

## **“The Midpoint of SDGs: Global and Local Progress & Challenges”**

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### **Abstract**

The SDG goal number 5 is regarding gender equity, which targets to bring equal rights and treatment to all women and girls. All the countries are trying hard to achieve this goal by reducing the gap. Although men and women are biologically different, but it does not mean that their rights and privileges are also different. They should have equal access to opportunities in every field of life so that they can live their life to the fullest. To achieve this goal it is pertinent to see which kind of facilities should be provided to women in order to improve their economic participation, their participation in politics and in leadership positions. The glass ceiling effect cannot be ignored as one of the main obstacles in development of women in all the countries. The paper examines the various laws, opportunities and obstacles that come in the path of bringing women equal to men. Some countries are proactively changing laws to bring women in leadership position, whereas others are watching and moving at snail's speed. Technology can help women and girls to participate in economic activities and act as a leader.

**Purpose:** The Purpose of the paper is to address the various obstacles in achievement of the sustainable goal no. 5 that is gender equity

**Research Methodology:** Empirical and exploratory research methodology is used to analyze the topic.

**Key finding:** There are differences in initiatives to bring women to leadership positions. Unless problems of women are not studied and opportunities are not provided, it will be difficult to bring gender equity. Strict check on grooming of women for leadership position will help in reducing the gap in gender equity. It is important to address glass ceiling effect which is a invisible barrier in the development of women. Training at workplace about glass ceiling effect will help in reducing the gender gap at work place.

**Implications:** It applies for all the nations because gender inequality is a universal problem.

**Originality:** Views and suggestions regarding change in policymaking for inclusion of women are given.

**Keywords:** SDGs, Technology, gender Equity, Glass ceiling and leadership position

## **Introduction**

**“When a woman suffers, humanity suffers because she is the one who brings a new life into this world”**

Therefore, it is not the women’s right we need to look into, rather it is the human duty and responsibility to give space for wellbeing of child and women. The society has framed the role of women as homemaker and men as bread earner. This social set up is perceived as a norm of a happy family. No doubt men and women are biologically different, their responsibilities with respect to family also differs. A child need more time of mother for grooming. The whole world is talking of equal participation of women in every field. This is not incorrect, but it further

reminds the facilities to be provided to women so that she could give more time at workplace. It requires change in policy and grooming of a girl child to prepare her for future responsibilities. Women from the early age of their development are trained to give consent rather than participate in decision-making, obey than command, respectful to others than open discussion. Such type of grooming makes them less confident to deal with the outer world. Single women, divorced women and widows are regarded as a symbol of unhappiness and there is social exclusion of such women. When the society loose confident women or socially excluded women it is burden on the society. It is important to groom them in such a way that she can face hardships of life and confidently focus on better part which is giving her ability and strength in economic participation. Child care leave is an important aspect if women are encouraged to participate in economic activities. More focus is also required on women support to women. There is enough scope of jobs when women come out to help other women. Gender diversity at workplace can improve the situation of women. Healthy, confident and economically independent women are not only an asset for the country but also a basis of a strong family.

### **Review of literature**

Acceptance of women leaders by people, open door to younger women to opt for leadership roles; Gangadharan Lata, Jain Tarun, Vecci Joseph (2016):Parental leaves positively effects child's health; Ruhm J. Christopher (2000); when maternity leave is given child born are less likely to have mental and behavioural disorder; Fabel Marc (2021), when the option to opt out in leadership is given generally women deny such roles giving preference to their family Erkal Nisvan, Gangadharan Lata,

Xiao Erte (2022); Corporate culture is important to promote female leaders Keller Wolfgan, Molina Teresa, Onley W. William (2023)

### **Research Gap**

There is lack of research on mental health issues, women empowerment and childcare leave last but not the least day care facilities

### **Objective**

1. To study the problem of gender equity
2. To find solution to reduce gender inequality.

### **Source of Information**

Secondary information through journals, books websites and reports are used to collect the information.

