

The effects of globalisation for women sociology essay



Critics of Globalisation have expressed the view that the opening of markets and foreign investment in developing countries will further exacerbate the existing gender disadvantages and create conditions of forced labour amongst women. What this paper considers is that as countries become more open and transparent through globalisation, it becomes very hard to sustain and continue cultures of discrimination and gender rights imbalances. Whilst some areas of women's rights are exacerbated by Globalization. The majority of women globally have benefited greatly from employment opportunities, access to new technologies, support from NGOs, increased political rights and social freedoms.

Female education has been recognized as one of the critical pathways to promote social and economic development. Female participation in education has been acknowledged as the single most important investment that a developing country can make, translating into better living conditions for families and increased productivity. Education is a crucial element of increasing rights for women, countries that hold a higher female literacy rate have a lower gender inequality rate. In developing countries 1 in 5 girls that enrol in primary school will not complete her primary education (USAID, 2009) which obviously creates a massive disparity between a the female population and a more educated male population. Globalisation has increased access to NGO for women in developing countries, many of these NGO's promote the education of women and develop programs to specifically target education gender inequalities. Catholic Relief Services (NGO) targeted the increasing school attendance and reducing dropout rates amount girls (Obanya, 2004). Once a group of girls are educated they then

are able to pass these benefits onto the community and their family members and future husbands are able to appreciate the reasons and benefits of educating women; slowly increasing the female education rate with each generation. In developing countries investing in just once extra year of education means women are more likely to earn more, raise healthier families and are more likely to be better educated about diseases and health issues. Higher female literacy rates also correlate strongly to reduced fertility rates and lower infant mortality rates (Kawachi & Wamala, 2007).

Women's health and access to health services has improved dramatically through globalisation. Women have additional vulnerabilities, malnutrition, sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy complications, cervical and breast cancer, domestic violence, sexual abuse, and genital mutilation.

Globalisation and improvement of health, particularly in impoverished countries has lead to greater levels of birth control and sexual health.

Developing countries have a disproportionate number of female deaths during child birth as well as high infant mortality rates, through improved health and education these rates. Women suffer from Malaria and HIV more than any other diseases, in some areas the World Health Organisation (WHO) has been able to reduce malaria infections by up to 50% greatly reducing the risks of child birth (Bellamy, 2004). Education programs by the WHO have helped to improve safe sex practises in an effort to reduce HIV infection.

Women's health is improving with globalisation. This is because overall Improved population health, particularly amongst the world's poorest countries, is increasingly associated with improved economic growth. As the economies and work forces of developing countries grow stronger so do their

levels of health and social awareness in the process improving women's health.

Ingrained and misinformed cultural practices are still a major issue for women's health. Female genital mutilation is a practice that still exists and is culturally practised, over 132 million women and girls have been victims of genital mutilation (Tinker, Finn, & Epp, 2000). The majority of the African nations have now made it illegal to commit female genital mutilation, however without public education making the practice illegal would be ineffective. Government organisations along with NGOs have developed education and awareness programs in many developing nations to outline the effects and problems with this long standing cultural practice. This aims to reduce significantly the practice of female genital mutilation and so far has shown positive results.

Political and democratic representation obviously plays a major role in the advancement through creation of public policies and legislation. The status of women has vastly improved through participation in democratic processes. Some countries such as India and France have introduced quotas to ensure a certain level of participation in the political process, the quotas aim overall to ensure that women's interests are looked after at a government level (International IDEA, 1998). The quota system ensures that cultural and gender barriers do not impede the proper representation of women in the political environment. Some critics dislike the idea of a quota system as they believe it artificially increases female representation, when democracy is meant to be democratic and that women are being elected just because they are women. This is a fairly shallow view of the overall problem, <https://assignbuster.com/the-effects-of-globalisation-for-women-sociology-essay/>

by actively representing women within politics it enables cultural change, it enables discriminatory practises to be overturned by governments and enables an overall fairer, balanced democratic process. As an example through the support of the UN the World Economic Forum (WEF) has developed the Women Leaders and Gender Parity Programme to encourage women's participation in the WEF has risen from 9% in 2001 to 17% in 2007 (WEF, 2010). Worldwide women only currently represent 18% of all political positions, whilst this may seem like a small number it is important to consider that since 1945 women's political participation has quadrupled as part of a globalised society (Karam, 1998). What this says is whilst women are still at a serious disadvantage at obtaining political positions, this disadvantage is decreasing and worldwide female representation is dramatically improving with globalisation.

