



Social Exclusion and Gender Differentials in Education in India

Amandeep Singh

Assistant Professor in Sociology, Department of Evening Studies- MDRC, Panjab University, Chandigarh

Abstract: *The purpose of this paper was to provide a definition of social exclusion as well as to explain gender gap that exists in schooling. Social exclusion is a universal concept which encompasses deprivation economically, socially and politically. It is practice of preventing some people or groups from fully participating in the society in which they live, either entirely or in part, by denying them the chance to participate in that society. It is the responsibility of society as a whole to create institutions, structures, and procedures based on equal opportunity, which it sees as a counterbalance to exclusion.*

Keywords: *Gender, exclusion, education.*

Social Exclusion

The term "social exclusion" can be used to wide variety of categories of excluded persons and areas of exclusion, as well as a large range of occurrences and processes connected to poverty, suffering, and misery. Social exclusion refers to the disadvantaged population that does not participate fully in society as a community. The term "social exclusion" is meant to define the study of how certain groups of individuals are marginalised from mainstream society. Social characteristics like belief, race, age, descent, sex, caste, handicap, migrant status, HIV status, and geographical location (such as 'no-go' zones, urban slums, and isolated regions) can lead to prejudice and exclusion. Those who are marginalised for a variety of reasons, such as women who are handicapped or girls from lower castes, tend to be at the bottom of the economic ladder. It's possible that certain groups of individuals are involved in the market, the state, and the society, but discriminatory and unfavourable behaviours that hinder their full participation as members of society and contribute to retain them in poverty; this is also what is meant by the term "exclusion" for example, "lesser wages for women in the labour market, discrimination preventing certain cultural groups or castes from accessing higher status jobs or public positions, geographical obstacles to full market integration". Social exclusion occurs when problems like lack of access to employment, low income, poor housing, high crime rate, lack of skills, poor health, discrimination and broken families. The combination of these issues can generate a vicious cycle. It arises due to problems that a person faces in life. Being born into deficiency or having low ability parents always has a huge impact on future life possibilities.

Persons can exclude others from political involvement, social status, or economic opportunity (for instance, the obstacles women and people with disabilities encounter while trying to enter the workforce). Location is a major factor in the marginalisation of many people; the poor and the marginalised are disproportionately concentrated in geographically and economically depressed areas. It is especially challenging to have a voice, access services, the government, and find employment in rural communities and urban slums. "Exclusion originates after the interaction of class, position, and political power and supports political goals of the included," according to Silver (1994). "Exclusion is combated via citizenship, and the extending of equal membership and full participation in the society to outsiders."

Through social, economic, and political systems and activities, discrimination and exclusion arise. Examples of this may be found in both formal institutions, like the judicial system, and informal institutions, such as the norms and practises that have been passed down through the generations and continue to impact gender roles in today's society. Individuals who have experienced discrimination for a long time may also lack confidence and have low self-esteem. Human rights are denied when discrimination occurs. Discrimination hinders efforts to decrease poverty and stunts economic growth by prohibiting certain individuals from contributing to and promoting from development.

Researchers as well as policy makers all around the world frequently use this phrase to pinpoint the gaps in the development of the disadvantaged population. The identities of gender, caste, religion, ethnicity, colour, race, country, and others are commonly used in this activity over the world. It is a process that entails denying privileges and opportunities that the majority enjoys, which prevents members of excluded groups from taking part in fundamental economics, politics and social processes of the society, leading to their poverty and plight. Sen (2000) said that Aristotle was as far back in history as the idea of social



exclusion. However, the modern term was born out of social unrest brought on by rising unemployment and economic inequality in France during the 1960s, and it was especially adopted by the newly elected U.K. labour government in the late 1990s, when the ILO also took the lead in spreading idea to less developed nations (Mathieson et al, 2008).

Kabeer (2000) categorises following three types of social attitudes and practices that lead to exclusion. This can be explicit or casual, conscious or unconscious, deliberate or inadvertent.

- *Social closure*: when social communities limit access to resources and opportunities to those who qualify in order to maximise benefits. It's about monopolizing certain options based on demographic background, religion, and other group attributes. When state organisations intentionally discriminate in their laws and policies, exclusion results. Other social structures rely on hereditary factors to establish a person's social standing.
- *Mobilizing Institutional Prejudices*: This is described as a collection of prevalent attitudes, beliefs, and rituals that routinely and continuously work to the detriment of other people and groups. This system operates without the participation of those who uphold the status quo in its decisions.
- *Unruly practice*: These are deviations between the rules, their implementation and execution. Institutions informally perpetuate exclusion when civil servants reflect society's prejudices through their positions. In this way, a kind of discrimination is institutionalized.

