
An Empirical Analysis on Gender Gap: With Specific Reference to Economic Participation in Asian Countries

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Dr. Geetanjali Singh¹, Neha Bamel², Aparna Sheoran³

Abstract:

Purpose: The aim of this article is to study the effect of gender gap in economic participation and opportunities on growth and development of Asian Countries.

Design/methodology/approach: Secondary data has been used in the analysis. Content analysis has been done by using Data Analysis method- PSPP: Correlation.

Findings: According to the results, the correlation between gender gap in economic participation and opportunities and growth and development is 0.33. Due to the scarcity of data on access to women to economic opportunities the correlation was low. If study the table closely, it was determined that countries with low gender gap in economic participation were doing well in growth and development.

Practical implications: The paper has guiding significance for the overall development of an economy by keeping in mind the importance of gender parity, and also provides the scientific reasoning that gender parity in economic participation can lead to higher growth and development levels.

Originality/value: This paper has reviewed the degree of gender in economic participation, effects of it in development and the relationship between development and gender parity in economic participation and opportunities.

Keywords: Gender gap, inequality, economic participation and opportunity, WEF, Asian Countries, ILO, women, political empowerment.

JEL codes: G03, G30.

Paper type: Research article.

¹Assistant professor, MCM DAV College, Sector-36, Chandigarh, India, geetanjalisingh@mcmdavcwchd.in;

²Graduate student, the same as in 1, neha.bamel97@gmail.com;

³Graduate student, the same as in 1, sheoranaparna3@gmail.com;

1. Introduction

‘All human beings, irrespective of race, creed or sex, have the right to pursue both material well-being and their spiritual development in conditions of freedom and dignity, of economic security and equal opportunity.’ (Declaration of Philadelphia of 1944). The importance of pursuing gender equality has long been recognized across the world, including the Asian countries for growth and development. Virtually all countries in the region are parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and gender equality is explicitly guaranteed in many constitutions and statutes (ADB *et al.*, 2006). Gender gap is a result of inequalities. The main cause of inequalities in Asian countries are cultural, social, and economic factors within and outside the household. The world economic forum’s gender gap framework:

- Economic Participation and Opportunity,
- Educational Attainment,
- Health and Survival,
- Political Empowerment.

Even if countries advance in achieving gender parity in basic human capabilities, the instrumental effects of gender equality on economic development would be limited unless women have as much access as men to economic opportunity to apply their capabilities. Economic participation and opportunity is an important index while considering gender gap. It’s the 2nd largest index in gender gap.

In the Global Gender Gap Index 2021, India is placed 140th out of 156 countries, down 28 points from its ranking in 2020. Iceland has risen to the top of the standings. According to the report, the COVID-19 epidemic has partially reopened gender gaps that had previously been closed. Globally, the economic gender gap could be between per cent and 4 per cent greater than previously stated. One of the primary goals of the Sustainable Development Goals is gender equality (SDGs).

Despite substantial progress in expanding women's labour force participation and lowering income disparities over the last few decades, gender equality in the workplace remains elusive. In spite of the fact that millions of women have become successful entrepreneurs, women continue to be chronically underrepresented in boardrooms around the world. Moreover, women continue to make up the majority of the world's working poor, earn less money, and are more likely to be affected by long-term unemployment than males, particularly in developing countries.

This is owing to women's socio- economic difficulties as a result of gender-based discrimination, as well as their dual obligations as workers and caregivers for society. In many nations, women have less access to productive resources, education, skill development, and job possibilities than men. This is mostly due to long-standing social norms that assign gender roles and are frequently reluctant to

shift. Furthermore, women continue to perform the majority of unpaid care work, which is posing an increasing obstacle to their efforts to engage in productive work, both in subsistence agriculture and in the market economy, particularly in countries afflicted by environmental change and HIV/AIDS. Pay disparities between men and women persist, and women are more likely to live in poverty.

