

## Gender Discrimination in Kashmir Valley "A Case Study of District Bandipora"

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### Abstract

The prime subject matter of the research is gender discrimination in education. Gender discrimination is a multidimensional issue which is deeply embedded in the improvised and traditional cultural settings in Kashmir valley, and it is considered as a major constraint towards the development process in the country. We, therefore, also have made an attempt to determine the root causes of pervasive gender gap persist in the society in valley. The study reveal that socio-cultural norms, religious beliefs, patriarchal family setting and dominance of male counterparts of women contribute to the regular forms of discrimination against women. The study highlights some basic causes of gender discrimination against women includes patriarchal family settings, lack of opportunities for education and employment. Therefore, some policy implications are needed for improvement of the gender situation in the country.

**KEYWORDS:** Gender discrimination, education, Bandipora, Kashmir Valley.

### Introduction

#### Gender and Sex

"The word gender" is often used as a synonym for "sex". Sex, refers to biological Characteristics and features that make someone female or male. Gender has also been misused as a synonym for "women" or "female". Development projects directed towards women's needs, for example, may mistakenly refer to gender needs.

**Sex** –Biological differences between men and women refers to sex they are universal. These sets of biological characteristics are not mutually exclusive as there are individuals who possess both, but these characteristics tend to differentiate humans as males and females. Only a few are small proportion of the difference in the roles assigned by gender can be attributed to physical differences based on sex (such as pregnancy and childbirth, or differences in physiology and bodily functions).

**Gender** –Gender describes socially constructed differences between men and women, boys and girls etc. Gender is defined on the basis of social norms, behaviors, activities, relationship, responsibilities which are assigned by the society as appropriate for male and female (WHO, 2010). Understanding of gender varies in different races, nations, castes, ethnic groups, religions. According to World Bank (2012), "Gender refers to the social, behavioural, and cultural attributes, expectations and norms that distinguish men and women. Gender equality refers to the extent to which men's and women's opportunities and outcomes are constrained—or enhanced—solely on the basis of their gender".

**Gender discrimination:** Gender is a common term whereas gender discrimination is meant only for women, because females are the only victims of gender discrimination. Gender discrimination is not biologically determined but it is determined by socially and the discrimination can be changed by the proper and perpetuate efforts. Denial of equality, rights and opportunity and suppression in any form on the basis of gender is gender discrimination. Half from web to death females are facing lots of

discrimination against them. Some of them are Half of the world's population is females. They are doing two-third of work of the total work in the world but received only one-tenth of the world's total income. Nearly two-third of the women are illiterates and they have possessed only one percent of the total world's assets. In the world only one-fourth of the families are headed by female. India is a male dominant society and gender discrimination is customized habitually. In India the condition of women was appalling during independence. The deprivation of women in getting the similar level of opportunities relating to education, health, decision making as men due to prevalence of patriarchal society and socioeconomic backwardness in India put women at a backstage. After independence Indian planners and policy makers recognized the problem and framed variety of policies and programmes to provide women equal status as men. But since after six decades of Indian planning after making various efforts Indian women are still at a backstage than men on various aspects. Under this backdrop, this paper tries to evaluate the status and position of women in Kashmir a case study of district Bandipora in the light of some important gender -related indicators

#### **Objectives:**

1. To study the gender discrimination in district Bandipora of Kashmir valley in education

#### **Area of the study:**

For the present study was carried out in district Bandipora during the year 2014-15. Bandipora is one of the 22 districts in Jammu and Kashmir State in northern India. Bandipora town is the administrative headquarters of the district. This district was carved out from the erstwhile Baramulla district in 2007. The district is bounded by Kupwara district in the west, Baramulla district in the south and Kargil, Srinagar and Ganderbal districts in the east. This district occupies an area of 398 km<sup>2</sup>. According to the 2011 census Bandipora district has a population of 385,099. This gives it a ranking of 561st in India (out of a total of 640). The district has a population density of 1,117 inhabitants per square kilometer (2,890/sqmt). Its population growth rate over the decade 2001-2011 was 26.31%. Bandipora has a sex ratio of 911 females for every 1000 males, and a literacy rate of 57.82%.

**Table: 1 Total population of the district Bandipora**

Population	Rural	Urban	Total
Male	172263	35417	207680
Female	154608	29944	184552
<b>Total</b>	<b>326871</b>	<b>65361</b>	<b>392232</b>

**Table: 2 the literacy rate state and district Bandipora**

Literates	State	%	District	%
<b>Males</b>	4,264,671	76.75	117,058	66.88
<b>Females</b>	2,802,562	56.43	68,921	44.43
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,067,233</b>	<b>67.16</b>	<b>185,979</b>	<b>56.28</b>

(Source Census of India 2011)

#### **Data Sources and Methodology:**

Even I have also used secondary data; my study is primarily based on oral interviews and responses to questionnaires, circulated to women in district bandipora of Kashmir valley. In the process of the collection of data, informal communication went hand in hand with data collection through formal means. There were a total of several

respondents equally distributed between towns and villages. All along my effort was to assure them that opinions and responses were both confidential and valuable for me both as a researcher and as a woman. The study was of a representative type a serious attempt was made to give representation to all the variables such as age, education, income, social status, marital status and location. All the variables were selected purposefully in order to give representation to all concerned groups and sub groups in the sample and to get the maximum required information on specific theme and topics. The data in the study presents the socioeconomic status of the respondents and other sociological variables, the first section of the information provides the information regarding the age group 0-14, 15-40 and 41-60 are involved the study. All the age groups were given almost equal representation.