Dimensions of Social Exclusion

The multi- dimensional Social exclusion include following:

- *Economic exclusion*: Failure to gain access to finance, the labour market, and other sources of capital wealth constitutes economic exclusion.
- *Social exclusion*: It is a form of discrimination based on a variety of factors, including culture and civilization, gender, a person's likelihood of receiving social services benefits, and their ability to participate in the job market.
- *Political exclusion* includes not only denial of civil rights, but also denial of personal security, freedom of expression, the rule of law, and equal opportunity.
- *Cultural exclusion*: The level of acceptance and appreciation for various beliefs, traditions, and ways of life is known as cultural exclusion.

Because these aspects or reasons are intertwined and coincide with one another, it is not possible to recognise a single reason that is precisely related with social exclusion. This is because of the complexity of the impact that these factors have on individuals. In general, the operation of uneven power relations can be attributed as the cause of social exclusion, which can lead to poverty, pain and even demise in some cases.

Social exclusion is a process, involving different aspects and the different routes through which people or groups experience it. Different sociologists describe in different ways as *Material dimensions*: inadequate income, substandard housing and physical surroundings (Townsend, 1997). *Spatial exclusions*: limits the geographic area in which people can dwell and, on their movements, (Sibley, 1995). *Access* to a variety of goods and services, both public and private (Batsleer & Humphries, 2000). *Health and well-being*: Material deprivation is the root cause of ill health, which in and of itself can be a factor that keeps people from participating in social activities (Purdy and Banks, 1999). *Cultural*: Some modes of lifestyle are regarded as being either immature or immoral, or both. Fear of other people can motivate some people to keep those who are seen as outsiders out of their group (Ward, 2005). *Self-determination*: Persons who belong to certain social groupings, youngsters, people who have trouble learning or reading, and people who are regarded as having a mental disability are regarded as being incapable of making judgments regarding their life choices.

Also, Clavel (1998) explained four types of social exclusion as:

- a strategy used by demographic groups in which society is separated into major socioeconomic classes, some of whom are privileged, and others of which are underprivileged;
- the economic strategy in which poverty, income, and other indices of socioeconomic exclusion serve as benchmarks;
- approach to rejection of rights reluctance of or inability to get resources; and
- Extreme cases resemble those in which individuals are viewed as strangers, aliens, and unwanted

Education and Social Exclusion

A lot of progress has been achieved in educating girls in poor nations. Girls' education fosters and enhances social and economic growth. However, some girls in underdeveloped nations don't go to school. Over 70% of them are members of "socially



excluded" groups, such as ethnic, racial, linguistic, rural, or impoverished groups that experience prejudice in their native countries (Lewis and Lockheed, 2007).

A fundamental human right, education is also a key instrument for attaining sustainable development. By making an investment in human capital, society and people may both profit and realise their full potential. Education is essential for empowering women and enabling them to be change agents in the political, social, and economic realms, as well as for bridging the opportunity gap between men and women. Additionally, it increases the likelihood that women will live healthy lives and pass on the advantages to subsequent generations.

Education is recognized as an important exclusion factor. Educational attainment interprets adults' involvement in work and income (Bynner, 2001). In addition to this, it has been linked to negative impacts on health, as well as depression, engagement in public life, communication abilities, and motivation (Social Exclusion Unit 2004a). The Social Exclusion Unit is responsible for determining the elements that play a role in social exclusion, including child and family characteristics, school-related factors, interactions between parents and schools, and community factors. One's educational attainment can be impacted by a child's or family's handicap, which can be considered as a child or family feature. Although certain disabilities have a direct influence on educational attainment, the historical practise of segregating children with disabilities into separate schools has prevented many persons with disabilities from reaching their full academic potential (Mittler, 2000). People with disabilities may have a more difficult time participating in the community's political and social activities if they are prevented from receiving an education (Sparkes 1999).

Gender parity and Gender equality in Education

To gauge progress toward gender parity in education, people frequently use the Gender Parity Index (GPI). To achieve gender parity in education, enrolment ratio (i.e., the ratio of males to girls) and participating in the system's different cycles must be equal.

On the other hand, gender equality means that both boys and girls would have equal access to, and outcomes from, educational opportunities. Equality is harder to define and quantify than parity insofar as it extends beyond issues of numerical balance.