This section examines the number of men and women who work for a living, who works full-time, and how having children and growing older affect women's work patterns and incomes differently than men's. It examines how, even while working full-time, women carry the bulk of household and family tasks. It also examines the economic benefits of maintaining skilled women in the workforce and encouraging them to serve on corporate boards. It examines women's representation in legislatures, courts, and high government positions. It looks at how men and women have fared in the aftermath of the crisis, and how women are relegated to the most vulnerable sectors.

2. Materials and Methods

Sources of data: Secondary data has been used in the analysis. The various source of this data is the world economic forum global gender gap report 2021. Content analysis has been done by using Data Analysis method-PSPP: Correlation.

2.1 Research Objectives

- To analyse the degree of gender gap in economic participation and opportunities and reason behind the gender gap in economic participation and opportunities.
- To find to what extent gender gap in economic participation and opportunities affect growth and development of Asian countries and the relation between the two.

2.2 Research Hypotheses

- Gender inequality in economic participation and opportunity effect growth and development in an economy.
- Gender inequality in economic participation and opportunity does not affect in few cases as exceptional.

3. Results

3.1 Gender Gap in Economic Participation and Opportunities

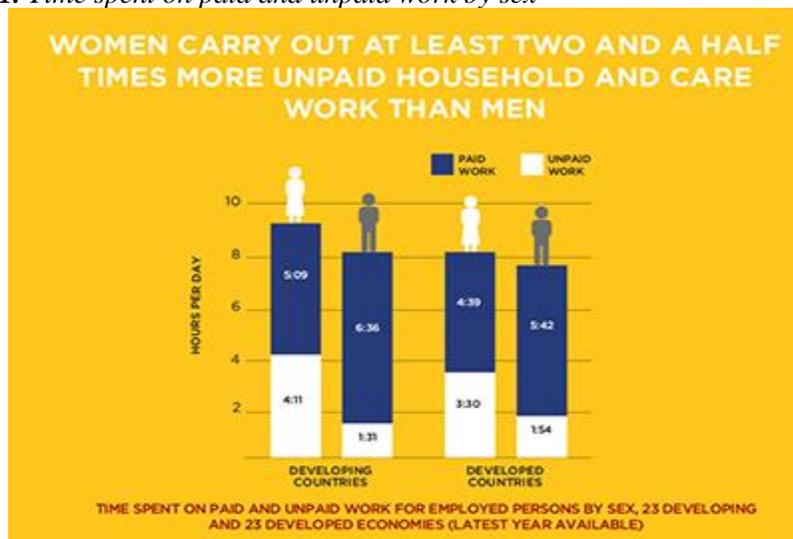
It's the second largest gender gap among the four components of the index that is for the economic participation and opportunities. The gender gaps in economic participation have barely changed in the last 20 years. Women represents around two

thirds of the poor in Asia, which is quite a big number and their contribution to an economy is also on a large scale. So, for an inclusive growth and development equal opportunities should be there for both men as well as women. Less economic access is part cycle of disadvantage for women, often caused by discrimination and in employments and education. Women's underrepresentation in the labour market is one of the most important sources of inequality between men and women.

Even, if countries are able to achieve gender equality in basic human capabilities, the requisite effects of gender equality on economic development would be limited unless women have as much as men to economic and political opportunities to apply their capabilities. According to the data from WEF 2021 report, it is clear that there is a wide gender gap in the access of economic participation and opportunities between men and women. And most of the women are employed in informal sectors with less wages and no formal social protection.

Still, there is a lot discrimination based on gender in economic opportunities. South Asian countries are the worst performers in this index. This mainly exists due to the patriarchal and social norms that tends to privilege men and boys' access to opportunities and control over the resources (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Time spent on paid and unpaid work by sex



