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Gender and Caste Intersectionality in the Indian Context

The current paper deals with the concept of intersectionality, with specific emphasis on interconnectedness of gender and caste discrimination in Indian society. While globalization brought along with it development and prosperity, it also increased the gap between the rich and the poor. Gender and caste inequalities have been deeply rooted in Indian culture and the sudden surge of prosperity leads to power politics by some oligarchs, depriving basic human rights for individuals from the minorities. Women with multiple identities** are still not represented and their opinions not voiced in parliament. There is not much research on the effect of the convergence of multiple identities on the life of individuals, and this paper is an attempt to address this gap in literature. To address the needs of the downtrodden in India, we explore the intersectionality of gender and caste using a lens of cultural conflict as a means to identify the systems, structures, and experiences that can be ameliorated through HRD intervention.

Keywords: gender, caste, intersectionality, multiple identities, Bourdieu, cultural conflict, India.

After almost 60 years of independence, quality education, fair pay, and equal opportunity are some aspects of affirmative policy in India that need to be examined further in research and practice. Globalization in recent years produced lots of

* Intersectionality – is the feminist theory that aims at revealing the discrimination faced by people due to these multiple identities by analyzing and exposing the various layers of complexity (Symington, 2004).

** Multiple identities – people sometimes belong to different communities simultaneously. This might in some cases result in them facing privilege and oppression at the same time (Symington, 2004). For instance Symington (2004) cites an example where a woman can be an accomplished professional and a victim of domestic violence both at the same time. Another example would be of a woman who belongs to a higher caste. In a patriarchal society the person might experience disadvantage for being a woman while experiencing the privilege of belonging to a higher caste.
money for a privileged few, while at the same time it increased the gap between the affluent and poor (Symington, 2004). The Colonial education system, where the eligibility for quality education was determined by an individual’s ethnic, racial, and gender classifications, was one of the initial practices that perpetuated inequality (Jauch, 1999). New technologies, policies and processes of globalization are further fostering these inequalities and discrimination against caste, racial, gender, and sexual minorities. According to Deshpande (2002), the caste inequities are “not mere holdovers from the past but continue to be perpetuated in the present” (p. 20).

In spite of women’s autonomy being the predictor of the performance of programs and policies for international development, gender based discrimination is one of the burning issues that needs to be addressed commonly across boundaries and various disciplines (Singh, 2010). Apart from gender discrimination many factors like caste, sexual orientation, ancestry, socio-economic class, religion, and geographic location play an important role in determining the social position of an individual (Symington, 2004). In spite of being one of the biggest democracies and having the longest history of Affirmative Action policies in place, Indian minorities still face many unfair practices due to a few oligarchies that have risen to power politically, socially, and financially.

The roots of Affirmative Action policies in India can be traced back to 1905 when they were first introduced by Viceroy Curzon for banning the employment of Hindu Bengalis (Basu, 2006). These policies known as reservations or quotas were further amended to favor the individuals from the downtrodden and discriminated castes in 1950 by the Constitution of India (Moses, 2010). Despite all the reservations gender and caste still continue to be the major barriers of development for many individuals and society as a whole.

**Need for the Paper**

Several issues were observed through the review of literature. First, with the increasing number of feminist studies on the changing roles and status of women, studies on the exploration and meaning of gender have gained paramount importance. Research by feminist scholarship has revealed that gender plays an important role in shaping the basic functioning style of a society (Torri, 2009). Despite a lot of research on women studies and gender studies, not many of them have examined the interconnectedness of gender with caste, race, and sexual orientation. Literature indicates a tradeoff between autonomy (lower-caste women) and material comforts (higher-caste women). However, freedom and autonomy are only theoretical and illusionary in the case of Dalit women (Deshpande, 2002). Researchers working in
feminist economics have made some progress in this regard, but there is still a long way to go (Brewer, Conrad, and King, 2002). This paper attempts to take the research in this field a step further. The paper aims to tailor a conceptual framework of intersectionality and cultural conflict to specifically encapsulate the interconnectedness of gender and caste in the Indian context.

