

Men and women are
equally valuable
sociology essay



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It is self-evident and a fact that men and women have the same intrinsic value. This is simply the basic moral perception that states that all people, men and women have the same intrinsic value, regardless of race, sex, religion, sexual orientation, etc.

2. Men and women are equally valuable to society

The question arises that are men and women equally valuable to society?

What differentiates men from women? Is it the brain? Research has shown that men and women are sometimes good at doing different things. But this hasn't proved any difference in the working and capacity of the brain itself. This indicates that the two genders have equal potential to be valuable.

Although men and women having a set different roles in the society, with men more often accomplishing roles in the public sphere, and women more often fulfilling roles in the private sphere. Regardless of whether you think this will change in the future or not and regardless of whether you find this division of labor desirable or not, it's safe to presume that men and women are equally valuable to society.

Society would not function without the roles that men perform or without the roles that women perform.

3. Men and women should have equal rights and responsibilities

The basic concept is that everything has consequences. If a person claims a right, they should be prepared to accept and acknowledge the set of responsibilities that come with the rights. So rights and responsibilities go

hand in hand. As the economists are fond of saying: “ There ain’t no such thing as a free lunch”.

The point can be made that for making sure that men and women have equal rights is to check that legislation and public policy are gender neutral. If either sex has responsibilities that the other one doesn’t have (such as the draft or military service), or if either sex has rights that the other one doesn’t have (such as access to women’s shelters), then we need to take a closer look at those imbalances.

4. An absence of discrimination (equal opportunities)

Discrimination is a word that is most commonly thrown around whenever there is a debate about gender equality. Discrimination simply means adjudicating someone by their race, gender, religion, sexuality or age – instead of mediating them for their competence. Sometimes the word discrimination is used incorrectly. For example, you can hear people say that women are discriminated against if they don’t have 50 percent of the important positions in society. However, that is not discrimination unless you can show that men who are less qualified than competing women are given the top jobs.

As long as competence determines who gets a job, we may have 80 percent women in a certain workplace or 70 percent men, without any discrimination occurring.

5. Realizing that equality need not mean sameness

Equality refers to the concept that all sexes are given equal opportunities in every field of life. But this fact doesn't imply that men and women are the same. Men and women may remain to make different choices when it comes to work, family and hobbies while still being perfectly equal. In fact, it is irrelevant to gender equality whether men and women make the same choices, as long as each man and each woman is truly free to choose whatever path seems right to him or her.

We know that biological differences between the sexes exist, but we do not yet know to what extent these differences would influence the choices of women and men in a culture that allows you to go beyond stereotypes.

However, it would be naive to assume that men and women would start making exactly the same choices, even in a society that is completely open-minded. By dropping the criterion of sameness, gender equality becomes much more achievable, and does not limit individual freedom.

“ Tradition is a guide and not a jailer”, wrote W. Somerset Maugham. Could it be that some traditions, however rooted in great histories and cultures, are now trapping countries in poverty? This certainly appears to be the case when it comes to the influence of social and cultural norms on the status of women.

If we take the situation of the developed world, the matter of discrimination is taken as a moral issue and is fought off at the basic values of principles.

The fact that is overlooked or often ignored is the vital role of women's

presence in the economic world. And the point to ponder is if the issue is <https://assignbuster.com/men-and-women-are-equally-valuable-sociology-essay/>

now starting to stick its neck out in the developed countries, it must be neglected in the poorer countries which could be the cause of poverty there where discrimination and repression often have deep cultural and religious roots. Yet, the success with which developing countries assimilate female workers into their economies will be a vital player in building their competitive position in the global economy.

According to the World Bank's World Development Report 2000/01, closing the gender gap in schooling would have significantly increased and sometimes more than doubled economic growth in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), South Asia (SA), and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Despite international declarations on gender equality, as, for example, in the Millennium Development Goals, only few countries have actually achieved gender equality in primary and secondary education. These gaps are even more noticeable in higher education. In South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, for example, girls only make up a third of the number of students in tertiary education.

The indicators of labor markets are also alarming which states that countries are not using the female labor force as they should for the economic success. The major dilemma in the developing countries is that the economic activities of women are sidelined as minor roles like farming and other informal sector activities. This is the scenario in South Asia and the Middle East and North Africa. In both regions, women hold only around 20% of all wage employment outside agriculture.

Inequalities are often rooted in social institutions

As these figures illustrate, women face serious inequities in many regions of the world. While discrimination against women has multiple facets, traditional research in this area has generally focused on examining (i) the economic status of women; (ii) women's access to resources such as education and health; and/or (iii) the political participation and empowerment of women. Less attention has been given to the role of social institutions such as norms, traditions and family law. Discrimination through social institutions is often hidden, but nevertheless an important source of gender inequality, especially in countries with weak formal institutions and governance structures. In order to address this knowledge gap, the OECD Development Centre created two innovative products: the OECD Gender, Institutions and Development (GID) Data Base (accessible at www.oecd.org/dev/gender/gid) and Wikigender, an interactive Internet portal to share and exchange information on gender equality (www.wikigender.org).

