over the past 20 years. Despite improved education among women, little progress has been made in addressing deeply entrenched occupational segregation in both developed and developing countries. Women still bear a disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work. In developing countries, this includes arduous tasks such as water collection, for which women and girls are responsible in 80 per cent of households that do not have access to water on the premises.

In India 2023, 32.7% of women aged 15 and older were part of the labour force, compared to 76.8% of men.⁷ This percentage represents the portion of the population that is economically active. The female labour force participation rate in India has been increasing since 1990. However, India's female labour force participation rate is lower than that of other countries in the lower middle-income group. In 2023, India ranked 165th out of 187 countries in terms of female labour force participation rate.⁸ Some argue that India is an outlier in terms of female labour force participation, considering its level of economic growth. Others suggest that caregiving harms women's labour force participation, reducing their possibility of participating in the labour market by 20 percentage points.

challenges:

- Women are paid less than men, with white women earning 82 cents for every dollar a man makes.
- Women are often paid less than men, even when they are more efficient. Women are often responsible for the majority of unpaid childcare and household work.
- 72% of women say that work-life balance is a source of conflict. 69% of female employees say that society pressures them to prioritize family over their careers.
- Women often prioritize education but may face challenges finding suitable jobs after completing their studies.
- Women may lack the support they need to succeed in business, including financial access, emotional support, and relevant connections.
- Women may feel unsafe and threatened in the workplace, as well as in their homes and public spaces.

Provide flexible work hours, remote work options, generous parental leave policies, and childcare support. Establish mentorship programs, educate on unconscious bias and gender stereotypes, review salary structures, and implement transparent promotion criteria. Offer leadership training for women,

encourage peer support, address the 'likeability penalty,' update company policies, involve men in promoting gender equality, and use data to track progress and adapt strategies

Culture and sciences

The Nobel Prize, awarded annually, recognizes intellectual achievement and academic, cultural, and scientific advances. Since its inception in 1901, it has been awarded to over 900 individuals. However, only 65 of the winners have been women⁹, with 19 in the categories of physics, chemistry, and physiology or medicine. Marie Curie was the first female laureate in 1903 when she and her husband won a joint prize for physics. Eight years later, she was solely awarded the Chemistry Prize, making her the only woman in history to win the Nobel Prize twice. Despite women being behind numerous scientific discoveries throughout history, only 30% of researchers worldwide and 35% of all students enrolled in STEM-related fields of study are women.¹⁰ In India, only 16% of scientists are women, which is lower than in most other countries. This slow increase in the number of women scientists suggests that the government's efforts to close the gender gap are not effective. Additionally, only 16% of STEM faculty members in India are women. In engineering and technical courses, women are underrepresented, with only 29.1% of students being women.

Challenges:

- Gender bias can limit women's access to resources, such as education, healthcare, and property ownership. It can also lead to a narrow understanding of women's capabilities and how they should behave.
- Women face harassment in the workplace, which can lead to unhealthy work environments, mental health challenges, and poor job satisfaction.
- Violence against women in politics is a significant barrier to their effective representation.
- Microaggressions can undermine women's confidence, inhibit their sense of belonging, and limit their opportunities for advancement.
- Women may face a lack of work-life balance.
- Hostile work environment: Women may face a hostile work environment.

Promote positive female role models in STEM, encourage girls to pursue STEM subjects, address gender biases in education, support work-life balance, enforce anti-discrimination policies, provide unconscious bias training, foster inclusive environments, offer mentorship and sponsorship programs for women, prioritize gender parity in funding, showcase female scientists' achievements, increase women in leadership positions, challenge gender stereotypes, and encourage male allies to support women's advancement.

Journalism

Progress towards gender equality in news media has stalled. A study spanning 20 years and 114 countries found that only 24% of the individuals featured in newspapers, television, and radio news are women.¹¹ In addition, there is a glass ceiling for women in news reporting, with only 37% of stories being reported by women as of 2015, and this figure has not changed over a decade. Women are also underrepresented in digital news, making up only 26% of the people in internet news stories and media news tweets. Only 4% of traditional and digital news stories challenge gender stereotypes. The underrepresentation of women in the media, combined with stereotypes, plays a significant role in shaping harmful attitudes of disrespect and violence towards women.