Secondly, there is a lot of emphasis on the need for research that is more bottom-up or participatory in nature, as opposed to the traditional male dominated top-down discourses (Torri, 2010). Grappling between unrealistic expectations of society and individualistic interests, women in India have been constantly facing and fighting discrimination. In a society dominated by patriarchal ideologies, women in India have been struggling to create an identity for themselves apart from being known as a daughter, wife, or mother (Razvi, and Roth, 2010). As a result of their multiple identities, depending upon their caste, religion, and socio-economic background, some women have experienced profound forms of discrimination and unfortunately are considered as outliers in most research and studies (Symington, 2004).

Thirdly, most of the current research available on intersectionality is based on the Western contexts of gender and race or gender and class. Extending the focus of current research to the international arena (India for this paper) is useful for understanding the effects of intersectionality of gender and caste on the dynamics between individuals in an organization. The caste system, being the most predominant inequality in Indian society, further warrants the focus of this paper.

Purpose of the Paper

The purpose of the paper is to propose intersectionality to specifically encapsulate the interconnectedness of gender and caste in the Indian context in order for it to be viewed through the lens of cultural conflict. This paper mainly focuses on gender minorities in India that are further discriminated due to their caste, thus revealing multiple identities of women who face different types of discrimination as a result of the combination of their identities. Choosing an under-explored context for the paper represents my effort at filling the knowledge gaps as identified in the previous section.

This paper gives an opportunity for HRD professionals to understand how the organizational policies, programs, and services impact the lives of employees who have converging identities. Being familiar with nuances that are culture specific would help HRD professionals make meaningful distinctions between different groups of employees and take informed decisions about policies to ensure that all individuals fully enjoy their human rights.
The remainder of the paper is divided into three parts. Part One provides theoretical perspectives regarding gender, intersectionality, and caste, particularly in the Indian context. Part Two discusses the conceptual framework based on intersectionality grounded specifically in the Indian context of gender and caste and viewed through the lens of Bourdieu’s cultural conflict theory. The article concludes with discussions and implications for future research and practice.

**Theoretical Perspectives**

This paper is shaped from three major bodies of literature: (1) gender, (2) intersectionality, and (3) caste. All three of these concepts are explored below in the Indian context.

**Gender**

Concepts like race, gender, etc., refer to different groups and concepts in different cultures, but are often used with little reference to the context under discussion leading to misconceptions and confusion (Thurnau, 2008). Gender has long been defined by many feminists as a concept evolved around reproductive differences of individuals that shape societal relationships, identities, and meanings (Connell, 1989). Researchers like Lorber (1994) further consider gender as an organizing principle or a social concept that goes far beyond just the reproductive differences. Some others view gender as a concept that is constantly evolving depending on our everyday lives and the roles we play (Torri, 2009).

Gender, as a fundamental principle underlying societal behaviors, affects major areas of life like work, family and sexuality that are organized on gender principles and the interests of power, hierarchy, and privilege. The classification based on the concept of gender in societies is, more often than not, manifested in many forms like gender specific symbols, images, allocation of resources, and autonomy based on gender. Thus, to gain a holistic understanding of gender one needs to know the context in terms of structure and meaning relevant to the society or culture under study (Torri, 2009).

Recent studies on gender have further analyzed this concept in terms of sex-gender distinction, which assumes that something real exists based on which cultural meanings and social relationships are developed. This interpretation of gender received many critiques from post structural feminists who argued that the concepts of sex and sexuality are in themselves constructed on cultural values and beliefs (Butler, 1990). Lorber (1994) further distinguished sex, sexuality, and gender
by explicitly defining them: (1) sex – biological or genetic characteristics, (2) sexuality – sexual interests or orientation, and (3) gender – identity and social status, thus emphasizing that all the three concepts are culturally and socially constructed.

**Intersectionality**

Intersectionality is a feminist theory which can be used as an analytical tool to study and understand the convergence of multiple identities with gender and to respond appropriately to alleviate the discrimination against oppressed classes. The theory is based on the premise that individuals simultaneously belong to multiple communities (that have emerged from social and power structures in the society) and would experience oppression and privilege both at the same time (Symington, 2004).

