

Gender equality has remained a difficult pursuit throughout the history of mankind, but what stops us from providing everyone their equal rights? From the times when man used woods for fuel, to the modern times of 21st century, there has always been conflict in reducing gender disparity. Although gender equality is not a basic human right, but it has become a necessity for peace and prosperity in the modern times of development. In modern era where men and women work hand in hand to produce collective results, equality between genders has become difficult than ever. There have been some incredible changes in the last two decades, but we are still far over from equal rights for all the genders.

In the past two or three decades we have seen a trend where education and work for women has been given considerable importance. But before that time gender disparities were observed in every field of life. After world war 2, the Britain were established on an assumption that women stayed at home and men worked to feed their families. But in the late 60s and 70s women activists raised their voice for their equal rights as men and the concept of male breadwinner came to a halt. While the idea of gender equality was changing into a reality, there still was different extents of gender discrimination in different ethnicities, ages, and social statuses. In the late 90s and early 21st century, governments started defining rules and regulations for equality at workplaces between different genders which included rules for equal pays, rights and freedom of speech. In this time policies were designed to encourage female participation in workplaces. In in start of year 2000, the head of governments of European union presented the goal of raising women employment to 60% by 2010. A term of gender employment gap was thus defined at that time which was defined as the difference in employment rate between males and the females. The table below explains some figures of employment percentages up to 2010. Although there were considerable changes in the upper region of Europe in accordance with the goal of 60% women employees by 2010 but there remained still some disparities in the southern Europe particularly in Belgium, France and

Ireland. There were already considerable changes in the gender employment gaps until 2000s, considering a decrease in this gap from 30% in 1980 to 16.6% in 2000. However, in 2010 the United Kingdom's commission for employment predicted that the employment rate for men will increase gradually in the coming times as compared to women because the age for state pension was changed to 65 instead of 60 for women (Annang).

Table I.1 Female employment rates: 1960–2000 persons aged 15–64

		1960	1980	2000	Men 2000	Lisbon distance*
Nordic	Denmark	42.7	66.3	71.2	80.4	11.2
	Finland	54.9	65.0	64.3	69.7	4.3
	Norway	26.1	58.4	73.4	88.1	13.4
	Sweden	38.1	67.6	72.1	76.2	12.1
Anglo-Saxon	UK	43.1	54.5	65.2	79.3	5.2
Mediterranean	Greece		30.7	40.4	70.2	-19.6
	Italy	28.1	33.2	39.7	68.5	-20.3
	Spain	21.0	28.4	40.3	70.3	-19.7
Rest of Europe	Austria		52.4	59.3	78.1	-0.7
	Belgium	29.6	35.0	51.1	69.8	-8.9
	France	42.9	50.0	53.1	68.1	-6.9
	Germany	35.0	34.8	58.1	73.5	-1.9
	Ireland		32.3	52.2	74.0	-7.8
	Netherlands		35.7	62.1	81.1	2.1
	Portugal		47.1	60.1	75.9	0.1
North America	United States	39.5	53.9	68.0	80.4	
	Canada		52.3	65.1	75.2	

While in the United States the change in this employment gap was even more considerable with 39.5% in 1960 to 68% in 2000. Another term used in the table is Lisbon rate which is defined as the percentage difference between women employment in 2000 and 60%.

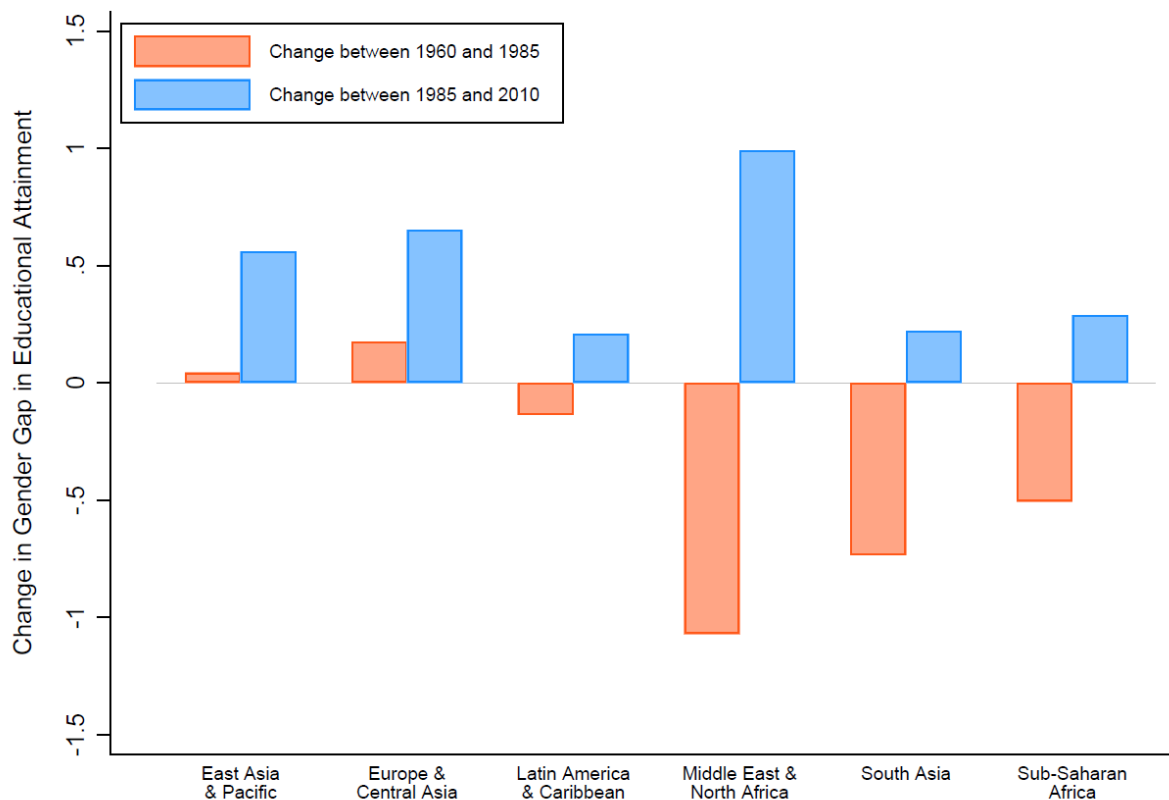
With these efforts by governments and private organizations who made sure that every gender got same wages for comparable work, there still was a disparity in gender pay gaps. Researchers observed that there was difference in wages for different age groups in

