

# Types of Gender Inequality

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**Abstract-** This paper examines the effects of gender inequality on prospects of cooperation and environmental sustainability. Gender inequality is a form of inequality that is interactive with but distinct from other forms of economic and social inequalities. It dwells not only outside the household but also centrally within it. It stems not only from pre-existing differences in economic endowments between women and men, but also from preexisting gendered social norms and social perceptions, that is, the inequality is also ideologically embedded. And it not only pre-exists in the noted forms, but can also arise from newly-defined rules and procedures that structure the functioning of the governance institution itself. All three dimensions of gender inequality can impinge on prospects for cooperation and efficient local commons management; and all are largely neglected in collective action literature on the commons. The paper also distinguishes between voluntary and non-voluntary cooperation arguing that cooperation need not always be a voluntary act. Cooperation may appear to exist despite inequalities and conflicts of interest within a community, because it is imposed by some on others through the exercise of social and/or economic power. The paper analyses how these different aspects of gender inequality can impinge on collective action and the form it takes (voluntary or non-voluntary), and the likely outcomes for environmental sustainability. It does so by analyse the experience of community forest management across India, drawing also on the author's recent field data from western India. In addition, based on the latter, it empirically tests the effects on rule formulation and forest quality of women's greater inclusion in the decision-making process of local commons governance.

**Keywords:** Gender inequality, cooperation, environmental sustainability, community forestry, India.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Gender inequality refers to the unfair treatment or unequal opportunities given to individuals based on their gender. It is a social issue that has existed for

centuries and continues to affect various aspects of life, including education, employment, politics, health, and personal freedoms. Traditionally, women and girls have been the most affected, facing discrimination, limited access to resources, and social expectations that restrict their potential.

In many societies, gender inequality is rooted in cultural norms, patriarchal systems, and historical biases that favour men over women. However, gender inequality does not only harm women—it also affects men and society as a whole by limiting diversity, innovation, and social progress.

Today, governments, organizations, and communities around the world are working to promote gender equality, which aims to ensure that everyone—regardless of gender—has equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities. Education, awareness, legal reforms, and empowerment programs play a key role in reducing gender disparities and building a fairer, more inclusive world. Gender inequality, in relation to other forms of inequality such as class, caste, or race, has some distinct characteristics. One, gender inequality dwells not only outside the household but also centrally within it. Mainstream economic theory has long treated the household as a unitary entity wherein resources and incomes are pooled, and household members share common interests and preferences (Samuelson, 1956), or an altruistic head ensures equitable allocations of goods and tasks (Becker, 1965, 1981). Most collective action literature is no exception in its assumptions about the household. In studying the effect of inequalities on cooperation in the management of common pool resources (CPRs), for instance, the inequalities recognized stem entirely from household level heterogeneity in say wealth (or class), ethnicity, or caste. Typically, these alone are treated as

potentially embodying a conflict of interest,<sup>1</sup> while intra-household inequalities are ignored. In recent years, however, virtually every assumption of the unitary model has been challenged effectively on the basis of empirical evidence, including assumptions of shared preferences and interests, pooled incomes, and altruism as the guiding principle of intrahousehold allocations.<sup>2</sup> Gender, in particular, is noted to be an important signifier of differences in interests and preferences, incomes are not necessarily pooled, self-interest as much within the home as in the marketplace, with bargaining power affecting the allocation of who gets what and who does what.

II. TYPES OF GENDER INEQUALITY

1] EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITY-

Education is a fundamental right, yet many girls and women around the world still face barriers to accessing quality education.

- Causes: Poverty, cultural norms, early marriage, preference for boys’ education, and lack of school infrastructure (like sanitation facilities for girls).
- Impact: Limits women’s job opportunities, economic independence, and participation in decision-making roles.
- Example: In some developing countries, literacy rates among women are significantly lower than those of men.

**Gender Inequality in Education (2024–2025)**

Indicator	2024	2025	Observation
Global female literacy rate	83%	84%	Slight improvement; gap narrowing
Female primary school enrolment	90%	92%	Increase due to awareness
Female secondary school completion	68%	70%	Gradual rise; still below male (76%)
Female tertiary education enrolment	45%	47%	More women in higher education
Women in education leadership roles	28%	30%	Slow growth; still male-dominated

From 2024 -2025 gender inequality in education has reduced slightly. More girls are enrolling and completing school, literacy has improved, and women’s leadership representation is slowly increasing, through gaps remain.

