Gender Equality Level among Women in Rural and Urban Areas of Mathura District

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ABSTRACT

Despite a high growth rate and various Government measures to encourage gender equality, the gender gap still exists in India. Lack of gender equality not only limits women's access to resources and opportunities but also harms the life prospects of the future generation. Gender equality is attained when women and men have equal rights and opportunities in all areas of society, including economic participation and decision-making. It is also achieved when the different behaviors, aspirations, and needs of women and men are equally valued. The main objective of this study is to evaluate the level of gender equality in rural and urban areas of the Mathura district in the state of Uttar Pradesh. The total size of the sample was 120 respondents from which 60 rural and 60 urban respondents were selected. Multistage stratified random sampling technique was used for the selection of samples. The standardized tool, developed by Asian Development Bank in 2013 on gender equality level was used. In rural and urban areas women below 35 years of age found higher gender equality level (t= 4.71 & t= 2.82 respectively) as compared to women above 35 years of age which was significant at <0.01 level and based on educational status above intermediate educated women found to be higher gender equality level (t= 7.16 & t= 3.22) than below intermediate educated women and it was significant at <0.01 level. Similarly, the women who have above Rs. 15,000 of monthly family income in rural and urban areas had more gender equality level (t= 4.21 & t= 2.57) as compared to the women of below Rs. 15,000 monthly family income and it was significant at <0.01 level. In urban area, the women of nuclear families (14.11) found higher gender equality level than the women of joint families (11.77) which was evident by the obtained t value 3.08. The women who belonged to rural areas (10.97) found more gender equality level than the women who belonged to urban areas (8.94) which obtained by t value 2.12 and it was significant at <0.05 level. The results indicated the importance of awareness to improve the condition of gender equality in our society.

Keywords: Gender Equality; Women; Rural Areas; Urban Areas; Mathura District.

1. INTRODUCTION

Gender equality, also known as sexual equality or equality of the sexes, refers to the state of providing equal access to resources and opportunities regardless of gender. This includes economic participation and decision-making. It also involves valuing different behaviors, aspirations and needs equally, irrespective of gender (Kumar and Gautam, 2022). Gender equality is achieved when women and men have the same rights and opportunities in all aspects of society. This includes economic participation, decision-making, and when the different behaviors, aspirations, and needs of women and men are equally valued (Kumar and Gautam, 2021). Women's empowerment is crucial for achieving gender equality. It involves increasing a woman's sense of self-worth, decision-making power, access to opportunities and resources, control over her own life inside and outside the home, and ability to effect change (Hebert et al., 2019). Gender issues are not solely focused on women but also the relationship between men and women in society. Women empowerment in India heavily depends on many variables, including geographical location (rural/urban), educational status, social status (caste and class), and age. A final area of focus in attaining gender equality is women's major aspects of empowerment (Devi, 2017). There are policies for women's empowerment at national, state, and local levels in various sectors such as health, education, economic opportunities and political participation (Agarwal & Gautam, 2021). However, women still face discrimination at all stages of life, both in rural and urban areas. Sajeev et al. (2024) found that there is still persistence of gender discrimination even in urban families but there is also a change in the outlook of modern times. The study of Brahmapurkar (2017) depicted that a higher percentage of women were illiterate compared to men in rural areas. So, the present study is also focused to assess the level of gender equality among women area-wise. Many of the studies revealed that women can not use their rights because of a lack of education and awareness (Mahase, 2018 & Chaudhary, 2018). The researcher aimed to determine the prevalence of gender equality in both rural and urban areas. It is important for societies to equally value men and women as it contributes to their safety and well-being. The main objective was to assess the level of gender equality in the rural and urban areas of Mathura District.

2. METHODOLOGY

This comparative study was done in the Mathura district of Uttar Pradesh state in 2023 and the locals of the study were selected conveniently. A multistage stratified random sampling technique was used to select participants from rural and urban areas of the Mathura district. Sixty respondents were selected from each area, and overall 120 women were included in the study between the age group of 21- 45 years. The standardized tool was taken from the 'A tool kit on gender equality' which was developed by the Asian Development Bank in 2013. There were five dimensions included in the tool which were social freedom, social taboos, health & nutrition, educational & developmental opportunities, and values. Percentage, Mean, SD, t-t-test were used for analysis data.

