



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Vol. 10. Issue.2. 2023 (April-June)

INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA
2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

RAISING GENDER AWARENESS AMONG WOMEN

Palak^{1*}, Amanpreet Singh², Chandni³

^{1*}English Department, Chandigarh University, Gharuan, Mohali, 140413, Punjab, India.

^{2,3}Computer Science Engineering Department, Chandigarh University, Gharuan, Mohali, 140413, Punjab, India.

E-mail(s): palakbhardwaj2102@gmail.com*; dhanoa.a@gmail.com; chandnikhiva@gmail.com;

*Corresponding author



Article information

Received:12/4/2023

Accepted:02/5/2023

Published online:05/5/2023

doi: [10.33329/ijelr.10.2.77](https://doi.org/10.33329/ijelr.10.2.77)

ABSTRACT

Gender Awareness promotes an understanding of gender roles. It does not focus on reducing the natural gulf between the genders. To promote gender awareness and gender sensitization amongst the citizens, they should initially understand and respect the natural gender differences, further; they should be able to eliminate man-made gender differences. It aims to support the idea that there is a cognitive line of difference between the genders, but none holds the upper hand. To inculcate gender awareness amongst women they should neither be taught to be superior nor feel inferior to the opposite gender. It is not only treating the other gender's rights respectfully but also protecting one's own from exploitation. Women since time immemorial have been maltreated; these faulty practices are deeply rooted, and it has accustomed women used to be treated as auxiliary. The line of discrimination instead of difference by society has hindered women from reaching the zenith of their true potential. This paper focuses on the unaddressed problems faced by women; limited access to education, workspace exploitation, forceful childbearing, etc. If charity begins at home, then why not gender awareness? The question is how to begin? These were some of the problems which are considered to be too trivial to even be discussed. Unfortunately, a considerable mass of the population is not even aware of the presence of these. Turns out this new normal is actually now normal and needs to be voiced. The paper emphasizes all such red flags and also offers practical solutions and a new perspective to look at these issues.

Keywords: Sensitization, Cognitive, Auxiliary, Zenith

1 Introduction

Gender is a complex concept that influences the social, economic, and political status of individuals around the world. While gender inequality affects both men and women, it is women who are disproportionately affected by discriminatory policies and practices. Despite significant progress in recent years, women continue to face barriers that prevent them from achieving their full potential. One effective way to address this issue is to raise gender awareness among women themselves. The aim of this paper is to inform about the past and present state of women in the matter of gender awareness. Then provide with the importance, scope, and ways to inculcate gender awareness among women.

1.1 A Flashback of Gender Inequality in World and India

Gender inequality has been a significant issue in India, and it has been a persistent problem for many years. Despite the progress made in recent years, women still face numerous challenges and discrimination in various aspects of their lives. The literacy problems of women are not unique to India, but is a global issue affecting many countries around the world. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), there are more than 750 million illiterate adults worldwide, two-thirds of whom are women [1].

There are many factors that contribute to low literacy rates among women, including poverty, social and cultural norms, gender discrimination, lack of access to education, and inadequate educational resources. In many countries, girls are not given equal access to education as boys, and are often forced to drop out of school at a young age due to early marriage, domestic responsibilities, or economic reasons.

Women in rural areas face additional challenges such as a lack of schools, long distances to travel to schools, inadequate infrastructure, and insufficient teachers. This makes it difficult for them to access education and improve their literacy skills.

Low levels of literacy among women have significant consequences for their personal development, economic empowerment, and overall well-being. Women who are literate have better job opportunities, earn higher incomes, have better health outcomes, and are more likely to participate in political and civic life. To address these issues, various global initiatives and programs have been launched to promote women's literacy, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, which include a target to achieve gender equality and improve education for all [2]. Governments and non-governmental organizations around the world are also implementing policies and programs to increase women's access to education and improve their literacy skills. One of the most significant areas of concern is education. Although there have been commendable improvements in female literacy rates in India, there is still a significant gap between male and female literacy rates. In 2000, the global literacy rate for men aged 15 and above was 84.5 percent, while in 2010 it increased to 89.2 percent. By 2018, the global literacy rate for men had risen to 91.1 percent. In 2000, the global literacy rate for women aged 15 and above was 70.7 percent, while in 2010 it increased to 78.3 percent. By 2018, the global literacy rate for women had risen to 84.3 percent. It is worth noting that the literacy rate can vary significantly between countries, with some countries reporting very high literacy rates while others have much lower rates [3]. Therefore, these global figures may not be reflective of the situation in individual countries. Additionally, gender disparities in education and literacy still exist in many parts of the world, with women and girls often facing greater barriers to education than men and boys.

