

Sexual Discrimination and Stereotyping: A Sociological Issue

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ABSTRACT

The article was prepared by reviewing the previous literatures. The article inculcates necessary information from the previously conducted studies. It is divided into introduction, literature review, the study, discussion and conclusion sections. The study was conducted to know the causes, consequences and remedies of gender discrimination and stereotyping of women. Even though gender discrimination is a very common act author decides to choose the same because, even in the 21st century, even after having higher literacy level, stereotyping a woman still exists. Due to which most of the women of the country suffer in and out of the home. But while coming to the end of the article it was evident that gender discrimination and stereotyping is decreasing as the women of our country are standing up for their rights. The article also includes few examples of women who overcame the ancestral system of stereotyping and who set an example for the other women suffering with the same issue. A woman must stand for herself before expecting somebody else to stand for her.

1.0.INTRODUCTION

Basically gender is used to identify the biological sex of an individual. Gender is basically confused with the sex of an individual but both the terms emit two different meanings. Generally, sex of the newborn is assigned by the external appearance of the genitalia of a baby and after assigning the sex of the baby its gender will be presumed. Gender is a definition which is constructed by the society. Gender may change according to the development of the child; it may differ with the sexual appearance once the child grew. Gender can further be differentiated into, cisgender, transgender, transsexual, genderfluid, agender, bigender, polygender, neutrois, gender apathetic, androgyne, intergender, demigender, greygender, aporagender, etc. (anonymous)

1.1.Definitions of some important terms

- 1.1.1. Sex – according to Marriam Webster dictionary, sex is “either of the two major forms of individuals that occur in any species and that is distinguished

respectively as female or male especially on the basis of their reproductive organs and structures”.

- 1.1.2. Gender – “where you feel that you personally fall on the spectrum between male and female. Commonly people identify as male or female, but some fall in the middle or move throughout the spectrum”. **(anonymous)**
- 1.1.3. Stereotype – “A stereotype is a fixed general image or set of characteristics that a lot of people believe represent a particular type of person or thing”. **(Collins)**

The present article elucidates only on male and female by generalizing different types of genders. Every human being's gender is not only decided by their but due to the pre imagined stereotypes. Man created different stereotypes to different genders. A historical belief also exists which defines the rules for how to be projected like a woman and how to be projected like a man. And if anybody goes against these set of rules he or she will be victimized for stereotyping. In Indian cultural history men are always termed as the head of the family, his duty was to earn enough to run his family, he was the bread earner of the family hence all the important decisions of the family were to be taken by the bread earner of the family. And women were to stay back at home and take care of the chores, house, children and her husband. A stereotype was prepared in such a way that no woman could go out and earn money and no man could stay back at home and do the chores. This belief is still in use in 21st century. Even a woman is working outside she has to fulfill all her stereotypes. Most of the times it so happens that whenever any woman tries break the pre assumed image she will be targeted to discrimination. Somewhere, the gender stereotypes tend to gender discrimination and harassment.

In maximum cases woman are subjected to discrimination, harassment and other gender based violence because women are considered as vulnerable. Women might be physically weaker than men but society takes it granted that women need to suppressive all the time. And the dominance of a man is defined by his masculinity.

1.2.Objectives of the article

- To know whether the stereotyping and gender discrimination is a learnt behavior?
- To study the root causes of gender discrimination and stereotyping.
- To learn the consequences of gender discrimination.
- To discuss the remedies to prevent gender discrimination.

2.0.LITERATURE REVIEW

(Loisea & Nowacka, 2015) Describe about the role of social media in developing women's role in leading and decision making process. Authors prescribes that proper accessibility to social media, developing technologies and increased opportunities of women will make them capable enough to lead a team and they can be better decision makers.

(Sivakumar, 2008) Explains that the country or the society cannot be developed without the equal participation of a woman. Author suggests that elimination of gender discrimination may lead women of the society to indulge in development activities and deliver all their potentials. Woman who develops her family with her knowledge can develop a nation and the whole world, researcher adds.

