

A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON GENDER GAP AMONG SOUTH ASIAN COUNTRIES

Dr. Archana Yadav*

ABSTRACT

Gender inequality; a global phenomena, has always been an issue of debate. Women are given lesser advantages the world over. Usually they are not treated at par with the men in terms of liberty, job responsibilities, education opportunity, healthcare facilities and social honor. The issue is more severe in under developed and developing countries where men are in dominant positions. In some of the communities, this discretion is seen with a very high degree and the women do not get proper respect and equal opportunities to contribute and grow. The discretion is present globally in varied degree. Though women play very important roles in any society for its economic, social, political and cultural development, however their roles are not recognized well, and they suffer the pain of biasness of the society. India and other neighboring countries do not present a good scenario regarding the subject. Women still do not get similar rights and chances as the men get. Cases of sexual harassment, eves teasing, female child infanticide, salary discretion, domestic violence, rapes and so many other crimes against women are wide prevalent in such countries. The current study has taken the global gender report of south asian countries indicating the level of equality based on different variables. Year wise trend and inter country comparison have been the key features of the underlying study.

Keywords: *Gender, Equality, Social, Political and Cultural Development, Index.*

Introduction

Most of the societies are men dominant and women are largely treated with biased attitude giving them lesser importance and honor the world over. Female infanticide, female illiteracy, domestic violence, workplace harassment, unequal salaries, rapes and sexual crimes are the common issues that are found everywhere indicating the plight of the women. 'Gender inequality acknowledges that men and women are not equal and that gender affects an individual's living experience. These differences arise from distinctions in biology, psychology, and cultural norms. Some of these distinctions are empirically grounded while others appear to be socially constructed. Studies show the different lived experience of genders across many domains including education, life expectancy, personality, interests, family life, careers, and political affiliations. Gender inequality is experienced differently across different cultures' (Wikipedia).

The Data

The study has used the Global Gender Gap Report which was first published in 2006 by the World Economic Forum. The 2017 report covers 144 major and emerging economies. The forum has designed an index known as The Global Gender Gap Index to measure gender equality globally.

The Global Gender Gap Index

The report's Gender Gap Index ranks countries according to calculated gender gap between women and men in four key areas:

- Health,
- Education,
- Economy and
- Politics

* Principal, Biyani Law College, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India.

These areas judge the state of gender equality in a country. The report measures women's disadvantage compared to men, and is not a measure of equality of the gender gap. Gender imbalances to the advantage of women do not affect the score. So, for example, the indicator 'number of years of a female head of state (last 50 years) over male value' would score 1 if the number of years was 25, but would still score 1 if the number of years was 50. Due to this methodology, gender gaps that favor women over men are reported as equality and would not cause deficits of equality in other areas to become less visible in the score, excepted for life expectancy.

Analysis and Discussion

The report examines four overall areas of inequality between men and women:

- Economic participation and opportunities (outcomes on salaries, levels of Assignments and access to high-skilled employment and job responsibilities)
- Educational attainment (outcomes on access to basic and higher education)
- Political empowerment (representation and participation in decision-making structures)
- Health and survival (outcomes on life expectancy and sex ratio) (Parity is not assumed here. This is assumed that there are fewer female births than male (944 female per 1,000 males), and men are assumed to die younger. Provided that women live at least six percent longer than men, parity is assumed. But if it is less than six percent it counts as a gender gap).

Though the index contains the data of 144 countries for a period of 13 years (from 2006 to 2018), however, this study pertains to the South Asian countries only. Table-1 depicts the data hereunder.