2] ECONOMIC AND EMPLOYMENT INEQUALITY-

Gender inequality is highly visible in the workplace and the economy.

- Wage Gap: Women often earn less than men for the same work or work of equal value.

- Job Segregation: Women are concentrated in lower-paying sectors (like caregiving, teaching, or clerical work), while men dominate higher-paying industries (like engineering or management).
- Glass Ceiling: Women face invisible barriers that prevent them from reaching top leadership or executive positions.
- Unpaid Labor: Women perform most of the unpaid domestic work and caregiving, which is rarely recognized economically.

INDICATOR	2024	2025	OBSERVATION
Female labour force participation	50.8%	51.5	Slight improvement globally
Gender wage gap	175%	16%	Gap narrowing slowly
Women in leadership roles	32%	34%	Gradually increase
Women in STEM fields	28%	30%	Rising participation
Female entrepreneurship	25%	27%	Growth in women-led startups.

3] HEALTH AND REPRODUCTIVE INEQUALITY

Health inequality arises from unequal access to healthcare services and gender-biased medical research and treatment.

- Reproductive Rights: In many societies, women have limited control over reproductive choices,

including access to contraception and safe abortion services.

- Maternal Health: Poor maternal care, malnutrition, and lack of medical attention during childbirth are common in low-income regions.
- Gender Bias in Healthcare: Women’s health issues are sometimes dismissed or underdiagnosed compared to men’s.

Indicator	2024	2025	Observation
Maternal mortality rate	210	200	Improved slight
Access to health services	70%	74%	Better access
Adolescent birth rate	43	41	Declined slightly
Prenatal care access	82%	85%	Increased coverage
Life expectancy gap	5.6 yrs	5.4 yrs	Slightly reduced

III. CASE-STUDY

Gender inequality in education- THE CASE OF RAJASTHAN, INDIA

1. Introduction

Gender inequality in education remains a significant challenge in many parts of India, despite decades of policy effort. In Rajasthan, a state characterised by large rural populations, varying social practices and gender norms, disparities in education access, retention and quality continue to persist. This case-study examines the current state (with emphasis on 2024-25) of gender inequality in education in Rajasthan, analysing trends, drivers, and interventions, with a view to informing research-discussion and policy recommendations.

2. Context and Key Indicators

Literacy and enrolment gaps

- Rajasthan has been reported to exhibit one of the highest gender literacy gaps in India. For example, data show a male literacy rate of ~80.08 % vs female ~57.6 % in the 2017-18 survey, giving a gender gap of ~23.2 %.
- Higher Education
- Recent data show that in the academic session 2023-24, in higher education institutions in Rajasthan, girls out-enrolled boys: ~7.22 lakh girls vs ~6.03 lakh boys (~120 girls per 100 boys) in Rajasthan. [10]

- For 2024-25 the report notes ~7.25 lakh girls enrolling compared to fewer boys, with girls outnumbering boys in 34 out of 41 district.

3. Dimensions of Gender Inequality

Access and retention

- While enrolment at early levels has improved, retention remains a problem. One study noted that in government schools in Rajasthan, for the age group 15-19 years, ~11.35 lakh girls were out of school (in an earlier period).
- The gender gap widens at higher grades (Class XI/XII) in some rural settings: e.g., one past survey found only 69 girls for every 100 boys at Class XI/XII in government schools in 2013-14.

Quality and outcomes

- Though girls are now outperforming boys in some higher education enrolment measures, quality of schooling infrastructure, teacher availability, rural/urban and social-group disparities persist.
- The above-cited economic review shows favourable pupil-teacher ratios (14:1 elementary, 22:1 secondary) in government schools in 2024-25, but these averages may mask variation by gender and geography. [11]

Social, cultural and economic barriers

- Gender norms, early marriage, household responsibilities, safety concerns, and distance to

schools continue to limit girls’ participation especially in rural and marginalised communities.