Another significant issue facing women in India is violence and harassment. Women in India face high rates of domestic violence, sexual assault, and harassment. Many women also face discrimination in the justice system, which often fails to prosecute perpetrators of violence against women.

The Indian government has taken steps to address gender inequality, such as implementing policies aimed at increasing female literacy rates and providing incentives for companies to hire women. However, there is still a long way to go in achieving gender equality in India. Efforts need to be made to change cultural attitudes towards women and to ensure that women are protected from violence and discrimination.

Table 1 Literacy Rate from Year 2000 to 2020 in World

Year	Women (Values in Percentage)	Men (Values in Percentage)
2000	70.70	84.50
2010	78.30	89.20
2018	84.30	91.10

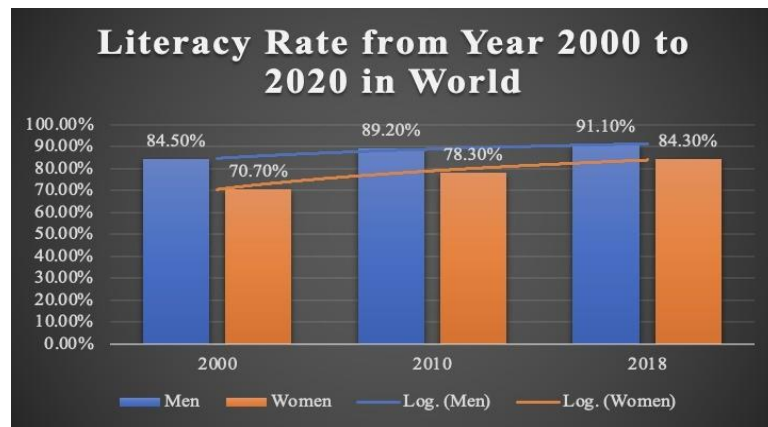


Fig. 1 Literacy Rate from the Year 2000 to 2020 in World

According to the latest data available from the World Bank, the literacy rate of women in India as of 2020 is 77.70 percent that is increased from the year 2000 to 2020. In the year 2000, it is 47.80 percent which is going to increase every year also mentioned in Table 2 which includes the whole percentage from the year 2000 to 2020. The literacy rate of the year 2005 also increases from 47.80 percent (the year 2000) to 54.20 (year 2005) This means that just over seven out of ten women aged 15 and above in India can read and write [3].

However, there has been a steady increase in women’s literacy rate in India over the years, with the rate rising from 54.16 percent in 2000 to 70.30 percent in 2020. Despite progress, there is still a gender gap in literacy rates in India, with men having a higher literacy rate compared to women. Efforts to close this gap and ensure equal access to education for all are ongoing in India. The literacy rate in the year 2010 increased from 54.20 percent (year 2005) to 64.80 percent (the year 2010). After taking the step by the Indian government against the lower literacy rate has increased in every year (from 5 percent to 10 percent). In the year 2015, it is 69.40 percent, and 77.70 percent in the year 2020 [3]. Corresponding these years, the literacy rate of men is higher rather than women. As per the latest report of the World Bank from the year 2000 to the year 2020

Table 2 Literacy Rate from the Year 2000 to 2020 in India

Year	Women (Values in Percentage)	Men (Values in Percentage)
2000	47.80	73.40
2005	54.20	77.70
2010	64.80	82.10
2015	69.40	84.70
2020	77.70	86.10

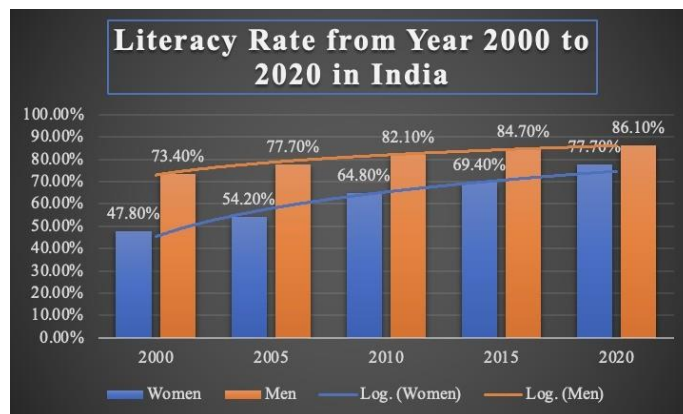


Fig. 2 Literacy Rate from the Year 2000 to 2020 in India

Fig. 2 depicts the bifurcation between the literacy rate of men and women in India. It gives the different aspects corresponding to the life of women. The Consequence of the efforts by the Indian government and the government of different countries in the world to improve the literacy rate of women has not been improved appreciably. It also affects the life skills of women like unemployment and mental and physical stress and also affects the economic life of the women. The survey of different countries provided by the World Bank gives an unpromising percentage regarding the improvement in literacy rate corresponding to women's life [3].