Achieving parity between the genders in educational opportunities would entail:

- It is assumed that parents, educators, and society at large do not discriminate against female or male students while deciding whether or not to enrol them in school;
- When it comes to education, gender parity means that both males and females are exposed to the same materials and are taught in the same ways, benefit from instruction free of gender bias and stereotypes, receive academic advising and guidance from non-biased academic advisors, and take advantage of the same quantity and quality of appropriate educational infrastructures;
- There would be no gender differences in the equality of outcomes, such as learning accomplishments, schooling duration, academic credentials, and degrees;
- When it comes to job opportunities, the time it takes to find a job after finishing a full-time course of study, the earnings of men and women with comparable training and experience, etc., there would be equality of external results.

Women and Social Exclusion

According to the 2011 census, the population of India is 121.06 Cr and women make up 48.5%. In 2011, the sex ratio (females per 1000 males) across India was 943 and in rural and urban areas it was 949 and 929 respectively. As for the social status of women, they are not treated equally with men in all areas. Nearly 50% of the world's population is made up of women, but they manage this while standing on shaky foundation. Despite constitutional protections and gender-neutral regulations, women still do not have fully equal status and opportunity as males. Concerns have been raised about gender disparities in schooling continuing to exist. Among SC female children, poor sex ratios, low literacy rates, and lower engagement rates are clearly visible.

Gender discrimination starts even before birth and persists throughout a woman's lifetime. Substantially addition, women and girls put in more effort than men do, yet they receive far less support for their fair share of food, health, education, and training. High levels of discrimination are present in a society's conventional socialisation processes. Not only have they failed to provide the girl kid with enough nutrition, health care, education, and playtime, but they have also succeeded in making her feel



that she is less capable and deserving of respect than her male peers. Therefore, family and community prevent girls from attending school. In terms of health care, sex ratio, literacy level, etc., gender imbalance affects every aspect of our lives most seriously. Though it exists in every nation, the degree of gender disparity differs (Subrahmanian, 2005).

Dalit Women and Social Exclusion

Dalit women make up the biggest socially isolated minority in the world and 2% of the world's population. Being Dalits, women, and poor make Dalit women three times more vulnerable to discrimination. 16.3% of the women in India are from the Dalit community. Both Dalit men and Dalit women are subject to the same cultural taboos. However, Dalit women encounter them more frequently. In addition to those of higher castes, Dalit women face discrimination within their own communities. In Dalit communities, men predominate. In the Dalit movement itself, Dalit women also hold little influence. Although there are many women involved in the movement, males have traditionally occupied the majority of leadership posts in the organisations, local bodies, and associations. As the poorest and most disadvantaged members of their caste—the "untouchables"—Dalit women in India are the Dalits among the Dalits and experience a triple kind of oppression based on gender, caste, and class.

Thind (1999) gave following reasons for lower literacy rate among Dalit women:

- Dearth of educational facilities particularly in rural areas.
- Privatization of educational institutions.
- Humiliation by high caste teachers and others
- Poverty

Present Status of Women Education in India

According to the Census (2011), India's female literacy rate increased from 8.6% in 1951 to 64.63%. This rise in female literacy is encouraging, but it also has its drawbacks. The present literacy rate for women is significantly lower than the literacy rate for men, which stands at 81.3%. The current literacy rate for women is 65.6%. In India, just 65.6% of women are literate, which is much lower than the global average of 79.7%. The situation is even more acute in rural areas, where fewer girls than boys attend school and where dropout rates are alarmingly high.

India's glorious history, on the one hand, respects women in many social aspects, but on the other hand, but it also reflects added challenges that women face on an equal footing with men in education, business and politics. On the contrary, millions of women in society are still denied access to their basic rights, which puts them in dire situations and undermines their true power. The global picture shows that almost 70% of women live below the poverty line, about 80% of the world's refugees are women, and two-thirds of women are illiterate.

Government Initiatives

According to the Constitutional Amendment Act of 2002, all children between the ages of 6 and 14 have a basic right to receive education, and UEE has emerged as one of the government's primary programmes from India. Through various schemes, various approaches were taken to achieve universal primary education (UPE) and close the gender gap, including the accessibility of education close to homes, participatory school mapping, emphasising the recruitment of female teachers, developing gender-sensitive curricula, and improving school facilities. The 2009 Right to Education law marked a significant advancement in closing the gender gap.

