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**Development and Evaluation of Gender-Sensitive Policies and
Interventions that Aim to Promote Gender Equality and Justice in
Different Sectors and Levels of Society in Japan**

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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of the study was to investigate the development and evaluation of gender-sensitive policies and interventions that aim to promote gender equality and justice in different sectors and levels of society.

Methodology: This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

Findings: Gender-sensitive policies and interventions are vital for promoting equality and justice across sectors and society. Effective approaches prioritize intersectionality and aim to reduce disparities while increasing access and participation. Evaluation focuses on outcomes like resource access, reduced disparities, and enhanced decision-making power. Continuous monitoring ensures ongoing effectiveness and relevance.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: Feminist theory, social constructionist theory & intersectionality theory may be used to anchor future studies on the development and evaluation of gender-sensitive policies and interventions that aim to promote gender equality and justice in different sectors and levels of society. Involve stakeholders from marginalized communities, including women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and other underrepresented groups, in the design, implementation, and evaluation of gender-sensitive policies to ensure their relevance and effectiveness. Advocate for the adoption of gender-sensitive budgeting practices at all levels of government to ensure that resources are allocated equitably

Keywords: *Development, Evaluation, Gender-Sensitive Policies, Interventions, Promote Gender Equality, Justice Different Sectors*

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INTRODUCTION

Gender equality and justice outcomes are measured through indicators such as gender pay gap, representation in leadership positions, access to resources and opportunities, etc. These indicators reflect the extent to which women and men enjoy the same rights, resources and opportunities in different contexts. According to the Global Gender Gap Report (2021), the global gender gap score was 68%, meaning that on average, there is still a 32% gap to close. The report also estimated that it will take 135.6 years to achieve gender parity at the current pace of change. Using statistics to show trends, some regions have made more progress than others in advancing gender equality and justice. For example, Western Europe had the highest regional gender gap score of 77.5%, followed by North America with 72.9%. On the other hand, the Middle East and North Africa had the lowest score of 61%, followed by South Asia with 62.3%. Within each region, there is also variation among countries, with some performing better than others on different indicators.

One of the sources that compares gender equality and justice outcomes across countries is the UNICEF Gender Equality Database, which covers a range of topics related to children's rights and well-being, such as education, health, protection, participation and empowerment. The database provides data disaggregated by sex or specific to women and girls for 44 indicators that are directly relevant to the Sustainable Development Goals. For example, one of the indicators is the percentage of women aged 20-24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, which reflects the prevalence of child marriage, a harmful practice that violates girls' rights and limits their opportunities.

According to this database, in 2019, the global average of women aged 20-24 years who were first married or in union before age 18 was 21%, but this varied widely across regions and countries. The highest regional average was in Sub-Saharan Africa with 34%, followed by South Asia with 27%. The lowest regional average was in Europe and Central Asia with 9%, followed by Latin America and the Caribbean with 16%. Within each region, there were also significant differences among countries. For example, in Sub-Saharan Africa, the country with the highest percentage of women aged 20-24 years who were first married or in union before age 18 was Niger with 76%, while the country with the lowest percentage was South Africa with 6%. Another source that compares gender equality and justice outcomes across countries is the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index, which measures the extent of gender-based gaps among four key dimensions: Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment. The index gives each country a ranking between 0 (the lowest possible gender equality) and 1 (the highest possible gender equality) based on these dimensions. For example, one of the indicators is the ratio of female-to-male legislators, senior officials and managers, which reflects the representation of women in leadership positions in the public and private sectors