Multiple identities tend to push women to extreme fringes and make them more vulnerable to discrimination in terms of access to basic human rights, opportunities, resources, etc. Intersectionality as a theoretical paradigm helps us gain a better understanding, by voicing the opinions of the victims themselves, as opposed to self-interest groups. Intersectionality as a theoretical framework has been used for more than a decade and is different from diversity management in its research focus, intended outcomes, and methodology of implementation. Its main focus is to advocate for the basic rights of minorities like women, disabled, colored, LGBT’s and indigenous individuals (Symington, 2004).

Intersectionality plays a particularly important role in this paper as this tool, when properly implemented, can overcome historically existent gaps and inequalities. Gender and caste based discrimination has been deeply rooted in Indian history and its origins can be traced back thousands of years. The work of many social reformers, academicians, and policies by the government have alleviated the problem to a small extent, but there is still a long way to go in order to break these barriers. In order to be effective a framework needs to be developed that offsets the defects of the previous frameworks and better conceptualizes the provisions of equality (Symington, 2004).

**Caste System and its Origins**

A caste based discriminatory structure is unique to Indian society where individuals are grouped into different castes depending on their family names, decent, and skin color. In spite of many laws and legislation against untouchability, it is still prevalent in India, where individuals are ostracized, especially from the Dalit clan (Human Rights Watch, 2001). Indians living in the urban areas are mostly categorized by their wealth and caste. Although not seen as a major obstacle to opportunities of advancement, many of the matrimonial advertisements specifically mention caste
preferences for the spouse. In the rural areas, social status, access to education, and basic necessities are all based upon the caste of an individual (Baker, 2006).

According to the ancient texts, Indians follow three major themes. One of the themes is the adherence to hierarchical order. Everything in the Universe, animate and inanimate, according to Indians, is arranged in a strong hierarchical order with human beings being at the top of the hierarchy. Among human beings the order is based on castes; within castes the order is based on gender and age (Sinha and Kumar, 2004). The origin of the caste system dates back 3,000 years, where it was mentioned only once in *Purush Sukta*, a part in the famous *Rigveda*. However, social reformers like B. R. Ambedkar and Max Muller have argued that the caste system in the Vedas is an inclusion for the interests of specific groups of individuals (*History of the Indian Caste System*, n.d).

The Caste system in India consists of four groups known as *varnas*, which are further divided into sub categories (Dumont, 1980). Individuals were initially grouped depending on their occupations—priests (*Brahmins*), warriors and kings (*Kshatriyas*), businessmen (*Vaishey*), and manual labor (*Shudras*), listed in their position in the hierarchy (Gupta, 2006). These categories have been further divided into numerous sub-categories, and were strictly codified into society, to cater for the selfish interest and power politics of a few (Baker, 2006).

**Gender and Caste Discrimination in India**

On December 2, 2011, the state of Uttarpradesh, India woke up to the shocking news of a *Dalit* boy being strangled to death because he shared his first name with a person from a higher caste (BBC, 2011). According to the news article, a fourteen years old *Dalit* boy named Neeraj was strangled to death as his father would not change his name in spite of continuous threats from Mr. Chaudhary who was from a higher caste. Though the caste system was abolished in India after the country’s independence in 1947, prejudice still exists and has a profound impact on individuals from lower castes like Dalit Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) (Pandey, 2011).

From an ecological perspective India is a continent with over one billion people, 1,600 languages and dialects (out of which sixteen of them are recognized), thousands of castes and tribes, many major religions (Hinduism is the dominant one) and ethnic groups of the world, extreme poverty, varied geographic and climatic conditions, a low human development index, the largest democracy in which members from minority religions are elevated to the highest positions, and so on. It is rated as the fourth biggest economy on its PPP index by the World Bank and has
a higher gross national income than Germany, Canada, and Russia (Sinha and Kumar, 2004).

Discrimination in the name of caste is equally bad in the Indian society. In spite of having Dalit communities with 200 million people in them, these individuals are still treated as untouchables and discriminated against. In a recent report on untouchability conducted in 565 villages in eleven states in India, public health workers were not willing to enter the houses of the Dalits in 33% of the villages. It has also been reported that:

- In 37.8% of the government schools, Dalit children had to sit separately while eating.
- A total of 27.8% of the villages had police stations where Dalits had restricted entry.
- In 23.5% of the villages, there is no mail delivery to a Dalit’s home.
- In 48.4% of the villages, Dalit’s did not have any access to drinking water. (Razvi and Roth, 2010).

