

Sustainable Development Goals and Gender Equality: Impact of Unpaid Labor on Women's Leadership in India

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Abstract : A genuine economic and social transformation requires equal contribution and participation from both men and women; however, achieving this gender parity is a global concern. In the patriarchal societies around the world, women have been silenced, oppressed, and subjugated. Girls and women comprise half of the world's population. This, however, must not be the lone reason for recognizing and providing equal opportunities to them. Every individual has a right to develop through opportunities without the biases of gender, caste, race, or ethnicity. The world today is confronted by pressing issues of climate change, economic crisis, violence against women and children, escalating conflicts, to name a few. Achieving gender parity is thus an essential component in meeting this wide array of challenges in order to create just, robust and inclusive societies. In 2015, The United Nation enunciated achieving 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, one of which is SGD#5- Gender Equality, that is not merely a stand-alone goal. It is central to the achievement of all 17 SDG's. Without progress on gender equality, the global community will not only fail to achieve the SDG5, but it will also lose the impetus towards achieving the broad 2030 agenda. This research is based on a hypothesis that aims to connect the targets laid by the UN under SDG#5 - 5.4 (Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work) and 5.5 (Ensure women participation for leadership at all levels of decision-making). The study evaluates the impact of unpaid household responsibilities on women's leadership in India. In Indian society, women have experienced a low social status for centuries, which is reflected throughout the Indian history with preference of a male child and common occurrences of female infanticides that are still prevalent in many parts of the country. Insistence on the traditional gender roles builds patriarchal inequalities into the structure of Indian society. It is argued that a burden of unpaid labor on women is placed, which narrows the opportunities and life chances women are given and the choices they are able to make, thereby shutting them from shared participation in public and economic leadership. The study investigates theoretical framework of social construction of gender, unpaid labor, challenges to women leaders and peace theorist perspective as the core components. The methodology used is qualitative research of comprehensive literature, accompanied by the data collected through interviews of representatives of women leaders from various fields within Delhi-National Capital Region (NCR). The women leaders interviewed had the privilege of receiving good education and a conducive family support; however, post marriage and children it was not the case and the social obligations weighed heavy on them. The research concludes by recommending the importance of gender-neutral parenting and education along with government ratified paternal leaves for at least six months and childcare facilities available for both the parents at workplace.

Keywords : gender equality, gender roles, peace studies, sustainable development goals, social construction, unpaid labor, women's leadership

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