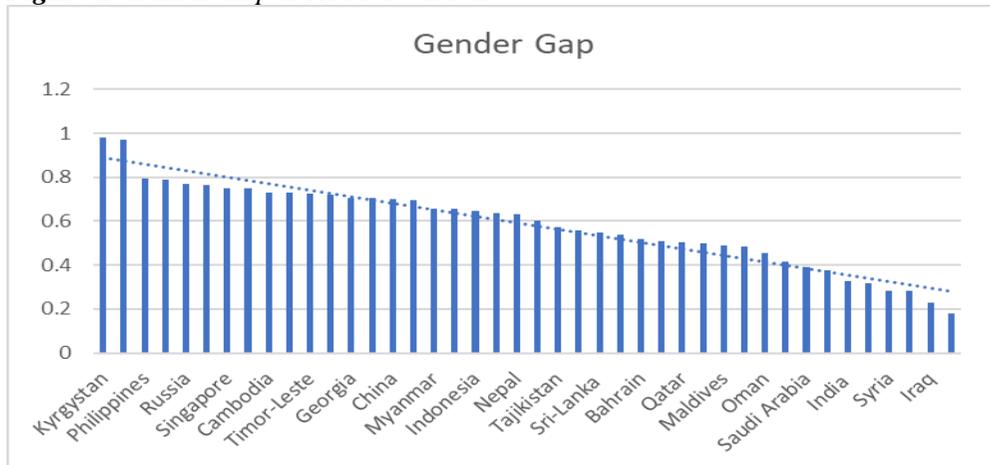
Source: UN Women.org.

3.2 Gender Gap: The Reason Behind

As it is evident from the chart above that India, Syria and Iraq are at the countries with huge gap in economic participation and opportunities. Most of countries in Asia are on the same track in gender gap in this index. The main reason behind this gap is the cultural and traditional labour divide in men and women. Men are obligated to

work and earn for the family, while female are expected to take care of the family. People attitude towards this is the main obstacle preventing women to participate in the labour market.

Figure 1. Gender Gap in Asian countries



Source: Own's Study.

Another big reason is the wage gap in men and women. Women are given less wages for the same work. The low wages prevents women from participating the labour market as opportunity cost of this is high. According to ILO'S findings." Across the board, both women and men report that the biggest barrier for women in paid work is the struggle to balance it with family responsibilities. Work such as childcare, cleaning and cooking is necessary for a household's welfare – and therefore for the well-being of societies as a whole – but women still shoulder the brunt of this often invisible and undervalued workload."

The historical divide between both the sexes, male as the bread winner and female as a caretaker or housemaker still prevails in Asian countries. And in times of pandemic women were the one who took the burnt of major household responsibility and more women were laid-off as compared to men. Lack of safety and transportation problems also affects women's participation in economic opportunity. And perceptions about women, they are perceived as unskilled and "low-value".

3.3 Effect on Growth and Development of Asian Countries

Gender parity in economic participation and opportunity can do wonders for an economy. Most studies have found a positive relationship between better access to employment and economic growth. As it's difficult for women to enter the labour market, fewer talented workers are available, this will therefore, reduce the average capacity of the workforce. Gender inequalities in employment can also pace the economic growth through their demographic effects. It has also been found in many

reports that working women are generally less prone than men to corruption and nepotism, and therefore, the existence of more employed women could be beneficial for the economy. Enhancing gender parity not only for achieving social justice but also for reducing poverty as women account for two-thirds of poor in Asia. Worldwide experience shows lucidly that supporting a stronger position for women attributes to economic growth, it improves child survival and overall family health, and it reduces fertility (Table 1).

Table 1. *Gender Gap Index in Economic Participation and Human Development Index of Asian countries*

Countries	Gender Gap	HDI
Kyrgyzstan	0.98	0.674
Lebanon	0.97	0.73
Philippines	0.795	0.712
Thailand	0.787	0.765
Russia	0.767	0.824
Vietnam	0.765	0.693
Singapore	0.749	0.935
Azerbaijan	0.748	0.754
Cambodia	0.729	0.581
Kazakhstan	0.728	0.817
Timor-Leste	0.724	0.626
Brunei	0.722	0.845
Georgia	0.705	0.786
Israel	0.705	0.906
China	0.701	0.758
Cyprus	0.694	0.873
Myanmar	0.657	0.584
Armenia	0.655	0.76
Indonesia	0.647	0.707
Malaysia	0.638	0.804
Nepal	0.63	0.579
Japan	0.604	0.915
Tajikistan	0.574	0.656
Bhutan	0.556	0.617
Sri-Lanka	0.547	0.78
Jordan	0.538	0.723
Bahrain	0.518	0.838
UAE	0.51	0.866
Qatar	0.504	0.848
Kuwait	0.498	0.808
Maldives	0.491	0.719
Turkey	0.486	0.806
Oman	0.453	0.834
Bangladesh	0.418	0.614
Saudi Arabia	0.39	0.857
Iran	0.375	0.797

