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**QUESTION**

1. Is Gender Relations changing in the 21st century? What are the areas of change and the factors driving the change?

**INTRODUCTION**

The nature of gender relations is not easy to understand in its full complexity as its broad scope as the relations of power between women and men varies from century to century. Relations among men and women are in ideas and representations, division of labor, marginalization, the ascribing to women and men of different abilities, attitudes, desires, personality traits, behavior patterns, and so on. Relations between the male gender and the female gender has been totally unfair especially during the early centuries as the female gender was always perceived as weak and less than the male gender .

In early centuries, the look for the equal relationship between both genders have been long fought and struggle by various individuals in the world to bring to limelight the ill management of the feminine gender

The female gender is the singular victim of this uneven treatment. All along this lived centuries and up to present times, the feminine gender has felt the heat of this dealing. The relations between and amongst both gender has been highly unequal due to many factors arising from majorly the society as the society plays the biggest role in the unequal relations and treatment just because one bears the femininity characteristics. This is arising from the societal construction in the minds from the day of birth such as blue color for boys and pink color for girls, boys should not cry, females are born for the home, females are assigned private works, this leads to other forms such as gender marginalization, gender roles, stereotypes, and so on.

**DEFINITION OF TERMS**

**Gender**: gender is socially constructed and classified. Gender refers to social definition of what it means to be a man or a woman in the society. It is the social relations between women and men, girls and boys defined by cultural values and norms.

**Gender Relations**: can be defined as the relations between men and women, both perceptual and material’ It is not determined biologically as a result of sexual characteristics of either women or men but is constructed socially.

GENDER RELATIONS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Sometimes it can be disheartening to think of the male-female relations and the inequalities that still exist in society; at other times it’s easy to pretend that women are triumphing because they’ve made a place for themselves in the business world, and proved their successful independence in the 21st century.

21st century gender relations have taken a twist in relations as the world is now developing and having progress as the both genders have acquired an equal call and status in the society as not majorly equal but to a certain level of achievement and equality. Gender relations are taking turns and are more fairly and equally than in the early centuries although there is still much progress to be made.

In the 21st century gender, the roles of women are still developing and changing, depending on need, circumstance and personal choice. Men and women both are establishing their roles within the twenty-first century society. And there are many men who demonstrate just how far the male-female relationship has developed and how it can work and be equal.

In addition to, Even the bureaucracy of gender is changing. Washington, DC and the state of Oregon now offer a non-binary gender option on their [driver's licenses](http://www.cnn.com/2017/06/27/health/washington-gender-neutral-drivers-license/index.html), and New York has [proposed](http://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/lawmakers-new-york-d-c-propose-third-sex-driver-s-n774741) similar legislation. Instead of M for male or F for female, these policies allow drivers to choose X for "unspecified."

The gender relations has been promoted in aspects such as gender marginalization, women suffrage, right to property, right to freedom of speech, discrimination, in work, equal work for equal pay, rape, marital rape, underage marriage, prostitution, genital mutilation, male rape, forced marriage, glass ceiling positions, women in politics, gender roles, stereotypes and prejudices, right to divorce, female education, sexism, and so on and so forth. Gender relations in the 21st century have become a lot better than in the early centuries. We have areas of change making the world a better place and putting in place a better relationship between the two genders to promote and ensure development as well as peace and stability.

**AREAS OF CHANGE IN THE 21ST CENTURY AND GENDER RELATIONS**

**Gender roles**

Gender role is the behaviors, attitudes, values and beliefs that a particular cultural group considers appropriate for males and females on the basis of their biological sex. Thus, roles are assigned based on one’s sex. In early relations, the female gender was left and assigned only roles in the private sector such as catering for children and the elderly, cooking, giving birth, nurturing the children, inferior to men while men were assigned public sectors such as bread winner, taking decision for everyone in the family, head of the family, superior to women and so on.

The 21st century demonstrates equal participation of both genders in different activities as compared to early centuries that kept women behind by being responsible for domestic chores. In the 21st century, gender roles in communities changed lately whereby women now play equal role as men in owning lead large companies, very active in their families and communities, own personal businesses, manage big organizations, head political groups, earn higher academic degrees from all sectors equal to men, to mention but few as compared to early centuries. Both genders actively attend sporting events; go to bars and all other outdoor activities that were dominated by men alone.

**Women suffrage**

With the rise of feminism in the 19th century, one of the major forms of discrimination they were fighting for was the right of women to vote as men do. The relations of men and women in the voting process were very poor all over the world in the 19th century. The coming of feminist and women activist such as Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and many others gave the fight for the adoption of women suffrage. The woman suffrage movement actually began in 1848, when a women’s rights convention was held in Seneca Falls, New York. The first country to accept women’s suffrage is Finland in 1906 and lastly was in Switzerland in 1974

In the 21st century women’s suffrage is not a problem in any area of the world. In the 21st century hardly is there any country that does not accept or exercise women’s suffrage. The quest against the voting of women has been conquered.

**Female Education**

Gender relations in education over the past 15 years have recorded immense growth. Women like [Emma Hart Willard,](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=1Q1NQf-FgCAC&printsec=frontcover&dq=history+of+women%27s+higher+education&hl=en&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=willard%20plan&f=false) Judith Sargent Murray were among the first women in world history to fight for women education (a form of women empowerment). The distance level of the girls in school relating to the level of boys in school has been able to be met although not completely. With assistance from the National governments and the international community, they have followed through on promises made in various international forums to increase investments in girls’ education and succeeded in merging the gap.

