

Effects of Covid-19 on Gender Equality

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Abstract

Gender equality has always been a major concern all over the world. Impact of crisis is never gender neutral and COVID-19 is no exception. The Pandemic is not same for everyone and women and transgender suffer even more. The unjust behavior they witness is horrible and shameful. Also the situation has opened up the reality of mental development we have attained in case of gender equality.

Keywords: Pandemic, Equality, Marginal.

Gender equality means a situation in which men, women and transgender are treated equally, are provided with equal opportunities, rights and fair treatment everywhere they go. Every adverse situation or crisis across the globe affects the marginal even more as they have to undergo double discrimination. Women and transgender being the marginalized section of the society face the same.

COVID-19 entered the lives of people like an intruder and slowed down the speed of lives destroying their happiness. Psychological effects are equally horrible as its economic and monetary impact. But, these adversities are not same for all and some suffer even more. Talking about gender discrimination in the society, it is not new to anyone. The plot of the story of discrimination is not set at any one nation, it covers the whole world. COVID-19 increased the discrimination even more. Before looking for discrimination outside the house, one must see what is happening inside the house. Every person's basic right should be 'to be happy' but even the happiness is discriminated on the basis of gender. Before the pandemic, women suffering from domestic violence were at least able to go to the police station and lodge an FIR but the terror of COVID-19 and lockdown made them stay inside the house with their abusers. Reports of domestic violence in France have increased 30 per cent since the lockdown began, similar increase have been reported in different countries too. This deadly situation keeps on becoming deadlier. It is so shocking to think that this patriarchal society has become so insensitive that when the pain of COVID-19 situation should have changed the mindset, the situation became even worse. People get distressed looking at others' pain but the society where men want to have control over everything became completely insensitive. It is very shameful that where everyone is going through psychological pain, gender specific group has to undergo various mental and physical pain as well.

This is not just the case with less educated people, such discriminations are in every field. A woman at job is already paid less than a man. It is even the story of companies talking about science and technology and modernity. Now when the unemployment rate has increased, the women are offered jobs at even less salary than earlier. During the lockdown the house helps were not available and so the entire work of the house came on the woman of the house. Work from home already burdened the employees because of no fixed time to work and in such situation the women working from home suffered a lot. It is not hidden from anybody that a woman does most of the household chores. But now the untimely office work and housework both came on her side. As Mohammad Naciri, head of UN Women in Asia describes, "An even greater burden is placed on women where health systems are overloaded or schools are closed, as care for children or sick family members largely falls on women."

Looking towards the crime against women, there also seems no change. May it be the normal days or Pandemic, these crimes kept on increasing. Crime against women on streets, in public spaces, and online kept on increasing. In some countries, the resources and efforts got diverted to COVID-19 relief from violence against

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women response. The victims are not just women but also the transgender. And it is yet again shameful that women who are already discriminated in this patriarchal world discriminates transgender rather they should extend their helping hands whole-heartedly. The transgender already finds it difficult to make a place in their houses and in the society. COVID-19 situation made it difficult for them to be in the house, make family accept them and for them to accept themselves too. The crimes towards transgender have also increased a lot. Even the FIR is not lodged owing to the dignity of the family as it would reveal the gender of the victim. According to UNFPA, Pandemics often lead to break-downs of social infrastructures thus compounding the already existing weaknesses and conflicts. The violence against transgender on streets by destroying their shelters, beating them and vacating them from their places has increased. Their voices are unheard by officials giving the reason of work-load due to COVID-19. The situation is so alarming that the women and transgender are forced to become sex workers and the women are illegally becoming surrogate mothers to earn money and fulfill their needs.

Discrimination in health and hygiene has also been noticed in case of marginal. Their treatment as sub-human and the diversion of attention and critical resources away may result in exacerbated maternal mortality and morbidity, increased rates of adolescent pregnancies, HIV and sexually transmitted diseases. In Latin America and the Caribbean, it is estimated that an additional 18 million women will lose regular access to modern contraceptives, given the current context of COVID-19 Pandemic.

The need to fill up this gap of discrimination is much needed to bring equality in society and give everyone access to better health services, economic development, job opportunities and peaceful life irrespective of its gender. Pandemic has worsened the situation and it is required to aware people about equality and discrimination that knowingly or unknowingly we do or witness to. Works of UN, NGOs and other organizations has played crucial role in helping the women and transgender establishing gender equality but still much more is to be achieved.

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