Suggestions for Reducing Exclusion of Girls in Education

- About the frequency, makeup, and severity of socially excluded females' scholastic disadvantages, there is just a dearth of precise numerical data. The information that is currently available, however, points to the fact that many socially excluded females have considerably lower attendance, enrolment, and completion rates for basic education than boys.
- Legal systems that support affirmative action, non-discrimination, and free basic education don't necessarily help socially marginalised girls' chances for a good education.
- Major barriers to education for women from underrepresented groups include pregnancy, gender-segregated schools, occupational segregation, and administrative structures of educational institutions connected to the permitted language of teaching.
- Increasing the number of schools that are located in close proximity to the homes of girls, broadening access to non-formal schools and facilities for distance education, and making educational environments safer and more accommodating to the needs of girls are all ways to increase the educational opportunities available to girls who are marginalised in society.



- If schools have antiquated buildings, inadequate learning spaces, and low-quality teachers, girls from marginalised groups are less likely to enrol and persist in school.
- Girls who are socially excluded may experience explicit discrimination due to the actions of teachers and students as well as some facets of classroom administration. Stereotyping in textbooks and instructional materials may also be used to carry out more covert operations.
- It has been demonstrated that properly targeted financial incentives, scholarships, and feeding programmes increase the engagement and academic success of girls from socially excluded groups.

Conclusion

Last but not least, it is true that girls from socially excluded groups have several obstacles when they attempt to enrol in and thrive in education. These girls may stay in school and flourish with better learning environments and well-targeted support programmes. Girls from socially excluded groups experience scholastic disadvantages in nations with significant levels of ethnic, economic, linguistic and social diversity and a large number of socially excluded groups. Much of this gender gap will be reduced by improving the accessibility and standard of education for the socially disadvantaged in these nations. In addition, it will be necessary to implement compensation programmes geared toward and for females who are socially excluded.

References

1. Batsleer, J., & Humphries, B. (2000). *Welfare, exclusion and political agency*. London: Routledge.
2. Bynner, J. (2001). Childhood risks and protective factors in social exclusion. *Children and Society*, 15, 285-301.
3. Census Data (2011). *Govt. of India, Ministry of Home Affairs. Office of Registrar General and Census Commissioner. India*
4. DFID (2005). *Reducing Poverty by tackling social exclusion: A DFID Policy Paper*. Retrieved from <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/development/docs/socialexclusion.pdf>
5. Jordan, B. (1996). *A theory of poverty and social exclusion*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
6. Kabeer, N. (2000). Social Exclusion, poverty and discrimination: Towards an analytical framework. *IDS Bulletin*, 31(4).
7. Lewis, M. A., & Lockheed, M. E. (2007). *Exclusion, gender and schooling: Case studies from the developing world*. Washington, DC: Center for Global Development.
8. Mathieson, J., et.al. (2008). *Social exclusion- Meaning, measurement and experience and links to health inequalities: A review of literature*, World Health Organization.
9. Mittler, P. 2000. *Working towards inclusive education: Social context*. London: Fulton
10. Purdy, M., & Banks, D. (1999). *Health and exclusion*. London: Routledge
11. Sen, A. (2000). *Social exclusion: Concept, application and scrutiny* (in Social Development Paper No. 1). Manilla: Asian Development Bank.
12. Sibley, D. (1995). *Geographies of exclusion*. London: Routledge.
13. Silver, H. (1994). *Social exclusion and social solidarity: Three paradigms*. Discussion Paper Series No 69. Geneva: International Institute for Labour Studies.
14. Social Exclusion Unit. (2004a). *Breaking the cycle: Taking stock of progress and priorities for the Future*. London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.
15. Sparkes J. (1999). *Schools education and social exclusion*. London: Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion.
16. Subramanian, S. V. (2005). *Income inequality and health*. Paper presented at New Developments in Social Determinants of Health: International and Australian Perspectives, VicHealth and Key Centre for Women's Health, Melbourne.
17. Thind, G. S. (1999). *Our Indian Sub-Continent Heritage*. Canada: Crosstown Press.
18. Townsend, P. (1997). Redistribution: The strategic alternative to privatisation, in A. Walker and C. Walker (eds), *Britain Divided: The Growth of Social Exclusion in the 1980s and 1990s*. London: Child Poverty Action Group.
19. Ward, N. J. (2005). *Social exclusion and mental wellbeing: lesbian experiences*. Doctoral Thesis, University of Birmingham.

Websites:

- <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000132513>
- https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/downloads/WorldsWomen2015_c
- http://www.wunrn.org/news/2006/12_11_06/121806_india_dalit.htm