

Gender inequality in developing countries



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Occupational gender segregation continued from era to era and is apparent in lands of the globe Grusky and England 2004; Moshe and Frank 1999; Preston 1999; Rosenfeld and Spenner 1992. Anker (1997) distinguished two main explanations for why occupational gender segregation should be a continuing concern: first, it is a major foundation of labor market inflexibility and economic incompetency. Second, it is detrimental to women in the sense that segregation brings about harmful views of both men and women as a result, affecting women's status, income, education, skills (Anker 1997).

The important outcome related with occupational gender segregation is the segregation of the payment methods and the continual sex discrepancy in earnings with women on the inferior edge. The proportion of the gender wage gap is to 5 to 40 percent attached to workplace segregation is seemingly advanced than the amount by career break 15 percent and equivalent worth wage upgrading 5 percent (Hakim 1992; Preston 1999).

There are two types of segregation: horizontal segregation, which occurs when there is a concentration of women and men in a determined fields and occupations, and produces disparity in terms of career, pension and vertical segregation, which take place when there is a focus of women and men in determined degrees and levels of responsibility or positions, and produces disparity on salaries.

2. 2 An Overview of Gender Inequality in Developing Countries

The issue of gender inequality can be considered as a universal aspect of developing countries. Unlike women in developed countries who are, in relative terms, economically empowered and have a powerful voice that

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demands an audience and positive action, women in developing countries are generally silent and their voice has been stifled by economic and cultural factors.

Economic and cultural factors, together with institutional factors state the gender-based division of labour, rights, responsibilities, opportunities, and access to and control over resources. Education, literacy, access to media, employment, decision making, among other things, are some of the areas of gender disparity.

One of the areas of disparity between males and females is related to the difference in their employment status which is manifested by occupational segregation, gender-based wage gaps, and women's unequal representation in informal employment, unpaid work and higher unemployment rates (UNFPA, 2005). As women in developing countries have low status in the community, the activities they perform tend to be valued less; and women's low status is also perpetuated through the low value placed on their activities (March et al., 1999).

In-depth analysis of DHS by Hindin (2005) showed that only 17% of women in Zimbabwe, 12% in Zambia and 4% in Malawi have higher status job than their partners. The respective percentages of women whose partners have higher status jobs are 52, 43 and 53.

Women are also overrepresented in the informal sector. In Sub-Saharan Africa, 84% of women's non-agricultural employment is informal compared to 63% of men's. The figure is found to be 58% and 48% for women and men, respectively in Latin America (UNFPA, 2005). Studies generally show <https://assignbuster.com/gender-inequality-in-developing-countries/>

that women are more likely to be engaged in work which is for longer hours than men. For instance, in 18 of the 25 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, greater than 50% of women were employed and even in six of these countries the percentage of employed women was greater than 75% (Mukuria et al., 2005).

However, as most of the employed women work in agricultural and other activities which are mostly considered to be having limited or no financial returns, their employment does not contribute much to their status in the workplace. Thus, women in those countries are dependent on their partners in most aspects of their life. In spite of its importance in enabling women to get access to information about personal health behaviours and practices, household, and community, the percentage of women exposed to different types of media is limited in most developing countries.

Women's limited access to education, employment opportunity, and media, attached with cultural factors, reduces their decision making power in the society in general and in a household in particular. Regarding their participation in decision making at national level, though the number of women in national parliaments has been increasing, no country in the world has yet achieved gender parity.

According to the millennium indicators data base of the United Nations, cited in the UNFPA (2005), the percentage of parliamentary seats held by women in 2005 was 16% at world level, 21% in developed countries, and 14% in developing countries. This low representation of women in national parliaments could be due, among others, to type of electoral systems in

different countries, women's social and economic status, socio-cultural traditions and beliefs about women's place in the family and society, and women's double burden of work and family responsibilities (UNFPA, 2005).

Women are underrepresented in the formal sector of employment. The survey conducted by the Central Statistical Authority (CSA, 2004) showed that women account for less than half (43%) of the total employees in the country. Considering the percentage of female employees from the total number of employees by employment type, the highest was in domestic activities (78%) and followed by unpaid activities (59.3%). In other types of formal employment (e. g. government, NGOs, private organizations), the percentage of female workers is less than 35.

On the other hand, the survey showed overrepresentation of female workers in the informal sector. About 58% of working women work in the informal sector whereas the percentage of working men in the informal sector was 37.7% (ibid). The breakdown of the federal government employees by occupational groups also indicated gender disparity. From federal government employees found in the clerical and fiscal type of jobs 71.3% were female, while the percentage of females was slightly more than half (51%) in custodial and manual type of jobs.

Women make up 25% and 18% of the administrative and professional and scientific job categories, respectively, indicating that upper and middle level positions are overwhelmingly dominated by men (Federal Civil Service Commission, 2005). This concentration of women in the informal sector and low level positions has implication on their earnings. In this regard, the

survey showed four out of ten women civil servants earn Birr 300 a month compared to two out of ten for men (Federal Civil Service Commission, 2005). Ethiopian women's access to mass media is one of the lowest. In their DHS comparative report, Mukuria et al. (2005) show that, among 25 Sub-Saharan African countries,