



## GENDER EQUALITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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### Abstract

*The COVID-19 pandemic has created a host of issues in society. It changed our lives as we knew it and compelled us to adjust to the 'new normal' of mask donning, hand sanitizing, growing isolation, and social distancing. Adolescent girls (aged 12-18) are at heightened risks during pandemics/epidemics in the past. The novel coronavirus outbreak proved to be no different and the vulnerable adolescent female population fell victim to increased incidences of GBV (Gender-Based Violence) all around the world. The site of home became the location of sexual abuse and violence owing to proximity with abusers in the lockdown phase, where girls found themselves trapped in domestic spaces with the male perpetrators. Post-COVID 19 era saw a spate of early marriages of adolescent girls due to loss of income in several households, resulting in early pregnancies in young girls which proved to be disastrous to both their physical and mental health. The adolescent phase is a sensitive and vulnerable phase where young girls undergo radical biological changes that produce a direct impact on their minds and moods. This is a stage where girls require greater care and attention to be paid to their diets, physical exercise, and mental health. The global lockdowns greatly stunted the all-round development needs of young girls. The key area of development in adolescence is education which took a backseat due to the unprecedented changes that coronavirus inflicted upon human society. Education saw a vast digitalization phase and the shifting of traditional modes of learning to blended learning. Young girls from distressed and downtrodden families failed to gain access to online platforms of learning which significantly harmed their education. My paper seeks to analyze the various underlying causes and sites of negotiations between pandemics and GBV in young girls. My paper will further try to discuss intervention tools that can be adopted by existing state apparatuses and machineries to deal with this grave issue in India.*

**Keywords:** COVID19, Adolescent girls, mental health, sexual abuse, GBV, India.



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### Introduction

Gender equality generally means both men and women are free to choose their career, choice of lifestyle without inequality between them. It is also known as Gender Equity.

Gender equality is a fundamental right of human. Non-discrimination and equality between individuals means that every human should get equal rights, status and opportunities.

However, in spite of having progress all over the world, there is still lack of equality between individuals. Discrimination between individuals still exists due to differences in culture, gender, geographical boundaries, colour etc.

Despite of having progress all over the world yet in 21st century 1humans do not get equal rights due to



indiscrimination between them. Gender inequality is still a concern prevailing in the whole world. According to the World Economic Forum, it will take 108 years to achieve gender parity.

Hence Gender Equality is necessary nowadays because women should get equal rights, status, opportunities etc as same as the men in all the spheres of life. Whether you are a man or a woman, your rights, status etc should be always same. Equality and discrimination between men and women is an important social issue which has a great impact on the society.

There has been improvement in the Gender Equality issue in the past few decades:

1. More and more girls are getting education,
2. There is reduction in force for early marriage of girls
3. Many women are working in parliament and playing leadership roles, and
4. Many laws are framed for development of gender equality.

In spite of these improvements, there are still many challenges faced by women:

1. Women are understated in social, economic and political leadership,
2. And 1 in 5 women and girls go through physical or sexual violence by men.

The spread of covid-19 pandemic in the year 2020 has reversed the progress of gender equality and women rights:

1. Women's health is adversely affected by increase in domestic work.
2. Physical and sexual violence has increased against women and girls.
3. Women are earning less due to unstable jobs and also there is decrease in their savings.
4. Care work are unpaid and increased, due to closure of school children, older persons and health services.
5. Safety measures for pregnancies and childbirth depend on health services and stringent rules are required from prevention of infection.

UNICEF says gender equality "means that women and men, and girls and boys, enjoy the same rights, resources, opportunities and protections. It does not require that girls and boys, or women and men, be the same, or that they be treated exactly alike."

The United Nation's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) includes 5th Goal which states to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, also known as UN Women, focuses on women empowerment, ending violence against them, framing policies for disabilities in women and girls etc.

#### **Objectives of the study:**

This research paper has the following objectives:

1. To understand the Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in the field of social, political, economical etc.
2. To identify the laws which reduces discrimination between genders.
3. To examine the bias of Gender Quality
4. To identify the issues tackled for Women Empowerment and Gender Equality for sustainable development.

#### **Research methodology:**

For the purpose of the present study data has been collected from secondary sources. It is collected from Journals, Magazines, publications, websites, reports etc.


**Depth of Research and Findings:**
**Laws regarding Gender Equality-**

Over the past decade, 131 countries enacted 274 legal and regulatory reforms in support of gender equality.

Laws containing discrimination needs to be amended and legislature, statutes, rules and regulations should be adopted for the development of gender equality. 5 There are still 49 countries which lack in making laws regarding protection of women from physical, sexual and domestic violence. And also there are around 39 countries that lack in making laws regarding rights of inheritance.

