

Empowering Women And Growth In The Economic Sector

Sohaib Khan¹

Amir Iqbal²

Ms Research Scholar Department of Management Science KKUK

Sohaib12@gmail.com

Abstract

The interconnection between the empowerment of women and the expansion of the economy is evident. Economic growth possesses the capacity to significantly diminish gender disparities, while concurrently, the empowerment of women can actively contribute to the advancement of the economy. Does this imply that initiating a successful cycle can be achieved by manipulating any of these two levers? This essay provides a comprehensive analysis of the existing studies pertaining to the empowerment-development argument. It posits that in order to attain gender equality, it may be necessary to maintain an ongoing policy commitment to equality for its own sake. This is due to the likelihood that the interconnections between men and women are insufficiently robust to sustain themselves autonomously. Furthermore, this essay argues that the available research supporting and opposing the empowerment-development argument is faulty.

Introduction

The issue of "missing women" stands out as a prominent manifestation of gender imbalance between men and women. The concept of "missing women" was introduced by renowned scholar Amartya Sen in a prominent article published in the New York Review of Books (Sen, 1990). Sen employed this phrase to elucidate the notion that the female population in emerging countries is

disproportionately lower than anticipated, assuming equal mortality rates for both genders. According to the World Development Report (2012), the global annual count of missing women is approximately six million. Approximately 23% of individuals do not come into being, 10% vanish during their childhood, 21% disappear throughout their reproductive years, and 38% vanish after reaching the age of sixty. The significantly elevated excess mortality rate observed in impoverished nations does not merely indicate the presence of lifelong discrimination against women, commencing even prior to birth, but also underscores the prevailing gender disparities that persist throughout various domains, wherein women lag behind males. The denial of educational opportunities, employment prospects, and political representation is disproportionately experienced by women in comparison to men, resulting in a significant gender disparity. This discrepancy is further exacerbated by the occurrence of women going missing, as it perpetuates the systemic barriers faced by women in accessing education, employment, and political participation.

Table 1 presents evidence of differential treatment between men and women in developing nations throughout the period spanning from 1990 to 2009. The progress made by women in several domains is evident, although disparities between genders persist, highlighting the existing gender gap. In low- and middle-income nations in 2010, the enrollment rate for girls in secondary school was 34%, while for boys it was 41%. Twenty years ago, the percentages were 22% and 30%, respectively. Currently, the majority of both male and female children are enrolled in primary education. The likelihood of women securing employment is comparatively lower than that of men, and women

tend to receive lower remuneration for performing equivalent job roles. Additionally, even when women do manage to secure employment, they often face economic hardship and reside in poverty. According to a study conducted by Beniell and Sanchez (2011), it was found that women spend approximately half the amount of time shopping for groceries compared to males. Additionally, women dedicate approximately twice as much time to cleaning the house and approximately five times as much time to taking care of children. According to a report by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (2011), the representation of women in the lower and upper chambers of parliament was reported to be at 19.4% as of July 2011. Preserving Legal Order: In some regions, women continue to face limitations in terms of land ownership, business ownership, property management, and independent travel, often necessitating prior consultation with their husbands. Htun and Weldon (2011) examined a total of 63 nations and found that in 21 of these countries, there were variations in the inheritance regulations between men and women.

The enhancement of women's empowerment, encompassing increased access to developmental resources such as rights, healthcare, education, and employment opportunities, exhibits a strong correlation with economic advancement. One potential avenue via which prosperity can significantly impact gender dynamics is by mitigating disparities between men and women, so fostering greater equality. However, Amartya Sen has demonstrated that economic expansion can impede progress in alternative domains. In alternative terms, the provision of increased empowerment to individuals has the potential to expedite the process of economic progress.

Frequently, social scientists and politicians tend to emphasise one of these two connections to a greater extent than the other. According to proponents of prioritising poverty reduction, there exists a positive correlation between the decrease in poverty levels and the improvement of gender equality. There is a viewpoint held by certain individuals advocating for legislators to prioritise the development of mechanisms that foster economic expansion and societal welfare, while also ensuring equal opportunities for both genders. However, it is not advisable for these leaders to enact legislation that specifically targets the enhancement of women's circumstances.

