



RESEARCH ARTICLE

GENDER DISCRIMINATION: A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL STATUS OF WOMEN IN KURUKSHETRA DISTRICT OF HARYANA

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ABSTRACT

Gender discrimination remains a deeply entrenched issue in Indian society, and Haryana is no exception. This study explores the lived realities of women in the Kurukshetra district, examining how social, cultural, economic, and political structures collectively shape and restrict their status and autonomy. Drawing on both primary and secondary data, the research employs a purposive sample of 64 respondents to assess the extent and nature of gender-based disparities in areas such as education, decision-making, mobility, and economic participation. The findings reveal that women face systemic marginalization, with limited control over personal decisions like marriage, education, employment, and political involvement. Patriarchal norms continue to dictate their roles and rights, often denying them the freedom to make independent life choices. Despite awareness of gender discrimination, most women remain disempowered in both private and public spheres. The paper underscores the urgent need for grassroots empowerment, educational access, and policy enforcement to bridge the gender gap and foster inclusive social progress in Haryana.

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INTRODUCTION

Gender refers to the collection of roles, behaviours, attributes, and expectations that society assigns to individuals based on their perceived biological sex. Unlike sex, which is biologically determined and refers to physical attributes such as chromosomes and reproductive organs, gender is a social construct shaped by cultural norms, values, and the process of socialization. While most societies operate within a binary framework of male and female, various cultures recognize additional gender identities, often described as the third or fourth gender. These identities reflect the broader understanding that gender is fluid and culturally contextual rather than fixed or biologically predetermined. From early childhood, individuals are taught to conform to gender-specific roles. Boys are typically encouraged to be assertive, strong, and emotionally reserved, while girls are socialized to be nurturing, delicate, and expressive. Toys, language, clothing, and even educational choices reinforce these distinctions. Girls are often seen playing with dolls or kitchen sets, while boys are given toy cars, guns, or sports equipment. Phrases like "boys don't cry" or "girls should be quiet" further solidify these roles, instilling in children the belief that certain traits and behaviours are inherently linked to their gender. Over time, these learned behaviours become normalized, forming rigid expectations that can restrict individual identity and potential. Renowned philosopher Judith Butler, in her seminal work *Gender Trouble* (1990), argues that gender is not something we are born with, but something we enact through repeated behaviours. According to Butler, gender is a "performance" shaped by cultural expectations, not a fixed identity. This viewpoint challenges traditional notions of masculinity and femininity and opens the door to understanding how deeply society influences perceptions of gender. Gender discrimination refers to the unequal treatment or perceptions of individuals based on their gender. This discrimination manifests in various forms, particularly affecting women, who are often denied equal access to education, employment opportunities, political

participation, healthcare, and economic resources. Despite legislative advancements and global movements for gender equality, discrimination remains deeply embedded in societal institutions and everyday interactions. The root cause of this persistent inequality lies in the process of socialization, through which individuals internalize cultural norms regarding gender roles. These norms often assign men the role of breadwinners and decision-makers, while women are expected to manage domestic duties and caregiving. This division of labour reinforces the belief that men are inherently stronger, more capable, and more intelligent, while women are viewed as weak, dependent, and emotional. In the Indian context, gender-based discrimination is both historical and structural. Patriarchal norms have governed social life for centuries, marginalizing women in social, economic, and political spheres. Harmful practices such as Sati, child marriage, dowry, and honour killings reflect the extent to which women have been controlled and oppressed. Even in contemporary society, women are often the last to eat in the family, receive fewer educational opportunities, and are underrepresented in leadership roles. Women's economic contributions, particularly in rural and agricultural sectors, have historically been undervalued or ignored altogether. For decades, India's official census failed to count unpaid domestic and farm labour performed by women, rendering their work invisible in national statistics. Furthermore, access to resources like land, credit, and employment remains limited due to cultural and institutional biases. The persistence of gender discrimination is evident not only in overt practices but also in subtler forms of inequality—such as limited mobility, lack of autonomy in decision-making, and societal expectations that restrict women's choices in education, marriage, and career. This deep-seated inequality is sustained by structural barriers and cultural attitudes that resist change. In conclusion, gender is not a simple biological classification but a complex social framework that governs behaviour, roles, and expectations. Discrimination based on gender reflects a deeply ingrained societal problem that requires transformative changes in

education, policy, family systems, and cultural norms. Achieving gender equality demands not just legal reform but a fundamental shift in how society perceives and values women.

