

A Case Study of Gender Discrimination Faced by Working and Non-Working Women in Haora District

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Abstract : *This study discusses Gender discrimination in our society. This is one of the major topics in sociology and economic development in the Indian subcontinent. Gender discrimination refers to the unequal treatment of women and men in our society. It is observed that infrastructural facilities are weak in those countries where gender discrimination is present. India is one of those countries, where we can see this type of inequality is omnipresent. This study indicates the discrimination in the entire social field of Haora District. The paper has tried to discuss different kinds of gender discrimination, their causes, and their effects on society. It also tries to suggest some remedies for reducing this gender discrimination and uplifting the position of women in society.*

Key words: *Unequal treatment, infrastructure, social field*

Introduction

In several societies, gender discrimination is still a major problem that affects women in many areas of life (Pennington et al., 2018). Gender refers to the roles and responsibilities of women and men created by our society, culture, and family. In India, patriarchal norms and sociocultural practices continue to influence women's experiences at home and work, even despite constitutional provisions guaranteeing gender equality (Solanki, 2011). Gender discrimination is the idea and situation that women and men are not equal (Ponthieux & Meurs, 2015). Gender discrimination refers to inequality between both genders from different perspectives and also indicates unfair and unequal treatment between men and women in terms of societal norms which include opportunities, rights, and so on (Cleveland et al., 2013). It remains a problem even in most advanced societies. It is a major barrier to human development. Most of the gender discrimination is observed in the African Continent and Indian Subcontinent (Blackden et al., 2007; Chancel, 2022). In our male-dominated society, men want to dominate women and try to keep women under their power, however, women are working against this want (Lorber, 2001; Ponthieux & Meurs, 2015). According to the Global gender gap Report (2024), India ranks 129 out of 146 countries.

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According to the gender inequality index West Bengal ranks 19 out of 36 states/UTs in India, 2017-18 by state/UTs.

Both working and non-working women are impacted by gender discrimination, though in different ways. In addition to the double burden of paid labour and unpaid home duties, working women also experience harassment at work, income disparities, and limited career advancement. On the other hand, non-working women face social preconceptions that limit them to traditional roles, financial dependence, diminished decision-making authority, and a devaluing of domestic work (Papanek, 1979). In this paper, the researcher describes the gender discrimination faced by both working and non-working women in Haora District.

History

Women during the Vedic period enjoyed equal status and freedom as men (Kumbhare, 2009). They had the right to choose their husband and married at a mature age. They were educated and they had the same respectful position in the society. In the medieval period, the position and status of women in society declined (Bardsley, 2007). In this period women had no right to literacy, child marriage, dowry system, Jawhar, sati daho paratha, parda paratha, and devdasi culture had started at that time. Women had no right to talk and live independently or freely. During British Raj Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar fought to increase the position of women in society (Majee, 2020). After that many movements took place and many acts were enacted for the betterment of women in society. Now in the present day, women's position in society is better than medieval period (Stuard, 2012). However, they are still struggling to achieve their proper power and position in society. In most interior places women of today are still dominated by man and their position in society has not greatly improved.

Study Area

Haora District is situated on the eastern side of West Bengal. It is the second smallest district after Kolkata in West Bengal. In terms of the geographical area, this district is ranked 17 out of 19 districts in West Bengal (Duary, 2010). The district extended from 22° 12' North to 22° 48' North latitude and 87° 50' East to 88° 23' East longitude. The total area of this district is 1467 sq km and consists of two subdivisions (Hoara and Uluberia), two municipalities (Bally and Uluberia), one municipal corporation (Hoara), and 14 community development blocks (Fig:1). According to the Census of India (2011), the total population was found to be more than 48 lakh where the sex ratio is about 935 females for every 1000 males, and 83.85 percent of the total population was found literate in Hoara district. Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) Populations make up 14.82 percent and 0.31 percent respectively. From 2001 to 2011 the population growth rate experienced 13.31 percent.

