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# LITERARY FINDINGS

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## Women Harassment in India

July 2023  
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# LFS

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### **WOMEN HARRESMENT**

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## **GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN CONTEXT OF U.P.**

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### **Abstract**

*This study reveal about the perception of women in discrimination in various aspects in a male dominated society. The study was based on a descriptive study based on sample survey. The total 200 women were selected randomly for this study. This study shows that there is a discrimination against women in various aspects. Women are aware of discrimination in the societal and household aspects. They perceive that there is more discrimination in societal level as compared to household level. Married women perceive that more discrimination in mobility, property, freedom, occupation and education. Similarly, unmarried women perceive more discrimination in mobility and way of behaving. They consider gender and customary practices as major factors for discrimination.*

### **Introduction**

The meaning of discrimination treating some people differently from others. It is an unfavorable treatment to anyone based on sex, race and so on. It is considered as a barrier for the achievement of equality, development and freedom. Discrimination is recognized as a form of inequality and issue for women around the world. It affects the capacity of women to participate freely and fully in society and in turns bring psychological harmful consequences. Half of the population of the world consists of women, whose large number of women is discriminated in different phase of life directly or indirectly, though there are some difference in each country, religion, society and ethnicity.

Gender Discrimination in the world can be seen in different religions, countries and communities. As told by Waltke, ancient jewish prayed everyone by saying that "Thank you Lord that I was not born women, Christian boys are taken to the special room but the girls are not during the name giving ceremony: women are not supposed to be priest or father in temples and church. The situation of the gender discrimination has been worsened with the development of science and technology as it predicts the sex of a fetus before it turns to a baby. In 1978 and 1983, seventy eight thousands of fetuses were aborted in Mumbai, as they were known as female fetus.

Discriminating against women in U.P. is related to the traditional culture and deeply rooted in society that establishes the hierarchical relationship between male and female. Discrimination has been a cultural tradition that is accepted by women and applied by men as social value. U.P. is a religious and male dominated society where women are considered as secondary to men. Preference of son birth is more common in every community. Gender based discrimination in different forms starts right after the birth and it continues throughout the life cycles. There are different sets of behavior for boys and girls to perform. Such



discrimination has helped to establish the hierarchical relationship between men and women in the society and also helped to create many rigid gender norms that restrict women's opportunities and stifle their development in the private and public sphere.

Scholars have reported different types of discrimination against women and it is different according to ethnicity. Brahmin and Chhetri are considered most vulnerable group as they often practice early age marriage. The girls from Brahmins and Chhetri families are forced to get marry at early age without their consent. Similarly, women are not allowed to move and talk freely which sometimes turns into violent. It was reported that women was beaten and tortured domestically in their houses for raising their voice.

Educational discrimination is also seen between males and females in U.P. Adult literacy and average schooling years of women in U.P. is very low comparing to men. People often think about that there is no need of education for women. In report of Pandey (2006), it clearly explained that more women's against men's attitude towards the need of education for girls is negative that resulted higher percentage of boys got the opportunity to study in boarding schools against the girls. Women in some communities, especially in madheshi still thinks that girls need to spend time for household chores after marriage and do not prefer to send girl child for higher education. Some women in madheshi community got the opportunity for higher education and job as well but they could not continue it after marriage since there was pressure from the husband and mother-in-law to quit the job as they need to move and interact with different people.

Discrimination in decision making for family, property right in the form of less expense in education, food and health care for girl child than boys in old practices in rural areas. Women in rural areas are considered as relatively uneducated and rarely involved in formal meetings and planning phase. Women are discriminated to make decisions in formal meetings and also to involve in political participation due to illiteracy. Women are excluded in planning and decision making process of the community forestry due to lack of education and awareness. Besides education, workloads also make women less available in attended meetings. Household responsibilities make women less available for the extra meeting or social events where information is exchanged.

The main objective of the paper is to document the perceived discrimination practices in U.P. male dominated society. Moreover, the study attempts to see the differences in the perception of married and unmarried women in the discrimination and also explain the factors responsible for it in various aspects.

