

“Gender Bias”

**Pratikshya Priyadarshini
Symbiosis Law School,
Nagpur*

***Archy Gupta
Symbiosis Law School,
Nagpur*

“Gender bias does worldwide damage. It’s a cause of low productivity on farms. It’s a source of poverty and disease. It’s at the core of social customs that keep women down.”
— Melinda Gates, *The Moment of Lift: How Empowering Women Changes the World*

Gender bias is often confused with the term gender discrimination. Even though we come across a lot of sources that convincingly tell us that gender bias and gender discrimination are almost the same and are used interchangeably, but the fact is that there does exist a difference between the two.

Gender bias is the preference, rational, irrational, or otherwise, for or against one sex or gender for some specific job or activity. It is rather a mental state whose expression doesn’t have to be in an overt or explicit way. The non-expression of gender biases is never illegal. On the other hand, gender discrimination involves different problems. It is the action that results from gender bias, which could be conscious or unconscious. Unlike gender bias, the expression of gender discrimination must be in an overt way.

For example: If someone is at a hospital for a dressing of a wound and says that “the nurse did a great job in there”, then it is more likely that we will assume that the nurse was a female. This is gender bias as we unconsciously comprehend that the job of a nurse is that of a female.

But if someone at the hospital refuses the service of a nurse who is a male, then that would be an act of gender discrimination as it was the manifestation of the gender bias attitude that the person has against that particular gender.

So, gender discrimination involves the obstacles of human participation in an activity while gender bias involves the cultural identity of the activity.

It cannot be denied that for over the centuries, gender bias against women is more prevalent than that of gender bias against any other gender. According to a report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), worldwide 90 percent of people are biased against women and half of that still perceive men to make a better leader.¹

¹ <https://www.dw.com/en/gender-equality-most-people-are-biased-against-women-un-says/a-52644994>

If we trace back the origin of gender bias then according to many studies done on the ground of archaeological shreds of evidence shows that by the second century BCE, gender inequality had already entrenched in the society. The cultural practice of valuing men over women arose in the pre-historic period, even before the written records emerged.

Archaeologists Marta Cintas- Pena and Leonardo Garcia Sanjuan from the University of Serville in Spain decided to align the archaeological record and studies to understand the origin of gender inequality as it would be a better tool of confronting the issue in the society.

The remains of more than 500 individuals buried in everything from tombs to pit graves were scrutinized. According to the findings from the archaeological evidence, men were more likely to be buried with arrowheads and other projectiles while women with ceramics. Men were also over-represented in cave art from the time – more often in scenes depicting hunting and war, while the females had a sign of injury or violent death.

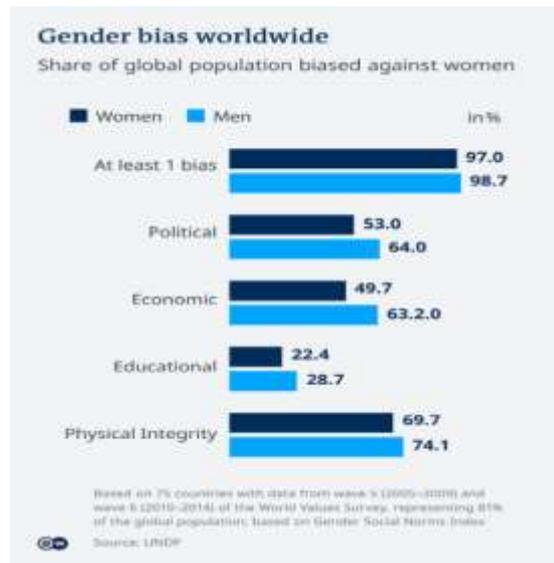
The predominance of men in terms of violence was linked to the evidence that was found. The violence by males gave rise to the difference in powers among the two genders. If we analyze the beginning of gender inequality we will realize that it meant something cultural and not biologically determined.

It is evident that gender inequality or the emergence and continuance of gender bias against women or of any other gender for that matter is playing a central role in social complexity and social conflicts.

Unfortunately, this sort of gender bias has resulted in a conscious or unconscious action of discrimination against women in many fields for over many decades. It is not ignorant to anyone, anymore, that women have been derailed due to gender bias or gender inequality as they were never given the same privileges as that was given to men, ever since the emergence of the society.

So, gender bias exists in many aspects of career fields and life. Taking the 1 percent of the entire bias-ness happening against men of the society, the women are considered to be a long run participant to this unfortunate and unfair manifestation of this culture in the society.

According to many statistic reports, the gender gap has lagged women behind men from workplace to political arena; from education to the size of the pay check in jobs; from getting exposure in work fields to falling prey to crimes following from the gender bias culture.