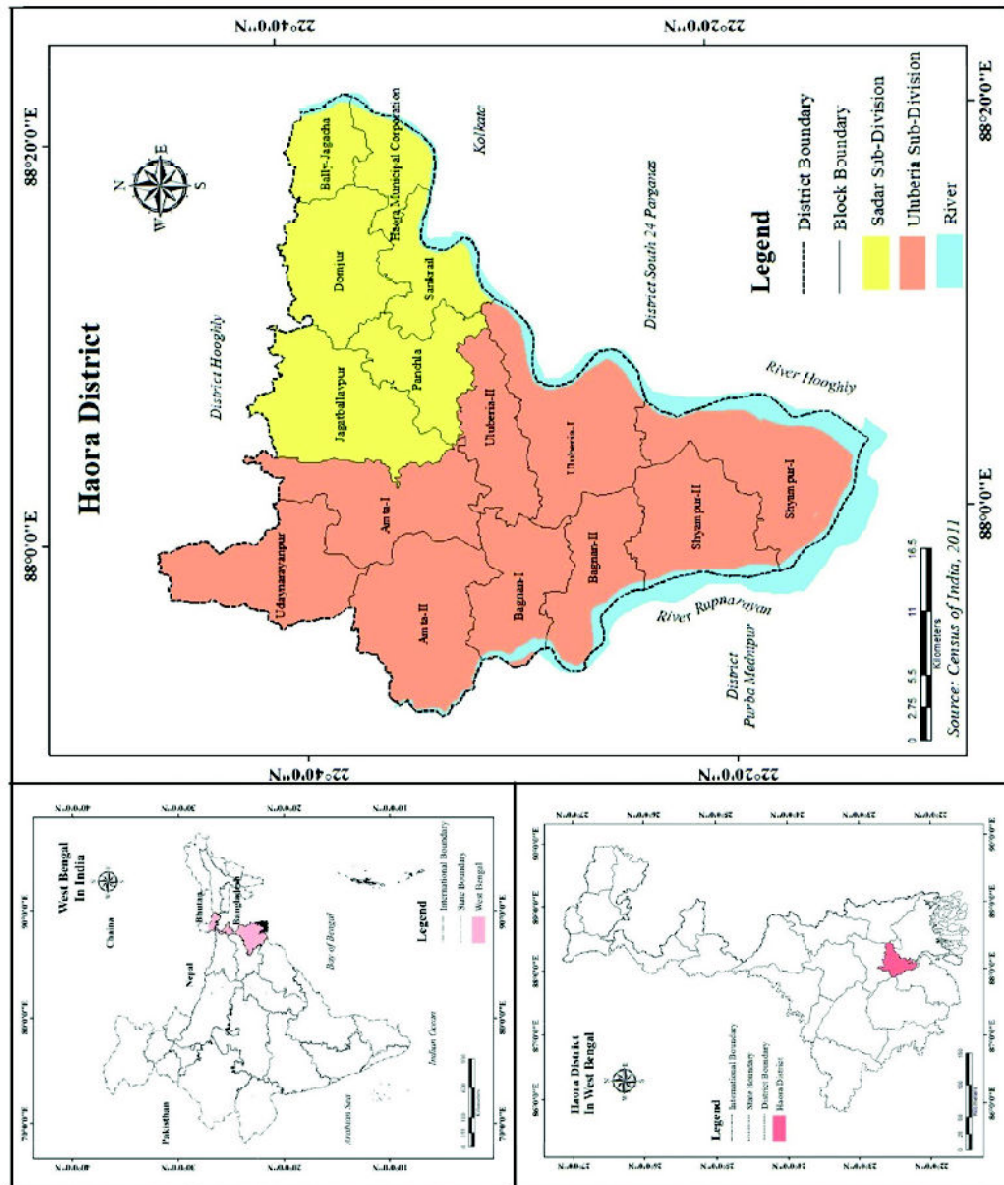


Fig. 1: Location of the study area.

Literature Review

In the literature review, it can be stated that men and women are equally important to the survival of a family (Barrow, 1986). From the early period, society separated their work, that is, men were the earning members of the house and women did the household work (Bruce, 1989). Society gives preference to men over women, so men get the power to dominate the family, and women, like - the decision-making power of women, women's self-dependency, etc. for that women are deprived and under-estimated in every stage of their lives (Leahy & Doughney, 2006). This gender discrimination has created unevenness in male-female literacy and work participation rates (England, 2011). Nowadays, women's positions have been a little bit uplifted. But in most situations women realize their position is not the same as men, however, they contribute their income to the family. Many research works have been made on this topic by different authors in different ways. According to Chaudhuri (2021), Indian women are inconsistently affected by harassment including sexual harassment in the workplace and this study also found how Social norms often prevent women from speaking out against discriminatory practices, which helps perpetuate structural inequality. Deshpande (2020) studied the lack of financial independence of non-working Indian women and their restrictions on decision-making. This study found gender inequality is also perpetuated by patriarchal values that confine women to traditional roles and prevent them from pursuing higher education or mobility. Gupta et al. (2022), highlighted intersectional gender discrimination pointing out that caste, class, and ethnicity make it worse for women and suggested some policies regarding these problems. Nair et al. (2021) found women are experiencing workplace bias. Ferrant and Thim (2019) suggested a social protection scheme for women. Blau and Kahn (2017) studied maternity protections and equal pay laws to reduce workplace discrimination. The Govt. of India initiatives like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao and the Maternity Benefit Act (2017), aim to empower women, although their effectiveness is debated (Deshpande, 2020). Based on the previous literature it has been found that both working and non-working women are differently affected by gender inequality as it is a multi effects problem. To reduce this or remove this from society systemic reforms in education, workplace policies, and social norms are essential. More research and legislative initiatives are needed to remove barriers to gender equality.

Objectives

The main objectives of the present study are to find out the types of gender discrimination prevalent with a focus on its causes and effects on society and to identify the necessary steps to reduce gender discrimination for women's welfare.

