



GENDER INEQUALITY, WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: LINKAGE AT GLOBAL LEVEL

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ABSTRACT

The present paper seeks to analyse the relationship among Gender Inequality, Women Empowerment and Human Development at Global Level. The secondary data are used for the study. The study carried out for 133 countries which are classified on the basis of region, level of human development and level of income. The indices like HDI, GDI, IHDI, GII and WEI were analysed on the basis of the classification. To know the strength of the relationship between HDI, GII and WEI a correlation analysis was carried out. We have found that HDI was negatively correlated with GII indicating that high human development countries had low GII and vice versa. HDI was positively related with WEI indicating that high human development always accompanied with high empowerment of women. Relationship between GII and WEI was also found to be negative which implied that countries with high women empowerment had less gender inequality. All these correlation coefficients established the fact that human development, gender inequality and women empowerment were significantly inter related.

KEY WORDS : *Gender Inequality, Women Empowerment, Human Development*

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The development theorists believed that a high level of human development would lead to empowerment of women and conversely highly empowered women would bring high level of human development and thereby establishing gender equality through their contribution to the development. Therefore one of the prerequisite for development of a country is to empower her women. So the governments at different levels have undertaken numerous efforts to eliminate gender gap and empower women through various constitutional provisions, formulation of various plans and policies, training programmes, celebrating decades of women empowerment and many such programmes. In spite of all these initiatives over the years, there has not been remarkable improvement in the lives of women and that effect development harshly. The crime and violence against women have increased enormously throughout the world. The female political participation is quite low. They are the most vulnerable class in respect of wage employment. Poverty is more frequent among women. All these probably led to the concept of feminization of poverty. Human Development Report (UNDP, 2002) singled out the quota system as the key factor for enhancing women's political participation. It further mentioned that reservation of seats was not enough and thus there was a need for creating an enabling environment for women.

1.2 REVIEW OF EXISTING LITERATURE

The researcher started empirically examining these relationships between gender inequality, human development and women empowerment. For instance, Von Braun (1985) conducted a study among Gambian Households and he found that larger the proportion of food under women's control, the larger the household's calories consumption. Similarly a study conducted in Philippines revealed that consumption of calories and proteins increase with the increased share of income accruing directly to the women (Garcia, 1990). Another study in Cote de Ivoire reveals that increased female share over households income leads to increased spending on human development enhancing items like food, healthcare etc. and reduced spending on tobacco. (Ranis et al, 2005). Gustav Ranis and others through empirical analysis tried to find out the two way linkage between economic growth and human development. According to them, female education is an important input of the production function (i.e. Human Development Improvement Function) which explains the effectiveness of expenditure directed to human development. Female education has important bearings on child health and their survival. To understand the significance of the link between female education and human development they used data of (35 to 76) data of developing countries and applied regression technique. In a similar way Sen (1995), Agarwal (1997) and Pillarisetti and Mc Gillivray (1998) used fertility and percentage of females in the labour force as the variables

to study the change in the level of women empowerment. Pillarisetti and Mc Gillivray further utilizing the cross section data on 116 countries estimated several models and their analysis revealed that both fertility and female employment significantly affect women empowerment.

1.3 AIM AND OBJECTIVE

The present chapter is an attempt to explore the linkage between gender inequality, human development and women empowerment at global level using the available secondary data.

1.4 DATA AND METHODOLOGY

To have an analysis on gender gap, women empowerment and human development at the global level we have used secondary data available in the human development reports by UNDP. The following documents are consulted for secondary data:

1. Gender Gap Reports of World Economic Forum,
2. Human Development Reports of UNDP,
3. Proceedings of various international conferences on women and human development; and
4. Other Reports of Government, NGOs and various other agencies on women issues

At global level we used Gender Inequality Index (GII), Gender Related Development Index (GDI) and Inequality Adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI) constructed by UNDP to measure gender inequality, women empowerment index constructed by the researcher herself to measure women empowerment and human development index (HDI) constructed by UNDP to measure human development. Women empowerment index (WEI) is a simple equally weighted average of three indices namely female literacy index, female work participation index and index for female share in politics. The values of the indicators viz., female literacy, female work participation rate and female share in politics are normalised using the formula

$$\frac{\text{Actual value} - \text{Minimum value}}{\text{Maximum value} - \text{Minimum value}} \text{-----(1)}$$

The countries are grouped on the basis of region, level of human development and level of income. To know the linkage we run correlation in different groups of countries. After collecting data, these are compared and analysed in a suitable manner using simple statistical tools.