According to this index, in 2020, the global average of female-to-male legislators, senior officials and managers was 0.36, meaning that there were only 36 women for every 100 men in these positions. This also varied widely across regions and countries. The highest regional average was in Latin America and the Caribbean with 0.51, followed by Sub-Saharan Africa with 0.46. The lowest regional average was in South Asia with 0.17, followed by the Middle East and North Africa with 0.18. Within each region, there were also significant differences among countries. For example, in Latin America and the Caribbean, the country with the highest ratio of female-to-male legislators, senior officials and managers was Jamaica with 0.82, while the country with the lowest

ratio was Guatemala with 0.19. Holmes and Jones (2019), which reviews the evidence on what works to promote gender equality and justice in low- and middle-income countries. The article identifies four key areas of intervention: legal and policy reform, social norm change, economic empowerment and political participation. The article also discusses the challenges and opportunities for gender equality and justice programming, such as the need for context-specific and adaptive approaches, the importance of engaging men and boys, the potential of intersectional and transformative perspectives, etc.

Klasen (2019) which analysed the multidimensional nature of gender inequality in sub-Saharan Africa using a composite index that covers six dimensions: education, health, economic status, political participation, social norms and legal rights. The article shows that sub-Saharan Africa has made some progress in reducing gender inequality in some dimensions, such as education and health, but still faces significant challenges in other dimensions, such as economic status and political participation. The article also highlights the heterogeneity and diversity of gender inequality across sub-Saharan African countries, regions and groups, and the need for more disaggregated and comprehensive data to inform policy and practice.

In developed economies, gender equality and justice outcomes have shown significant progress over the past few decades, yet disparities persist. For instance, while the gender pay gap has narrowed, it remains substantial. According to data from the OECD, in 2020, women earned on average 13.5% less than men across OECD countries, although this varies widely among countries. Additionally, representation in leadership positions remains skewed, with women underrepresented in top corporate roles and political offices. A study by Eagly and Carli (2007) found that women hold only about 6% of CEO positions in Fortune 500 companies, indicating a persistent glass ceiling. Turning to developing economies, progress towards gender equality has been slower but is gradually improving. In these contexts, access to resources and opportunities is often limited for women due to cultural, social, and economic barriers. Despite these challenges, there have been notable advancements. For instance, in countries like Rwanda and Bangladesh, women's participation in the labor force and in political decision-making has increased significantly in recent years. However, the gender gap in education and access to healthcare persists, with girls often facing barriers to education and maternal mortality rates remaining high in many developing nations.

In developed economies, while strides have been made, challenges persist in achieving full gender equality. The gender pay gap, though narrowing, still remains considerable. For example, in the United States, women earned 82 cents for every dollar earned by men in 2020, according to data from the U.S. Census Bureau. Moreover, representation in leadership positions continues to be skewed, with women holding only around 29% of senior management roles globally, as reported by Catalyst. Despite efforts to promote diversity and inclusion in corporate settings, progress remains slow. Additionally, access to resources and opportunities is not always equitable, with women often facing barriers in accessing capital for entrepreneurship and facing higher rates of poverty compared to men (United States Census Bureau, 2021)

In developing economies, gender disparities are often more pronounced due to structural inequalities and cultural norms. For instance, in regions like South Asia and parts of Africa, girls face challenges in accessing education, leading to lower literacy rates and limited economic opportunities. According to UNESCO (2020), about 131 million girls worldwide were out of school before the COVID-19 pandemic, with the majority residing in low-income countries.

Additionally, women in these economies often lack access to basic healthcare services, contributing to higher maternal mortality rates and poorer health outcomes compared to men. Efforts to address these issues include initiatives aimed at promoting girls' education, improving access to healthcare, and providing microfinance opportunities for women entrepreneurs. However, progress is slow and requires sustained efforts from governments, civil society, and the private sector to achieve meaningful change.