Database and Methodology

The study was mainly based on secondary data collected from various reliable sources. The following sources provided the secondary data:

Governmental and Administrative Sources:

Reports of local government, community development, and infrastructure were gathered from the Panchayat Bhavan of West Bengal. Demographic information and maps for this study were provided by the survey department of the Howrah Municipal Corporation (HMC). The Survey of India (SoI) organization provided the topographical data and base maps that formed the foundation of the cartographic and spatial analysis.

Non-Statistical Sources:

The relevant published materials, information about historical, social, and economic circumstances, were acquired from institutions like the Howrah Library and the National Library in Kolkata. Google and N-LIST (National Library and Information Services Infrastructure for Scholarly Content) were among the platforms used to access digital academic journals, articles, and e-books that improved the study.

Data Analysis and Processing:

The patterns, trends, and relationships were found by closely examining the collected data through qualitative as well as quantitative analysis to make sure they aligned with the objectives of the study. Diagrams and charts were used to represent the statistical data. Microsoft Excel and SPSS were utilized to enable comparative analysis and statistical outputs. The maps that have been used in this study were generated through the Geographic Information System (GIS) by integrating many data layers.

The final step was to compile all of the results into a coherent report. This required integrating maps and diagrams, compiling the data that had been examined, and producing a coherent narrative that adhered to the study's objectives. The report presented the results of the investigation and provided useful advice.

Different Type of Gender Discriminations

In this study based on collected data and previous literature, gender discrimination has been classified into three categories (Shastri, 2014; Salvini, 2024; Raju et al., 2020). These are respectively; social, cultural, and economic discrimination. The result and observation are described below:

1. Social

- Before Birth – Many families want to identify the sex of the baby after 4 months of conception. They plan to abort the baby if it is found to be a girl. Sometimes working mothers have no power to protest it.
- Discrimination after Birth – After the birth of a male child father and family celebrate by distributing sweets and sometimes organizing parties for friends and relatives. And show

the gratitude to the god for these blessings of the baby boy. Many times female babies of working or non-working mothers are tortured and ignored by their family members.

- Early Childhood – In many families, female children participate in household work to help their mother or other female family members. Sometimes she takes care of her little brother and sister as a mother. Because of that, she does not get proper time for her studies. And at a young age due to low literacy, she does not get a proper job.
- Ignored Female Child – sometimes parents only focus on their boy child and are busy fulfilling his needs. They ignore the needs of their female child. This deprivation creates low self-esteem. For that, women do not feel confident to start the job.
- Literacy and Medical Care – Because of gender discrimination, parents prefer their boy child because they believe that a young age boy child supports her family financially and cares for them. But the girl child will go to another house after marriage. So they do not want to waste their money on the girl child. Due to that, female children are deprived of their study and medical care. For that, the female school dropout is greater than the male. Due to that, working women do not get proper jobs and suffer from health issues like low blood pressure, which hampers their professional lives (Seema Jayachandran, 2024).
- Restricted Behaviour and Free Mobility – Family members always restrict their female member's behaviors although she is doing her job. Parents want to control their female child, they try to decide how she walks, how she behaves, how she dresses, and everything. Even controlling their free mobility means restriction to last night parties, outings, long drives with friends, etc.
- Selection of Life Partner – In this modern era, in many cases, parents select the groom for their girl without her knowledge even though she is doing the job. And force her to marry their selected groom. If the girl selects her life partner and marries her selected partner against her parents, then in many cases, parents break all relations with that girl child.
- Marriage – The average age of marriage of a girl is 18 years. But many parents give marriage to their daughter before the average age. Because they believe that their daughter is a burden on them. They want to release this burden as early as possible. For that, women cannot complete their studies and do not get good jobs.
- Remarriage – The backwardness of society is highlighted when a working female gets married after divorce or after the death of his husband. The gossip will start after this practice. And now also society questions their character.
- Selection of Guardian Name of Child – As per the norms, children use their father's name as their guardian, although their mother is financially independent. After the death of the

father, the mother can use her name as her children's guardian. Here we see the discrimination between father and mother preferences created by society.

2. Cultural

- Male Preference – If the mother gives birth to a male child then the baby and mother both get proper treatments to maintain their health. But if the mother gives birth to a female child then in many cases, both baby and mother do not get proper treatments to maintain their health, and causes malnutrition. Because the husband thinks he has the right to his wife's money. Sometimes working lady cannot spend their own income money independently (Raju et al., 2020)
- Rituals Belief – Due to the superiority of males in family and society, women are deprived of many rituals, although they contribute money to the family. She plays a supportive role in helping the male (Raju et al., 2020).