### **Methodology of Study**

The study was undertaken in Kamla Nagar of Agra District. The total population of the Kamla Nagar is 7,516 with diverse ethnic group such as Brahmin, Shatriya, Baniya, and Thakur. Over-three fourth of the total population is literate in the Kamla Nagar.

The study is designed as descriptive study based on sample survey. The main purpose of the study is to document the existing discrimination practices in U.P. male dominated society as perceived by women and also identify the factors responsible for discrimination. Women were categorized into two categories: married and unmarried. An interview schedule



was conducted with the total of 200 women who were selected randomly (100 from each category). The woman with the age of 17 years or older were considered as respondent for this study.

A set of close-ended questionnaire was developed as an instrument for this study. The questionnaire consists of two parts. First part consists of general information such as age, caste and education and second part consists about practice of discrimination. The questionnaire was administered by visiting house to house. In some cases, more than one interview also conducted separately at the same household where the criteria for the respondents were met.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **Demographic characteristics of Respondents**

The breakdown of the survey population was 50% married and 50% unmarried since women's status in terms of marriage changes their role to perform also changes. Ethnically, one-half of the survey population was Brahmin and the remaining was (50%) was Baniya. The age of the respondents ranged from 18 to 70 years with an average age of 28.46. Over one-fifths (23.5%) of the survey population were illiterate, 4.5% literate, and 72% received formal education. Among the respondents who received formal education, over one-half (53%) attended high school and higher secondary level, followed by bachelor level and above (27%) and upto class eight (20%). Regarding occupation, about one-half (45.5%) of the respondents were housewife, followed by students (39.5%), job holders (6.5%), wage labors and maid (3.5%) and the remaining (5%) was engaged in other occupation.

### **PERCEPTION OF DISCRIMINATION**

In order to make the respondents to understand the meaning of discrimination, it was explained as "any type of restriction that might be in the name of teaching, love or protection." Such explanation helped the respondents to understand the meaning of discrimination and responded the questionnaire accordingly. Respondents were simply asked if they have felt or heard the discrimination practises in the society. Overwhelmingly (90%), the respondents were aware of the prevalent societal discrimination whereas their perception of discrimination at the household level varies. Over one-third (36%) of married and over one-fifth (21%) of unmarried respondents felt the discrimination at the household level, respectively. It shows that the married women perceived the discrimination relatively more at the household level comparing to unmarried women. It is said that married women feel more discrimination at home comparing to unmarried women since woman requires performing more gender based works once she gets married. Similarly, as daughter-in-law she gets different treatments such as she cannot take meal until she serves meal to all family members.

When asked for what they feel discrimination at household level, about one half (47.5%) of the respondent expressed that they feel discrimination in mobility. They also expressed that they feel discrimination in education (29%), marriage time (29%), choice of partner (28%), and way of behavior (21%). When compare between married and unmarried, it appears that married women feel more discrimination in education, property, occupation, food, marriage time and choice of partner. Married women generally are busy with household



chores and do not get time to study. Similarly, only son inherits the parental properties in a U.P. culture as a result, men are found to be a owner of the property rather than a women. There is a practice in U.P. society that daughter-in-law should take meal after serving meal to all family members which means she should eat the leftover food. In a U.P. society, there is practices of arrange marriage; girl rarely gets opportunity to chose life partner and marriage time. Such possible reason made married women to feel more discrimination in education, property, food, marriage time and choice of partner.

Similarly, unmarried women feel more discrimination in the way of behaving comparing to married women. One possible reason could be that elder married women fully accept the gender role defined by the society due to lack of opportunity available for them in education and communication as well. There is an increasing trend sending girl to school those facilities in getting delay marriage allowing them to stay longer time a parental home. Once the girls are exposed to education they compare the treatment or behavior offered by the parents to them and their brothers. There is a tradition to behave the girls differently than the boys. Generally, boys get favor from the parents than the girls. Such practice may have made unmarried women to feel more discrimination in the way of behaving.