5 <https://>

One of the data report states that there are around 87 countries where physical/sexual violence has been experienced by 1 in 5 women and girls under the age of 50. It also states that the harmful traditional practices, 6 like child marriage is still practiced every year of 15 million girls under the age of 18.

Following are the laws regarding Gender Equality all over the world:

1. 2009 Danish Act of Succession referendum
2. Anti-discrimination law
3. Equal Pay Act of 1963 (United States)
4. Equality Act 2006 (UK)
5. Equality Act 2010 (UK)
6. European charter for equality of women and men in local life
7. Gender Equality Duty in Scotland
8. Gender Equity Education Act (Taiwan)
9. Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act (United States, 2009)
10. List of gender equality lawsuits
11. Paycheck Fairness Act (in the US)
12. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (United States)
13. Uniform civil code (India)
14. Women's Petition to the National Assembly (France, 1789)

**Data Analysis under Gender equality and Women Empowerment in social, political, economical etc-**

In politics 1 in 4 seats are held by women in National parliaments. Globally women aged 25 to 34 are 25% more likely than men to live in extreme poverty. Women on average do three times as much unpaid care and domestic work as men with long-term consequences for their economic security.

The gender gap in labour force participation among adults aged 25 to 54 has stagnated over the past 20 years standing at 31 percentage points. 7 Women are paid 16% less than men and only one in four managers are women. Share of women and men with an account at a financial institution is for women are about 65% and men are 72%.

31% of young women age 15 to 24 are not in education, employment or training in 2020, more than double the rate of young man 14%.

18% of ever partnered women aged 15 to 49 experienced sexual or physical violence by an intimate partner in the previous 12 months.

The climate emergency will most affect doors with Limited access to land resources are the means to support



themselves. Globally 39% of employed women are working in agriculture Forestry and fisheries but only 14% of agricultural land holders are women.

In most countries with data less than 40% of women who experience violence seek help of any sort, indicating barriers and lack of confidence in justice systems.<sup>8</sup>

190 million women of reproductive age 15 to 49 worldwide wanted to avoid pregnancy did not use any contraceptive method in 2019.

### **Issues to be tackled for Women Empowerment and Gender Equality for sustainable development for Sustainable Development-**

There is always a discrimination between men and women at each level in the society. Women are discriminated at various levels such as social, political and economic participation, access to resources, education, economic opportunity etc.

As many women are poor, illiterate, insufficiently trained so there is a daily struggle for women to manage their family. Although many steps are taken for the women empowerment but the actual situation remains the same and many at times it also worsens.

The following are some of the important issues to be tackled for women's empowerment and gender equality for sustainable development:

1. Education should be provided to women which will lead to a big change resulting in better health and nutrition of women and their families. There should be no discrimination for education between men and women.
2. There must be eradication of child marriage because if a woman gets married at an early age it indicates that the status of women is low in the society.
3. Mentally and physically healthy women overcome all the challenges of equality. Women should get an affordable and quality healthcare.
4. Training and development programs should be conducted for women who are in agriculture sector and other occupations. This will lead to expansion of all the sectors and will also prove also beneficial for women workers in it.
5. Employment opportunities provided to women, helps in empowerment of women by making them financially independent. There should be no discrimination between men and women for providing proper wages at work.
6. There should be strict laws, rules and regulations, made for the eradication of violence against women. Change in the attitude of family, society, especially the female members in the society which will help in eradicating violence against women.
7. Participation of women in politics is considered as a major step in women's empowerment. Necessary steps should be taken to bring growth in women's participation in the politics.
8. Harmful traditional practices against women such as marriage by abduction, forced marriage, bride by price, sexual slavery, female genital mutilation, untouchability, dowry etc should be abolished.
9. To create awareness of unpaid care by providing public services and policies of social protection. To promote nationally the shared responsibility of domestic work.
10. To ensure that women should participate equally as men in leadership and decision making roles in all spheres of life such as political, social, economic and public life.



11. Laws should be made where women can get equal rights in property of land, inheritance, financial services and natural resources.

12. To promote the use of information technology or any other communication technology for all girls and women.

#### **Benefits of gender equality-**

- a. Growth in Business
- b. Growth in Economy
- c. Decrease in Poverty
- d. Better Health

#### **Conclusion:**

The targets and goals of gender equality can be achieved when there is equal access to sexual and reproductive health and giving women equal rights on land and property. As compared to before, there are more women in public office and more women should be encouraged to play leadership roles which will help to strengthen the legislation, rules and regulations, policies etc. To promote women empowerment and gender equality at all levels, all countries should come together as a unifying force and adopt policies to strengthen their legislation.

It is very important that women should also empower themselves and all women should participate together for the empowerment of women and such goal cannot be achieved if women cannot empower themselves and participate together. Women should also start self-empowering actions at all the levels to achieve this goal.

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