Conversely, a significant number of individuals emphasise the latter connection, namely the freedom to develop and progress. According to Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN), gender equality is considered a fundamental requirement for achieving many Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These goals include eradicating poverty, decreasing infant mortality rates, achieving gender parity in education by the year 2015, and ensuring universal access to education for all children (United Nations, 2005). The 2001 research titled "Engendering Development" emphasises the need for policies aimed at addressing disparities in "rights, resources, and voice" between men and women. The proposition entails the implementation of specific policies, such as the establishment of parliamentary quotas for women and the provision of scholarships for girls, in conjunction with institutional reforms aimed at fostering gender equality. According to the study, these steps are deemed crucial for enhancing the pace of growth and fostering equity.

The 2012 World Development Report, published by the World Bank in 2011, presents a notably equitable perspective, which is of considerable importance. The discourse extensively addresses the "business case" for the empowerment of women; nevertheless, fundamentally, it asserts that the intrinsic value of gender equality necessitates policy efforts to promote it.

This essay examines the evidence supporting both perspectives of the relationship between empowerment and development. Firstly, it demonstrates how socioeconomic deprivation and limited opportunities contribute to gender-based inequities. As a consequence of this phenomenon, women tend to have greater advantages relative to men when economic progress successfully eradicates poverty. There are two primary reasons for this phenomenon. Firstly, the improvement in overall societal well-being is observed when poverty rates decrease, leading to an elevation in the status of individuals across the population. Secondly, a reduction in poverty levels corresponds to a decrease in gender disparity, resulting in women benefiting disproportionately from economic growth compared to men. Nevertheless, it is important to note that economic growth in isolation is insufficient to achieve full gender equality. The implementation of policies remains necessary in order to attain gender equality. The implementation of such a government action would be deemed acceptable if the empowerment of women results in heightened economic growth, so establishing a constructive cycle of reinforcement. There exists a prevalent belief among a significant portion of the population that women possess an inherent superiority in making decisions pertaining to long-term advancement. However,

the present essay posits that the augmentation of women's authority yields substantial ramifications on the decision-making processes of society. In contrast to the more assertive arguments expressed by proponents and opponents of the discussion, the findings of this study offer a more equitable perspective, but with a little less optimistic outlook, on the potential reciprocal relationship between women's empowerment and economic growth.

Is there a correlation between economic progress and women's empowerment?

The disparity in socioeconomic status both among and within nations tends to be more pronounced for impoverished women. An evident reduction in the disparity between male and female gross enrolment rates in primary and secondary education may be observed from 1991 to 2009. However, the disparity in enrollment rates between poorer countries and middle-income countries is still evident, with a difference of 7 percentage points for primary enrollment and 13 percentage points for secondary enrollment. In comparison, middle-income countries exhibit a smaller discrepancy, with a 3 percentage point difference for primary enrollment and a 2 percentage point difference for secondary enrollment. Rich countries, on the other hand, demonstrate negligible differences, with no change in primary enrollment and only a 1 percentage point difference in secondary enrollment. Furthermore, it is worth noting that disparities persist between male and female students in underdeveloped and rural regions, as highlighted by the World Bank in 2011. Between the years 1971 and 1995, there was a notable increase in women's employment in East Asia and Latin America, surpassing the rate of men's

employment growth. Additionally, during this period, there was a reduction in the disparity between the wages earned by men and women. The World Bank (2011) reports that there has been a significant increase in women's life expectancy in developing nations over the past 50 years, with a rise of approximately 20 to 25 years. Nevertheless, there has been a comparatively lesser increase in life expectancy among men.

Is it accurate to assert that as nations progress, women will inherently acquire greater influence, hence obviating the necessity for targeted policies aimed at enhancing the well-being of women? Is providing assistance to emerging nations sufficient in addressing poverty and facilitating economic development?