3. RESULTS

Table 3.1. Gender equality level in rural and urban areas based on given I. V. (independent variable)

IV	Areas	Categories	No.	%	Mean	SD	t-test	p-value
Age	**Rural**	Below 35	38	63.33	73.58	13.94	4.71	<0.01
		Above 35	22	36.66	57.56	12.57		
	Urban	Below 35	37	61.66	65.63	13.88	2.82	<0.01
		Above 35	23	38.33	55.58	12.47		
Educational Status	**Rural**	Above Intermediate	27	45.00	74.46	13.49	7.16	<0.01
		Below Intermediate	33	55.00	56.32	10.80		
	Urban	Above Intermediate	36	60.00	66.97	15.50	3.22	<0.01
		Below Intermediate	24	40.00	55.12	11.96		
Monthly Family Income	**Rural**	Above Rs.15,000	28	46.66	68.64	14.68	4.21	<0.01
		Below Rs.15,000	32	53.33	55.69	11.10		
	Urban	Above Rs 15,000	33	55.00	64.7	15.01	2.57	<0.01
		Below Rs.15,000	27	45.00	55.93	12.13		
Occupational status	**Rural**	Working	33	55.00	57.3	10.63	0.24	>0.05
		Non-working	27	45.00	58	12.57		
	Urban	Working	44	73.33	57.41	11.42	0.61	>0.05
		Non-working	16	26.66	55.38	14.28		
Family Pattern	**Rural**	Joint	43	71.66	64.37	13.74	0.73	>0.05
		Nuclear	17	28.33	61.47	16.56		
	Urban	Joint	22	36.66	54.18	11.77	3.08	<0.01
		Nuclear	38	63.33	64.63	14.11		

Table 3.1 shows the mean score of gender equality level based on the age of respondents and their educational status, monthly family income, occupational status, and family pattern in rural and urban areas separately. Women below 35 years (73.58) had a higher level of gender equality than the age group of the above 35 years (57.56) in the rural area which is evident by the t value (4.71) and found to be significant at <0.01 level. Similarly, in an urban area, the women below 35 years of age had a higher level of gender equality than the women above 35 years of age which is evident by the t value of 2.82 and it is significant at <0.01 level. It is maybe because above 35 in age, most women were married. They may face more discrimination in their in-laws house.

The mean score of above intermediate respondents was found higher (74.46) as compared to below intermediate rural respondents. It is revealed by the t value (7.16) which is highly significant at <0.01 level. The table further depicted in this regard in the urban area found that above intermediate had a higher mean score than below intermediate level and obtained t value (3.22) and it is significant at <0.01 level. UNESCO (2017) & Potvin et al. (2018) reported that education and gender equality are significantly responsible for the betterment of people's lives.

There is a significant difference found in gender equality according to the monthly income of the family and found that the mean value (68.64) of the women who have above Rs.15,000 income had a higher gender equality level than the mean value (55.69) of women who have below Rs. 15,000 as income in the rural area. It is proved by the t value (4.21) which is significant at <0.01 level. Similarly, a significant difference was found in an urban area in this regard and it is proved by the t value of 2.57 which is significant at <0.01 level. Higher income helps women in getting higher accountability in respect of their importance in the family.

Based on the family pattern, the data revealed that the women of the nuclear family in urban area had higher gender quality levels with a mean score which was 64.63 than the women of the joint family in this regard with a mean score (54.18) as is depicted by the t value (3.08) which is significant at <0.01 level. May be it's because, in nuclear families, women are more empowered to make decisions due to the smaller the smaller size of the family. They do not face the same restrictions imposed by traditional norms as women of joint families. On the other hand, the women of the rural area who belongs to nuclear and joint family found no significant difference related to gender equality level which is proved by the t value of 0.73 which is insignificant at >0.05 level.

The similarity in mean score was found in working and non-working respondents of rural areas related to gender equality level which is revealed by the t value of 0.24 and it is insignificant. Similarly, no major difference was found in the women of urban areas in this matter and it is cleared by the t value (0.61) which is insignificant at >0.05 level. Lal, N. (2016) also found the same results.

Table 3.2. Mean score of gender equality in the rural and urban area

	Area	No.	%	Mean	SD	t-test	p-value
Residential area	Rural area	60	50.00	57.99	10.97	2.12	<0.05
	Urban area	60	50.00	41.65	8.94		

Table 3.2 revealed the gender equality level based on the residential area. The women who belonged to rural areas had a higher mean score (57.99) in gender equality level than urban areas (41.65) in this matter. It has been obtained by t value (2.12) and found to be significant at <0.05 level. On the other hand, the study of Ahamad and Narayana (2016); Clench-Aas et al. (2018); Agarwal & Gautam (2024) depicted that the condition of gender equality is worse in rural areas for females and the birth of girls is seen as a liability.

4. CONCLUSION

The present study result indicates that more discrimination was found in women who are above 35 years of age in rural as well as urban areas. In rural and urban areas, women who had obtained above intermediate education were found higher gender equality levels as compared to below intermediate educated women. Women who had above Rs.15,000 monthly family income were found higher gender equality levels as compared to those women who had below Rs. 15,000 monthly family income in the rural and urban areas. In urban areas, gender equality levels were found high in nuclear families as compared to joint families. Overall, it is found that the women of rural areas had more gender equality levels as compared to urban areas. With this study, it is found that this is necessary to work on more improvement on gender inequality by which women can be more empowered in rural and urban areas. Several Indian women hold influential positions and are strong advocates in various fields. However, the majority of women and girls in India are unable to fully exercise their rights due to deeply ingrained patriarchal views, norms, traditions, and structures. It is imperative for government authorities, the donor community, the private sector, and civil society to collaborate and take action to bridge the gender gap.

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