**Research Methodology:** Empirical and exploratory research methodology is used to analyze the topic.

### **According to Sustainable development report 2022**

Top 10 countries having SDG index raking are

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Score</b>
1	Finland	86.5
2	Denmark	85.6
3	Sweden	85.2
4	Norway	82.3
5	Austria	82.3
6	Germany	82.2
7	France	81.2
8	Switzerland	80.8

9	Ireland	80.7
10	Estonia	80.6

**According to world mental health report**

1 person in eight is living with mental health condition.

2% of health budget goes for mental health.

**52.4%** women in the world have mental health issues.

13% of adults of more than 70 years have mental disorder.

**America tops with 15.6% prevalence of mental disorders**

Inequality and gender based violence are risk factor for mental health conditions.

**12 million work days are lost due to depression and anxiety**

**According to International Labour Organization,** it will take 131 years to close the gender gap.

**1. Development of women**

The social norms which are set for the women are biased. It does not allow women to be aggressive even if she is correct, whereas a male is raised to be aggressive. Health and leadership skills are not given priority to a girl child. It needs to be changed. Muscle power is as good to a girl as to a boy. Ability to deal with problems and developing earning skills are not only the right of a male child. Here more emphasis through education and awareness is required that solution of biasness with women will end only when they are empowered. Economic empowerment is must to handle issues related to her. The educational curriculum must include stories giving emphasis on the role of strong women who has taken care of the family with her wisdom. It will inspire a young girl to focus more on her health, wisdom and ability to earn rather than her beauty only. The changed mindset will help them to focus on becoming a strong and wise individual. Women who are economically independent

can have good food, better medical services, and they will not be dependent on their husbands for raising their children. It also will help women to plan for her old age. It also will improve sex ratio.

## **2. Women as leader**

It is seen that women generally compromise leadership position in order to give time to her family. It is also seen that women are given less recognition for her leadership skills and she is more talked about her absence from the workplace. Grooming of all individuals is required that a woman will take leave for motherhood and for raising her child. Others have to change their mindset that unlike males, she will be sitting in the office till late hours. For its better implementation, grooming of women for the top position must be checked. Whether she is given fair chance for her development or she is constantly facing glass ceiling effect. A committee at every work place must be constituted to monitor the situation.

## **3. Women in Politics**

According to 2023 edition of IPU-UN Women Map of women in politics globally, representation of women as a member of parliament is 26.5%. Women are in minority to act as heads of states and government. It shows decisions at top level are taken in majority by men. That is due to underrepresentation of women in leadership. Europe and the Americas have the most women cabinet ministers. As on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2023 only 13 countries in the world have gender equal cabinets and most of these countries are in Europe. Three top countries in percentage of women in cabinet are Albania 66.7%, Finland 64.3% and Spain 63.6%. European Nordic countries are at the top of the regional ranking. 45.7% of the MPs are women. Some of the top women leaders are resigning from politics,

which is a matter of grave concern. It seems they have family issues when they reach to the top. It will discourage other women to join politics.

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Value</b>
1	Finland	46
2	Denmark	39.7
3	Sweden	47
4	Norway	41.4
5	Austria	39.3
6	Germany	31.2
7	France	39.5
8	Switzerland	41
9	Ireland	22.5
10	Estonia	28.7

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#### **4. Women as board member**

According to McKinney study, in the year 2019 diverse leadership leads to better financial performance of the companies. According to ILO global report on women in business and management only 19% women are working as board member globally, less than 5% CEOs are women in the world's largest corporations. Reservation of women in the board of company by European Union has opened doors for the women directors. It will provide opportunity to women to work at the top level in public listed companies. According to this reservation, 40% of the post of non-executive directors or 33% of all directors' post will be occupied by the women. This will give a chance to women to participate at the top level in framing policies. Policies of maternity leave and crèches near workplace

can help in women reaching the top positions. Further, there shall be reservation at every managerial position that will help women to get enough training to handle the situation at the top. The whole idea is to look at the development aspect of women for the leadership position. Here success of women cannot be determined by her economic progress only, but workplace and leave policy also requires suitable amendment to retain women at workplace. According to ILO top barriers to women to enter women in business and management are family responsibilities, gender stereotypes and masculine corporate culture.

