

Gender Discrimination or Respect?

Soheil Dastmalchian Khorasani

BSc student of Sociology, University of Milan Bicocca, Italy

Abstract

In recent years, sociologists pay special attention to the challenging issue of sexual discrimination which has been converted to a hot topic nowadays. The main issue is why women are inhibited to attend in a special socio cultural events despite of presence law, rule and regulation in that area. So, in order to find out the answer of this question, the authors decided to conduct an analytic short communication using a search in the literature. As the main problem was emerged in Iran, besides reviewing International documents and conventions allocated to women, national – Iranian- literature such as academic papers, reports, newspapers and magazines were also searched. Comparing the written documents to real situations showed inconsistency; because although there was no limitation for participating women in such activities, the execution of laws has been failed. The barriers seem to be categorized in Macro and Micro levels which could be resolved by clarifying, defining and planning specific strategies in their related area. Obviously, in depth exploration of the major concept need qualitative studies.

Keywords: Gender, Discrimination, Respect

Introduction

Nowadays, human societies develop and progress, focusing on their financial capitals, social assets and human resources. There is no need to say that social and humanistic wings play more crucial role than financial and materialistic parts in different affairs; e.g. males and females could constitute a balanced community in terms of talent, ability and capability by which human asset of community could be formed and the social life could be possible. It is crystal clear that the more clear laws, rules and regulations for clarifying position of women in different parts of society, can conducive to better application of human assets for social development. If this position is defined more rational, the capability of society will promote accordingly. (Javaheri, 2015)

Recently, women have been more capable and competent in different areas of sociopolitical aspects; on the minus side, they have experienced some problems and dilemmas such as social and sexual discrimination, poverty, abasing, violence and assault across the world. In Iran, the similar situation has been appeared in some extents for women, however, like any other region, it is not possible to depict an integrate model for presenting the dilemma.

According to Iranian Statistical Center, women constitute more than half of Iranian population that is approximately in consistent with international ratio. (Iranian Statistical Organisation) However, there is a big difference between international and national law legislation for women due to the religious form of government which influences on this issue. (Creedon, 1994)

Apart from religious aspect, which claims that men and women are equal and equity should be established between two genders, so that in holy Quran both males and females are regarded equal in terms of virtual aspects and moral excellence, there is also a cultural background in Iranian society which is related to patriarchal nature of units of community in which women had to obey and follow the men of family and community. It has been dominant for years and historically rooted in structure of Iranian social life and influenced by sociocultural movements during the history where except for some limited instances, the key positions of society were occupied mainly by men rather than women. For that, women were inhibited from sociocultural activities by both written and unwritten laws.

It seems, some bio psycho social differences between males and females are responsible for behaving differently in the society. Despite of these differences, holy Quran emphasized on the equity rather than any egalitarian point of view. According to the holy Quran, both men and women are human being, they are capable, however, they should be treated based on their differences in bio psycho social aspects. They are created to complete each other; they are able to bridge their partner's gap and help to his/her development. This belief is attributed to Islamic scholars and is completely different from slavery view. This kinds of beliefs influence on the laws extracted from Islamic resources such as inheritance law by which the women have been financially supported after dying their fathers or husbands. On the other side, women have been financially supported after divorce, etc. These written rules are completely feasible in real situations. (Saberian, 2004, Mayer 1991)

On the minus side, there are some activities that religiously have not been inhibited but there are some problems for implementing them in real situations. In these instances, the hidden movements or unwritten parts of law play an important role. Of these laws, is related to participating the women in sport arena. In Islamic literature, women not only have been encouraged both for doing exercise and useful sport activities such as swimming, horse riding etc, but also participate in sport atmosphere for refreshment as well as inspiring others to join health- related affairs. These types of behaviors help them to learn socially, communicate to each other and experience some kinds of social events. They learned how to teach their children to behave as a hero rather than a champion, help others both physically and emotionally. On the other hand, some social values transferred automatically by informal hidden instruction to people in different age groups. It sounds women could freely attend in such socio cultural meetings. It was common across the world. Although today, there is no written law, neither religious nor formal, for preventing women from entering the stadiums, frequently, it is forbidden for them to attend sporting events. (Cook 2012, Mehrpour 1995)

So, in present paper, it has been decided to point out the specific part of this big picture (attending in sport arena), in which the written laws are not feasible in real situations.

Methodology:

In order to prepare this analytic short communication, some international and national laws, rules and regulations related to women social activities were applied for conducting this study in order to compare the written one with real situation. Human right law, International, European and National Conventions for women's right have been reviewed for sexual discrimination documents as written law in order to compare with present status of women condition in society as unwritten or hidden movement which inhibits implementation of the written law, rules and regulations. Iranian literature as well as some newspaper and magazine reports in Iranian context were also reviewed for discovering the trend of this movement.

Result and discussion:

International and national declarations and documents indicate to no discrimination between male and female in social, cultural and political activities. They explicitly emphasize on women's right authorized by the UN with egalitarian view in civil rights, marriage and familial situation, social and working situations, payment, social and professional position as well as involving in political activities.