3. Economic

- Deprive from Property – Due to gender discrimination, in most cases, female children do not get their parent's property. Because parents think if they share their property with the girl child then after marriage all their property goes outside of their family. So they deprive their female child. In most cases, when a family buys a property, then family members want to buy this in a male member's name. Sometimes she invests money in this property.
- Work Selection and Participation – In this modern time, society believes all jobs are not suitable for women. Females face many obstacles in the job sector. She is deprived in many situations in the workplace (Raju et al., 2020).
- Long Distance Working Place – If the men get jobs at a far distance in their home, most of the time they stay there and do the job. But in the case of females, due to family responsibilities maximum time, they leave the job and in a few cases, they continue this job with lots of struggle. And if they decide to stay in that place then the gossip starts about her job and her character.

Causes of Gender Discrimination

- Male Dominating Society – In this social system, men feel they are superior to women and have power over women although she is financially independent. It creates a negative effect on women. Women have been deprived in different stages of their life and men have held more power and privileges.
- Various Social Beliefs – It is social beliefs for women as well as working women that restrict behavior and free mobility, obeying their husband's decisions, taking care of their family and children, doing household work, etc. Society believes all women are born to do

household work. With the exclusive responsibility of home and job sectors, the health condition of women has decreased and sometimes they suffer from depression and critical illness.

- Lack of Strong Protest by Women - Women are denoted as a weaker section of society. The main causes of the lack of strong protest by women are lack of education, low self-esteem, and dependency on male counterparts even after her financial independence.
- Workplace Discrimination- Due to gender discrimination, many women face negative situations in the workplace. Many-time due to their superiority complex men do not want to obey the instructions of their female bosses. Sometimes they participated in back-beaching against their female colleagues. Many of them create questions about her efficiency. Many working women are faced with unfair treatment by male colleagues. Because of these gender issues, they are deprived of the proper promotion even after they have the talent. Women face wage differences in most of the unorganized sectors. In this modern era, some workplaces have no separate toilets for women.
- Lack of Respect for Women – In this patriarchal society, not only the male, but the female is also responsible for women's deprivation. Due to the mindset of society, women's ideology has not changed. Because the upbringing of a child depends on his mother and other female family member's lessons. Excessive love and privilege by the mother and family members of the boy child creates a superiority complex in his mind. It creates a lack of disrespect for women in their minds. Sometimes the child does not respect the working mother because they notice that after financial independence she has no power, her father and other male family members control her.
- Lack of Legal Protection - There are many laws against gender discrimination in India. But the mentality of the society cannot be changed. There is no proper legal support for women who are doing outside jobs at night. Also, the lack of women protesting against this discrimination cannot stop this from the root (Human Rights Careers).

Effects of Gender Discrimination

- Sex Ratio - Due to the excess killing of girl children in the womb sex ratio has been affected in Haora District. According to census 2021 and 2011, in Haora District, the sex ratio was 935 and 939 females out of 1000 males.
- Maternity Death - A lot of female death occurs while giving birth to a baby due to malnutrition and anaemia which also affects the sex ratio. The main causes of this death rate are – high blood pressure, high sugar levels, hypertension, and anaemia.
- Rate of Woman Literacy - Women are denied their right to education even though a lot of government programs are in place for imparting female education and this is particularly

true in lower levels of the society. However, the gap between male and female literacy is seen clearly.

Table 1: Block wise sex ratio and Literacy rate of Hoara District (2011)

Name of Block	Sex Ratio	Male Literate	Female Literate	Total Literacy
Sadar Subdivision				
Bally- Jagacha	941	91.02	84.26	87.75
Domjur	965	84.17	78.38	81.33
Panchla	951	82.82	74.91	78.98
Sankrile	947	86.55	79.64	83.19
Jagatballavpur	951	83.6	74.56	79.2
Haora (MC)	919	91.06	86.15	88.71
Bally (M)	870	90.96	86.48	88.9
Uluberia Sub-Division				
Uluberia - I	962	81.86	72.75	77.39
Uluberia - II	958	82.67	73.33	78.05
Amta - I	950	86.18	76.07	81.26
Amta - II	944	86.68	75.93	81.47
Udaynarayanpur	946	86.37	75.41	81.05
Bagnan -I	945	88	79.81	84.02
Bagnan -II	945	86.83	78.05	82.57
Shyampur - I	966	83.98	73.75	78.96
Shyampur - II	952	85.18	75.57	80.49
Uluberia (M)	949	83.72	76.27	80.1

Source: Census of India, 2011

Table no. 1 reflects that Bally (M) areas have a lower sex ratio among the whole Haora District. HMC also has the 2nd lowest sex ratio in the Haora District. Both of these areas are urban areas. So the development of this area and the position of females in this area are better than other areas in the Haora District. Other side Udaynarayanpur, Amta-I & II, Bagnan-I & II, and Shyampur-I are rural areas. In those areas, gender discrimination is high which affects the sex ratio in these areas. Table 1 also represents that the total literacy rate is high in HMC, Bally (M) area, because these areas are the urban and suburban areas; and low literacy rate are found

