

# Significance of Gender Equality in accomplishment of Sustainable Development Goals

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## Abstract

This research paper analyzes the significance of Gender Equality with five other sustainable development goals. Availability of food is essential for health and access to quality education is must for quality production and prudent consumption. A healthy, educated and wise economy results in the reduction in poverty. Hence, five goals including Poverty, Food Security, Health, Education, Production and Consumption are selected considering their importance for being the basic needs to be achieved for sustainable development in the economy. While, several aspects related to sustainable development goals (SDGs) are found to be covered in the literature reviewed. Nevertheless, the need for further work out assessed to be required from the reviewed literature. Hence, this paper focuses on the women participation in order to attain other sustainable development goals. This study will be useful to extract areas and analyze gaps that if addressed will provide grounds for growth in the economy with specific reference to Pakistan.

**Key Words:** Gender Equality, Sustainable Development Goals, Economic Growth, Women Empowerment.

## 1- Introduction

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is a set of 17 comprehensive goals decided by the United Nations. These goals have certain targets to be achieved total being 169. These development goals deal with a wide arena of economic and social issues. The goals have replaced the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that ended in 2015 and are applicable for all countries worldwide. Since United Nations adopted the worldwide Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 15 years (2016–2030), sustainable development will become an essential idea and key principle to guide national and global social and economic improvement (Zhu, 2017). As per seventeenth session of United Nations General Assembly, seventeen sustainable development goals are there to be attained during the period of fifteen years. Hence, the same are also termed as 2030-agenda in short.

In the paper under study, we have analyzed the relationship of Goal No.05 i.e. Gender Equality to the 5 other goals i.e. Poverty, Food Security, Health, Education, consumption and production.

The term 'Gender' is used to describe the roles of man and woman in society and culture. Though, usually gender and sex are used interchangeably. However, in its true sense, sex cannot be used in place of gender. Sex is the term which defines the physiological difference between man and the woman. The scope of word sex is limited as compare to that of gender.

By gender equality it is meant that both the man and the woman should be provided with the same starting point in the society in terms of decision making and access to the social and economic resources. Nevertheless, gender equity can be defined as the creation of same ending point. Usually, women are deprived or disadvantaged in relation to decision making and access to resources social as well as economic in the situation of gender inequalities.

When women of any society get control on their lives then this is called the women empowerment. In order to reach the gender equality women empowerment is significant. Women empowerment narrows down the gender gap, in order to reach and maintain the gender equality, women empowerment is necessary (Pathania, 2017).

## 2- Research Objective & Scope

This research is conducted to take out the untouched areas and extract combination of such goals where inclusion of women participation will provide basis to achieve other goals of the sustainable growth. Though, there are seventeen goals for sustainable development. From these, five goals and their relationship with gender equality are selected to be covered in this paper.

## 3- Research Hypothesis

H0: Women participation in the economy will not help reduce poverty

H1: Women participation in the economy will help reduce poverty

H0: Maintaining gender equality in the economy will not support in food security

H2: Maintaining gender equality in the economy will support in food security

H0: Availability and access of necessary resources for women will not bring improvement in their health condition and appropriate part in the economy

H3: Availability and access of necessary resources for women will bring improvement in their health condition and appropriate part in the economy

H0: Gender equality will not cause education attainment

H4: Gender equality will cause education attainment

H0: Increased women participation in consumption and production patterns will not result in achieving SDG-12 (Sustainable consumption and production)

H5: Increased women participation in consumption and production patterns will result in achieving SDG-12 (Sustainable consumption and production)

## 4- Review of Related Literature

Sudershan Kumar Pathania (2017) analyzed the sustainable development goals with the view of gender equality and gender equity. This paper has not only focused on the said area of SDGs rather displayed the relationship how women empowerment may support to achieve all the other goals for sustainable growth.

### Gender Equality and Poverty

Andrew Morrison, Dhushyanth Raju and Nistha Sinha (2007) studied the role of gender equality in reducing poverty at both micro and macro level. Educated women may not only get the better wages but also result in the human development in form of their children. Hence, participation of women specifically in education and employment causes to help reduce the poverty.