Out of the total respondents more than three fourth (40.0%) respondents in rural areas and (60.0%) in urban areas were literate. While gathering the occupational background the study reveals that (16.6%) in rural areas and (40.0%) respondents in urban areas were working as Govt. employees were (83.3%) in rural areas and (60.0%) in urban areas were not working. Regarding the family income the table discussed that (20 %) respondents in urban areas as well as in urban areas were in the income group of 5000 and below whereas (54.6%) respondents in rural areas and (50.0%) in urban areas were belonging to the income of 5001-10000 while (24.6%) respondents in rural areas and (30.0%) respondents were found in the income group of 10001 & above. A detailed questionnaire and interview method was the main tool to get the information from a cross section of society; women of different (a) age groups (b) income status, educational background, marital status and different areas (rural and urban). The local language was used as the respondents were both literate and illiterate. The participatory observation tool was also used during the field work abroad. The questionnaire was based on the complete sociological background information of the respondents. The information deals with the sociological variables of the respondents which includes place of residence, age, income, occupation and literacy. In this stage the required data was collected tabulated and classified as per section and themes of the questionnaire. The data was assigned with codes to prepare the base work for statistical process. The data aggregation was done on the basis of themes and sub themes which were useful in the removal of duplication of the data this was followed by tabulation of field work which enabled the researcher to present them based tables in the study report. Finally the information was processed and analyzed objectively, scientifically and sociologically in order to find out the problem.

### **Results and Discussion**

Kashmir is indeed a neglected region, and if it has suffered from the neglect of politicians, it has also suffered from the neglect of scholars. Compared to the kind of sophisticated studies on the position of women and gender that we have for the other regions of India, the works on Kashmir are few and far between. One scholar who has extensively worked on women in Kashmir, within a sociological framework, is Bashir Ahmed Dabla. A sociologist, Dabla primarily relies on field work for the collection of data, and since no other scholar has made such an effort, his work remains a pioneering one. His study reveals the existence of discrimination against women in education, availability of jobs, nutrition, health etc. Women and girls receive far less education than men, due to social norms but also increasingly owing to fears of violence. As is evident from the census data (Table -1) the women's literacy in Kashmir as everywhere else in India is lagging behind men's literacy. However the situation seems to have changed since 1961. Women's literacy rate rose from 20% in 1981 to 48% in 2011, an increase of 28%. With women's literacy standing at 58.1%

in 2011, the percentage increase in the two decades following 1981 comes to 10.1% lowered down (Census of India, J&K, 2011). There seems according to Dabla least discrimination against the female children in sending them to primary school (B.A Dabla., 2009) The present study is evaluating the followed parameters in order to find out the scenario of Gender discrimination in education in Dist. Bandipora. Women and girls receive far less education than men, due to social norms but also increasingly owing to fears of violence. As is evident from the census data (Table -3) the women's literacy in Kashmir as everywhere else in India is lagging behind men's literacy. However the situation seems to have changed since 1961. Women's literacy rate rose from 20% in 1981 to 48% in 2011, an increase of 28%. With women's literacy standing at 58.1% in 2011, the percentage increase in the two decades following 1981 comes to 10.1% lowered down (Census of India, J&K, 2011).

**Table 4: Statement showing the Literacy Rate in J&K**

Census Year	Literacy rate in J & K			Increase in Literacy Rate over the previous census	
	Male	Female	Total	J&K	India
<b>1961</b>	<b>16.97</b>	4.2	11.03	----	----
<b>1971</b>	26.75	4.2	18.58	07.55	6.15
<b>1981</b>	36.29	15.8	26.67	8.09	9.12
<b>2001</b>	66.60	43.00	55.50	28.83	21.27
<b>2011</b>	76.75	49.12	67.16	13.24	9.20

As from the above Table, it is evident that gender differentiation exists both in rural and

Urban areas, but it is high in rural areas. This can be attributed to number of factors like social dogmas, stereotypes, established order, culture, beliefs, powerstructure, engagement of girl child in agricultural/domestic work, preference of male child over female one. At the National level, the gender gap in literacy has decreased from 25.06% in 1961 to 21.59% in 2001 and further to 10.68% in 2011. Contrary to this, the gender gap in literacy Increased in the State from 12.71% in 1961 to 23.60% in 2001.