## **6. Child Care leave**

From the blog of Supreme Court of India related to one of the case related to child care, the following was quoted

**“No employer can perceive childbirth as detracting from the purpose of employment. Childbirth has to be constructed in the context of employment as a natural incident of life and hence, the provision for maternity leave must be constructed in that perspective.”**

It is the leave which is given to working women when she becomes mother to look after her child. From feeding child to early stage development of child, mother plays a crucial role. Hence, her leaves and work place must be suitable amended to retain her in the employment. Without such leaves it would be inappropriate to talk about inclusion of women at workplace. Well-being of child and mother both in terms of physical and mental health is an important aspect of life. It has positive impact on the health and behaviour of the child. But sadly the world is talking of women empowerment by opening doors of every field of employment to women and silent on the well-being of mother and child in terms of child care leave.



Iceland is the most gender equal country. It is praiseworthy to see how childcare leave is given there. It maintains a very good work and life balance.

### **Paid child care leave**

Finland provides 160 days paid child care leave to both mother and father.

US-12 weeks unpaid child care leave (Family and medical leave Act) it applies in companies employing 50 or more workers.

UK- 18 weeks unpaid leave (Gov.UK)

## **7. Universal working hours**

There shall be minimum hours of work and that shall be universal. Unless working hours are not reduced, social life and mental peace will not be achieved. One cannot dream of gender equity at the cost of her motherhood, cost of her mental peace and cost of her time to the child. Therefore, when women inclusion is the priority, universal working hours are essential. It is a well noticed fact that women share more unpaid household work and when they are working, their work pressure doubles, results in more burnout which adversely affects her health. Universal working 5 working days a week will improve mental health of all men and women.

### **Steps in women empowerment**

- 1. Focus on social change that is encouraging healthy, confident, and economically independent women.**
- 2. Girls should be raised to take independent decisions.**
- 3. Framing universal maternity and child care leave will help in coming out of post pregnancy depression, reduce delayed pregnancy, improve sex ratio.**

- 4. Universal minimum working hours will reduce burnout of women for excessive care work and participation in economic activities.**
- 5. For help of working women, a policy can be framed to employ less qualified women/ single women/ divorced/ widows in care work. There shall be child care facility at every working place employing women.**
- 6. Reservation of women in politics will give them chance to work on various issues related to women, resulting in more laws in favour of women. (e.g. abortion laws, maternity leave, child care leave, affordable care services etc.)**
- 7. Women are more talked of their leaves taken, more recognition is required for work done, and leadership roles played when on the job.**
- 8. Networking of women will help them to grow and break glass ceiling effect.**

### **Conclusion**

According to a study by McKinsey, Women leaders are not given recognition at the workplace. 43% of women are burnout with extra work at workplace, in comparison to 31% of men at workplace at their level. That shows more health issues to women and more effort to break the glass ceiling. In the political representation, political parties can have policy of voluntary quota of women representation in their party like Nordic Nations. Legislation can also be passed to give quotas to women in political representation like France. If we are promoting women without giving space for motherhood by not providing more leaves to mothers and absence of crèche facility at workplace, it will adversely affect motherhood and will lead to

mental disorder etc. While including women at workplace we need to think what are we trying to solve, only improving her economic condition but not concerned with her whole development. This cannot be her growth. Human life is to be cherished and blossomed. There shall be universal policy of maternity leave child care leave affordable crèche facility at workplace and policy regarding development of women as a leader. Flexible working hours can help in retaining half of the global talent. Such initiative will reduce burnout of women; reduce mental health issues and will develop more confident women leaders. Universal 5 working days a week will improve mental health of all men and women. Ease of old aged living should be added to sustainable development goal. By 2050 the old aged people will be around 22% of the population of the world. A human life deserves a healthy environment to be welcomed at birth, and the exit part that is living in old age. From Japan it should be learned how old aged people can be given decent life.

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