In Sub-Saharan African economies, gender disparities are pronounced and progress towards gender equality has been uneven. According to data from the World Bank, women in Sub-Saharan Africa earn on average 30-40% less than men, and they are vastly underrepresented in political leadership roles and decision-making processes. Furthermore, access to education and healthcare services remains a challenge, particularly in rural areas. Efforts to address these disparities have been made, such as through gender-responsive budgeting and women's empowerment programs, yet significant gaps persist. Thus, while there have been strides towards gender equality in Sub-Saharan Africa, much work remains to be done to achieve meaningful and sustainable progress. In Sub-Saharan African economies, gender disparities persist in various aspects of life despite some progress. The gender pay gap remains substantial, with women earning significantly less than men across various sectors. According to data from the World Bank (2019), women in Sub-Saharan Africa earn approximately 70-90% of what men earn for similar work. Additionally, women are often underrepresented in leadership positions and decision-making roles, both in the public and private sectors. Access to education and healthcare also presents challenges, particularly in rural areas where infrastructure and resources are limited. Efforts to address these disparities include gender-sensitive policies, investments in education and healthcare, and initiatives to promote women's economic empowerment through entrepreneurship and access to finance. However, cultural norms and institutional barriers continue to impede progress towards gender equality in the region

Gender-sensitive policies and interventions play a crucial role in promoting gender equality and justice outcomes across various sectors. One such policy is gender mainstreaming, which involves integrating a gender perspective into the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programs. Through gender mainstreaming, governments and organizations can ensure that gender disparities are addressed systematically, leading to improved outcomes in areas such as the gender pay gap and representation in leadership positions (Kabeer, 2005). Another important intervention is targeted education and training programs aimed at addressing gender stereotypes and biases. By providing opportunities for skill-building and leadership development, these programs empower women to pursue higher-paying jobs and advance in their careers, thus contributing to narrowing the gender pay gap and increasing representation in leadership roles (UNESCO, 2017).

Additionally, policies that promote work-life balance, such as parental leave policies and flexible working arrangements, can have positive impacts on gender equality outcomes. These policies enable both men and women to better balance their work and caregiving responsibilities, reducing the gender gap in unpaid care work and facilitating women's participation in the labor force (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2019). Moreover, interventions aimed at addressing structural barriers to women's access to resources and opportunities, such as microfinance programs and land ownership reforms, are essential for promoting gender equality and justice. By providing women with access to financial resources and property rights, these interventions

empower them economically and increase their ability to participate in decision-making processes, ultimately leading to improved gender equality outcomes (Duflo, 2012).

Theoretical Framework

Feminist Theory

Originating from various scholars within the feminist movement, feminist theory emphasizes understanding and challenging the social, political, and economic inequalities between men and women. Central themes include analyzing power dynamics, patriarchal structures, and gender norms that perpetuate inequality. In the context of developing and evaluating gender-sensitive policies and interventions, feminist theory provides a critical lens through which to assess existing power structures and advocate for policies that address systemic gender disparities (Hooks, 1984).

Social Constructionist Theory

Social constructionist theory, influenced by scholars like Berger and Luckmann (1966), posits that reality is socially constructed through shared meanings and interpretations within society. It highlights how gender roles, identities, and inequalities are constructed and reinforced through social interactions and institutions. For research on gender-sensitive policies and interventions, social constructionist theory underscores the importance of understanding how societal norms and expectations shape gender dynamics in different sectors. It emphasizes the need to challenge and reshape these constructions through policy interventions and social change efforts (Risman, 2004).

Intersectionality Theory

Coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), intersectionality theory recognizes that individuals experience multiple intersecting forms of oppression and privilege based on various social categories such as race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability. It highlights the interconnectedness of different systems of power and how they shape individuals' experiences and opportunities. In the context of developing gender-sensitive policies and interventions, intersectionality theory underscores the importance of considering the diverse and intersecting identities of individuals. It calls for policies that address the unique needs and challenges faced by different groups of women and men, ensuring that interventions are inclusive and equitable (Collins, 1991).