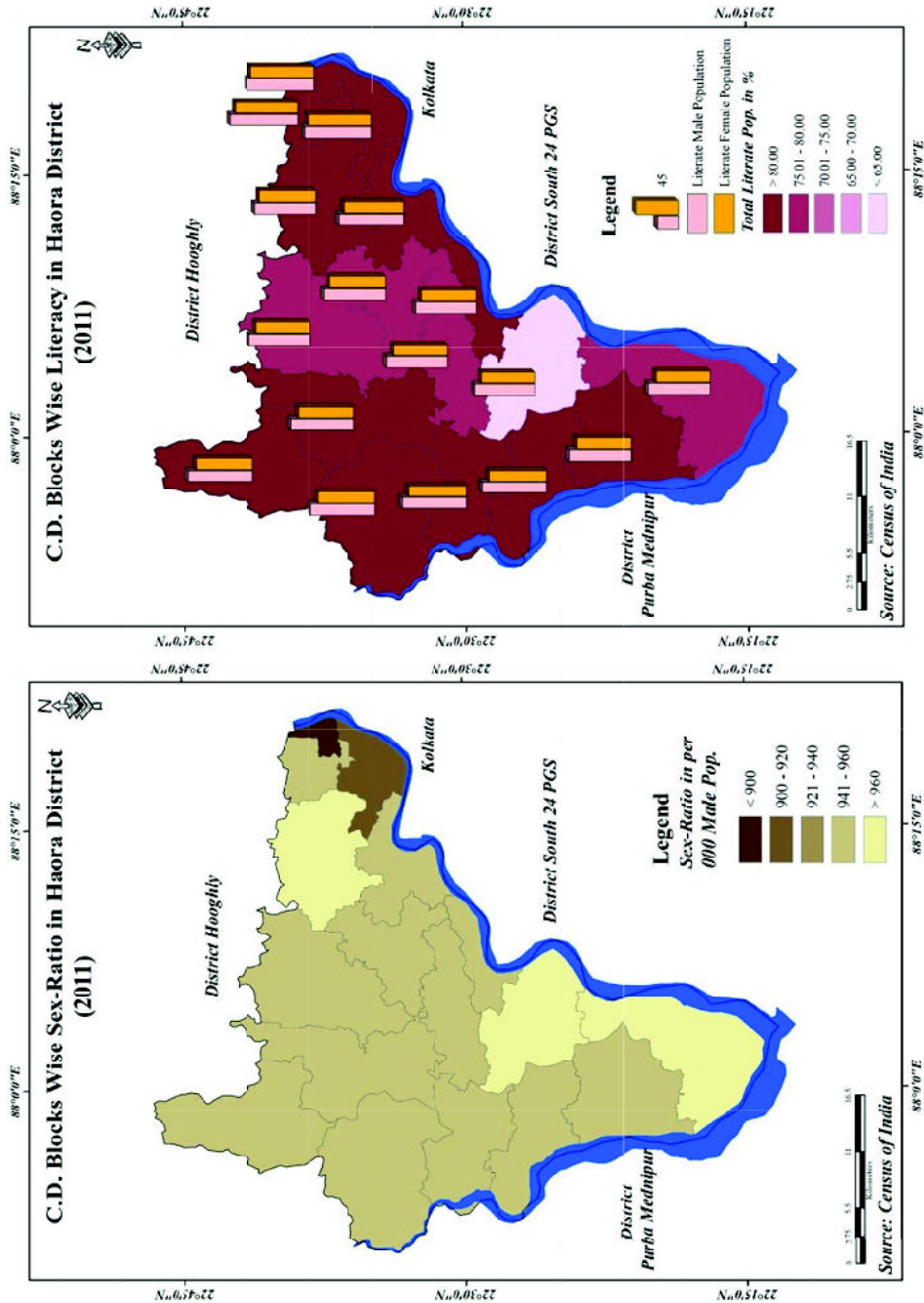


Fig.2: a. Sex ratio and b. Literacy rate of Haora District

in Uluberia- II. The maximum literacy gender gap is seen in Udaynarayanpur, Amta-I, Amta-II, and Shyampur –I. Another side, Bally (M) and HMC areas are low literacy gender gap areas.

- Malnutrition - Because of gender bias, family members as well as women herself, also neglect their health. Sometimes I do not take food properly. In poor families, the mother and girl child sacrifice their food for the male members. This has increased the malnutrition problem in women. Table no. 1 and Fig. No. 3 shows that the total literacy rate is high in HMC, Bally (M) area because this area is an urban and suburban area. and low literacy rates are found in Uluberia- II the maximum literacy gender gap is seen in Udaynarayanpur, Amta-I, Amta-II, and Shyampur–I. On the other side Bally (M) and HMC areas are low literacy gender gap areas.