LITERARY REVIEW

According to Wollstonecraft (1792), people don't know what women can accomplish because they have never been allowed to fully participate in the economy because of gender-defined jobs and also spend a lot of energy doing housework which is unpaid. In most countries, women possess an exceptionally small percentage of the basic leadership positions in the upper economic range. The scholar further maintains that they are human beings deserving of the same fundamental rights as men. Mills (1869) reveals that inequality based on gender is claimed to be a relic of the past. The "might is right" proverb prove that in patriarchal society women are always subordinated by the men. But in modern time, the subjection of women lessened partly. He said that for the better development of the world, half of the population can't be ignored. Angles (1884) stated that "discrimination and exploitation of women starts from the institution of family and women in family is like proletariat in capitalistic society who haven't any rights and men been like bourgeois who exploits the counter part of society i.e., women. Simone de Beauvoir (1949) claims that men are considered standard and females are considered "other." "Therefore, humanity is a man, and a man does not define a woman herself, but as something related to him." She explains that the comparison between male and female is based on the facts of the physiological context and also society play an important role in the gender formation and quoted that "One is not born, but rather become, a woman. She further observes, "when women act like women, they are accused of being inferior. When women act like human beings, they are accused of behaving like men".

As per Laki (2014), people's discriminatory behaviour in society seems to be very diverse, and their decisions, whether advantageous or unfavourable, are not always based on logical debate. Effective politics can be useful in certain cases, but it is only one means in particular. It includes social participation, social consensus, tolerance, development of social values, and development of individual and group decisions that do not limit but support procedures for eliminating discriminatory behaviours and tendencies. Nisha, Lekh Raj, and Ratish Kumar (2015) in their work reveals the disparity in the literacy rate, women participation in work, and sex ratio in Haryana is a matter of great concern. The study further reflects that due to many reasons like gender bias, less wages, and sexual harassment at work place, the participation of women in outdoor work is less in Haryana. Shailendra Singh Rana (2016) in his study "A Study of Gender Disparities among the Districts of Haryana" portrays the gender inequality in the districts of Haryana on the basis of health, marriage, and education. There are some variables which show the present status of women in state. These variables include sex ratio, literacy rate, child marriage, early pregnancy, and food & nutrients. Mewat districts has low literacy rate of women and high rate of child marriage & early pregnancy while Gurugram with high literacy rate and low rate of child marriage & early pregnancy which indicate that only education improves the condition of women. In contrary Mewat has highest sex ratio and Gurugram with least sex ratio in Haryana. Dr. Vidya K & Dr. Ravindranath N. Kadam (2017) in their paper "Women Empowerment through Protecting and Educating Girl Child: A Good Start" studied the condition of women in India and concluded that for the upliftment and empowerment of women, education play a vital role. Their study shows that from year 2006 to 2012 crime against women in the forms of Rape (Sec. 376 IPC), Kidnapping & Abduction (Sec. 363 to 373 IPC), Dowry Death (Sec 302/304 IPC), Torture (Sec. 498-A IPC), Molestation (Sec. 354 IPC), Sexual Harassment, (Sec. 509 IPC), Importation of Girls (Sec. 366-B IPC), Immoral Traffic, and Indecent Representation of Women increase by 48.25 %. The only solution to overcome this burning problem is to empower women in every aspect. Empowering women is not an easy task. It's a challenge to the country. This can be achieved by attacking the problem from all sides. The reason behind it is sometimes abuse by parents, siblings, spouses, mother-in-law, father-in-law, employers, society, teachers, etc.

Women's empowerment is the solution to all questions. Therefore, it is important to study the current situation of women and propose measures for their upliftment. Sharmila (2019) in her work "An analysis of trends in literacy, differential literacy and spatial pattern of literacy rate in Haryana state, India" studied the spatial pattern of literacy rate among rural/urban & female /male in Haryana. The study reveals that from year 1971 to 2011 there is significant increase (25.71% to 76.64%) in the literacy rate in Haryana. The Gurugram district has higher literacy rate and Mewat district has lowest rate of literacy in Haryana. There are large regional differences in the literacy rates of men and women. The difference in literacy level in rural and urban areas is high in Sirsa, Fatehabad, and Mewat districts, while Gurgaon and Rewari districts has very low. Male literacy in rural as well as urban area in every district is higher than female because parents discriminate with girl child to their right of education, and make boundaries for women in every aspect of life i.e., social, cultural, and economic etc. The other reason for the discrimination in education is poverty due to which girl are bound for the household works and parents prefer boy child to go schools, colleges, and universities.