1.5 WOMEN EMPOWERMENT, HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND GENDER INEQUALITY —THE NEXUS

It is argued in the literature that gender inequality, women empowerment and human development are all mutually related. Elimination of gender inequality may promote women empowerment and empowered women can contribute towards human development. Again at the same time progress in human

development is expected to promote women empowerment and to eliminate gender gap through improved health, nutrition, education, social security, political freedom, availability of employment and a decent standard of living. Female education is an important input in the production function, i.e. "Human Development Improvement Function" which explains the effectiveness of expenditure directed to human development. Female education has an important bearing on child health and their survival. Moreover a study in Cote de Ivories reveals that increased female share over household income leads to increased spending on human development enhancing items like food, healthcare etc and reduced spending on tobacco (Gustav Ranis et al, 2005). But evidences show that a high level of human development in terms of HDI is not necessarily linked with highly empowered women. Many countries having high HDI are also having low GDI. In the following paragraphs we have attempted to put together data on these indicators like HDI, IHDI, GDI, GII and WEI to examine if there is any such nexus among them

1.6 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

From the Table 1 wherein region wise data are presented, it is clear that both HDI and GDI values were the highest for Latin America & Caribbean. The second and third positions in terms of HDI were occupied by Europe & Central Asia and the East Asia & Pacific respectively. The value of HDI was the lowest for Sub Saharan Africa whereas the value of GDI was the lowest for South Asia. Again if we see the value of GII we find that it was the highest for Sub Saharan Africa and the lowest for Europe & Central Asia. However the region, Latin America & Caribbean in spite of having highest HDI witnessed a high value of GII. In other words a region with higher human development did not necessarily guarantee reduction in inequality. The GII value for the world was 0.451. Arab States, South Asia and Sub Saharan Africa had lower HDI, GDI, and IHDI values and higher GII value compared to the corresponding global average figures. The average loss due to inequality in percentage term was the highest in Sub-Saharan Africa (34%), followed by South Asia (29%), the Arab States (26%) and Latin America & the Caribbean (25%). The lowest loss was in Europe & Central Asia (13%). The loss of HDI due to inequality was 23 per cent for the entire world. Female work participation rate was the highest for the region Sub Saharan Africa (63.6 %) followed by East Asia & Pacific, Latin America & Caribbean and Europe & Central Asia. Women empowerment index (WEI) was the highest for the Europe & Central Asia (0.673) followed by Latin America & Caribbean, East Asia & Pacific, Sub Saharan Africa. Arab States and South Asia witnessed lowest but equal level of women empowerment. Three regions, namely, Europe & Central Asia, Latin America & Caribbean and the East Asia & Pacific relatively performed better than that of the global average in terms of women empowerment.

Table 1: Development Indicators Across Regions

Region	HDI	IHDI	GDI	GII	Loss due to Inequality (%)	WEI
Latin America & Caribbean	0.740	0.559	0.963	0.416	25	0.623
Europe & Central Asia	0.738	0.639	0.938	0.317	13	0.673
East Asia & Pacific	0.703	0.564	0.943	0.331	20	0.582
Arab States	0.682	0.512	0.866	0.546	26	0.408
South Asia	0.588	0.419	0.830	0.539	29	0.407
Sub Saharan Africa	0.502	0.334	0.867	0.578	34	0.529
World	0.702	0.541	0.920	0.451	23	0.574

Source: HDR 2014, GGGR 2014, WEI* calculated on the basis of data available from the HDR report, GGGI report.