This study reveals that the majority of women and unmarried women feel discrimination at home in mobility. It was interesting to note that one of the unmarried women mentioned during the interview that discrimination in mobility has affected her education as she is not allowed to go neither far nor in evening time although the parents are positive in her education. She furthered mentioned that such restriction is not applicable to her brothers. The respondents indicated that they feel discrimination in quality education as well since the parents send girls to school or college similar to boys but pay the additional expenses only for the brothers if it is required for extra educational activities. Similarly, it was also mentioned that the girls are not allowed to choose the subjects that are costly and also required to go far from home. It was remarkable to note that a couple of respondents felt discrimination in interaction with boys. They said that they are not allowed to interact with boys alone. The married woman felt discrimination more in marriage time and choice of partner comparing to unmarried women.

## **RESPONSIBLE FACTORS FOR DISCRIMINATION**

The study analyzes the perceived factors responsible for discrimination. The study considers gender and customary practices as main factors responsible for discrimination. The discrimination in various aspects was analyzed along with the perceive responsible factors. Over one-half (53%) of the respondent indicated that mobility is one of the aspects they feel discrimination and consider male as responsible for it. As a male dominated society, male often considered themselves as superior than women and put restriction to women. Generally, women are not allowed to move freely in the name of protection. There is also a tendency of males as husband they want women as wife to stay at home and offer their services for them. During the interview, one of the respondents indicated that her husband does not allowed her to move freely since he is older than her and thinks she may leave him if he allows her to move freely. Two-thirds of the respondents consider male as responsible for discrimination in



education. They also consider male as responsible for discrimination in property, occupation and allowances.

Married women consider male as responsible for discrimination as allowances, occupation, mobility and property. They further consider male, particularly father-in-law and husband responsible for discrimination when they asked about the marital home. It also shows that over two-third of the married women considers women, particularly mother-in-law responsible for discrimination in food, way of behaving, and others such as interaction with boys. Similarly, married women consider both female and male responsible for - discrimination in choice of partner, marriage time and education. A few of married women also consider customary practice as responsible for discrimination in education and property.

This study reveals that the factors responsible for discrimination as perceived by unmarried women. The unmarried women consider male and female are main responsible for discrimination. A very few unmarried women consider customary practices as responsible factor for discrimination. One-half of the survey population of unmarried women feels male as responsible for discrimination in property, occupation and allowances. Similarly, they feel women as responsible for discrimination in way of behavior, marriage time, and mobility. Over one-half of the unmarried women think both male and female is equally responsible discrimination in choice of partner.

## **Results**

Gender discrimination in U.P. is deeply rooted in traditional culture and societal hierarchy. This study uncovers various forms of discrimination starting from birth and continuing throughout life. Discrimination is observed in education, where women receive less support, and in decision-making, where women's involvement is limited due to illiteracy. Furthermore, discrimination affects property rights, workloads, and political participation. Education and employment opportunities are often curtailed for women, particularly after marriage.

The study differentiates perceptions between married and unmarried women, with married women perceiving more discrimination in property, occupation, and education. Mobility restrictions, prevalent in U.P., are felt by both groups. Discrimination is attributed to gender biases and customary practices within families.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study findings show that societal discrimination exists in the society. Women are aware of discrimination practices at home and society as well. They perceive more discrimination practices at the societal level comparing to household level. Societal discrimination is often highlighted by media and it becomes as issue for debate at the national level. The debates are often discussed even in an informal chat when they meet each other. Such informal chat facilities to disseminate the issues widely in rural areas making women relatively more aware of societal discrimination. Similarly, there is a tendency of women to perceive the things culturally at the household level and do not consider the restriction as discrimination.

The study revealed different types of discrimination practices at the household level. Women perceive discrimination in various aspects such as property, education and mobility. The study findings suggest that the perception of discrimination varies between married and unmarried women. The married women feel more discrimination in property, occupation and education comparing to unmarried women. It is believed property, occupation and education help an individual to become an independent in a society. Women feel more discrimination in property, occupation and education since lacking of such things makes them dependent in the society. Most of both married and unmarried woman feel the discrimination in mobility, as there is a culture of not allowing women to move freely in the name of protection.

Women consider gender and customary practices are main factors responsible for discrimination. They perceive different members of the family such as father, husband and mother-in-law are responsible for discrimination. To some extent women themselves were found to be responsible for discrimination as they perceive the things culturally and perform it accordingly accepting the gender based responsibilities without considering it as discrimination.

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