Table: 2. Year-wise literacy rate of Haora District

Year	Male Literacy	Female Literacy
1951	44.9	17.6
1961	55.5	26.9
1971	57.6	34
1981	67.8	46.1
1991	76.1	57.8
2001	83.2	70.1
2011	84.7	75

Source: Census of India, 2011

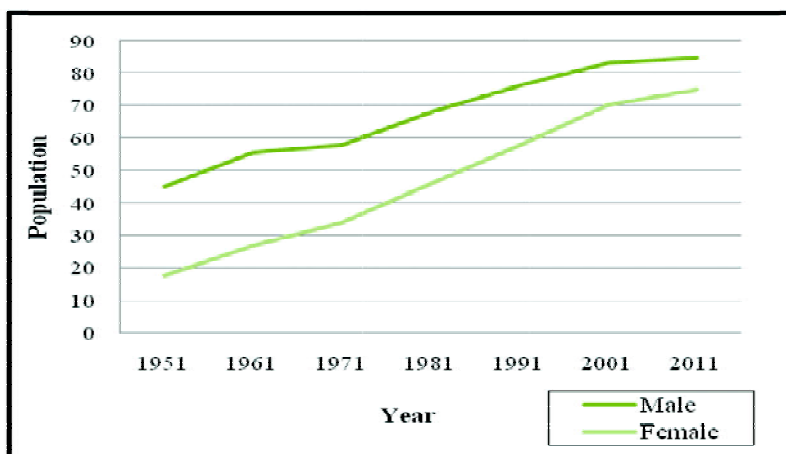


Fig. 3: Decadal Literacy Rate by Sex in Haora District

- Child Marriage - Female child marriage is still a burning issue in some communities and contributes to the deprivation of women from a normal childhood and education. Due to child marriage girls face early pregnancy, decreasing health, sexual abuse, exploitation, domestic violence, and heavy responsibility of domestic work in their teenage (UNICEF, India).

Table. 3: Changing pattern of child marriage (%) in Haora District and West Bengal

DISTRICT	NFHS-4			NFHS-5			CHANGE		
	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total
Haora	37.2	26.8	30.6	33.3	29.9	30.9	-4.0	3.1	0.3
West Bengal	50.9	30.0	44.5	49.1	27.6	42.5	-1.8	-2.4	-2.0

Sources: Computed From NFHS- 4 And 5

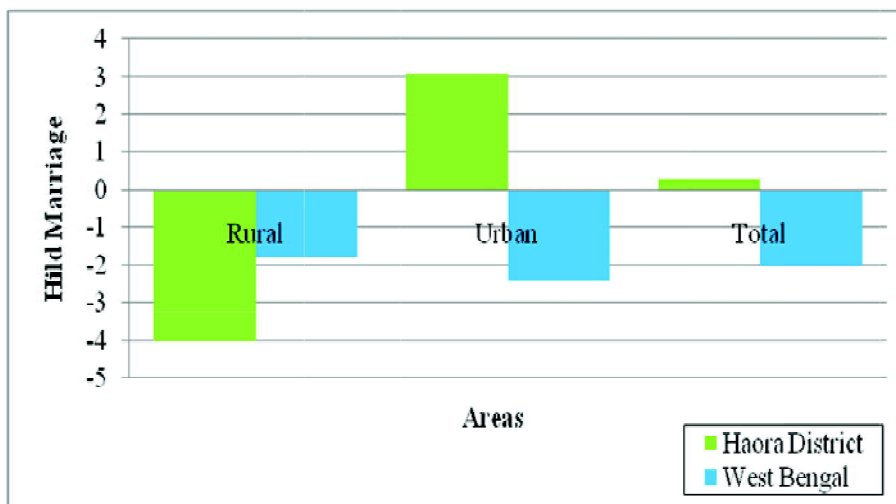


Fig. 4: Changing pattern of child marriage (%) in Haora District and West Bengal

Figure 4 represents that positive change in this problem has been seen in the urban area Of Haora District. Otherwise, child marriage is not abolished in the rural area of Haora District and rural-urban areas of West Bengal

- Violence and Sexual Harassment - Due to gender discrimination mentality, some men think that they are superior to women and have the power to dominate any women. They sometimes think they have the right to do anything to women. Due to this mentality

violence and sexual harassment of women have increased day by day (Seema Jayachandran, 2024).

- Mental Health – Due to gender discrimination, many parents prefer their boy child over their girl child. So the girl child is deprived in every stage of their life. From an early age, women can understand they are the burden of their family. This attitude creates depression, and trauma, and increases stress in the women's minds (Kendra Kubala, 2021).
- Low Self-Esteem – Social cultural behavior of the family on the girl child, makes them dependent on male family members. For that, they lose their confidence. This creates a lack of decision-making power, and limited access to finance and also creates fear for free mobility (Kendra Kubala, 2021).
- Dowry – The situation of women in our society is so poor, that's why the dowry program was started. This ritual told that a woman is a burden to a family. For that parents give dowry in their daughter's marriage to release the burden from their family and the groom's family takes dowry because they took the burden of the woman for her next life.
- Veil System – The Veil system is still prevalent in the Muslim community, designing women a right to normal life. In this modern time, Muslim women wear *burqa* and go outside for jobs. They feel comfortable in *burqas*. They want to stay with this mindset.
- Bias in Divorce – In Muslim personal law for centuries male was allowed the right to give divorce to his wife only via verbal divorce. A few years ago, working Muslim women who were self-dependent accepted these rituals. However, as per a recent Supreme Court judgment, some respite has come to Muslim women by banning the '*Teen Talaq*' system though it is still being disputed by some Muslim religious organizations.
- Human Trafficking – Human Trafficking is still a huge problem for females mainly for working women. Sometimes she is trapped by human trafficking in the workplace (Dr. P M Nair, 2011).
- Work Participation – The work opportunities are still narrow for women. In many job vacancies, women are not the ideal candidates, according to society. With low education and lack of skill, women cannot get good jobs to increase their status. In this modern era, due to low self-esteem women lose their confidence, and before joining a job they and their family think many times whether it is good or not. Some of the families do not allow their female members to do their job. For that, the Work participation rate of females is less than males. Figure no 4 represents that the percentage of the gender gap in the work participation rate has been reduced year by year. In 1991 it was 47.74% and in 2011 it was 26.22% respectively. This means the work participation rate of females is increasing year by year.

