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## The Unfinished Struggle. Gender Inequality

### Abstract

Gender inequality has been a central issue in society for centuries, deeply embedded in cultural, social, economic and political structures worldwide. While progress has been made, gender disparities persist in various areas, from pay gaps and educational opportunities to leadership roles, healthcare and societal expectations. Women often face discriminations, receive lower wages for the same work, hold fewer leadership positions, and encounter social and family-level restrictions on their rights. Combating gender inequality involves promoting equality in laws, education and culture, as well as equal access to resources and opportunities for all genders.

**Keywords:** *gender inequality, cultural, social, economic, political structures*

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## Yarımçıq mübarizə. Gender bərabərsizliyi

### Xülasə

Gender bərabərsizliyi əsrlər boyu dünya miqyasında mədəni, sosial, iqtisadi və siyasi strukturlarda dərin kök salmış rahatlığın mərkəzi məsələsi olmuşdur. Tərəqqi əldə olunsa da, gender bərabərsizliyi maaş fərqləri və təhsil imkanlarından tutmuş liderlik rollarına, səhiyyə və digər sahələrdə müxtəlif sahələrdə davam edir. Qadınlar tez-tez ayrı-seçkiliklə üzləşirlər, eyni iş üçün daha az maaş alırlar, daha az rəhbər vəzifələr tutur və onların hüquqlarına dair sosial və ailə səviyyəsində məhdudiyətlərlə üzləşirlər. Gender bərabərsizliyi ilə mübarizə qanunlarda, təhsildə və mədəniyyətdə bərabərliyin təşviq edilməsini, həmçinin bütün cinslər üçün resurslara və imkanlara bərabər çıxışı nəzərdə tutur.

**Açar sözlər:** *gender bərabərsizliyi, mədəni, sosial, iqtisadi, siyasi strukturlar*

### Introduction

Gender inequality has been a central issue in society for centuries, deeply embedded in cultural, social, economic and political structures worldwide. While progress has been made, gender disparities persist in various areas, from pay gaps and educational opportunities to leadership roles, healthcare and societal expectations. Women often face discriminations, receive lower wages for the same work, hold fewer leadership positions, and encounter social and family-level restrictions on their rights. Combating gender inequality involves promoting equality in laws, education and culture, as well as equal access to resources and opportunities for all genders.

### Research

#### 1. Understanding the roots of Gender Inequality

Historical and cultural norms: Many societies have traditionally assigned different roles for men and women, often valuing men's roles as leaders, providers and protectors, more highly than women's roles as caregivers or homemakers. These norms have been passed down and reinforced across generations, creating systemic biases that limit opportunities for women (State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2021).

#### 2. Patriarchal Systems

Patriarchal structures, which prioritize male authority have historically governed most societies, placing men in control of political, social and economic institutions. This concentration of power has

perpetuated gender inequality by limiting women's access to resources, decision-making and leadership roles.

### 3. Economic Dependence

Traditionally men have always held more economic power, being the primary earners while women's contributions, such as domestic work and caregiving, have often gone unpaid and undervalued. This economic dependency has contributed to women's limited autonomy and fewer career opportunities. Globally, women are paid about 20 % less than men on average for the same work.

### 4. Educational Barriers

In many regions, girls have less access to education than boys. This stems from traditional views about gender roles, poverty and cultural practices such as early marriages. Lack of education limits women's job opportunities and economic independence, perpetuating the cycle of inequality. Education is essential in breaking the cycle of poverty and improving health outcomes for all communities, so gender disparities in education have broad social impacts (Blumberg, 2007).

### 5. Violence and Health disparities

Women face higher rates of domestic violence, sexual harassment and exploitation. These issues stem from entrenched gender norms that view men as dominant and women as subordinate. In many countries, laws addressing gender-based violence are weak, non-existent, or poorly enforced, making it difficult for victims to seek justice. Financial inequality makes it hard for victims to escape abusive situations. When women lack resources or face barriers of employment, they may feel trapped in violent relationships.

#### **Causes of Gender-based Violence are:**

1. Patriarchal Beliefs and Gender Norms.
2. Economic Dependence.
3. Cultural and Religious Justifications.
4. Legal Gaps and Weak Enforcement.