METHOD AND MATERIAL

This study sets out to uncover how a woman's place in society influences the discrimination she faces—focusing on the Kurukshetra district of Haryana. Combining both primary and secondary sources, the research applies a data-driven approach to decode the patterns of gender bias rooted in social structures. A carefully chosen sample of 64 women, selected through purposive sampling, responded to thoughtfully crafted questionnaires—both open and close-ended—capturing a wide range of lived experiences. The study is analytical in spirit, evaluative in method, and exploratory in scope. Anchored in a quantitative framework and guided by previous scholarly work, this research dives deep into the question: Does a woman's social, cultural, and demographic background shape the degree of gender-based discrimination she endures? The answers, as this study reveals, are both revealing and urgent.

RESULTS AND FINDING

The data collected for interpretation has been systematically arranged in the following tables. The below table represent the demographic profile of the respondents; half of the respondents are from the age group of 26 to 50 following by 1/4th of the respondents lies in the age group of 50 to 75. Nearly 3/4th of the respondents is married. Half of the respondents lived in rural area, and above 1/4th of respondents lived in urban settings. In education nearly half of the respondents only go schools till matric followed by 34.38% of respondents done study till secondary level, and only 6.25 % of the respondents reached to higher study like post-graduate and above. Nearly half of the respondents are housewife by profession, 1/4th is doing govt. job, and nearly 1/10th of the respondents doing their self-business. The family income of half of the respondents is up to 2 lakhs, 1/4th of the respondents lies in the slab of 2-4 lakhs, and only 6.25 % respondents have income above 6 lakhs per year. Majority of the respondents are from the general caste. The family structure of 3/4th of the respondents is nuclear and rest live in joint family. The religion of half of the respondents is Hindu, 31.25 % are from Islam religion, and 12.75% respondents are from the Sikh religion. Nearly 2/5th of the respondents has two children followed by three children (25%) and one & above four (18.75%). Majority of the respondents live in a family of four members and their self-owned house. The above table represents the freedom of social mobility among women in society. Majority of the respondents said that they have freedom of social mobility in following case like Go to near friends & relative, Wedding parties, Tourist place, visit Hospital, and market. For travelling alone above half of the respondents deny, but for religious place like temples etc. All respondents agree that they can go freely. Economic access is the main indicator for the social status of a person. The above table represent the freedom of women in autonomy for the expenditure.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Age in years	Up to 25	26-50	50-75	Above 75	Total
Frequency	8	32	16	8	64
Percent	12.5	50	25	12.5	100
Marital status	Unmarried		Married		
Frequency	17		47		64
Percent	26.57		73.43		100
Habitat	Rural	Semi-Urban	Urban		
Frequency	32	12	20		64
Percent	50	18.75	31.25		100
Education	Matric	Secondary	Graduation	Post-Graduation & above	
Frequency	28	22	10	4	64
Percent	43.75	34.38	15.63	6.25	100
Profession	Housewife	Service/Job	Business	Any other	
Frequency	34	16	6	8	64
Percent	53.12	25	9.38	12.50	100
Family Income(yearly)	Up to 2 lakhs	2-4 lakhs	4-6 lakhs	Above 6 lakhs	
Frequency	32	16	12	4	64
Percent	50	25	18.75	6.25	100
Caste	General	Schedule caste	OBC	Any other	
Frequency	28	14	16	6	64
Percent	43.75	21.88	25	9.37	100
Nature of Family	Nuclear		Joint		
Frequency	48		16		64
Percent	75		25		100
Religion	Hindu	Islam	Sikh	Other	
Frequency	32	20	8	4	64
Percent	50	31.25	12.50	6.25	100
Number of children	One	Two	Three	Four and above	
Frequency	12	24	16	12	64
Percent	18.75	37.50	25	18.75	100
Size of Family	Up to four members	Above four			
Frequency	40	24			64
Percent	62.50	37.50			100
House Ownership	Self	On Rent	Any other		
Frequency	32	16	16		64
Percent	50	25	25		100

