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2. Is Gender Relations Changing in the 21st Century? What are the Areas of Change and Factors Driving the Change?

Gender is a state of being a male or female. In most cases, it's typically defined with reference to social and cultural differences rather than biological differences. Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) defines it as '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. It is a central organizing principle of societies and often governs the processes of production and reproduction, consumption and distribution'. Despite all the above definitions, Gender is often misunderstood as being the promotion of women. It therefore implies in the above definitions that the relationship between men and women, their roles and responsibilities, control and access to resources, involvement in labour market, interests and needs. While gender relations refer to relations between men and women that are socially determined by culture, religion, or socially acceptable ways of thinking or being.

In the current generation of 21st Century, gender is often misunderstood as promotion of women who have taken more active role in different sectors and careers despite some traditions still hold women inferior in their society like numerous cases reported in Indian cultures women still come from traditional strict households, they have accepted their roles and feel comfortable in their decisions or lack thereof. Feminist movement gained momentum in the 1960's and 70's in the United States together with other Human Right groups that advocated for equal rights among all genders in recent centuries after observing women gender being domesticated by cultural norms, religious believes, traditional marginalization yet for the few women who were out speaking role models showed great hope. 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. 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. Gender being a central organizing principle of society in social construction which governs the process of production, reproduction where consumption and distribution are elements in that setting, gender has remained a critical and major focus of society despite equal rights. Young genders both males and females are groomed up with knowledge of man being head of family. Religions across all denominations still hold believe of man being a superior being from woman gender. This naturally has left a gap between the two genders where by man still carries weight of being the head of the household though women headed families also perform equal roles but the family still remains incomplete without a man due to title, security, and other duties that women can't perform. However, there are areas of changes of gender relations in this 21st century, which includes;

Marriage Proposals

Marriage proposal in early centuries, men typically propose to women which was traditionally their role but in the 21st Century, women are stepping up by proposing to men as they get down on their knees. They have boldly come out elaborating men initiative proposals that can't wait any longer for men to propose. Sometimes cultures term them as taboo breakers who boldly ask their future husbands to be hand in marriage. Men traditionally take head the process of proposing for marriage but this has changed in the 21st century where women now take bold action in dating and propose for marriage. This has left some traditional cultures thinking of women proposing as prostitutes desperate for marriage. Men take lead in proposing for marriage but when woman proposes, man shies off in fear of mockery and insults from fellow men or woman might be having HIV/AIDS as to why she boldly took men role of proposing for marriage and men prefer traditional marriage proposals or weddings. This happens in rural villages. However, today's women can propose for marriage, more women are

proposing than ever before. Some are giving men engagement rings.

Dress Code

Culturally dress code for men and women are defined by norms and expectations that relate to an understanding to tell difference between man and woman. The dress has the most direct contact with the human body and is therefore considered an integral part of the self. Clothes influence and shape the appearance with significant impact on the construction of social identity. Dress codes differ from culture to culture, religion to religion, tribe to tribe, some people use different dress code for different settings for different gender (marriage parties, church/mosque, offices, etc.) for example the easiest identified dress code is men put on trousers and shirts while women put on skirts and blouses. 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. This has been associated with gay proactive men. Meanwhile Brighton College in Britain is the first school to scrap uniform policy so all children can wear skirts or trousers (Mirror online by Steve Robson. January 20th 2016). In Islam women are required to wear modest forms of attire which covers from head to toe. Therefore all this depends on the traditional cultural environment either in rural or urban though in most urban settings adapt any kind of dress code. In other words the world of clothing is changing as new cultural influences meet technological innovations.

Work

Traditionally, both genders have different roles and responsibilities whereby men were considered responsible for taking care of the family financially; guiding the family while listening to their spouse though they make final decisions while women are to take care of children and household duties. During the 20th – 21st centuries, there strengthened Gender inequalities in all areas that are rooted in social structures but also in attitudes, said Professor Gillian Robinson, of the University of Ulster. Many arguments have shown imbalance at work. Others defend men to be more burdened while others argue that women are more burdened with daily chores such as laundry, cleaning,

cooking food, shopping, looking after sick relatives and carrying out repairs while men only show significant contribution by other services of mending faulty items around the house. Both genders to some extent perform equal domestic duties though tradition still holds in some societies.

In the factors of multiple drivers of change in gender relations, they are based either on the evidence on gender norm change or on long-term observation of change in gender norms in particular communities. Reflecting the fact that it is usually multiple factors that drive change in gender relations simultaneously, and they often interact. The most significant drivers of change vary considerably between contexts and over time, but economic change, education and exposure to new ideas via the media or other communication processes are particularly common. Drivers of change with respect to masculinity, and find similar forces have driven changes in expectations of men's and boys' roles and behaviour as have driven changes in the expectations of women and girls. They highlight the ways norms of male behaviour are strongly shaped by the expectation of differently positioned female actors. The significance of different drivers of change is in different contexts. It is highlighted the importance of economic change, and, in the case of South Korea, urbanization and greater freedom to act outside prescribed models of social behaviour in urban areas. It is also suggested exposure to new ideas through migration and increased access to media has played an important role in leading change, and locates change within the broader context of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, migration and the process of independent state formation, which in Zimbabwe involved armed struggle. The role of education is as a driver of change, although, ironically, increased investment in girls' education is not necessarily driven by empowerment goals, but by the perceived demands of marriage markets. The changing nature of marriage is also a factor of change and, although they do not focus specifically on child marriage issues, are helpful for understanding the broader processes that change the contexts in which decisions about adolescent girls' marriages are made. There are some of the main factors statistically associated with egalitarian gender norms, such as education and income or wealth, although this is not

a linear relationship, with the most egalitarian attitudes globally among the middle class.

Globalization and economic change is also a major factor driving the change of gender relations. The World Development Report summarizes the growing body of evidence on the relationship between women's economic activity and empowerment, much of it based on women's involvement in formal sector manufacturing in South and South East Asia and on analysis of women's involvement in export-oriented agriculture. Markets can affect private household decisions, even with slow-moving social norms.' Greater economic opportunities for women and girls can also promote women's exercise of agency by broadening their networks from mostly kin-related networks and thus expanding their sources of information and support. The increased physical mobility that often comes with employment puts women in contact with a new set of individuals at work and in other places. This, in turn, contributes to changing gender relations. However, where information flows associated with globalization are perceived as leading to pressure to adopt 'western' social relations.

Technological change is a driving factor of change; the implications of technological change for gender relations its impacts on economic opportunities and its impacts on exposure to information. There is some evidence of expanding opportunities in the information and communication technology (ICT) sector in leading to greater investment in girls' education and changing norms about unmarried and married women's employment outside the home. Evidence from Brazil and India also indicates changes in gender norms (concerning fertility, gender-based violence and mobility) related to exposure to cable television.

Public investment; this is a strong case for public investment in health, education and water and sanitation as a route towards gender equality. For example, expanding access to secondary schooling has helped shift norms in favour of both boys' and girls' attendance. Education is strongly associated with greater decision-making power. 'In South Asia and the Middle East and North Africa, women with more education are not as likely to have to ask their husbands or family for permission to seek medical care. Education gives them more freedom than earnings.'

Lastly, urbanization and demographic change are important factors. For example, in South Korea the formally most skewed sex ratio in Asia has now normalized, largely as a result of a change in social values associated with urbanization.

References

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