One of the primary reasons for low literacy rates among women in India is the traditional patriarchal mindset that values men over women. Girls are often seen as a burden and are not given equal opportunities to education as boys. Many families prioritize investing in their sons' education over their daughters', and girls are expected to take on domestic responsibilities at a young age, which further limits their access to education.

Another factor is the prevalence of child marriage in India, which affects girls disproportionately. Child brides are often forced to drop out of school, limiting their opportunities for education and perpetuating the cycle of illiteracy.

Additionally, women in rural areas face challenges such as a lack of schools, inadequate infrastructure, and insufficient teachers. Many girls are forced to travel long distances to attend school, which can be dangerous and expensive and can further limit their access to education [4].

To address these issues, the Indian government has implemented various policies and programs such as the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao (Save the girl child, educate the girl child) scheme, which aims to improve the welfare of girls and increase the number of girls attending school. However, much more work needs to be done to improve the literacy rates of women in India and ensure that all girls have access to quality education [5].

1.2 A Glimpse of the Present State of Women

Do we practice equality or are we just equal in the name of law? Before addressing this question, it should be clear what equality is, it is to accept natural gender differences but not allow them to be a hurdle in practicing equal opportunities for all irrespective of their gender. This is the point of beginning of gender differences/biases, as people fail to accept the natural, and in an attempt to impose the derogatory ideology of the man, they end up in a maze of biases. It is not a relieving sight to be in the 21st century yet looking at a major population still striving for the bare minimum. After 75 years of our independence are we really independent of our biases? The further discussion will highlight these questions more accurately:

- A female infant is more likely to survive only in 5 states out of 29 states in India, according to the 2017 Sample Registration Survey (SRS), says The Economic Times.
- In India boys and girls experience adolescence quite differently, while boys tend to experience more freedom and encouragement, girls on the other hand, have to face limitations with no ability to make their own decisions regarding essential life decisions such as education, work, marriage, and social relationships.
- India has recently been ranked 140th among 153 countries in the Annual Global Gender Gap Index for 2021, as per the publications of the World Economic Forum (WEF)
- In India, a total of 30 percent of people are below the poverty line, out of which 70 percent are women.

This was just a flash of the present condition of women at the national level but all of this is rooted in our everyday lives. The prevalent scenario of gender discrimination is unfair social norms, exposing girls to child marriage, unwanted and early childbearing, poor health and sanitization, prey to sexual exploitation, forced domestic work, lack of better educational facilities, and so on. This discrimination is not only practiced in society but at our houses as well, when it is only girls who are taught household chores and not boys, when a girl child is without even asking bought a doll house to play with whereas a boy receives a robotic or mechanical toy when girls are not allowed to walk out of the house alone even during the daytime without a male escort, when girls are taught to be independent but in the boundary of their house only, when only women face pressure to get

married even before getting a job, or even if they do get one they are expected to drop it for their marriage, when working women are expected to working with less salary on a higher paying job, when there is an unsaid rule for men to take rest after a long day but women can't, when taking care of the child is the sole responsibility of mother only. In rural India the condition is much worse, only a handful of women are allowed to complete their education before forcing them to get married, and women spend a large proportion of time on un- paid home sustaining work, for them to respond to better opportunities is not possible due to lack of mobility allowance, highly educated women are still not preferred in the household as education does not teach one to be dependent and rural society is still not supportive of independent women. There are still a few women who have managed to break stereotypes, stepped out, and made their way to success.

The present state of women in the world varies significantly depending on the country and region. While there have been significant gains in promoting gender equality in some areas, many women continue to face significant barriers to achieving their full potential.

In terms of education, there have been significant improvements in recent decades. More girls are attending school than ever before, and the gender gap in education is narrowing. However, in some parts of the world, girls still face significant barriers to accessing education, including poverty, child marriage, and cultural norms that prioritize boys' education.

In the workforce, women continue to face significant gender inequality. The gender pay gap remains a persistent issue, with women earning less than men for the same work. Women are also underrepresented in leadership positions, with men occupying the majority of top-level roles in many industries and sectors.