Table 2. Freedom in social mobility among women

Response	Totally Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Totally disagree
Go to near friends & relative	50	25	18.75	6.25	
Wedding parties	6.25	43.75	25	25	
Tourist place	21.875	25	3.125	50	
Travel alone	6.25	15.625	6.25	15.625	56.25
Go to Hospital	43.75	25	25	6.25	
Go to Market	56.25	37.50	6.25		
Go to Religious institution	75	25			

Table 3. Freedom in autonomy for the expenditure among women

Response	Totally Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Totally disagree
Household item	43.75	25	25	6.25	
Fruit & vegetables	75	25			
Groceries	56.25	37.50	6.25		
Cloth's	43.75	25	25	6.25	
Jewellery & other	56.25	37.50	6.25		

Table 4. Freedom in decision making & choice among women

Response	Totally Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Totally disagree
Marriage age	6.25	15.625	15.625	56.25	6.25
Choosing husband	6.25	15.625	6.25	15.625	56.25
Family planning	15.625	6.25	56.25	6.25	15.625
Dissolution of marriage	6.25	15.625	6.25	15.625	56.25
For education	43.75	25	25	6.25	
Go out for work	21.875	25	3.125	50	
For parlour and cloth	50	25	25		
Outing with a friend	6.25	43.75	25	25	
To choose type of job	21.875	50	3.125	25	
Having a bank account	50	25	25		
Family budget & to buy a property	6.25	43.75	25	25	
To consult a doctor	56.25	37.50	6.25		
About dowry related decision	6.25	15.625	6.25	15.625	56.25

Table 5. Political access among women

Response	Totally Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Totally disagree
Have access to vote	75	25			
Have access in a political party	21.875	3.125	50	25	
Have access to take part in election	21.875	25	3.125	50	
Have access to join a political meeting	15.625	15.625	6.25	6.25	56.25
Have access to make women organisation	6.25	15.625	6.25	15.625	56.25

Table 6. Are you aware for gender discrimination?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	52	81.25
No	12	18.75
Total	64	100

Table 7. Type of gender discrimination among women

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Girls are considered as a burden in the society	40	62.50
Women can't go outside without anyone	32	50
Women can't choose their life partner	44	68.75
Women can't take participation in decision making	24	37.50
In Health & nutrient	42	65.625
A boy needs better food than a girl	48	75
Discrimination in the media and technology	48	75
Domestic violence	34	53.125
Female foeticide	8	12.5
Sexual harassment at workplace	40	62.50
In Education mainly higher education	50	78.125
Eve teasing	52	80.25
Dowry	34	53.125
Abduction	8	12.50

Majority of the respondents said they have access to expense in own way for Household item, Fruit & vegetables, Groceries, Cloth's, and Jewellery & other. The below table represents the freedom in decision making & choice among women. Majority of the respondents agree that they have access for education, Family planning, to go parlour and choose cloth, to choose type of job, having a bank account, and to consult a doctor, but majority of the respondents deny that they don't have freedom in choosing life partner, marriage age and dowry related decisions. Political participation can be of two types i.e., direct and indirect. Majority of the respondents deny about the direct participation as they don't have access to make a political party, to join a political meeting, and to make women organisation. The below table represent the awareness about the gender discrimination, majority of the respondents are aware about the same. The below table represent the types of gender discrimination; majority of the respondents agree that they faced all type of discrimination mention in below table.

CONCLUSION

This paper focus on the gender discrimination faced by women in Kurukshetra district of Haryana. The level of discrimination studied through their social, cultural, economic, educational, and political participation. Present study depicts that woman face discrimination because she is women, and pay a huge amount of freedom as society think that women is a vulnerable & weak member of society. In our study majority of the respondents said that they don't have freedom to take important decisions for example, when they want to marry, from whom they want to marry, where they want to study, which type of job they want to do, which type of cloth they want to wear, and they can't go outside alone etc. These all decisions are imposed on a woman by patriarchal society without her consent.

The overall development of women achieved when society allow to women to take part in the decision-making process that affect her life. Haryana Government launched various schemes from time to time such as *Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao*(2015), *Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana*, *Aapki Beti Humari Beti*, *The Ladli Scheme*, *Dhana lakshmi Scheme*, & *Apni Beti Apna Dhan* etc. to enhance the condition of women in Haryana.

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