The GID shows that persistent discrimination and repression are most marked in South Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, and the Middle East and North Africa. Some of the richest countries in the world, such as Saudi Arabia, show high levels of gender inequality. On the other hand, discrimination is considerably lower in many poor Latin America countries. In other words, higher economic development does not directly imply more gender equality.

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Another finding of the data base emphasises the important influence of social institutions on the economic role of women. Female participation in

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the workforce is low in areas where discrimination through social institutions is high, for example. Add to this the fact that women who are denied ownership rights cannot easily take on an entrepreneurial role, and the problem becomes clear.

While religious affiliations may have an effect on the institutional framework of a country, the important question is how rules and norms are applied and implemented. Although social norms that discriminate against women appear less important in Christian and Buddhist countries, some predominantly Christian countries in Africa and Latin America still apply several customs that reduce women's rights. Conversely, some Muslim countries, such as Malaysia, Turkey, Tunisia and Morocco, have changed within the overall institutional framework, granting women more rights with respect to marriage, authority over children, divorce, freedom of movement, dress and access to property. This suggests that persistent discrimination can be removed without undermining religious customs or beliefs.

Changing social institutions is cumbersome, but possible

From Morocco and Tunisia to some states in southern India, efforts are under way to change the institutional frameworks that limit women's employment and skills, and thereby their contribution to growth. These efforts are paying off: in Tunisia, 30-50% of judges, physicians and schoolteachers are now women. In India, women have risen to the highest levels of politics and business in recent years. However, these are relatively isolated cases, and there have been setbacks. Even in India, there are strong pockets of resistance, particularly in the north of the country and among migrants to

major cities, with women being murdered in some states over disputes about dowries.

In order to strengthen reforms, many development experts have called for more funding – for instance, to build schools. The trouble is that many shiny new classrooms would remain empty because girls are sometimes simply not allowed to attend them. Extra spending, while badly needed, will generate real returns only if the fundamental causes of discrimination are also addressed.

That may mean institutional and legal reforms, as well as better enforcement of existing laws. Similarly, the fight against gender discrimination needs to involve men much more than is currently the case. Too many reform programmes fail due to their heavy focus on women's needs, overlooking the fact that societies based on persistent discrimination generate advantages that men will not sacrifice easily. Engaging men in reform, providing incentives and perhaps even financial compensation are important. Such a debate is now taking place in Kenya in view of reforming discriminatory inheritance laws.

Many countries are willing to change, having signed the 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and, more recently in 2000, the UN millennium goal of empowering women and combating discrimination. Helping countries improve gender equality is therefore not only important but an international commitment as well. The question is where to begin and how? Investing in better information and high quality data is a good starting point. The GID and other statistical resources

have helped us to come to grips gradually with the scale of female discrimination. More importantly still, lasting change has to be coaxed from within the communities themselves.

Wikigender – Fostering Dialogue to Promote Gender Equality

Wikigender, the new Internet portal of the OECD Development Centre, will be instrumental in reaching out to the public and fostering a bottom-up dialogue on the importance of gender equality. The website provides an open forum to share and exchange information on the situation of women and encourages a frank discussion on the elements that prevent women's social and economic empowerment. It welcomes an active participation of users who can contribute to the content of the website by posting comments, editing articles or creating new entries into this knowledge database.

Providing a forum to reveal people's experiences with local customs and laws will have two important effects. First, it will help improve the information that is available on the situation of women around the world; some facts and figures may well feed back into existing databases like the GID. Second, involving people in this mutual learning experience will bring forth local allies such as workers' unions, business associations and teachers who can help build pressure for change, as well as garnering wider public support and dispelling inevitable fears of change among citizens.

In the long run, this process will help break down stubborn social attitudes and mindsets, while enabling policy-makers to tailor their strategies to the specific situation in a country or community. Encouraging greater openness

can help tackle the prejudice and distrust that underpin persistent discrimination. It will also raise public awareness, from the international press, for example, but also the local media, that can strengthen the willingness to reform.

Reducing gender disparities may not be an easy task, but it is a feasible and necessary one. With coherent, sensitive and inclusive strategies, the kind of wasteful discrimination that denies women their rights and blights the development potential of whole countries can one day be removed for good.

Only by involving the public in the debate will we have a better understanding of the elements that prevent gender equality and the policies that will be able to counter them. The GID Data Base and Wikigender are two important initiatives in this endeavour.