women too. Stats showed that except for Italy, Denmark and Germany the female to male wage ratio is 10 percent higher for younger women as compared to older women. Several factors have proved to be a reason for this, one of which is that younger women have same experience and labor market knowledge in comparison with men of the same age as compared to that in the older ages. Secondly, there had been a big change in the literacy rates of women during the specified course of time. In UK the pay gap was 8% in younger genders as compared to 33% in older genders. This wage gap between genders is expected to decrease with time but one reason why this gender gap is inevitable is that women must take care of their households and offspring more in comparison to men. Some researchers have also believed that women at higher posts are more likely to be in continuous employment as compared to those in manual and regular employment. Thus, while family responsibilities remain gendered, there will always be an employment gap (Crompton).

According to Lewis, several industrialized states had designed their strategies and policies considering man as the sole breadwinner of the house who works all day, while women remain to be responsible of the household chores all day. A huge increase in the women employment in developed countries has now made this norm blur in the 21st century (Macran).

Education for females has also been a major concern in the later half of 20th century. The prime pre-requisite for equality in gender employment was education with no gender discrimination. If there was discrimination towards women in education, there wouldn't have been a need for discrimination in workplace since there won't be any women in the workplaces then. Gender equality in education has been one of the prime most objectives in the countries within and outside the European Union. Much has been done by governments and organizations all over the globe to help female education grow in the last 3-4 decades. Female enrollments in the primary level education in the developing countries was 87% in

1990 which increased to a 94% in 2004. Stipends, scholarships, female teachers' recruitment and many other measures have been proved to be affective in decreasing gender disparity in education. Even with all these measures there is a big number of female children out of their schools. A survey of the United Nations stated: "Around the world, 132 million girls are out of school, including 34.3 million of primary school age, 30 million of lower-secondary school age, and 67.4 million of upper-secondary school age. In countries affected by conflict, girls are more than twice as likely to be out of school than girls living in non-affected countries." Some other surveys show that only 66% of countries in the world have achieved gender parity in education at primary level. While only 45% have achieved equality at secondary level whereas only 25% have achieved gender equality in higher secondary education.



The graph above shows the changes in education gap in the later half of 20th century and 21st century. It is evident from the chart that the last two decades and the start of 21st century have proved to be important in reducing gender discrimination in education. A considerate portion

of this low education level is from the war-torn countries such as Syria, Palestine, Iraq and Yemen. Some under-developed regions also contribute to this low level of education.

Gender equitable education system is not only necessary for the sake of it, but can also help in reducing child marriages, school related gender-based violence and female genital mutilation. An education system free of gender-based inequality can prove to be help for boys in reducing masculinity related norms. Girls today are at a risk of violence online, in community, workplaces and classrooms also which may lead to severe psychological problems. Every year 12 million girls are married in their childhood while 4 million face Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). The United Nations have at times taken steps to put a stop to these abuses but many of the under-developed countries are still facing these issues. The Human Development and the Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Networks of the World Bank organized a symposium with several NGOs and welfare organizations in October 2007 in Washington, DC, to discuss gender discrimination. The symposium discussed five core issues namely Educational quality, post primary education, emergency issues including HIV, violence and sexual abuse, employment issues and access and retention. The symposium discussed that female education can be helpful for reducing not only gender parity but also in economic growth and reducing poverty. Educated women produces women who can relate to modern issues and thus helps in reducing population growth. This turns in lesser population growth and higher per capita income. (Goodman)

It is vital to give women equal rights land and property, sexual and reproductive health, and to technology and the internet. Today there are more women in public office than ever before. Ending all discrimination against women and girls is not only a basic human right, it's crucial for sustainable future; it's proven that empowering women and girls helps economic growth and development. Mankind has come a long way in reducing gender discrimination but dispensing gender equality in every region of earth is still a difficult task

which seems impossible with violence, war and corruption spread all around the globe. We have done countless efforts to reduce gender parity, but we still have a long way to go before we attain gender equality.

Works Cited

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