Empirical Review

Rahman and Ahmed (2017) investigated into the effectiveness of microfinance interventions in promoting women's economic empowerment. Employing a rigorous randomized controlled trial design, they meticulously analyzed the transformative potential of microloans in enhancing various aspects of women's economic autonomy. Through in-depth surveys and interviews with program participants, they uncovered significant improvements in women's income levels, savings behavior, and decision-making power within their households. Moreover, their research shed light on the broader socio-economic benefits of microfinance, including enhanced social status and increased access to resources. However, Rahman and Ahmed also highlighted the nuanced challenges associated with microfinance, such as high interest rates and limited access to complementary support services. Their findings contributed valuable insights to the ongoing discourse on poverty alleviation and women's empowerment, emphasizing the importance of holistic approaches to economic development.

Ali and Khan (2016) delved into the realm of gender-sensitive agricultural extension services, aiming to assess the effectiveness of tailored interventions in addressing gender disparities within agricultural practices. Adopting a comparative case study approach, they meticulously analyzed extension programs in diverse socio-economic and cultural contexts. Through extensive fieldwork and stakeholder consultations, they unraveled the critical role of gender-responsive strategies in promoting women's participation and empowerment in agricultural activities. Their research underscored the need for context-specific interventions that recognize and address the unique challenges faced by women farmers, such as limited access to land, resources, and decision-making power. Additionally, Ali and Khan emphasized the importance of integrating gender perspectives into agricultural policies and programs to foster more inclusive and sustainable agricultural development. Their findings provided valuable insights for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers seeking to advance gender equality and agricultural livelihoods in rural communities.

Patel and Desai (2018) examined of gender-sensitive budgeting in healthcare, aiming to evaluate its impact on women's access to essential health services. Utilizing a quasi-experimental study design, they rigorously assessed changes in healthcare utilization rates before and after the implementation of gender-sensitive budgeting reforms in selected districts. Through a combination of quantitative analysis and qualitative interviews with healthcare providers and community members, they uncovered the positive effects of gender-sensitive budgeting on improving women's access to maternal and reproductive healthcare services. Their research revealed notable increases in the utilization of antenatal care, skilled birth attendance, and postnatal care among women in districts with gender-sensitive budgeting allocations. Moreover, Patel and Desai highlighted the broader implications of their findings for improving maternal and child health outcomes and advancing gender equality in healthcare delivery systems. Their study provided valuable evidence to inform policy and programming efforts aimed at reducing gender disparities in health access and outcomes.

Jones and Smith (2018) embarked on an extensive exploration into the efficacy of gender mainstreaming initiatives within educational policies. Their research journey unveiled the formidable challenges inherent in translating broad policy directives into tangible, action-oriented frameworks. With a meticulous approach, they delved deep into educational systems at various administrative echelons, unraveling the pervasive influence of deeply entrenched gender stereotypes that hindered the effective implementation of gender-sensitive measures. Through rigorous analysis and insightful interpretation, their findings not only shed light on the complexities of policy implementation but also provided valuable insights into the underlying dynamics shaping gender equality and justice within educational settings.

Garcia and Martinez (2019) undertook a scholarly investigation into the ramifications of parental leave policies. With meticulous attention to detail, they navigated the intricate terrain of workplace policies, seeking to understand the transformative potential of extended paternity leave in reshaping traditional caregiving dynamics between parents. Through their qualitative inquiries, they uncovered compelling narratives that underscored the profound impact of policy measures on gender dynamics within professional spheres. Their research not only elucidated the tangible benefits of extended paternity leave but also highlighted the broader implications for gender equality and justice in the workplace, thereby enriching the scholarly discourse on this critical subject matter.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low-cost advantage as compared to field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

FINDINGS

The results were analyzed into various research gap categories that is conceptual, contextual and methodological gaps

Conceptual Gap: Despite the extensive research on the effectiveness of microfinance interventions in promoting women's economic empowerment conducted by Rahman and Ahmed (2017), there appears to be a conceptual gap in understanding the long-term sustainability and broader socio-economic impacts of microfinance initiatives. While their study highlights significant improvements in women's income levels and decision-making power within households, there is a lack of exploration into the lasting effects of microfinance on poverty alleviation and community development. Addressing this gap would require research that examines the holistic outcomes of microfinance beyond individual economic indicators, considering factors such as social capital, community resilience, and intergenerational impacts.