#### **Impacts of Gender-Based Violence. (GBV)**

##### Physical Health:

Women who experience GBV often suffer from physical injuries, chronic health problems, reproductive health issues and even death.

##### Mental Health

Survivors frequently experience trauma, leading to psychological issues like depression, anxiety, PTSD (flashbacks, nightmares, intrusive thoughts, intense distress, physical sensations such as pain, sweating, nausea or trembling), and suicidal ideation. The constant fear and lack of safety further exacerbate these conditions.

#### **Impacts on Families and Communities**

GBV disrupts family dynamics and can lead to cycles of violence, affecting children who witness or experience violence. Children growing up in abusive environments may be at a higher risk of experiencing or perpetuating violence themselves (Blumberg, 2008)

**Economic Impact. Loss of Productivity:** Survivors of GBV often miss work due to injury, trauma, or stigma, leading to lost wages and reduced productivity. This affects the victim's, or families' economic stability and can have ripple effect on the economy.

**Impact on Education:** GBV disproportionately affects young women and girls, often leading to disrupted education. Girls who experience violence are more likely to drop out of school, limiting their future economic opportunities and perpetuating cycles of poverty (Braslavsky, 2006).

#### **Efforts to Combat GBV**

**Criminalization of GBV:** Many nations now recognize GBV as a criminal offence and are working to improve law enforcement's response to such cases, ensuring that police are trained to handle sensitive cases appropriately.

**International treaties and Agreements:** The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms Of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Istanbul Convention (Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence) are key

international treaties that encourage states to develop comprehensive policies to combat GBV and protect victims (OECD, 2011).

**Education on Consent and Healthy Relationships:** Schools, universities and community organizations gave start implementing programs that teach about healthy relationships, gender equality, and the importance of consent. These educational efforts are essential for preventing violence and fostering more respectful attitudes toward women.

**Media Engagement:** Media campaigns, social media activism, and the involvement of public figures have played a significant role in bringing attention to GBV. Movements like "#MeToo" and "Time's up" have made it easier for survivors to come forward and demand accountability from perpetrators in various sectors, including entertainment, politics, and business (Campbell, 2010).

### **International Women's Day**

International Women's Day, celebrated on March 8-th every year, highlights the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. However, it also serves to draw attention to the ongoing challenges women face due to gender inequality.

This day aims to inspire action towards achieving gender equality by spotlighting the disparities women experience in various areas of life, such as education, employment, healthcare, and political representation (Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on guarantees of gender (men and women) equality).

#### **The Origins of International Women's Day (IWD)**

The International Women's day was first celebrated in the early 20th century, a time when women in many parts of the world had few rights. The holiday began as part of a labor movement advocating for fair treatment of working women and later expanded to address broader issues of gender inequality.

In 1908, approximately 15,000 women marched through New York City, demanding shorter hours, better pay, and voting rights. The mobilization of women inspired an international movement that ultimately led to the formal establishment of International Women's Day. The holiday was adopted by the United Nations in 1975, underscoring its global importance and recognizing the need for an annual day to focus on women's issues (Islam & Asadullah, 2018).

#### **Purpose of IWD.**

IWD was established to advocate for women's rights, including voting, education, fair wages, and protection against discrimination. It continues to highlight ongoing gender disparities in areas such as:

1. **Pay Gaps:** Women earn less than men globally for the same work.
2. **Leadership roles:** Women are underrepresented in political, business, and academic leadership.
3. **Education Gaps:** In many regions, girls have less access to education compared to boys.
4. **Gender-Based Violence:** A significant barrier to equality.

#### **Advocacy and Awareness.**

The day mobilizes individuals, organizations, and governments to take action against inequality through campaigns like:

Promoting actionable equality.

UN Women Initiatives: Addressing barriers to gender parity in health, work, and leadership.

Global impact.

IWD also brings attention to intersectional inequality—where gender intersects with race, class, and other identities to exacerbate challenges. It highlights regional challenges, such as:

Developed Nations: Focus on closing wage gaps and improving work-life balance.

Developing Nations: Addressing child marriage, education gaps, and maternal health.

Actionable Goals.

IWD serves as a reminder for governments and organizations to prioritize gender equality, aligning with global frameworks like UN Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Gender Equality) (Durrani, 2008)

## Great Achievements

Billie Eilish (Musician and Songwriter, USA)

Achievement: At a young age, Billie became a global music sensation, winning multiple Grammy Awards (7 Grammys), including Album of the Year, and becoming an advocate for mental health and body positivity.