**Table-4Gender discrimination at Educational level**

		Area			
		Rural		Urban	
		no.	%	no.	%
Do discrimination led to educational backwardness of women	Yes	102	68.0	38	76.0
	No	48	32.0	12	24.0
<b>Total</b>		<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>
Women is given less priority in educational field than a men	Yes	85	56.6	32	64.0
	No	65	43.3	18	36.0
<b>Total</b>		<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>
Discrimination resulted in restriction of employment opportunities	Yes	75	50.0	27	54.0
	No	75	50.0	23	46.0
<b>Total</b>		<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>
Your choice of career was constrained by your	Yes	82	54.6	26	52.0

family	No	68	45.3	24	48.0
<b>Total</b>		<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>
Discrimination impacted on the career prospects of women	Yes	90	60.0	30	60.0
	No	60	40.0	20	40.0
<b>Total</b>		<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>
Family want you to be educated	Yes	81	54.0	28	56
	No	69	46.0	22	44.0
<b>Total</b>		<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

In my study it has been found that the discrimination has led to educational backwardness of women. About (68.6%) of women 102 out of 150 respondents in rural areas and respondents confirmed this fact and their number in the urban areas, (76.0%), 38 out of 50 respondents acknowledged this fact (Table-4). In other related survey of the researcher, 85 (56.6%) out of 150 respondents in rural areas while (64.0%) i.e. 32 out of 50 in urban clusters believe that they are given less priority in educational field than men. In respect of employment opportunities for women 75 out of 150 (50.0%) in rural areas felt that discrimination has resulted in fewer opportunities for women. Among the respondents (54.0%) (27/50) from urban background from rural background felt this type of discrimination. From the above table those (60.0%) respondents both in rural as well as in urban areas felt that their career is constrained by their families. The data in table-1 also conveyed that (46.0%) in rural areas and (44.0%) in urban areas confirmed that their families did not want to see them educated, and favoured their brothers over them when it came to education. Several women in general responded that their families would have been interested in our education if only they exhibited the willingness or the ability to learn. They held themselves responsible for their illiteracy and not their families. Recognizing the same, number of steps has been taken to bridge the gap of male female literacy. Steps were taken for promoting "Education for Women's Equality" as laid down in the National Policy of Education (1986). The revised National Plan of Action (1992) strongly advocates education for women's equality and empowerment. Motivation centered programmes with special inputs to promote self-confidence and self-sufficiency among women have been stressed under the new education policy. The initiatives include National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary level (NPEGEL), Establishment of Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalas (KGBVs), Free Text-Books/ Scholarships, Community mobilization, Establishment of Women ITIs and Women wings in the existing ITIs, reservation of half of the seats for females in the Medical Colleges, Focus on adult female illiterates under "Saakshar Bharat Mission (SBM) etc. As a result of these

### Conclusion

Gender discrimination is a global phenomenon having its offshoots in different spheres of society. It has its reflection in social, economic and political spheres to name a few. A most evident reflection of gender discrimination can be seen at the alarming decline rate in sex ratio, be it at the national level or to the matter the J&K state. A nation or society, without the participation of women cannot achieve development. If we eliminate gender discrimination, women will deliver all the potentials, skills, knowledge to develop the family, the nation and the whole world. In case of J&K state, as depicted from various surveys, reports and census, gender discrimination is clearly a matter of concern. Taking education as a starting point, there is nearly 27% gap between males and females in case of literacy rate. It clearly reflects the attitude of the society towards female education. Although, the literacy

rate of education of females has increased from 9.28% to 49.12%, yet it is evident that gender gap has increased from 17.47 to 27.63.

Education must become a top priority and the patriarchal system must be challenged. Only through successful integration of women into the workforce and community will issues that affect women be brought into the limelight. This is where the work of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) becomes crucial. By supporting efforts for agency and by working with the community to teach women 34 important life skills a slow change will start occurring within society. Kashmir has a long way to go in ending the problem of violence against women. However, if these steps are implemented progress will be made. For increasing female literacy rate government should provide free and compulsory education to all females at all level of education. Govt. should provide reservation policy for female in all sectors. Society and family should cooperate for enhancing interest and support for girl's education. They should provide sympathetic attitude towards girl's education.

### **Suggestions**

1. Government should ensure equal and easy access to gender responsive education services more widely.
2. Women should be given priority for human resources development programs (Training, technical or vocational learning etc) in order to enhance women's skills and capability so that they can easily enter into the formal labour force of the country.
3. Local government institutions, NGOs and community leaders jointly can organize counselling parents on importance of women's education, which could be an effective measure to improve the situation of women in general.
4. Documentaries, short film or commercial film based on positive image of women can play a vital role in changing the mind set of common people.
5. The following study, therefore, suggests that women need to have easy access to education, particularly to the higher study and comprehensive social awareness programs need to be undertaken by the government in collaboration with NGOs of national and international level.
6. More National level schemes/Scholarships/programmes/ should be initiated to give impetus to the women literacy rate in the country.

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