Gender-based violence also remains a significant challenge, with women and girls at higher risk of experiencing violence, sexual harassment, and other forms of abuse. This is particularly true in conflict-affected areas, where sexual violence is often used as a weapon of war.

Political representation is another area where women continue to face significant inequality. While progress has been made in increasing the number of women in political office, women remain underrepresented in political leadership positions worldwide. Overall, while progress has been made in promoting gender equality, there is still much work to be done to address gender inequality and empower women to achieve their full potential.

2 Why is Gender Awareness important?

Gender inequality is a global issue that affects individuals, communities, and countries worldwide. It refers to the unequal treatment of individuals based on their gender, and it can manifest in various forms such as unequal access to education, healthcare, employment opportunities, and political representation.

In many parts of the world, women and girls face significant barriers to achieving equal rights and opportunities. They are often denied access to education, forced into early marriage, and subjected to violence and discrimination. This limits their ability to reach their full potential and contribute to the development of their communities and nations [6].

Gender inequality is also evident in the workplace, where women are often paid less than men for the same work and are underrepresented in leadership positions. In politics, women are often marginalized and excluded from decision-making processes, which can limit their ability to advocate for their rights and influence policy [6].

Despite progress in some areas, gender inequality remains a significant challenge globally. Addressing this issue requires a collective effort from individuals, communities, governments, and international organizations to promote gender equality and empower women and girls to achieve their full potential.

The discussion has been evident of the fact that women belong to the suppressed class of society. Most of women are not even aware of the fact that they are being discriminated against, even over something trivial like a toy [8]. This blindfold on the eyes of women has been tied by society by tagging such trivial discrimination as normal. When these malpractices are called normal then the women are made to accept these wrongdoings.

At this point, Gender Awareness and Gender Sensitization play a pro vital role. Women should be aware of the maltreatment they have been facing. When they would know the real problem it will aid them in raising their voice against such actions. But only awareness is not enough, it will only bring them closer to a better understanding of the problem, instead, they need to be close to the solution. Therefore, with this awareness, they should also be familiarized with applicable solutions [8].

One of the most significant reasons why gender awareness is important is because it promotes equality. By highlighting and addressing the various forms of gender-based discrimination that women face, gender awareness can help to create a more equitable society. This includes addressing issues such as the gender pay gap, unequal access to education and healthcare, and gender-based violence.

Another important aspect of gender awareness is its ability to empower women. By helping women to recognize and challenge gender-based discrimination, gender awareness provides them with the tools and knowledge to advocate for themselves and others [7]. This empowerment is crucial for creating a society where women have equal opportunities and can thrive without fear of discrimination or violence.

Gender awareness also promotes diversity and inclusion by recognizing and celebrating the diversity of experiences and identities within the gender spectrum. This recognition helps to build more inclusive and equitable communities, where individuals are valued for who they are rather than for their gender or other aspects of their identity [10].

Furthermore, gender awareness improves relationships between men and women by promoting mutual respect, understanding, and empathy. It helps individuals to understand the ways in which gender intersects with other aspects of identity, such as race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, leading to more harmonious and respectful relationships. A little step of awareness will bore the fruit of the realization of their true potential. Gender Awareness will help women to fight discrimination but will also make them advocates for the same. Further is it important to reach the stability we as a society thrive to reach.

A McKinsey Global Institute recently points out that improving women's status and initiating gender equality in India could add 12 trillion dollars to global growth. Increasing women's labor force participation by ten percentage points could add 700 Billion dollars to India's GDP [4].

3 Scope for the Improvement in the Condition of Women

There is always scope for improvement in the condition of women, and it requires a collective effort from individuals, communities, and governments to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment. Here are some ways in which we can work towards improving the condition of women:

Education: Providing education to girls and women can help them become financially independent, improve their health, and reduce their vulnerability to gender-based violence.

Economic empowerment: Ensuring that women have access to employment opportunities, equal pay, and resources such as credit and land ownership can help them become financially independent and improve their status in society.

Health and well-being: Ensuring access to quality healthcare, including reproductive and maternal health services, can improve the health and well-being of women and reduce maternal mortality rates.

Legal rights: Ensuring that women have equal rights under the law, including protection from gender-based violence and discrimination can help improve their status in society.

Political representation: Increasing the representation of women in politics can help promote gender equality and ensure that women's voices are heard in decision-making processes.

Cultural and social norms: Challenging harmful cultural and social norms that perpetuate gender inequality, such as child marriage and female genital mutilation, can help create a more equal and just society for women.