India	0.326	0.647
Pakistan	0.316	0.56
Syria	0.285	0.549
Yemen	0.282	0.463
Iraq	0.228	0.689
Afghanistan	0.18	0.496

Source: Own study.

From the above Table 1, it can be noted that Kyrgyzstan gender gap is 0.98 percent closed when HDI is 0.674. In countries like Georgia and China gender gap closed is 0.705 and 0.701, HDI is 0.786 and 0.758, respectively. Hence, these countries are moving towards the path of growth and development at a higher rate. Saudi Arabia, Iran have removed gender gap 0.39 and 0.375 whereas HDI is 0.857 and 0.797, respectively. India is lacking behind in closing gender gap and has closed only 0.326 gender gap till date and its HDI is 0.64.

4. Discussion

4.1 Relation between Gender Gap and HDI: Statistical Analysis

The correlation between the two index is 0.33, which is quite low. It's due to the scarce data on the employment and access to economic participation and opportunities to women. If we study Table 2 closely, it can be determined that countries with high gender gap removed are doing well in economic growth and development as compared to the countries where gender gap is still high, in economic participation and opportunities.

Table 2. Correlation between gender gap and HDI

		Gender gap	HDI
Gender Gap	Pearson correlation sig. (2 tailed) N	1.00 42	.33 0.33 42
HDI	Pearson correlation sig. (2 tailed) N	.33 0.33 42	1.00 42

Source: Own study.

It can be observed that countries like China, Georgia, Israel, Russia, Philippines etc. are developed nations where gender gap is closed simultaneously as much as HDI is growing. Countries like Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen etc., have low HDI and low Gender Gap closed which correlates with the theory

And the exceptions to the theory are the countries like Japan, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Oman etc., have high HDI but gender gap closed is very low. The reasons for the same are Technological advancement, better infrastructure, more FDI'S, and for the

countries like Saudi Arabia, Iran and Oman is the presence of petroleum in these countries which is being exported to other countries.

5. Conclusion

This paper has reviewed the degree of gender in economic participation, effects of it in development and the relationship between development and gender parity in economic participation and opportunities. It can be concluded that there exists a positive relationship between growth and development and gender in economic participation and opportunity. The countries with low gender gap had high growth and development. Gender parity in economic participation can also bring out more indirect positive results in Asian countries like family planning, low fertility rate, infant mortality rate.

Also, if a woman is financially independent, she can spend more on their children's education, further creating more skilled and educated labour force in future. It can also help in reducing poverty as women represents two third of poor in Asian countries. It is safe to say that gender gap in economic participation and opportunity has a cascading effect on an economy's growth and development. Thus, more emphasis should be given to bridge this gap. Even when we talk about GDI, it takes into consideration long and healthy life, knowledge and standard of living but the most important aspect in ignored that is access to economic participation and opportunity. Outweighing the few exceptions to the theory, we can conclude that for growth and development of any economy there should be equal economic participation and opportunity for both the genders. Government should formulate/bring such policy which brings the conditions to parity.

The pandemic is likely to have a scarring effect on future economic opportunities for women, risking inferior reemployment prospects and a persistent drop in income due to the combined effect of accelerated automation, the growing "double shift," and other labour market dynamics such as occupational segregation.

Gender-inclusive recovery policies and practises can address these issues. First, the report suggests that more money be put into the care industry, as well as equal access to care leave for men and women. Second, policies and practises should be proactive in addressing gender-based occupational segregation. Third, effective mid-career reskilling initiatives, when combined with strong, unbiased hiring and promotion processes, will pave the path for a more gender-equal future of work.

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