Table 4: Year Wise Gender Gap in Work Participation in Haora District

YEAR	GENDER GAP IN WORK PARTICIPATION (%)
1991	47.74
2001	46.66
2011	46.22

Source: District Census Handbook, 2011

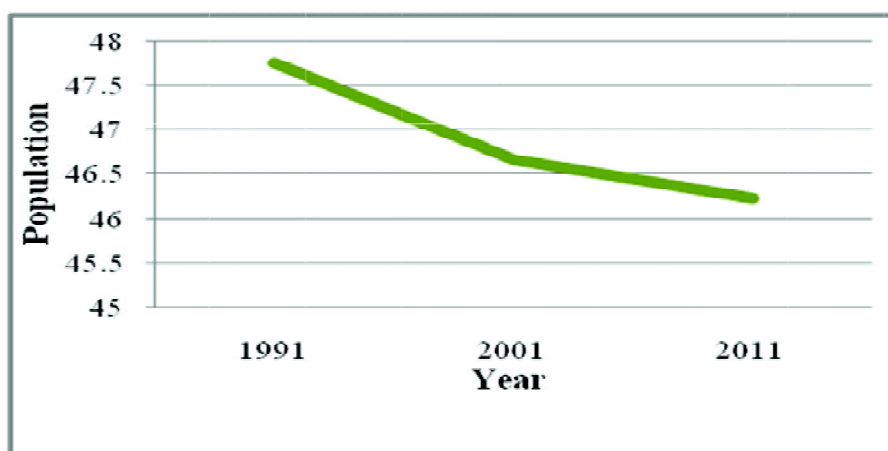
**Fig. 5: Gender Gap in Work Participation Rate (%)**

Figure No. 3 represents that the percentage of the gender gap in the work participation rate has been reduced year by year. In 1991 it was 47.74% and in 2011 it was 26.22% respectively. Means, work participation rate of female in increasing year by year

It can be noticed in Figure 5 that work participation is high in the Sadar Sub-Division mainly in HMC, Domjur, and Sankrail areas. Due to this, many industries, factories, and offices are situated here. So, the job opportunities are high here. And those areas are near to Kolkata. Many people went to Kolkata for jobs. Female work participation is high in those areas compared to other areas. And the male-female work participation gap is low here.

On the other hand, work participation is low in the Uluberia Subdivision mainly in Amta - I, Amta - II, and Bagnan-II. Female work participation is low in those areas. And the male-female work participation gap is high here.

- **Wage Difference** – Due to deprivation of literacy, and proper job skills women sometimes do not get the same wages as men. But in many cases, due to the mentality of society,

Table 5: C D Block wise work participation in Haora District, 2011

NAME OF THE C.D. BLOCKS	TOTAL WORKERS		
	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE
Sadar Sub-Division			
Bally- Jagacha	84461	67070	17391
Domjur	147445	119807	27638
Panchla	101780	77646	24134
Sankrile	125709	101037	24672
Jagatballavpur	100798	81465	19333
Haora (MC)	397084	336600	60448
Bally (M)	108152	89216	18936
Uluberia Sub- Division			
Uluberia - I	78221	63048	15173
Uluberia - II	68224	56494	11727
Amta - I	80508	69779	10729
Amta - II	78745	66420	12325
Udaynarayanpur	81091	63039	18052
Bagnan -I	77943	65143	12800
Bagnan -II	62478	50833	11645
Shyampur - I	73701	62378	11323
Shyampur - II	71877	60015	11862
Uluberia (M)	81667	68180	13487

Source : District Census Handbook, 2011

women are deprived of getting proper wages after the same level of literacy and job skills as men (Sharmila Kantha, 2010).

- Property – Deprivation of property makes females less financially strong than males.
- Socio-Economic Condition – Lack of literacy, malnutrition, child marriage, low self-esteem, dowry program, and deprivation in the working workplace of women all create a low infrastructure of the society which affects the socio-economic condition of society.