The sufferings of women due to gender bias:

From sitting in the same classroom, reading the same textbook, listening to the same teacher, both boys, and girls perceive education in a very different way. Education being the most important aspect of an individual’s future, got a huge gender gap between boys and girls. Even though girls perform equal to or better than boys, the consideration of letting the girls out there for education is still considered to be stereotypical in society. Gender bias in education has become a sinister culture which makes many still unable to take a stand against it. By far as we already know that gender biases are embedded in our minds, the same is the broader reason why do these things prevail in an educational institution.

A major proportion of women do not have access to higher education and some to even primary education and the reason behind these prejudices is the unconscious biases that have been passed down to generations for ages.

One of the reasons why the victims have also failed to voice up against this unfair treatment is because over the years they have directly or indirectly been told to be silent and passive towards such treatment. No wonder, the uneven distribution of teacher time, energy, attention, and talent, with the boys getting the lion’s share has taken a toll on girls in our society. Gender bias has been embedded in education from pre-kindergarten through graduate school. Unfortunately, the teachers are unaware of their teaching approach being biased because they are just following the trend, mechanically, of how they were being taught which results in almost overseeing the teaching curriculum which tends to have subtle gender inequities involved. Due to the sexist hidden curriculum that the students are faced every day, girls and boys today are receiving separate and unequal educations because of gender socialization. Women are often underestimated and presented in a stereotypical role. Over time, the self-esteem of women and girls is undermined through the gradual process of biasness and as a result, discourages them.

Unless the teachers including parents at home are made aware of the gender-role socialization and the intentional or unintentional actions of there in imparting the biased messages to both boys and girls, the women will still continue to receive an inequitable education and are going to suffer in the same way.

Gender bias resulting in gender discrimination has its widespread impact on the workplace too. Workplace gender discrimination has many forms, but generally, it means that an employee or a job applicant is treated differently or less favourably because of their sex or gender, or because the person is affiliated with any organization or group that is associated with particular sex or gender.²

The gender gap in the workplace is again a natural reflection of large differences between men and women. The difference is reflected by inequality in pay check given to women; position in the job, etc. Women's representation in businesses and governmental institutions should be in equal numbers to men, which at the end would result in a real change. On contrary to what women face in society, women make up half the population and earn more advanced degrees than men. But still, the full participation of women continues to be inefficient and challenging.

The society operates with a set of assumptions about women that hold them back and more certain if they are willing to go ahead, then those assumptions drag them down. And it is more so because of how women have been perceived and seen throughout since time immemorial.

Women have hesitated in entering the world of politics due to the partial rules of politics. Also, the women who still enter the political offices have to undergo a lot of atrocities and contention from the rest of the world. They are viewed from a prejudicial lens of being an inattentive wife or/and mother. Even if women are a passionate family member then they are still seen from the same lens of being an inefficient leader or public servant. Undesirably, men don't suffer from such double-standards.

Despite all these problems faced by women, in the contemporary world, the role of women in politics is increasing, gradually. Although men still control the major political parties but the attainment of high political parties by women is winning because of the reason for public credibility and political approach with integrity and reasonability when they running their strategies against someone who is lacking in integrity. With the increasing acknowledgment of issues, supporters of child welfare, environment protection, abortion rights, sexual harassment, LGBTQ, etc. are being inclined to women politicians for their votes.

Women can potentially have greater influence in the outcomes of an election as they tend to gather votes for more liberal candidates who support social programs than male politicians do. In other words, women are making strides in the political field, eventually. But it also has a long way to go before coming to the same pedestal as that of men in the world of politics as

² <https://www.equalrights.org/issue/economic-workplace-equality/discrimination-at-work/>

women hold only about 5 percent of all political offices and posts, which makes the situation far from being balanced.

There is a spectrum of gender identities, due to constraints within existing literature we've focused on the gender binaries i.e. male and female. In a world where gender biases amongst males and females are gradually changing its form, today we are living in a world where second-generation gender bias exists, which has been discussed above thoroughly and is defined by the researchers at the Centre for Gender in Organizations (CGO). Its work cultures and practices that appear neutral and natural on their face yet they reflect masculine values and life situations of men who have been dominating the development of work standards.

We cannot completely ignore the biasness other genders have to go through, as well. Hence, if we are to create a gender-equal world, then we need to dispel the perception and mentality of people. We must change their outlook and talk about issues in rather a wider view to be able to alter the situations. We must firstly introspect ourselves by accepting the fact that such kind of bias-ness does exist within ourselves and try to amend it. We shall focus on not to pass this sinister culture of bias-ness to our future generations. One amongst the operative tool for reducing or eliminating is by calling attention to the problem when it occurs rather than simmering with anger and not speaking up about it. By calling attention to what is happening when it happens, the perpetrator will either learn from it or at least introspect his views before doing it again, recognizing that you're not going to silently stand by and let it continue. The problem not only lies within the dominant genders even the dominated genders in most of the cases do not realise the gravity of the treatment and passively accept it. Self-realisation is the need of the hour to eradicate gender bias-ness from the society.

We have a long way to go for the world to be a better place for all genders to co-exist, parallelly with respective dignity, but we can all make it possible if we are in it together.

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