By working towards these goals, we can improve the condition of women and promote gender equality around the world.

4 How can Gender Awareness be imparted?

All the roads lead to Rome; there is no defined way to inculcate Gender Awareness. It is a matter of hard work and perseverance. It is a trodden road to a desired destination. Appreciable efforts have been witnessed from the governments' end, in organizing multifarious campaigns and lectures on Gender Sensitization and Gender Awareness. Here are some ways which might help in raising gender awareness among women:

- Don't define basic survival skills like cooking and cleaning as gender roles. An inferiority complex should not be instigated among women by prioritizing masculinity.
- A child, whether male or female, should be taught about gender equality. A house free from gender bias will make the nation free from the same.
- Equal educational opportunities should be provided irrespective of gender like the government of India has taken initiative to increase literacy among women, "Beti padhao, Beti bachao". Make education gender sensitive.
- Women should be encouraged to fight child marriage, unwanted or forceful pregnancies, and abusive environments. Instead of asking women to stay indifferent to all such abuses, they should be helped in fighting back. Let women be vocal about their issues. Their suppressed voices add to the gender biases of society.
- Engaging men in discussions about gender can be an effective strategy for promoting gender awareness among women. Men can be encouraged to challenge harmful gender norms and stereotypes and to promote more positive and inclusive attitudes toward women.
- Creating safe spaces where women can come together to discuss and explore gender-related issues can be a powerful tool for promoting gender awareness. These spaces can include women's groups, community centers, and online forums, and can provide a supportive environment where women can share their experiences, learn from each other, and build a sense of community.
- Empowerment and leadership training programs can help women develop the skills and confidence they need to challenge gender-based discrimination and inequality. This can include training on assertiveness, communication, and leadership skills.
- Mentor-ship programs can be effective in promoting gender awareness among women, particularly in male-dominated fields. Having a mentor who can provide guidance and support can help women navigate the challenges they may face and achieve success in their chosen fields.

5 Conclusion

Based on the research conducted, it can be concluded that raising gender awareness among women is essential for promoting gender equality and empowering women. The research indicates that many women still face various forms of gender-based discrimination and bias, which can limit their opportunities and hinder their success. By raising awareness about gender issues and promoting gender equality, women can be empowered to challenge and overcome the barriers that limit their potential. This can include encouraging women to pursue leadership roles, advocating for equal pay and benefits, and promoting policies that support work-life balance and other forms of flexibility.

To effectively raise gender awareness among women, it is important to take a multi-faceted approach that includes education and training programs, outreach and awareness campaigns, and policy and institutional changes. Additionally, it is important to involve men and other stakeholders in the process to ensure that gender awareness and equality become a shared responsibility and priority.

Overall, the findings of this research suggest that raising gender awareness among women is crucial for promoting gender equality and empowering women. By working together and taking a proactive approach, we can create a more equal and just society where everyone has the opportunity to thrive and reach their full potential.

Reference

- [1] Anon, "Gender Inequality in the world," *UNESCO*, vol. 1, 2023.
- [2] UNSDG, "Gender Equality, UN Coherence," *Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women*, 2016.
- [3] W. Bank, "Literacy rate, adult female (% of females ages 15 and above)," <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ADT.LITR.FE.ZS>, vol. 1, 2022.
- [4] R. U. Arora, "Gender inequality, economic development, and globalization: A state level analysis of India," *The Journal of Developing Areas*, vol. 46, pp. 147-164, 2012.
- [5] A. Bhargava, "Functional literacy in India: A progress report," *Toronto, Ontario: Canadian Education Association*, 2008.
- [6] H. k., "Engendering policies and programmes through feminist evaluation: Opportunities and insights," *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, vol. 19, pp. 312-340, 2012.
- [7] C. M. K. B. M. N., "Gender equality in employment: Policies and practices in Switzerland and the U.S. Washington, DC: George Washington University," 2012.
- [8] C. M. M. S., "An evaluation of major determinants of health care facilities for women in India," *Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, vol. 5, pp. 1-9, 2012.
- [9] A. M. R. G. J. M. K. E. S. G. M. K. Jonathan Woetzel, "The power of parity: Advancing women's equality in India," *Report on advancing women's equality in India*, vol. 1, 2015.
- [10] M. K. N. Hussain, "Gender differences: A case study of Malda district of West Bengal, India," *Pakistan Journal of Women's Studies: Alam-e-Niswan*, vol. 17, pp. 75-96, 2010.