Whilst Western women have benefited the most from globalisation, there still remains a disparity in the working environment. Gender Inequality in the workplace is one of the most publicised issues for women's rights activists, discrimination in the workplace today is more subtle and is correspondingly harder to detect. This has resulted in a large proportion of women in part-time work and very little representation in upper managerial roles, when compared to males of equal education and experience. Whilst Anti-discrimination legislation has existed in Australia since the 1980s and yet there still remains a large disparity in the workplace between men and women, due to gender and cultural stereotypes. The glass ceiling in many professional workplaces denies women the opportunities to rise through the ranks of organisations. This was highlighted through a study by the

Australian Bureau of Statistics which found women on average earn \$611. 50 per week and men earn \$897. 50 (ABS, 2005). Whilst direct wage discrimination has all but been quashed, a division of labour still exists due to roles being defined along traditional gender lines. These roles are often rewarded more highly in favour of male workers (Jones, 1983). This is highlighted in the law profession where 60% of Monash University Law graduates are women yet less than 14% of women are partners in law firms. (McLeod, 2008). This is not something confined to the legal profession nor is it something confined to Australia, only “ 1 to 3 per cent of top executive jobs in the largest corporations worldwide are held by women” (Wirth, Luxembourg). Despite some existing problems overall these figures have increase dramatically over the last century, even thirty years ago women had little or no representation in a large corporate environment. From 1985 to 2010 there has been a massive increase of participation of women within the workplace globally and this expect to rise further in coming years (ILO, 2010). As the world becomes more globalised gender equality within the workplace is reduced, this is because the main barriers to this form is equality culture and social norms are changed. Globalisation creates increased employment opportunities and demand for women in non-traditional sectors enable them to earn and control income, thus providing a source of empowerment and enhancing women’s capacity for representation and power within the community.

In a recent World Bank study of developing countries, respondents from more than 90% of the countries studied identified gender violence as a serious problem (Doyal, 2002). Modern day slavery and trafficking of women

has become a major problem. Transnational crime has become prevalent through globalisation and remains a massive threat to women in particular vulnerable women. The underground trafficking of women across borders is an issue of great international concern and has been exacerbated by globalisation. The individuals that are normally transported in these operations are normally abused, raped and often forced or coerced to work as prostitutes in a target country. One of the main contributing factors to this increase in trafficking has been the widespread forced submission of women. Poverty stricken populations are more vulnerable to trafficking, because these women and girls have a very low social status that puts them at risk. Another significant contributor to the increase in trafficking is political targeting and conflict zones. The breakdown of society and the rule of law have made these women especially vulnerable to the lure of a better future or an exit out of their countries or even a forced exit. The counter measures in place in the majority of countries target the human traffickers with heavy imprisonment and fines, specifically in Australia this is targeted with the anti-slavery and organised people smuggling legislation where the maximum penalty imposed can be 25 years (David, 2000). This legislation aligns with the United Nations Conventions against Transnational Organised crime, which specifically targeted the trafficking of people (Green & Grewcock, 2002). Despite these efforts at any given time over 2.5 million people are held in forced labor the majority of which are women and a further 98% of these experience physical sexual abuse (ILO, 2007). Overall 43% of trafficked people are used for sexual exploitation or prostitution almost all of whom are women (ILO, 2007). Cowen highlights quite elegantly the problems with globalisation, " While some sectors expand extreme rapidly, other

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shrink and wither away” (Cowen, 2002). This is true for women and globalisation in some areas women have received increased rights and economic power and yet in many places they still suffer large amounts of gendered violence.

Globalisation has presented new challenges and new opportunities to women, gender equality develops from many different sources and it is often impossible to determine whether these are the result of globalisation or they just have been exacerbated by it.