According to a recent study, it has been found that economic growth can significantly contribute to the promotion of gender equality through expanding opportunities and alleviating poverty.

2.1 Facilitating the Alleviation of Poverty through Economic Growth

To commence, it is noteworthy that economic expansion serves to mitigate inequality by facilitating the fulfilment of basic necessities for impoverished households. This implies that individuals are not required to frequently make decisions that have the potential to determine life or death outcomes. The adverse consequences of these detrimental choices, often resulting in compromised women's health, can be mitigated through increased access to resources for families, which is contingent upon a thriving economy.

In actuality, the frequency with which girls receive less attention than boys in real-world scenarios is not as prevalent as commonly perceived. This phenomenon is particularly evident in locations where

boys are unequivocally more favoured. Monitoring the differential feeding practises between girls and boys poses significant challenges due to the dynamic nature of households under observation, which frequently modify their behaviours. Moreover, in instances where individuals are requested to monitor the consumption of each household member within a specified timeframe, there is a possibility of incomplete disclosure of the quantities allocated to boys and girls. In summary, it is possible for girls to possess distinct preferences compared to boys, while receiving equal financial resources from their homes. Angus Deaton (1989, 1997) devised a methodological approach that utilises household consumption data to infer potential disparities in nutritional intake across genders, specifically examining whether girls receive comparatively lesser nourishment than boys. According to his statement, the addition of a kid to a family leads to a decrease in financial resources, since there is now an additional dependent individual who is unlikely to contribute to the household income in the immediate future. Consequently, the adults residing in the household will be need to curtail their personal expenditures in order to compensate for the escalated expenses. One method to indirectly estimate the financial impact of having a kid is to examine the reduction in expenditures on adult-oriented commodities, such as cigarettes, alcohol, and adult clothing, following the arrival of a child. There is a higher probability that adults will exhibit reduced consumption of adult-oriented products in the presence of an additional female child as compared to a male child. This is attributed to the tendency of families to allocate fewer resources towards girls, particularly in terms of nutrition. Deaton (1997) did not identify any

empirical evidence supporting the notion that households in Pakistan or Cote d'Ivoire exhibit a differential reduction in the allocation of adult resources for girls compared to boys, as observed in his initial study. It is conceivable to observe the absence of explicit prejudice in daily existence by examining factors such as immunisation rates. In the context of India, the administration of vaccinations to boys and girls does not exhibit significant or discernible disparities. According to research conducted by the National Family Health Survey, it has been observed that females have had an average of 4.55 vaccinations, while boys have received an average of 4.79 vaccinations. Rajasthan exhibits a relatively low rate of vaccination and the most pronounced gender disparity in India, with fewer women than men. In contrast, Banerjee et al. (2010) reported that there was no significant difference in the mean number of vaccines administered to boys and girls, with females receiving an average of 1.18 vaccinations and boys receiving an average of 1.19 vaccinations.

This does not imply that girls and boys receive equal treatment. It is evident that parents and children are subjected to differential treatment under conditions of heightened stress. India exhibits a significant gender disparity in mortality rates, which ranks among the highest globally. One potential explanation for differential treatment of girls when they are ill is gender-based disparities in healthcare. A research conducted in the impoverished slums of New Delhi revealed a significant disparity in mortality rates between girls and boys afflicted with diarrhoea, with girls being more than twice as likely to succumb to the disease (Khanna et al., 2003). Despite consuming same quantities of food, it is plausible that this dietary pattern may

contribute to a higher mortality rate and a gradual decline in the nutritional well-being of females in comparison to boys. Enhanced accessibility to health services, such as family health insurance or provision of cost-free medical treatment for individuals with little financial means, would disproportionately benefit girls in comparison to boys, irrespective of parental attitudes towards their children. This phenomenon can be attributed to the tendency of economically disadvantaged households to allocate fewer financial resources towards addressing the healthcare needs of their female children compared to their male counterparts.

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