In India in 2022, a survey conducted by News Laundry revealed that male journalists constitute the majority of staff in Hindi and English newspapers. For instance, in the English newspapers that were surveyed, The Telegraph had the highest percentage of male journalists at over 87%, while Business Standard had the highest percentage of female journalists at around 37%. According to a preliminary analysis, women held 20.9% of leadership positions in news channels and 26.3% of leadership positions in digital media outlets. The Global Media Monitoring Project study found that men accounted for 68–89% of news coverage as subjects and sources across all news. The study also indicated a decline in the number of women reporters between 2015 and 2020, dropping from 43% to 13% in print and 60% to 52% in TV. Women hold only 13% of senior roles in Indian media. Journalism, like many other industries, is male-dominated, and women have faced significant discrimination within the profession since its inception.

Challenges:

- Women journalists are more likely to experience online and offline attacks, including harassment, intimidation, and physical assault.
- Women journalists are often paid less than men for the same work.
- Women are underrepresented in leadership roles. Stereotyping: Women journalists may be pigeonholed into covering "soft" topics.
- Women journalists may face bias in the way their work is evaluated. Family and work balance: Women journalists may have difficulty balancing their work and family life.
- Women journalists may have low self-esteem and low ambition, which can hinder their career advancement.

Establish clear anti-harassment policies with accessible reporting and swift disciplinary actions. Implement mandatory diversity training for all staff, including leadership. Create family-friendly policies, robust mentorship programs, and women-led journalist networks. Actively seek diverse candidates and track gender disparities in leadership roles. Provide comprehensive safety training, legal support, and clear guidelines for handling online harassment. Encourage reporting on issues affecting women and marginalized groups. Top management must champion gender equality initiatives and partner with journalism associations for broader systemic changes. Regularly assess and adapt strategies to address evolving challenges.

Entertainment

Similar to other forms of media, film and television hold significant influence in shaping cultural perceptions and attitudes towards gender, making them crucial in driving the agenda for gender equality. However, an analysis of popular films across 11 countries revealed that only 31 percent of all speaking characters were women,¹² with a mere 23 percent featuring a female protagonist. This percentage closely mirrored the representation of women filmmakers, which stood at 21 percent. The striking underrepresentation of women in the film industry is also evident in prestigious film awards. For instance, in the 92-year history of the Oscars, only five women have been nominated for the Best Director Award category, and only one woman, Kathryn Bigelow, has ever won. Additionally, Jane Campion is the sole woman director to have won the Palme d'Or, the most prestigious prize at the Cannes Film Festival, in its 72-year history. The only other women to have received the prize did so jointly with the male director of their film. The message is loud and clear: To challenge stereotypical

notions of gender and accurately reflect women's realities, the film industry needs greater representation of women both on-screen and off-screen."

In the top 25 Indian media and entertainment (M&E) companies, women only hold 13% of senior leadership roles. Women are underrepresented in both theatrical and streaming content in on-screen representation. From 2021 to 2022, there was only a marginal 3% increase in women's representation in lead roles in direction, editing, and cinematography. Additionally, women only hold 10% of head of department positions in key divisions such as production design, writing, editing, direction, and cinematography.

Challenges:

- Women in the entertainment industry face gender discrimination, including discrepancies in earnings, lack of mentorship, and tokenism.
- Women in the entertainment industry face sexual harassment and are often scrutinized for their body images, clothing, and gaming performances.
- Women in the entertainment industry often don't get the exposure they need to negotiate terms and conditions of their transactions.
- Women in the entertainment industry face difficulty maintaining a work-life balance.
- Women in the entertainment industry can face isolation.
- Women in the entertainment industry can face a lack of recognition

Advocate for more women in leadership roles to influence project decisions. Set gender balance goals on sets and publicly report progress. Actively seek out scripts and projects by female creators. Challenge stereotypes about women in media and establish clear anti-harassment policies. Foster connections between established and aspiring women in the industry. Use social media to raise awareness about gender disparities. Provide training to address bias and promote inclusive practices. Collaborate with organizations supporting women in the industry. Educate audiences about the importance of diverse, female-led narratives.

sports

The power of sports to inspire change and break gender stereotypes is undeniable. Women have shown their capability, resilience, and strength both physically and strategically, proving themselves as leaders and game changers decade after decade. For example, Billie Jean King's history-altering tennis match, the Battle of the Sexes, is a must-watch for those interested in Generation Equality. Today, women are more visible in sports than ever before. The Tokyo 2020 Olympics is set to have close to equal representation of women and men competing for the first time in its history. In comparison, only 22 women (2.2 per cent) out of a total of 997 athletes competed in the modern Olympics for the first time in 1900. Women and men will compete in almost all sports categories, with the exceptions being rhythmic gymnastics and artistic swimming, which are women's-only events, and Greco-Roman wrestling, which is a men's-only event—although women can compete in freestyle wrestling. Despite this progress, women are still excluded from certain sports in some parts of the world and are paid far less than men in wages and prize money globally. UN Women is working to level the playing field for women and girls, including through partnerships with the International Olympic Committee and UN Women Goodwill Ambassador and all-time top scorer of the FIFA Women's World Cup, Marta Vieira da Silva.