As research will prove that in almost all the countries of the world in the 21st century, the female gender has at least the privilege of attaining primary education. At this rate and this level of achievement much can be said for the future yet to come. In the 21st century, over all female enrollments at the primary level in low-income countries has accordingly grown from 87 percent in 1990 to 94 percent in 2004, considerably shrinking the gender gap.

**Glass ceiling positions**

The term ‘glass ceiling’ was initially used to refer to women who could not break through a certain threshold when attempting to advance in their careers. The glass ceiling was brought to limelight in the 21st century, as the issue of women not being able to occupy top managerial positions was not seen as a major problem as far as the first fight was to allow women to work then the note women in top position arose, as It is counted as an area of change, as the world develops so should we

In the 21st century there are different women in top managerial position, from political organizations to economic to social and are making efforts to give rise to other women also. As we currently and past have women as presidents, prime ministers, women in parliaments, women leading organizations as CEO’s, managers and so on.

**Political affiliation:** Traditionally, women representation is seen as coming from and ‘being active’ more within parties with left or social-democratic political orientation. The struggle for women to have equal play in politics as the men has been on-going since the 1960’s.

However in the 21st century, there has been a challenge to this view and has shown that women not only take part in politics of the right, but they even occupy leadership posts in parties with extreme right views. The political position of women today is better than just 20 years ago. There is mass improvement in gender equality in every region of the world. Women are in more positions of political power, are more represented in the political sphere, have higher access to education and less barriers to civil society participation. In 1997, only 3 per cent of countries had a lower chamber legislature made up of more than 30 per cent women; in 2017, this had risen to 28 per cent of countries (Trends in the GSOD Indices Gender Equality subcomponent).

**Others:** we have dress codesas However in the 21st century, the trousers are worn by both genders. Women dress on trousers, shirts and neck-ties like men while men as well take part in women dresses, skirts and blouse though not widely in public, marriage proposals as but in the 21st Century, women are stepping up by proposing to men as they get down on their knees, also the change at work

**FACTORS DRIVING THE CHANGE IN 21ST CENTURY AND GENDER RELATIONS**

**1. Feminists**: Feminism has to do with the belief in the need to secure rights and opportunities for women equal to those of men. Feminists are those that are committed to pursuing these goals, they seek to find the direct source causing poor gender relations and inequality. Feminism is also a movement for women’s rights. . The word feminism originated in France in the early 1900s as parts of the efforts to expand women’s political rights. The women who first identified themselves as feminists in the early twentieth century believed in required changes in the relations between women and men.

In the 21st century,

**2. Response by the international community:** the world took the issue of gender inequality and poor gender relations and took world actions and contributions to counter this problem. Measures such as the forming of international organizations mainly for women, days set aside for the awareness of the female gender, goals setting and achievement and so on.

-International organizations

International organizations have been the biggest enabler and source of aid to the level of balance of equality in relations among and between boys and girls. The efforts by international organizations are recognized throughout the world.

We have major international organizations such:

* Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), as the principal global policy-making body dedicated exclusively to gender equality and advancement of women.
* United Nations Women (UN Women) under which have: UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues, and the UN International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women.
* Raising awareness by creating special days.

There have been an effort not only in the assisting of this aid or in fostering inequalities but have been days set aside to recognize and raise awareness to celebrate all women around the world. Or recognize and remember the efforts of women of both past and present in the struggle for the female gender.

* We have days like the United Nations Decade for Women “international women’s day” which is every decade celebrated on ‘March 8th’
* International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on November 25th
* Set goals: At the turn of the 21st century, during the year 2000 World Summit in New York, the UN came up with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and in the 2015 World Summit the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
* SDG’s- goal 5 of the SDG’s is targeted at the achievement of gender equality and women empowerment.
* MDG’s- in the MDG, goal 3 is centered on promotion of gender equality and women empowerment.

**3. Conferences:** the coming together of the word world to tackle the problem of gender inequality lead to the calling of conferences for the sharing and the marking of ideas and contributions to see that there is an end to poor gender relations. We have conferences such as:

* 1993 UN’s World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna.
* The 1995 Beijing Conference was the Fourth World Conference on Women was held in Beijing, China in September 1995(model of gender mainstreaming).

**4. Campaigns**: campaigns for women in all areas of empowerment

* HeForShe - stand in solidarity with women to create a bold, visible and united force for a gender equal world
* #Fearless girl- campaign to inform people that companies with women in top positions perform better financially.
* #Dream crazier- just how strong women can be when they believe in themselves
* #Real beauties- Body confidence of all kinds of women
* #This girl can- target women from lower incomes to inspire girls to move and be physically active, kick at stereotypes.
* The #metoo movement- fight against sexual harassment and access to justice.

In conclusion, the gender relations has recorded much success than the early centuries although there is still a lot of progress that have to be made to promote this relations the bring the world of both genders to an equal stand and equal relations and with the help from international organizations who are the major contributors to this aim that has been set, others such as goals, campaigns, enlightenment programs, conference, and so on, it is with strong hope to say we can promote gender relations further than what we have now.

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