

Gender Inequality and Indefinite Pandemic

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Abstract

The Covid- 19 pandemic has changed the outlook towards the term gender equality. The pandemic not only exposed multiple socio-economic differences in the society but also gender biasness. It has taken significant and direct toll on women's physical and mental health, education, safety, and financial wellbeing. The pandemic can be given credit for negatively affecting women's present and futures. Our article will throw some lights on the scale of the challenges among six domains.

Key Words: Gender equality, Pandemic, Domestic Violence, Covid 19

1. Introduction:

Women and girls, face more risks without the means to absorb the economic shocks and mitigate the health crisis. They are caring for their families, sustaining livelihoods and leading efforts to fight the pandemic, amidst the threat of a third wave. In Covid 19 Pandemic it has shown that all type of violence against women and girls particularly domestic violence has intensified. Social isolation creating more stress which can result in violent reactions.

Pandemic and its economic effect affect the gender equality as percentage of women who lose their jobs is more than men. During work from home women has to carry out her domestic work, she has to take care of children and at the same time she has to complete her official work also.

2. Domestic violence

An estimated 736 million women around the world (one in three) have experienced physical and/or sexual abuse by current or former/non-former, intimate

partners/husbands [1]. Emerging data shows substantial increase in violence against women during Covid- 19 pandemic. Emerging data from different countries have shown increase in the cases of reported domestic violence to helpline, police and women rights organizations [2]. The stay at home orders, limited social gathering and travel restrictions had formed conducive environment where domestic violence survivors are at risk for further violence. Furthermore, it creates limited access to support services and information.

3) Job loss

From the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, economy of the world has been brought to a screeching halt. Some sort of gender disparities widened in workforce was during the pandemic. Employment in developing countries remains unstable, particularly depreciating employment opportunities for women. The unemployment rate has increased to 17% among women which is twice the rate for men, data from private research firm Centre

for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE). Furthermore, women who managed to keep their jobs had to deal with a drop in wages. This all led to drop in savings and shortage of spending money on health and food.

4) Work from home- double responsibility

The orthodox idea and general expectation of men was to earn money by performing competent or skillful tasks while women were confined to house with domestic chores and child care. As we have evolved into modern economies, both the spouses paid jobs with an average of 40 hours per week working. On the contrary, with times a general expectation pertaining household chores and child care duties have not been equally shared between men and women. With the onset of COVID, which caused most of the workforce to work from home, dynamics of household duties should have changed as well. However, according to a Yale research, with both parents working, women have done more household and child care work. The new dynamics have burdened women with additional efforts to be a contributing member of a family and therefore reflects a discouraging situation which may establish root causes of future physical and mental health challenges.

5) Girls left schools and colleges

The girls are especially hard hit when it comes to access to education. The pandemic has disproportionately affected girl child education and empowerment, particularly in developing nation. According to UNESCO, school closures have sent about 90% of all students out of school, among them more than 800 million girls. According to the article published in Lancet journal, sexual and reproductive health and socioeconomic issues () can obstinate challenge girl's education [3].

The rate of dropping out from the school is higher among girl child from poor socioeconomic background. The priority is given to perform unpaid household work rather than education.

6) Increase in child marriages

According to UNICEF report, up to 10 million more girls will be at risk of becoming child brides as a result of the pandemic. The risk of child marriage increases through different pathways as mentioned in above points. School closures triggered by pandemic push girls towards marriage since school is no longer an option. Additionally, the disruption of 'non-essential' services including reproductive health services have a direct impact on teenage pregnancy and subsequently on marriage. The policy makers and stakeholder should consider policy which will attain sustainable development goals.

7) Covid widows and orphans

'Covid Orphans' term is used to describe children who have lost one or both parents, or primary caregivers, to the disease. 'Covid Widow' is a person who have lost his/her partner to pandemic. One data suggest that from March 1, 2020, to April 30, 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic left at least 1 134 000 children globally whose lives have been permanently changed by the COVID-19-associated deaths of their mothers, fathers, or custodial grandparents. Of these children, 1 042 000 were orphaned of their parents [4]. United nation report, widow often denied inheritance rights, had property taken from them, and been shunned for being perceived as "carriers" of disease, amid other discrimination and stigma [5]. The psychosocial and economic support can

help children and widows to improve overall quality of life.

8) Physical and mental health during pandemic

Although mortality rate was higher among men than women, the Covid- 19 pandemic has major impact on women. According to the United Nations, women aged between 24 to 34 are already 25% more likely to face extreme poverty than men [6]. During the crisis, women had difficulty in

accessing health care services. Also, the factors which we mentioned earlier can largely affect overall well-being of the women.

To sum, the pandemic has definitely affected overall social, physical, mental and economical well being of the women. Therefore, policy makers and governmental organizations should identify current needs of women and girls which will help to develop gender neutral society that leaves no one behind.

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