Sylvia Chant (2015) analyzed the relationship of poverty rate in women and their participation in the economy through their low or unpaid services. It is observed that women might not play the vital role in the economic progress because of their less advanced educational and entrepreneurial skills. This is because of their low access to various social and economic resources. Hence, this concept is required to be studied in the way that can generate the possible positive outcomes.

Andrew Morrison, Dhushyanth Raju and Nistha Sinha, discussed the relationship of Gender Equality with economic growth and poverty. This study reflects the macro level influence of the Gender inequality and identify the areas to be studied further.

Sida, Women's Economic Empowerment Series (2010) states that gender inequalities is the cause to restrain the poverty reduction and growth in the economy. As per the study, countries those have increased women participation in the economy and have enhanced their access to opportunities and resources resulted in the economic progress and ultimately the reduction in poverty. Another aspect was discussed i.e. inflexible division of labor in between men and women.

Naila Kabeer (2015) analyzed the link between gender inequality and poverty in the perspective of worldwide improvement. Though, other inequalities also persist in the economies and societies; gender inequality is on priority in the list. It is as important as the race and caste in various cultures are. Hence, gender equality may be considered an important pillar of the international economic and social development.

USAID discussion series (2015) analyzed and discuss the results of various researches showing the linkages of gender with poverty. Evidences from the studies reflect that women participation in the growth of children in terms of their income spending over them is more than the men. Keeping the same in consideration, they are supposed to do more for the economic growth. Various factors are mentioned that influence women towards

intense poverty. These include uneven work burden over women, limited availability of resources for women, gender-based violence and forced & early marriages. Uncertain access to resources keeps the women restricted to survival only rather than moving towards sustainability.

Various policy initiatives are suggested in the study to reduce poverty and several areas are identified for further study and identification of more ways of the poverty reduction through women empowerment.

Poverty in Focus publication (2008) portrays the connection between gender and poverty through various aspects. An observation i.e. shared in this publication is that where there is low level of gender inequality in the developing countries, reduced level of poverty is there. These collective articles provide dimensions through which poverty reduction objective may be attained if policies are restructured and transformed accordingly.

Jacqueline A. Ashby (1999) considered women the vital contributor in mitigating and ultimately eliminating poverty. This paper focuses the people living in rural areas of the third world countries. Various measurement bases to poverty are also discussed herein.

### Gender Equality and Food Security

Bina Agarwal (2012) describes the link of gender equity with food security focusing on women as the producer, consumer and manager of the family food. Food security constitutes both availability/adequacy and access of the food. This paper states the difficulties faced by women in the agricultural productivity. Food shortages are responsible for the poor physical as well as the mental health of women and consequently the children i.e. future generation. Hence, ways to reduce such difficulties and restraints are also discussed for the implementation and better consequences in terms of productivity and resultantly the most important element for development i.e. Food security.

SP5 Discussion Paper (2017) has recognized the significance of connection between gender equality, food security and maintaining peace. Peace building is considered to be the measures adopted to align disagreements in order to reinforce peace in society. These measures include the security of food as well.

Bridge (2014), is the shared effort of various researchers and policy makers working on the Gender and Food Security in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and North America. This report highlights the significance of Gender inequality and food security mentioning that food is enough all over the world to meet requirements of all humans. However, a huge number of people suffering from hunger mainly women is due to disproportionate distribution of food among all. Another important aspect i.e. mentioned in this working report is the environmental pollution due to the use of unhealthy and artificial ways of farming, agriculture and fishing those are resulting in the attrition of food and water from the earth. As per the study, food insecurity and gender inequality were observed to be highly correlated. It is stated that women are the source for creating a number of food producers throughout the world. Nevertheless, they and their daughters are facing food insecurity and are not being provided with the satisfaction of their needs due to gender inequalities as per social norms in various parts of the world. The report suggests that gender equality and human rights must be on top most priority to reduce hunger and poverty.