(Sharma, 2015) The author elaborates that both men and women together can change the current situation of gender inequality. If they both work together gender inequality in India can be eliminated. Author also mentions that women are not only need to break the stereotypes of the workplaces in fact women must be able to advice and make decisions about the career possibilities those are beyond the predetermined traditional characteristics. Author adds by pointing on the fact that it takes a mile to reach gender equality.

A review was developed by **(Cerise & Francesca, 2012)**. As per the results of the study it was evident that discriminatory social institutions are related to employment of women, their education, health and political stability. According to the study discriminatory social institutions are overlooked but they should be measured to gather important information, dimensions of gender inequality and developmental outcomes. Researchers suggest that discriminatory social institutions should be addressed properly, to attain both gender equality and development. Lastly the study was mentions the need of quality gaps, comparability and data coverage, building higher statistical capacity related to discriminatory social institutions and gender equality.

In an assessment paper of Copenhagen Consensus on Human Challenges, 2011 was prepared by **(Jacobsen, 2011)**. The analysis revealed the earnings of underutilized women; the measurement was done in terms of corresponding lower earnings of the women. The loss of earning when estimated lied in the range of 4% to 37% of world GDP per annum. The paper

analyzed the 2050th year's lowest potential loss to be 4%. And loss experienced due to gender inequality would be 328-1019 % of the total world GDP.

A report was prepared by (**Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2014**). The report argues that there is a developing consensus that the gender stereotyping poses a significant challenge to be recognized. But gender stereotyping is generally left unaddressed even though it violated human rights of a woman.

In a research article "Gender Discrimination in India" prepared by (**Raju, 2014**) issues of gender inequality, women empowerment and reproductive health of Indian women are broadly discussed. Author mentions that there is a correlation between the gender inequality and the reproductive health of women. Researcher argues that there must be a positive change socially, economically and politically to decrease the gender inequality and improves the importance of women empowerment in India.

3.0.THE STUDY

3.1.Whether Stereotyping and Gender Discrimination is a learnt behavior?

Gender discrimination and stereotyping are both learnt and developed behaviors. Because no child is born with prepared assumption of responsibilities of a woman and of a man. Stereotypes are all man developed rules. Therefore, such behaviors need to be learnt. Gender discrimination are the results of stereotyping as there are characteristics set in each and everybody's mind that a girl should be like the characteristics mentioned and if she goes against to it people start discriminating her behavior.

The learning process of discrimination and stereotyping can be explained by some sociological theories such as Social Learning Theory by **Albert Bandura**. He explained that people learn from one another through observation, copying and modeling. "Most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others, one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action" he adds. Author connects the theory to gender discrimination as it is also a form of learnt behavior because no new born carry the characteristics of stereotyping. (**anonymous**)

Gender Discrimination and Stereotyping may also be learnt by **Burgess and Akers's** Social Association Theory. They argued that criminal behavior is learned through both social and nonsocial reinforcement and most of the exchanges of criminal behaviors are

encountered in social interactions with people. Discriminating character may also be exchanged through coming in contact with the society where the discriminating and stereotyping characters are dominant. **(Bernard, 2017)**

3.2.Root Causes of Gender Discrimination and Stereotyping

3.2.1. Illiteracy - Illiteracy is a basic cause of almost everything. Illiteracy can be termed as mother cause for all. Because, illiteracy may result both in criminalization of a person as well as victimization of a person. An illiterate person will be unaware of the rights and provisions provided by the government. An illiterate will not have analyzing mind, so he/she will believe whatever is told to him and he tend to follow the same. We can say that even though parents do not give proper education to their children but they provide enough knowledge about the terms and practices they follow. In such cases an illiterate will discriminate a woman if she goes against the knowledge he/she has. Discrimination may not only done by only male but even females discriminate other woman when they encounter any stereotype being overcame.