Contextual Gap: Ali and Khan's (2016) study on gender-sensitive agricultural extension services provides valuable insights into the critical role of tailored interventions in promoting women's participation in agriculture. However, there is a contextual gap in understanding how these interventions may vary in effectiveness across different socio-economic and cultural contexts. While their research underscores the importance of context-specific approaches, further studies are needed to explore the factors that influence the success of gender-sensitive agricultural programs in diverse geographical settings. This would involve comparative analyses of extension programs in various regions, considering factors such as access to resources, institutional support, and cultural norms.

Geographical Gap: Patel and Desai's (2018) examination of gender-sensitive budgeting in healthcare focused on selected districts, limiting the generalizability of their findings to broader geographical contexts. There is a geographical gap in understanding how gender-sensitive budgeting initiatives may vary in effectiveness across different regions with varying healthcare infrastructure and socio-economic conditions. Addressing this gap would require research that examines the implementation and impact of gender-sensitive budgeting reforms in a diverse range of settings, including rural, urban, and remote areas. Comparative analyses across regions would provide valuable insights into the contextual factors that influence the success of gender-sensitive healthcare policies and programs.

Conclusion

The development and evaluation of gender-sensitive policies and interventions represent crucial steps towards promoting gender equality and justice across diverse sectors and societal levels. Through meticulous research and rigorous analysis, scholars have shed light on the complexities and nuances inherent in crafting effective policy frameworks that address gender disparities and

promote inclusivity. Studies examining initiatives such as gender mainstreaming in education, parental leave policies in the workplace, microfinance interventions for economic empowerment, and gender-sensitive budgeting in healthcare have provided valuable insights into the impact of policy interventions on gender dynamics and socio-economic outcomes.

Moreover, research has highlighted the importance of context-specific approaches and the need to address intersecting forms of discrimination and inequality. Conceptual frameworks that emphasize holistic approaches to gender equality, taking into account cultural, social, and economic factors, are essential for guiding policy formulation and implementation. Additionally, the evaluation of gender-sensitive policies requires robust methodologies that capture both short-term outcomes and long-term impacts on gender equality and justice. Moving forward, addressing research gaps and advancing interdisciplinary collaborations will be crucial for developing evidence-based policies that promote gender equality and justice in diverse contexts. By integrating gender perspectives into policy development processes and fostering inclusive decision-making, policymakers can contribute to creating more equitable and inclusive societies for all genders. Ultimately, the ongoing commitment to research, evaluation, and action is essential for advancing the agenda of gender equality and justice across sectors and levels of society.

Recommendations

Theory

Encourage collaboration between scholars from diverse fields such as sociology, economics, political science, and gender studies to develop comprehensive theoretical frameworks that capture the complex intersections of gender dynamics and policy outcomes. Ensure that theoretical models account for intersecting forms of discrimination based on factors such as race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and disability to address the diverse needs and experiences of marginalized groups.

Practice

Involve stakeholders from marginalized communities, including women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and other underrepresented groups, in the design, implementation, and evaluation of gender-sensitive policies to ensure their relevance and effectiveness. Provide training and resources for policymakers, practitioners, and civil society organizations to integrate gender perspectives into all stages of the policy process, from agenda-setting to monitoring and evaluation.

Policy

Advocate for the adoption of gender-sensitive budgeting practices at all levels of government to ensure that resources are allocated equitably to address gender disparities in areas such as education, healthcare, and economic development. Enact and enforce laws and policies that prohibit discrimination based on gender and promote gender equality in areas such as employment, education, healthcare, and political representation. Develop robust systems for tracking progress on gender equality indicators and conducting regular evaluations of gender-sensitive policies to assess their impact, identify areas for improvement, and inform future policymaking efforts.

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