ADB Report (2013) emphasizes on the connection between gender equality and food security in the international perspective. Main reason for food security among women in the Pacific region and Asia is their limitations in access of available resources. This situation may be turned towards betterment through women empowerment and their access to resources.

Nitya Rao, Mamata Pradhan and Devesh Roy (2017), analyzed the gender justice and food security in India. They insist that if food security is required to be achieved on the whole than fair treatment with women should be considered the core for attaining this goal. Study reveals that a considerable percentage of population mainly including children is not having safe and healthy food. The paper defines food and nutrition as not only the energy to perform routine functions of life rather intake of the necessary proteins, vitamins and other ingredients necessary for a human body specifically for women. The study reveals that in India gender equality is also affected by the ethnicity and caste. It is also observed that women look for the support of their parents and brothers in an expectation of and to come up with any unforeseen events that may cause food shortages. This paper conveys the message to make necessary revisions in existing policies where work burden is shared in between men and women and the other counterparts.

Catherine L.M. Hill (2006), as per the study, five HIV-positive women founded Swaziland Positive Living (SWAPOL) in 2001 after having discrimination from their in-laws. SWAPOL conducts tricks to produce food from which they can support the helpless children. It shows that if women have access to resources than they can

provide food security to the effected. It is revealed from the studies that availability of resources can empower people to treat and cure the ones living with HIV/AIDS.

Adnan A. Hyder, Suzanne Maman, Joyce E. Nyoni, Shaniysa A. Khasiani, Noreen Teoh, Zul Premji, Salim Sohani (2005), discuss the gender equity, women's health and food security with the view of women living in rural areas of Africa. Study is based on the detailed survey and interviews from the women farmers of various areas in Africa. Study reveals that lack of women empowerment in decision making is being resulted in the health issues that if resolved will bring improvements.

Sida (2015), emphasized that as per the researches their low status in society affect their nutrition. This is because women do not have appropriate access to the productive inputs. Four dimensions of food security i.e. availability, access, utilization and stability are elaborated in view of gender equality.

#### *Gender Equality and Health*

Ann Sorlin, Ann Ohman, Nawi Ng and Lars Lindholm (2012), studied the connection between gender equality on jobs and their health. Research was conducted and results were drawn through a survey. Positive relationship was found in apparent gender equality on job and their self-rated health. However, the study required further research to determine the credibility of results.

Jafar Hassanzadeh, NoorollahMoradi, Nader Esmailnasab, Shahab Rezaeian, Pezhman Bagheri and Vajihe Armanmehr (2014), discussed the relationship of Gender Equality with their health related factors worldwide. Results of the study reflect that Gender Inequality is reducing with the passage of time if analyzed on global basis. However, it is still on rise in some parts of the world e.g. Africa. Hence, availability of resources for women that may bring improvement in their health status is supposed to move this trend on the positive side.

Sofia Elwer, Lena Alex and Anne Hammarstrom (2012), analyzed the interaction of gender equality at a work place for elder care i.e. dominated by women with that of their health. It is basically tried to be observed what employees at such a workplace understand from gender equality/ inequality. Results indicate that this concept is recognized in terms of interests and personality and not the gender

Carla Medalia (2012), studied the relationship between gender and health. It is analyzed that social factors also have vital contribution to sex gap in health. Since, this gap was observed to be declining; however, men tend to be the more depression patient as compared to women after the age of 75 when they are unable to fulfill their desires.

Sofia Elwer (2013), analyzed the patterns of work place in Northern Sweden. The study suggests that work place is the important area to apply activities for promotion of health. However, for this purpose, patterns of equality are needed to be assessed and analyzed first.

Ann Sorlin, Lars Lindholm, Nawi Ng and Ann Ohman (2012), studied measurement of gender equality and its impact on health. Disagreement was found between the self reported index and perceived inequality when studied from the view point of men and women. It is observed that the link of gender equality with health depends upon the method of measurement used for gender equality.

#### *Gender Equality and Education*

As per the USAID Report, it is universally acknowledged that educating males and females have a large number of benefits for their own selves and for the society collectively like increase in their individual earnings and increase in GDP. However, when females of any society are provided with the education, it produces many additional benefits, these benefits include increased economic productivity, increased family incomes, and improved health and survival rates for infants and children etc.