These documents are in agreement with religious literature in some extents. Some threatening situations are exceptional based on cultural diversity among different societies which caused some challenges among religious leaders and scholars and lead to objection to this equality.

It seems, religion does not play the direct role in this issue, but governmental structure and authorities decide for its people how they should behave. In Iranian context, people experience differently in different periods. After Islamic Revolution, the law, rules and regulations showed a radical change and women restricted more than before. Until then, several women

especially in higher class of society had social and political positions. In the lower classes, they had no limitation for either running or involving with such activities both indoor and outdoor.

Despite membership of Iran and some similar countries to International conventions, it seems executing the related laws pertaining to women has been failed in some area of their activities. It should be noted that Islamic Republic of Iran has been incorporated to International Convention for Civil and Political Law since 1976, however, still some laws are left just on the papers with no execution. They are neither presented and approved by legal authorities nor executed in society. Therefore, these days, women have been prevented from attending in some socio cultural activities such as sporting, although no barrier is exist legally. (The UN guide, 1975)

It sounds, the most important barriers are associated with legal issues rather than cultural ones. The International laws are neutral and keep separated from any religion and detached from special ideology, however, the religious governments have religious bias and consider religious bases for legislation. (Hosseini, 2009)

As the major organization for human rights have been established and worked in either Non-Muslim or the western countries, they are also accused for bias towards Islamic nations; These days, several politicians have been elected among women in the west, such as Angela MerKel, Tresa Mai, Candolina Rice, Hilary Clinton, etc, however, it is less common either in the East or even in the Muslim nations (Indra Gandhi in India was exceptional). In Iran, there are limited number of women who are working in high rank such as politicians or senators. It seems it could be due to the setting priorities for women in managing family and doing house chore rather than playing socio-political roles. It is believed that a woman should be firstly a wife, then a mother and after that works as a member of society. She should be secured from social risks and abnormalities. Although some positive changes have been occurred in recent years in some countries such as Iran for involving women in different socio-political positions and facilitating their participation in social activities, there is still long way to pave for women development.

The developing and underdeveloped countries also doubtful for the nature, structure, performance and reports issued from these organizations. Some countries believed that the organizations are instruments for western and developed countries by which they could monitor the western policies in the inferior regions and confirm their superiority policies. But it is claimed that these neutral organizations present their critical reports for all countries and critique any discrimination, they also defend women right as well as monitor any breaking human right.

Apart from the Macro barriers, related to government and society, some micro barriers should not also been ignored. They could be related to some issues specifically pertaining to self-esteem and self-concept of men and women in these countries. They should empower their socio cultural identity and advance to social role promotion in order to bridge the gap of discrimination. Women used to be under supervision of men for years and treated as the second gender. So, it is necessary to help not only women but also men to revise and define their roles along with changing society to modern and postmodern form. They need to acquire new experiences in several fields as well for resolving micro issues.

In a nutshell, growth of equalitarian values and civil freedom, process of social regeneration and development, revolution of traditional and conventional values, increase academic education, application of broadcasting media and social networking as well as drastic changes in accessing information could be regarded as necessary reasons for radically revising international and national conventions. (Javheri, 2015, Bunch 1990)

Conclusion:

Overcoming sexual discrimination in social activities become possible if the Macro and Micro barriers will be recognized, new opportunities for women activities will be clarified and they will be empowered for involving in different socio political positions. On the opposite side, men also need to be instructed to have shared activities and responsibilities with women. They should try to reflect on their paternal role more than before.

Limitation:

In order to explore main concepts of sexual discrimination, qualitative approach is recommended.

Conflict of Interest:

No conflict of interest is declared.

Acknowledgment:

Authors offer their special thanks to Nazila Zarghi.

References:

- [1] Javaheri, F. (2015). Social Status Report of women in Iran, Published papers from 2001-11. Tehran: Ney.
- [2] Nussbaum, M. C., & Glover, J. (1995). *Women, culture, and development: A study of human capabilities*. Oxford University Press.
- [3] <http://www.amar.org.ir>
- [4] Saberian, A. (2004). Religion and politics quarterly. Women dignity from Holy Quran point of view, (2), 93-111
- [5] Mayer, A. E. (1991). Islam and human rights: Tradition and politics.
- [6] Creedon, P. J. (Ed.). (1994). *Women, media and sport: Challenging gender values*. Sage publications.
- [7] Cook, R. J. (Ed.). (2012). *Human rights of women: National and international perspectives*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- [8] Mehrpour, H. (1995). Human rights in international documents and stand of Iran. Tehran: Etelaat
- [9] www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/
- [10] www.hri.org/docs/ECHR50.html
- [11] The UN. The UN Guide (1975).
- [12] Hosseini, R. (2009). Political right of women in Iran and International convention of civil and political law
- [13] Bunch, C. (1990). Women's rights as human rights: Toward a re-vision of human rights. *Human Rights Quarterly*, 12(4), 486-498.