Let us have a look on the performance of few selected countries on HDI, IHDI, GII, and GDI (Table 2). Norway being the highest ranking country in terms of HDI, it had high GDI and IHDI and the highest WEI. GII and Loss of HDI due to inequality was lowest in Norway. However USA, UK, China, Saudi Arabia were having high human development as well as high gender inequality implying that in spite of improvement in human development front the countries were lagging behind in terms of the development of fair sexes. Both India and Ghana were moderately high human development countries. However the GDI and WEI of Ghana were more than that of India and GII was more in India than in Ghana which clearly showed that gender disparity was stronger in

India as compared to Ghana, though in human development front India was doing better than Ghana. Yemen was low ranking country in terms of both GDI and HDI. Yemen had a very high value of GII and quite a low value of WEI which implied that along with its low status of human development its women were deprived in almost every facets of life. Loss of human development due to inequality was low for high human development countries like Norway, Finland, UK and France whereas it was high for one high human development country, USA. Loss was the highest for low human development country, Yemen. WEI was more than 0.6 for the countries like Norway, Iceland, China, UK, France and USA. Saudi Arabia, one of the members of very high human development countries had the WEI below 0.5.

Table 2: Development Indicators for Selected Countries

Country	HDI	IHDI	GDI	GII	Loss due to Inequality (%)	WEI
Norway	0.944	0.891	0.997	0.068	5.6	0.802
USA	0.914	0.755	0.995	0.262	17.4	0.640
Iceland	0.895	0.843	0.982	0.088	5.8	0.839
UK	0.892	0.812	0.993	0.193	8.9	0.663
Saudi Arabia	0.836	---	0.897	0.321	---	0.409
France	0.884	0.804	0.989	0.080	9.0	0.658
China	0.719	---	0.939	0.202	---	0.679
India	0.586	0.418	0.828	0.563	28.7	0.336
Ghana	0.573	0.394	0.884	0.549	31.2	0.507
Yemen	0.500	0.336	0.738	0.733	32.8	0.181
World	0.702	0.541	0.920	0.451	23.0	0.574

Source: UNDP, Human Development Report 2014

Again if we look at the scores of GDI of countries classified on the basis of levels of human development we find that GDI value was always being lower than one, implying a gap in the achievement between male and female in the human development indicator (Table 3). Again GII value varied inversely with human development implying gender inequality became lesser and lesser with increase in the level of human development. The loss of human development due to inequality was indicated by difference of HDI value and IHDI value. The percentage of loss was the lowest in very high human development countries (12%) followed by high human

development countries, medium human development countries, and it was the highest for low human development countries. Medium and low human development countries had lower value of HDI, IHDI and GDI and higher value of GII and higher percentage loss due to inequality as compared to the world as a whole. If we analyse the value of WEI, we find that it varied directly with the level of human development. Very high and high human development countries had higher values of WEI as compared to the corresponding global figure.

Table 3: Development Indicators of Countries by Level of Human Development

Countries	HDI	IHDI	GDI	GII	Loss due to Inequality (%)	WEI
Very High HDI Countries	0.890	0.780	0.975	0.197	12	0.658
High HDI Countries	0.735	0.590	0.946	0.315	20	0.565
Medium HDI Countries	0.614	0.457	0.875	0.513	26	0.534
Low HDI Countries	0.493	0.332	0.843	0.587	34	0.489
World	0.702	0.541	0.920	0.451	23	0.574

Source: UNDP, Human Development Report 2014

Now let us have a look on the movement of HDI and GDI which vary when countries are classified on the basis of levels of income. From the Table 4, it is seen that HDI and GDI varied directly with income. But the GDI score in every group was less than one indicating disparity between men and women. GII score varied inversely with income indicating that high income countries had lesser inequality as compared to low income countries. Similarly if we see the IHDI we find that it varied directly with income groups. The percentage loss of HDI due to inequality was the highest for low income

countries (32%) and the lowest for high income countries (7.29%). Lower middle and low income countries had lower value of HDI, IHDI and GDI and higher value of GII and higher percentage loss due to inequality as compared to the global average. High income countries had the highest value of WEI (0.657) followed by upper middle income and low income countries. It was the lowest for lower middle income countries (0.503). Except high income countries all other countries categorized by income level had lower values of WEI as compared to the as a whole.