Women's participation in sports in India has been increasing over the years,¹³ but there is still work to be done to promote gender parity. In 1990, women made up only 2.2% of the Indian contingent at the

Olympics, but by 2020, that number had increased to 47%. According to a BBC survey, 75% of the Indian population believes sports are important in their lives, but only 29% of women participate in sports. A Mint survey found that 75% of Indian sports fans want sports to be more inclusive, which is close to the global average of 65%.

Challenges:

- Girls and boys do not receive equal support in sports from a young age. By the age of 14, girls drop out of sports at a rate six times higher than boys.
- Women earn less than men for the same work. A 2017 survey revealed that women in elite sports earned only 1% of what men earned.
- Women's sports events often receive less coverage than men's.
- Women may face inadequate training conditions compared to men. Lack of opportunities: Women have fewer professional opportunities than men.
- Women receive fewer sponsorships than men.
- Women may encounter institutional racism and sexism. Prejudice and gender stereotypes: Women may face prejudice and gender stereotypes.
- Women may experience sexist comments and unjustified criticism.
- Girls may lack self-confidence and rate their performance more negatively than boys.

Ensure equitable reporting and highlight female athletes' achievements with the same prominence as men's sports. Encourage more women to take on leadership roles in sports organizations at all levels. Tailor equipment and training programs to fit the unique physiological needs of female athletes. Challenge sexist attitudes and behaviours within sports culture, including language used to describe female athletes. Ensure facilities are safe and welcoming for female athletes, addressing concerns about harassment and discrimination. Foster youth participation in sports by providing opportunities for girls at the local level. Work towards pay equity for female athletes compared to their male counterparts in similar sports. Raise awareness about the challenges faced by female athletes and the benefits of gender equality in sports. Celebrate successful female athletes and utilize their influence to inspire young girls.

Culinary arts

Despite women being traditionally associated with kitchen roles at home, the upper levels of the restaurant industry have largely excluded female chefs. The documentary "A Fine Line" reveals that women often encounter active discrimination and must navigate a culture that glorifies masculinity and indirectly condones harassment. In addition to long, unpredictable working hours, unfriendly family and childcare policies, and lower salaries, women face significant challenges when entering the restaurant business. The statistics reflect this reality: Currently, less than 4 percent of chefs awarded three Michelin stars (the highest rating) by the prominent restaurant guide are women. In the Indian culinary industry, women are underrepresented, with men comprising the majority of chefs and executive chefs. Currently, only 18.5% of professional chefs are women.¹⁴ However, there are more women with diplomas in culinary arts today than ever before.

Challenges:

- Women working in the culinary arts industry may encounter gender inequality, such as receiving lower salaries, fewer opportunities for promotions.
- Male-Dominated Work Environment The culinary arts field is often dominated by men, leading women to face resistance and stereotypical attitudes.

- Women in this industry may also face unfavourable work policies, such as long working hours. Household Pressure Additionally, women may experience pressure from their households to adhere to traditional domestic roles.
- Women can be excluded from organizational structures due to the belief that their bodily processes are not suitable for the industry.
- Women are underrepresented in the culinary arts, and there is a scarcity of research on gender inequality in this field.
- Some women may believe that they do not possess the physical and mental competencies required to excel as a chef.

Encourage more women to enrol in culinary schools and programs, highlight female culinary role models, develop a curriculum that addresses gender bias, implement strict anti-harassment policies, provide leadership training for chefs to promote gender sensitivity, establish mentoring programs, organize events and conferences that celebrate women in culinary arts, ensure equal opportunities for promotion and leadership roles for women, offer flexible work arrangements, provide career development support tailored to female chefs, and promote female chefs in culinary media.

Result and Discussion

Women play a crucial role in society across various sectors, including family, community, and the economy. However, they still face significant challenges such as limited access to education, economic opportunities, political representation, and ongoing gender-based violence. These issues hinder their full potential and contribute to global inequalities. While progress has been made, systemic barriers still exist that need to be addressed in order to achieve true gender equality.

Conclusion

The Indian constitution prohibits discrimination based on sex and empowers the government to undertake special measures for them. Despite the significant progress made by women in various aspects of society, they continue to face widespread inequalities globally. These include underrepresentation in leadership roles, a persistent gender pay gap, a disproportionate burden of unpaid domestic labour, and higher rates of gender-based violence. This indicates that their status remains far from equal to men in many parts of the world. Significant progress is required to achieve true gender equality.

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