Gender equality in education cannot be ensured and ascertained only by viewing the enrolment, there are some other factors which are supposed to be taken under consideration which are equality of access, equality in the learning process, equality of educational outcomes and equality of external results. These concepts are defined briefly:

**Equality of Access:** By equality of access it is meant that girls and boys are supposed to have the equitable opportunities in getting admissions to educational institutes. The attendance rather than enrolment is a much better indicator to ensure and ascertain the equality of access.

**Equality in the Learning Process:** By equality in the learning process it is meant that everyone should have equal opportunities to learn irrespective of their gender. There should be the same syllabus and same teacher for both the genders.

**Equality of Educational Outcomes:** By equality of educational outcomes it is meant that everyone should have the equal opportunities to enjoy the outcomes of their efforts in education irrespective of their gender. Both the genders should get in terms of educational outcomes what they deserve.

**Equality of External Results:** By equality of external results it is meant both the genders are supposed to have the equitable opportunities to participate and contribute in different social, cultural, political and economic activities. After completion of education, everyone should have the equal opportunities to play their roles for the society irrespective of their gender, it implies the career opportunities (USAID, EDUCATION FROM A GENDER EQUALITY PERSPECTIVE, 2008).

#### *Gender Equality and Sustainable Consumption & Production*

Production is directly in relation with the consumption as consumption stirs up production. Production, in most of the cases, reduces natural resources and endangers biodiversity. Consumption and production are also responsible for generating waste products, includes, physical outputs and different kinds of pollution. It is widely accepted that consumption patterns are needed to be addressed.

Research reveals that women are more motivated towards sustainable lifestyle as compare to men and this is more or less true in both rich and poor countries of the world. Despite of the fact that the choices of women are affected by income levels, social conditions etc. they are also motivated by their generative role and the effects the purchases could have in long term on well-being of their families. Variety of Swedish researches show that females spend more time in search of sustainable consumption options and life style alternatives as compare to males. Swedish females recycle more, consume more organic foodstuffs and buy green goods at higher proportions. Moreover, Swedish females have outnumbered the males over there in supporting sustainable transportation options. EcoMom Alliance was founded by a woman who was worried about the presence of poisonous chemicals in baby products. By creating a network of a large number of mothers concerned, she initiated a virtual company in order to start the trading of sustainable products. In order to stop Kimberly Clark (world's largest producer of tissue paper products) from cutting down forests, women banded together. Just like the women of developed economies, the women of developing economies also recognize the need and importance of sustainable consumption and production patterns.

Household consumption is 60% of overall consumption in most of the countries, therefore in order to transform the consumption patterns in order to reduce unnecessary and excessive consumption first of all household consumption should be taken under consideration. Men as well as women, both have to play the equal role for this transformation as in the current scenario men have more access to education, political and social systems and female are the primary household managers (UNDP, 2012).

### **5- Research Methodology**

This study discusses the participation and involvement of women to achieve sustainable development goals. This task is tried to be attained using detailed review of literature and secondary data for gender equality related to Pakistan.

Research Findings, Discussion and Conclusion:

Appended below are the selected findings from The Global Gender Gap Report 2017 produced by the World Economic Forum (WEF). 144 countries are covered in this report and rank of Pakistan is 143rd.

In 2017, average score of Gender Gap closed at 0.680 i.e. 68% on global basis reflecting that remaining 32% is needed to be closed in upcoming. However, the situation is quite varying while reviewing on the country level. Statistics reveal that from 142 countries covered in the 2016 and 2017, gender gap score of 82 countries showed improvement whereas 60 were on decline.

Appended below is the summary of top 10 countries in attaining gender parity along with their economic indicators and relative position of Pakistan.