Gender Inequality Context: In a male-dominated music industry, Billie has faced scrutiny over her image, clothing, and choices but continues to challenge societal standards by promoting self-expression and rejecting objectification.

Bertha Benz.

The first person to ride a car in history was Carl Benz's wife Bertha Benz. In August 1888, Bertha made history by taking the world's very first long-distance car trip in her husband's invention, the Benz Patent-Motorwagen.

Serena Williams (Tennis Champion, USA)

Achievement: One of the greatest athletes in tennis history, with 23 Grand Slam titles.

Gender Inequality Context: Serena has faced discrimination in terms of pay, sponsorships, and racial and gender biases, yet continues to advocate for equality in sports (Sadker & Zittleman, 2007).

Marie Curie (Scientist, Poland/France)

Achievement: The first woman to win a Nobel Prize and the only person to win in two sciences (Physics and Chemistry).

Gender Inequality Context: She broke barriers in male-dominated field, facing exclusion and funding challenges, yet advanced scientific research in radioactivity.

Emma Watson (Actress and Activist, UK)

Achievement: Known for her role as Hermione Granger in the Harry Potter series, Emma Watson has grown into leading voice for gender inequality through her activism.

Gender Inequality Context: Emma became a UN Women Goodwill Ambassador in 2014 and launched the "HeForShe" campaign, which calls on men to support gender equality. She has consistently used her platform to address issues like gender pay gap, sexism in Hollywood, and barriers to education for girls globally.

Why She Matters Today:

Emma resonates with our generation because she balances fame with purpose, blending her work in entertainment with passion for activism. Her speeches, including her impactful address at the UN, inspire young people to challenge gender stereotypes and advocate for equality in their own communities (Lynch, Modgil, & Modgil, 1992).

Wangari Maathai (Environmental Activist, Kenya)

Achievement: The first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize for her work in environmental conservation and women's empowerment.

Gender Inequality Context: She faced resistance from male-dominated political systems but championed the Green Belt Movement, empowering women through tree planting.

## Gender Inequality in Azerbaijan

While Azerbaijan has made progress in addressing gender inequality challenges persist in areas such as employment, political representation, and combating gender-based violence. Below are key aspects of the issue, with examples of prominent women who have worked to address these challenges.

1. Employment Disparities: Women in Azerbaijan often face gender pay gap and are underrepresented in high-paying industries. Traditional societal norms sometimes limit women's participation in the workforce, particularly in rural areas.

Prominent Example: Leyla Aliyeva, Vice-President of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, has initiated programs in rural communities, promoting access to education and entrepreneurship (Heslop, 2016).

2. Political Representation: Women hold a limited number of seats in Azerbaijan's parliament and government positions. Despite laws promoting gender equality, cultural barriers restrict women's involvement in decision-making roles.

Prominent Example: Elmira Gafarova (1928-1993), a prominent Azerbaijani politician, was the first woman to chair Azerbaijan's Supreme Soviet. She broke significant barriers for women in politics during the Soviet era.

3. Gender-Based Violence: Gender-based violence remains a critical issue, with many cases underreported due to stigma and lack of legal protection. Efforts to address domestic violence and empower victims are ongoing.

Prominent Example: Mehriban Zeynalova, women's rights activist and head of the NGO "Clean World" has been the forefront of supporting victims of domestic violence and advocating for stronger protections.

4. Cultural and Educational Barriers: While women in Azerbaijan have access to education, traditional roles can limit their opportunities to pursue higher education or careers. This is especially evident in rural regions.

Prominent Example: Khadija Ismayilova, an investigative journalist, has used her platform to expose corruption and promote social justice, inspiring young women to challenge societal norms and pursue careers in journalism and activism.

### Conclusion

Gender inequality is not just a women's issue; it is a societal problem that hinders progress, innovation, and justice. True equality benefits everyone by fostering more inclusive economies, balanced leadership, and healthier communities and relationships. Addressing this issue requires collective efforts to challenge stereotypes, reform policies, and ensure equal opportunities for all genders.

Only through sustained action and commitment we can create a world where everyone, regardless of gender, can reach their full potential. Finally, we must understand that both genders are equal, without one the other would not exist.

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