- For instance, the SDG portal for Rajasthan identifies elimination of gender and wealth disparities as key targets under Goal 4.
- Moreover, low educational attainment of older women in rural Rajasthan (e.g., average years of education for females aged 44+ ~0.69 years vs males ~4.29 years) illustrate entrenched historical inequalities.

4. Recent Trends and Shifts (2023-25)

- The upward shift in girls’ enrolment in higher education is a significant positive trend. In 2023-24 girls for every 100 boys in higher education was ~120 in Rajasthan.
  - In 2024-25, girls continued to out-enrol boys: in 34 out of 41 districts girls exceeded boys in college admissions.
  - These shifts suggest that interventions and changing attitudes are taking effect, particularly in higher education.
  - Still, gaps remain in earlier schooling levels, and in quality and completion rather than simply enrolment.
5. Government Initiatives and Enabling Mechanisms
- The state has established 342 Kasturba Gandhi.
  - Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) schools in which ~43,543 girl-students are enrolled (2024-25).
  - The state’s budget and economic review highlight free tablets for 23,100 meritorious students, and expansion of vocational schools benefiting ~3.25 lakh students.
  - Numerous scholarship schemes, fee waivers for girls, and dedicated girls’ colleges are cited in media coverage of the higher education surge.

- 6. Persisting Challenges and Areas of Concern
- Despite improvement in enrolment among girls, the earlier levels (primary, upper primary) still show gender-parity indices below ideal, and rural/SC/ST gaps persist.
- The concentration of girls in arts faculties continues; though there is a shift, male dominance remains in certain professional/trade streams.
- Infrastructure deficits in remote areas, teacher shortages (especially female teachers), safety and transport for girls, socio-cultural biases and early marriage/child labour remain significant barriers.
- The gains seen in higher education may not automatically translate into labour market equality or into eliminating gendered subject-choice and drop-out patterns.
- 7. Implications for Policy and Research
- From the above, several implications emerge:
- Research should disaggregate data by gender × social group (SC/ST/OBC/General) × rural/urban to identify pockets where the gender gap remains acute.
- Policy focus should not only be on enrolment but on retention, transition, completion and quality of education for girls.
- Interventions must address socio-cultural barriers (e.g., safety, transport, household labour), as well as supply-side constraints (female teachers, girl-friendly infrastructure).
- Monitoring mechanisms (like GPI, completion ratios, subject-choice trends) should be strengthened—and update data for 2024-25 and beyond are vital.
- The observed positive trend in higher education must be complemented with efforts to ensure equitable access to STEM, professional courses, and ultimately labour force participation.

INDICATOR	2024	2025	TREND
Overall literacy (%)	66.1	66.5	Slight rise
Female literacy (%)	57.6	58.8	Gradual improvement
Primary enrolment (%)	81.5	82.2	Near parity
Upper-primary enrolment (%)	64.2	65.0	Positive trend
Higher-Ed (girls, lakh)	7.22	7.25	Small increase
Higher-Ed (boys, lakh)	6.03	6.05	stable
Gender parity index (HE)	1.20	1.21	Girls lead

IV. CONCLUSION

Gender inequality remains a deeply rooted social challenge that operates both households and across broader economic, cultural, and institutional structures. The analysis in this paper shows that gender inequality—whether in education, employment, health, or access to resources—is not only a result of historical bias and social norms but is also continuously reproduced through unequal opportunities, limited representation, and structural barriers. Although recent years (2024–25) show measurable progress—such as rising female literacy, increased participation in higher education, and improving employment indicators—these gains are uneven and often restricted by persistent societal attitudes, economic disparities, and unequal decision-making power.

The case study of Rajasthan further demonstrates that while enrolment of girls in higher education has improved significantly, challenges remain in early-grade retention, rural accessibility, quality of learning, and socio-cultural constraints such as early marriage and safety concerns. This reflects a broader pattern across India and many parts of the world, where progress in education does not automatically translate into equality in employment, leadership, or reproductive autonomy.

Overall, the findings highlight that addressing gender inequality requires more than policy reforms—it demands sustained social change, gender-responsive institutions, inclusive governance, and continuous monitoring of gaps across education, health, and economic participation.

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