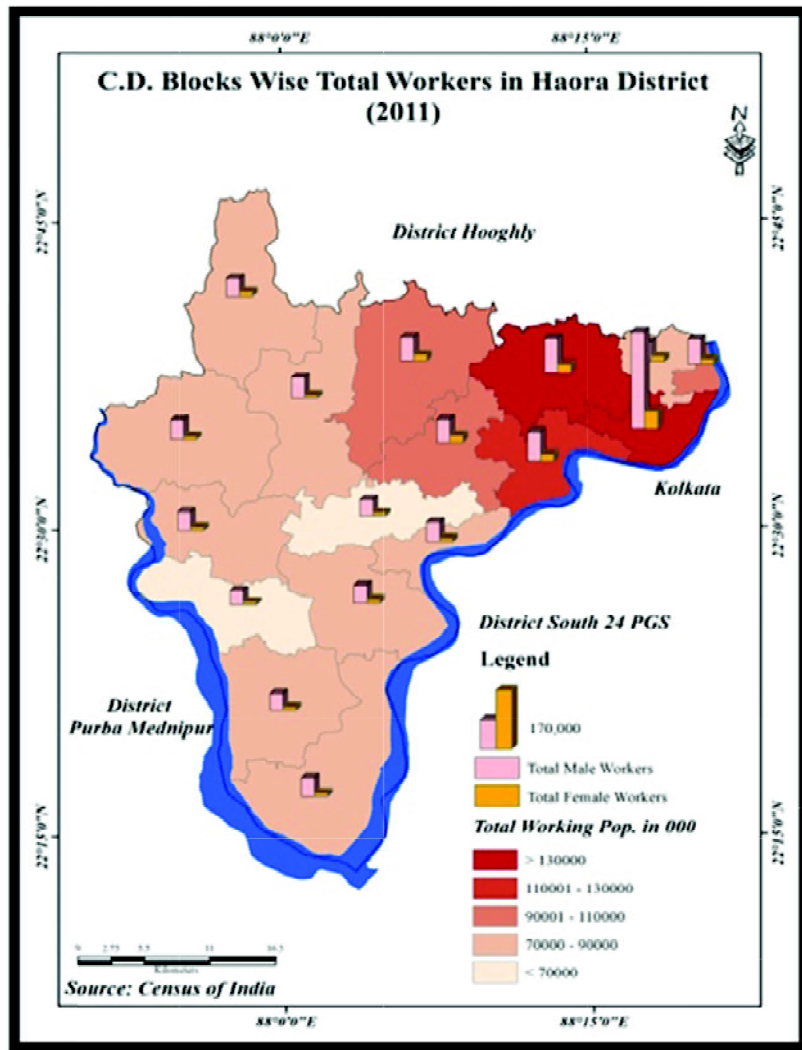


Fig. 6: C. D. Block wise total worker in Haora District, 2011

Necessary Steps for Woman Welfare

Some remedies for reducing gender discrimination in the society of Haora District and better placement of women in so society are as follows-

1. To stop killing girl children in their mother's womb
2. Give proper care and nutrition to female

3. To give female wards equal opportunity for education
4. To stop female child marriage
5. To abolish the discrimination in employment and earning of wages
6. To protect females from family and society-related violence and victimization
7. Give equal survival facilities and freedom
8. Increase women employment
9. The government of India and the government of West Bengal have already implemented some schemes and acts for women's development. Some of them are discussed in the tables below.

Table 6**SCHEMES LAUNCHED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA**

Name of The Schemes	Launching Year	Objective of The Scheme
Beti Bachao Bati Padhao	2015	Improve the education and survival of girls and prevent gender biased sex selection.
Swadhar Greh	2001	Provides shelter, food, clothing, counselling, training, and legal aid to women in different circumstances.
LAWS		
Protection of Women From Domestic Violence Act	2005	Protection of women from domestic violence
Dowry Prohibition Act	1961	Prohibits the giving or taking of dowry.

*Source: Press Information Bureau Government of India,
Ministry of Women and Child Development*

Table 7**SCHEMES LAUNCHED BY GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL**

Name of The Schemes	Launching Year	Objective of The Scheme
Lakshmi Bhandar	August, 2021	It provides a monthly income to women who are economically weaker section of society.
Kanyashree Prakalpa	October, 2013	Aim to improve the status of girls in west bengal, by encouraging them to stay in school and delay marriage until they are 18.

*Source: Department of Women And Child Development and Social Welfare,
Government of West Bengal*

But there are some loopholes in those schemes, many women cheat on government schemes and enjoy their facilities and many women who suffer do not get the facilities. The government should undertake more strategies to protect the schemes for the women who are sufferers.

Conclusion

From the above discussion, we can say that social, cultural, and economic factors are responsible for gender discrimination in Haora District. At present some acts are being passed by the government for the betterment of women's empowerment. However, the public is not always aware of the order of the Government or neglects them intentionally which impedes women's empowerment. Society must appreciate that programs of the society are not possible by man alone.

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