Countries	Rank	Score	Population Sex ratio (female/male)	Human Capital Index Score	Estimated Earned Income (Female/Male)	Potential Support Ratio	Total Dependency Ratio
Iceland	1	0.878	1.01	71.44	0.73	5.00	52.00
Norway	2	0.830	1.02	77.12	0.79	4.00	52.00
Finland	3	0.823	0.97	77.07	0.71	3.00	59.00
Rwanda	4	0.822	0.96	61.06	0.86	20.00	77.00
Sweden	5	0.816	1.00	73.95	0.78	3.00	59.00
Nicaragua	6	0.814	0.97	53.11	0.82	12.00	53.00
Slovenia	7	0.805	0.99	73.33	0.81	4.00	50.00
Ireland	8	0.794	0.98	71.67	0.58	5.00	55.00
New Zealand	9	0.791	0.97	74.14	0.62	4.00	53.00
Philippines	10	0.790	1.01	64.36	0.68	14.00	58.00
Pakistan	143	0.546	1.06	46.34	0.19	13	65

It is reflected that population sex ratio (F/M) is higher in Pakistan from the top 10 countries whereas Human Capital Index Score and Estimated Earned Income (F/M) are the lowest comparing the same. Hence, women participation and deployment into the economy will not only enhance their estimated income but also the total income of the country or economy.

Though, Total dependency ratio in all top 10 countries is considerably higher than the potential support ratio, however, they are better in deployment of human capital.

Following data of the GDP per capita reflects that except Rwanda, Pakistan has the lowest GDP per capita while comparing to top 10 countries in gender parity score. Hence, gender parity may be considered vital element to have higher GDP per capita.

Countries	Rank	Score	GDP US\$ Billions	GDP per capita
Iceland	1	0.878	20.05	45,276.45
Norway	2	0.830	370.56	63,810.79
Finland	3	0.823	236.79	39,422.65
Rwanda	4	0.822	8.38	1,773.75
Sweden	5	0.816	511.00	46,441.21
Nicaragua	6	0.814	13.23	5,136.84
Slovenia	7	0.805	43.99	29,803.45
Ireland	8	0.794	294.05	62,828.34
New Zealand	9	0.791	185.02	35,269.10
Philippines	10	0.790	304.91	7,236.47
Pakistan	143	0.546	283.66	4,866.16

Besides, above statistics, following are the findings related to the significance of gender equality in attaining five major sustainable development goals i.e. poverty reduction, health, food security, education and sustainable consumption and production.

Studies reveal that increased participation of women in economy through the even workloads, education and their access to resources causes reduced poverty. They can not only participate themselves rather bring to the front the skilled work force in form of their children.

Whole literature i.e. reviewed for the purpose of this study related to gender equality and food security concludes that if women are empowered and provided access to resources then they can not only ensure their own food security instead they can provide food to the other needy as well. This is because women are proved to be the better manager of family in terms of providing food.

Mixed results were found while reviewing the relationship of gender equality and health. However, it is from a study that this relationship depends upon the measurement methods being used.

One thing which can be concluded about connection of gender equality with education at this point is that until and unless gender equality in education by taking under consideration the concepts in various studies is not achieved, the achievement of SGD-4 i.e. quality education for all is just a dream.

On behalf of the discussion one more thing which can be concluded is that gender equality and women empowerment is quite significant in order to ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns, as females throughout the world are more inclined towards promotion of sustainable consumption and production so if they are empowered and gender inequalities get reduced globally, it would be definitely helpful in achieving the SGD-12.

#### **6- Suggestions**

Based on the above discussion and conclusion, following measures are suggested that may help attaining sustainable development goals:

Providing better access of resources to women so that they can have a healthy life, built up a healthy generation and participate in the human capital

Awareness for the importance of women participation in economy should be made in areas where it is missing due to social norms.

#### **7- Limitations of Study**

The above study is limited to the data collected and the time restraints. Moreover, resources required to proceed with the research procedure are scarce i.e. limited financial resources, accessibility to the desired personnel in data collection (for interviews and survey) etc.

Identifying Gap for further research:

SDG No. 1, 2, 4 and 12 showed strong positive relationship with gender equality. However, relationship of Gender Equality and health found to be ambiguous from the reviewed literature. Hence, this aspect specifically requires some further workaround.

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