

The Gender Care Gap : A Silent Crisis in Well Being of Community

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Abstract

The gender care gap the unequal distribution of unpaid care giving responsibilities between men and women represents a silent yet profound crisis in community wellbeing. Despite increasing awareness of gender equality, women continue to shoulder a disproportionate share of caregiving of children, the elderly, and sick, often at the expense of their economic independence, physical and mental health and social participation. This imbalance not only perpetuates gender inequality but also undermines the social and economic fabric of communities. This conceptual paper explores the structural cultural and policy factors sustaining the gender care gap and examines its cascading effects on health, education and community resilience. Bridging the gender care gap is not merely a matter of fairness but crucial investment in the collective wellbeing and sustainability of community.

Keywords: Sustainability, cascading, resilience

Introduction

Gender equality has been an important and popular subject since the late 1900's .Gender inequality; specifically pertaining to women also causes several other issues to arise, such as lack of education. Gender inequality, discrimination, and violence against women, gender inequality, discrimination and violence against women persists in being an issue to be solved. Furthermore, violence against women has been defined as “any act on conduct based on gender which causes death physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women whether in the public or private sphere. The council of the European Union has taken a decisive step in recognizing the vital connection between gender equality and Mental Health. Through its latest EPSCO (Employment Social Policy, Health and consumer Affairs) Conclusions on strengthening Women's and Girls' Mental Health by promoting gender equality. Gender inequality has a profound effect on mental health worldwide. Some of the psychological effects of gender inequality include higher levels of stress, anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in women and people of marginalized genders. Gender inequality refers to the difference between gender in terms of status, power, wealth, health and employment. When these differences are avoidable and unfair, it is known as gender inequality.

Some of the measurable ways that gender inequality affects women globally in comparison with men, include:

- lower rates of schooling and employment.
- Less pay for similar work.
- Higher levels of stress.
- Higher rates of unpaid work, such as caring for sick relatives.
- Exposure to higher rates of sexual assault, intimate partner abuse, and gender based violence.

All of these have a significant impact on the mental and physical wellbeing of women and girls, as well as people of other marginalized genders.

Unlike sex, which is based on biological traits such as genitalia gender refers to how people feel about themselves. As a result, anyone can experience gender inequality and sexism based on how they behave and express themselves.

According to 2020 article, women with mental and physical health conditions outnumber men by as much as **two or three fold**, depending on the condition.

In comparison to men, women are: twice as likely to have generalized anxiety disorder, depression, eating disorder and PTSD. More likely to attempt suicide, though men are 3.63 times more likely to die by suicide.

While it is true that many factors play a role in mental illness, including biological differences between sexes, women are overrepresented in these statistics, as well as statistics for chronic physical illness.

Studies have shown a link between experiencing discrimination and mental and physical health symptoms. Sexism also exposes people to many of the risk factors of wellbeing conditions, including chronic stress, negative self-image and trauma. Exposure to trauma is one of the psychological effects of sexism. Trauma is a reaction to experiencing a severely distressing event that can cause a wide range of mental and physical symptoms, including anxiety, panic attacks, anger, sadness, numbness, insomnia on nightmares, heart attacks, blood pressure, dissociation or feeling disconnected from one's own thoughts, feelings or body. Hyperarousal, which puts the body into a state of alertness making it difficult to relax. Women are slightly less likely to experience a traumatic event than men. But the types of trauma women experience are more likely to lead to PTSD. This includes child abuse and sexual assault, which 1 in 3 women in the United States endure during their lifetime. In men, the rate is around 1 in 10. Women are also more likely to experience childhood neglect, intimate partner abuse, the sudden loss of a loved one, and harmful practices such as female's genital mutilation (FGM). The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 3 million girls undergo FGM every year. Most of whom are under the age of 15 years old. Experiencing a traumatic event leads to depression and anxiety. **Ouellet (2015)** depression and anxiety are 2-4 times more prevalent in women who have experienced intimate partner violence, on average, than in the general population. Childhood abuse is also strongly linked to depression. Exposure to chronic stress can cause stress. **Mayor (2015)** found that Spain and Canada have shown women have more chronic stress than men. They also find their stressors more threatening. As chronic stress is a risk factor of many health conditions, it is likely this plays a role in the higher rates of mental health conditions among women.

Jolly et.al. (2014) supported a nationwide study, looking at women physicians and academics found that among those with partners and children, women spent on average 8.5 hours more each week on domestic chores. Among those with partners who had full time employment, women were also more likely to take time off from their jobs to take care of children.

It is found in one caregiver stress study (2019) that women provide unofficial care to family members and others more often than men. Caring can negatively impact a person's mental and physical health caregivers have higher stress levels than those who are not caregivers and health problems than men caregivers. Research also links caregiving with a higher incidence of less sleep, depression socially isolate in women of child bearing age.

Sexual harassment refers to unwanted sexual comments or advances. Researcher found that around twice as many women experience sexual harassment as men.

During their lifetime, 81% of women and 43% of men reported at least one incident. Women with disabilities were the most likely to experience physically aggressive harassment and assault. For most people, the age they first experienced harassment was between 14-17 years old.

Friberg et.al (2017) study found that work place harassment was linked with depressive symptoms, while other studies have linked sexual harassment to symptoms of PTSD, lower quality sleep and higher rates of absent from work.

A cross-cultural study by Mayore.E (2015) found that across 48 nations, men had higher self-esteem on average than women. One explanation for this widespread influence of gender roles, stereotypes, and the emphasis on women's physical appearance in certain countries, such as U.S, low self-esteem is a risk factor of a number of mental health conditions, some of which can become serious. This includes eating disorders.

Self-esteem can be closely related to body image or how a person feels about their physical appearances. A 2019 report from the **British Charity Mental-Health Foundation** found that when it come to body image: 25 % of women and 15% of men felt shame.

40% of women and 28% of men felt anxious.

45% of women and 25% of men felt depressed. Both low self-esteem and negative body image are risk factor of eating disorders, which are more prevalent among women than men.

Conclusion:- This conceptual research paper investigated that gender inequality has serious and long lasting consequences for women and other marginalized genders. Exposure to violence objectification, discrimination and socioeconomic inequality can lead to anxiety, depression, low self-esteem and PTSD.

To bridge the gender gap in mental and physical wellbeing, EU member's states must take bold and effective steps:

- Eliminate Gender disparities
- Improve work life balance
- Strengthen mental Health services
- Boost economic empowerment support survivors of violence
- Promote Holistic well-being.
- Invest in social support networks

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