3.2.2. Patriarchal society - We followed the patriarchal society from ancient period of India. As per Hindu law giver Manu “Women are supposed to be in the custody of their father when they are children, they must be under the custody of their husband when married and under the custody of her son in old age or as widows. In no circumstances she should be allowed to assert herself independently”. Patriarchal society is a practice where male dominate the family. Male member of the family is the head of the family as he is the one who earns bread of that family. This system is still in use in many parts of the country. According to a sociologist Sylvia Walby patriarchy is “A system of social structure and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploits women”. Due to these predetermined characteristics of women if not followed by her will obviously tend to discrimination. Patriarchy system results in developing gender inequality. **(Sharma, 2015)**

3.2.3. Social customs, beliefs and practices - Women are bound with the societal beliefs and practices. Women are only constrained to the domestic sphere, allocating them to subordinate a male member of the family. Therefore, boys and girls are trained according to the preset images of their genders. Therefore, boys as well as girls grow with the preset image of a male and female. When they grow to adult they try to implement those ideas and they indicate if anything goes against the preset image.

There is also a belief that women however economically do not support her family as per the designed stereotypes. Therefore, the parents of the girl marry her as soon as possible and they believe that providing education or the money invested in the education of a girl child is a waste of money. Therefore, only boy children of the family are given more preference for their education and girl children are taught households instead of proper education. “When there is a discrimination between boy child and a girl child in the family by their parents, what more can be accepted from the society?” **(Shauni)**

- 3.2.4. Lack of awareness - It will not be wrong if said that women in India are not much exposed to technologies or practicality as compared to men. In most of the times women are also held responsible for not getting exposed properly. Many women working in unorganized sectors are unaware of the legal provisions they have whenever they are victimized for gender based violence. Most women are even unaware of their basic rights. They just accept all kinds of discrimination by neglecting those behaviors. Sometimes women neglect such behavior due to fear of losing their jobs. Women of our country must know each and every provision given to her, if not they will be discriminated and harassed due to their own negligence and unawareness. **(Shauni)**

3.3.The consequences of gender discrimination

Gender discrimination is a very sensitive social issue. It will have many impacts on one self even on the society. Some of the impacts are as following.

- 3.3.1. Mental health – gender discrimination is also a form of harassment. Usually victims of gender discrimination suffer mentally. Not only victims but also the family members of victim suffer a lot. Victims of gender discrimination usually encounter stress, trauma, anger, fear, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and etc. **(Trevino, 2018)**
- 3.3.2. Decreased Job Satisfaction – higher job satisfaction increases the skills, knowledge and exposure of the employee. And exposure is equally important to men and women. But once women undergo any discrimination at workplace she starts shrinking herself in her professional life. The victim may not get more opportunities due to her poor performance. And it leads to lower job satisfaction. **(Trevino, 2018)**
- 3.3.3. Irrational population – Due to discrimination only male children are given more preference. Female children are either victimized for feticide and infanticide.

Because of which the ratio between male and female is irrational. Natural participation of women is 50% of the total population but according to the statistics collected by **(Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation , 2019)** ratio is 107.48 males per 100 females. Which intern can be connected to the decreasing level of gender discrimination.

3.4.Preventive measures of gender discrimination and stereotyping

Many Government and Non Government Organizations are working for empowerment of women. How much ever any organization fight against discrimination of women, a woman herself must stand against it. There are even many legal provisions to complaint against the gender discrimination acts. But it can be prevented through some sociological approaches.

- 3.4.1. Literacy - There is a saying that “Education is the movement from darkness to light” by Allan Bloom. It elucidates that educated person will have the enough maturity to lead his life. Knowledge makes a person skilled and develops attitude and self confidence. Literacy plays main role in employment. There are situations where the literate person can act illiterate. Therefore, always literacy cannot be measured by one’s education.
- 3.4.2. Economic Independency - A practice is still continued in most of the cases that, a woman will be economically dependent on her father in her early ages followed by she will be dependent economically on her husband in her middle age and in her old age, she will be economically dependent on her son. Women were not allowed to work out and earn money in olden days. But when a woman starts earning and when she is independent for her economy, her chances of being discriminated will fall down. Economic independency of woman does not only prevent her victimization it also develops her self confidence, power to fight back and most importantly empowerment of women increases national economy. **(Sivakumar, 2008)**
- 3.4.3. Awareness - Every Indian woman must know her basic rights and special provisions given by the Government. Hillary Clinton quotes that “Human rights are women’s rights and women’s rights are human rights, once said for all”. The Constitution of India provides some basic rights to every citizen of the country. Women have right to equality, right to equal pay, right to dignity and decency, right against workplace harassment, right against domestic violence, right to sexual assault victims to keep their identity anonymous, right to get free legal aid, right not to be arrested at night, right to register virtual complaints, right against indecent representation, right against