Table 1: Global Gender Gap Scores for South Asian Countries

Country	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Bangladesh	0.6270	0.6314	0.6531	0.6526	0.6702	0.6812	0.6684	0.6848	0.6973	0.704	0.698	0.719	0.721
Bhutan	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.6651	0.6364	0.646	0.642	0.638	0.638
India	0.6011	0.5936	0.6060	0.6151	0.6155	0.6190	0.6442	0.6551	0.6455	0.664	0.683	0.669	0.665
Maldives	N/A	0.6350	0.6501	0.6482	0.6452	0.6480	0.6616	0.6604	0.6557	0.652	.65	0.669	0.662
Nepal	0.5478	0.5575	0.5942	0.6213	0.6084	0.5888	0.6026	0.6053	0.6458	0.658	0.661	0.664	0.671
Pakistan	0.5434	0.5509	0.5549	0.5458	0.5465	0.5583	0.5478	0.5459	0.5522	0.559	0.556	0.546	0.550
Sri Lanka	0.7199	0.7230	0.7371	0.7402	0.7458	0.7212	0.7122	0.7019	0.6903	0.686	0.673	0.669	0.676

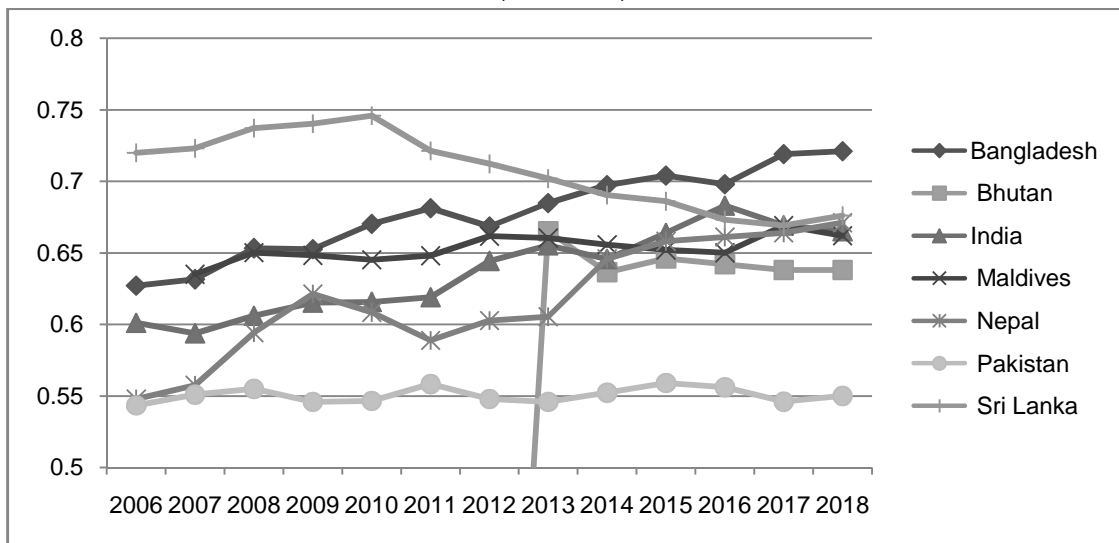
Source: Global Gender Gap Report by World Economic Forum

Data for few years of some of the countries are not available.

The score 1 indicates a situation better for women. Less than 1 indicates a gap (not better for women) as per the score. For better understanding and view, the data of table-1 has been depicted in chart-1 showing the trend lines for all seven countries.

Chart 1: Global Gender Gap Scores for South Asian Countries

(Trend Line)



Observations

- Bangladesh scores quite good in a gradual manner and stands at highest ranking in 2018 among all South Asian countries.
- Bhutan's data was available from 2013 where it showed good position but fell down a bit in further years.
- India started at 0.611 and reached to 0.665, a good progress in gender equality.
- Maldives reflects a mediocre status during the period of study. It improves a little.
- Gender gap in Nepal has got a better position year by year.
- Pakistan's ranking on the issue is worst among all the countries taken for study
- Sri Lanka showed very good scoring in the initial years but it was declined in later years.

Conclusion

Except Pakistan, all other countries are already at good ranks or have improved during the 13 years period of index. The situation of gender equality in Pakistan appears to be bad on a long term basis. Sri Lanka is on a declining position but still not bad. Bangladesh and Nepal are on a continuous improvement path.

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