Table 4: Development Indicators of Countries by Level of Income

Countries	HDI	IHDI	GDI	GII	Loss due to Inequality (%)	WEI
High Income Countries	0.850	0.788	0.980	0.182	7.29	0.657
Upper Middle Income Countries	0.734	0.593	0.947	0.371	19.2	0.567
Lower Middle Income Countries	0.601	0.454	0.910	0.504	24.5	0.503
Low Income Countries	0.450	0.306	0.849	0.578	32.0	0.512
World	0.702	0.541	0.920	0.451	23.0	0.574

Source: UNDP, Human Development Report 2014

To know the strength of the relationship between HDI, GII and WEI a correlation analysis was carried out. Because of lack of data, our analysis was restricted to 133 countries. The correlation summary is presented in the Table 5. From the table it is clear that HDI was negatively correlated with GII indicating that high human development countries had low GII and vice versa. HDI was positively related with WEI

indicating that high human development always accompanied with high empowerment of women. Relationship between GII and WEI was also found to be negative which implied that countries with high women empowerment had less gender inequality. All these correlation coefficients established the fact that human development, gender inequality and women empowerment were significantly inter related.

Table 5: Correlation Coefficients among HDI, GII, and WEI

Indices	HDI	GII	WEI
HDI	+1.000		
GII	-0.879**	+1.000	
WEI	+0.467**	-0.614**	+1.000

** Correlation coefficients significant at 0.05 level.

In order to examine whether these significant relationships among HDI, GII and WEI remained valid for countries irrespective of their levels of (human) development we segregated 133 countries into four categories and estimated correlation coefficients separately for each of these categories (Table 6). The correlation results of HDI, GII and WEI of 44 nos. of very high human development countries revealed that all the relationships were strong and significant. However the correlation analysis for the 35 high human development countries depicted a different picture. In this case the relationships of HDI with GII and WEI were weak and not statistically significant though the relationship between GII and WEI was statistically significant. For medium human

development countries (26 countries) the relationship of HDI and WEI was weak and even negative, though not significant statistically. However the relationship of GII with HDI and WEI were negative and the strength of the relationship was moderate. For low human development countries (28 countries) strong relationship existed between HDI and GII and also between GII and WEI. However the relationship between HDI and WEI was weak and not statistically significant. To summarize it can be said that the relationships were found to be strong and statistically significant both in the cases of countries having either very high or low levels of human development.

Types of Countries	Indices	HDI	GI	WEI
Very High HDI Countries?	HDI	+1.000		
	GI	-0.586**	+1.000	
	WEI	+0.505**	-0.514**	+1.000
High HDI Countries?	HDI	+1.000		
	GI	-0.278	+1.000	
	WEI	+0.107	-0.463**	+1.000
Medium HDI Countries?	HDI	+1.000		
	GI	-0.499**	+1.000	
	WEI	-0.130	-0.431*	+1.000
Low HDI Countries?	HDI	+1.000		
	GI	-0.541**	+1.000	
	WEI	+0.268	-0.793**	+1.000
* Correlation coefficients significant at 0.05 level. ** Correlation coefficients significant at 0.01 level. ?No. of countries/observations (N) was 44, 35, 26 and 28 for very high HDI, high HDI, Medium HDI and low HDI countries respectively.				

1.7 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The major findings of the paper are summarized as follows:

Gender gap exists in almost all the countries of the world. No country has been able to eliminate gender gap completely. There exists a relationship between human development, gender inequality and women empowerment. Overall a positive correlation existed between HDI and WEI and negative correlation between HDI and GI. The relationship between GI and WEI was also negative. However the results showed a minor variations across countries with different levels of human development.

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