being stalked and many more. **(Indian Today Web Desk, 2016)**. Women also have many legal provisions to take actions against the one who indulge in gender based offences.

Therefore, it is an essential part of every human being to be aware of committing gender based offences and its consequences. Women need to know about their rights and provisions to protect themselves from the violence and men need to know the same things to protect themselves from the after consequences of the offences if committed.

4.0.DISCUSSION

The ration of men and women must be equally distributed in society. i.e., women must accomplish the 50% of the total population of society. Hence, men and women must also share the equal responsibility and respect in the society. But in the current society women are still considered to be suppressive as compared to men. Women empowerment is the most concerned issue till date. Women empowerment can be made successful when the women rights are respected and by identifying their ability to complete the allotted task. The present condition is so bad that women do not believe themselves; they don't have enough trust on themselves. Women themselves believe that they must be suppressive in front of men. Women must have self trust and belief to develop.

At present day not only women are victimized of discrimination there are many other kinds of discriminations; discrimination occurs economically, caste discrimination, race discrimination, LGBTQ discrimination and many more. As gender discrimination is among very sensitive sociological issues author decides to study the same. Further studies may analyze the other vulnerable groups mentioned and the as present article is a review article it is not scientific but future studies may verify the aforementioned factors scientifically by using statistics.

CONCLUSION

The current article has attained all the objectives mentioned. Article justifies that the sexually deviant behavior as a learnt behavior. It also studies the causes, consequences and remedies for gender discrimination and stereotyping. There are many other aspects which are contributing for and against of sexual discrimination but this article only contemplate on the major aspects.

It is necessary for every individual to stop gender based violence and stereotyping the other person. Nobody knew the facts behind the stereotypes formed in earlier periods but in the present era women should be given equal rights and equal importance as men are being treated. Gender equality will obviously tend towards success but discrimination degrades whatever success has been attained. There is a saying by John Heywood quoted as “Many hands make light work”. Similarly, work done by men and women together will always see the light of achievement. It is a prime duty of all the women of the world to have the hunger of achieving the success and equality. Because, when a woman herself doesn’t want the equality in her life no person can help her out. A woman must be aware of her rights and she must have the self-confidence to achieve an accomplishment by overcoming the internal fear and external stereotypes. There are many women who overcame the gender stereotypes and became world famous figures through their hard work and dedication. Also they became the examples for other women who are being victimized of sexual discrimination. Some of the India women who went against gender stereotypes to achieve their success are mentioned below.

Kiran Mazumdar Shaw – An Indian woman who is been trained as Brewer in Melbourne she was not allowed to work as a master brewer as it was believed to be a man’s job in the beginning, but today she is one among the billionaire of the world. She is working as a Chairman and Managing Director of Biocon Limited. **(India Today, 2017)**

Sudha Murthy – The Chairperson and Philanthropist of Infosys foundation and an Indian writer who hails from South India. Sudha Murthy had to face many problems during her education. She once had to convince her family to complete her graduation in engineering as women were not preferred to be graduated in engineering during those days. She was the only female student along with the other 149 male students who got admitted in BVB engineering college. And she successfully completed her graduation with the highest rank. She was also the first female engineer appointed by the TATA Engineering Locomotive Company (TELCO), Pune. She in fact had written an opposing letter addressing the TELCO for publishing the advertisement of job opportunity only for men. The director of the company by appreciating the way of thinking and the confidence of Sudha Murthy and gave her the opportunity to set an example for other women.

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