Looking at the negative aspects of the Indian economy, more than one-third of the Indian population is living under the poverty line, with 80% of them surviving on less than $2 (Re. 100) per day. India’s economy does not favor women from low-income groups who are forced to take up unregulated informal work as the economic reforms of the 1990s could not reach out to 90% of the female workers in the informal sector. Even in the formal sector there is a huge gap between the percentage of employed males (23%) and females (7%) (Razvi and Roth, 2010). To add to an already dismal situation, there is much gender discrimination in organizations in India where promotion and retaining prospects for women are not so good as compared to their counterparts (Rajadhyaksha, 2002).

Caste and gender being the major forms of discrimination in Indian society make life even more difficult for individuals who belong to both groups. The conditions for existence become even worse in rural areas where literacy levels are lower than 55% for individuals coming from lower castes (Pandey, 2011). Statistics have revealed that there has been an increase in the violence rate recently towards lower-caste individuals from people from the higher castes. It has been reported that on average three Dalit women are raped per day by individuals from higher–castes, and this is done primarily to reinforce their power and hierarchical position in society. Shockingly, reports by the Human Rights Commission have revealed that rape is a custom in many villages, where girls from lower–castes are forced to sleep with the village head man who invariably is from a higher–caste (Orchard, 2004).

Social activists from the Harijan or Dalit tribe and girls from lower-caste families who are not economically sound are the major targets of land owners. Many of the
land disputes and debts are resolved by sex or rape (Orchard, 2007). According to Sahoo (1997), women from the lower–castes are forced to sleep with the village head man on the first night of their marriage in some parts of Bihar. The irony of the situations being that women from Dalit and Harijan clans are ostracized as untouchables but, when it comes to sexual pleasure, untouchability is not a restraint. This in turn is resulting in an increase of child marriages, as a girl once raped is rendered unmarriageable (Torri, 2009).

Women from upper–castes who live in the same villages and economic conditions do not face as much sexual assault as women from lower–castes. Also, male counterparts from the same caste enjoy better lives and safer living conditions when compared to the female clan. Conditions become intolerable when an individual simultaneously belongs to both minority groups (Orchard, 2007). Government and social workers have looked at issues of caste discrimination and gender discrimination, but they have not been able to efficiently deal with the intersections of both the identities.

Women from higher–castes have different battles to fight that are unique to them because of the status attained by being born into a higher–caste. There is strong opposition to reservations (similar to quotas) given by the government intended for improving the status of women. The opposition to the bill, which reserves one third of the positions in universities and governmental organizations for women, is not solely due to the patriarchal orientation of the society. The Indian ruling class that was once dominated by individuals from higher–castes has undergone drastic changes and currently represents the population of India encapsulating individuals from different classes, castes, religions, and educational backgrounds. The fear of upper–caste women replacing lower–caste men is part of the reason behind the strong opposition faced by the bill (Menon, 2009).

Studies have shown that better social status in terms of caste hierarchy comes at the expense of loss of mobility, freedom of decision making, risk of domestic abuse after marriage, and many more restrictions in terms of dressing, education, etc. (Malhotra et al., 2002). Many women in Southeast Asia who belong to higher–castes also face oppression in many aspects of life and often do not go out in public due to fear of losing face. Ironically, women educated or earning more than their spouses are at a higher risk of domestic violence, as the spouse would view his wife’s better social status as a threat to his dominance (Yick, 2001).

The patriarchal orientation of Indian society is one of the prime reasons for widespread violence against women (irrespective of their social status), which manifests itself in low literacy rates, high female mortality rates, deaths resulting from domestic abuse, high female malnutrition, etc. (Heise, 1989). Long rooted social customs like
dowry, *devadasi*, and *purdah*, make violence against women more prevalent. While some of the customs affect women specifically from the lower–caste, others affect women in general irrespective of their position with regard to caste and social or economic status. Being brought up in a patriarchal society, men often perceive controlling women as a birthright, which is a primary reason for violence against women—apart from the social customs that have been constructed by men (Heise, 1989).

**Failed Affirmative Action in India**

Affirmative action policies in India have not been able to reach economically and socially backward communities, as the policies were mainly concerned with backward castes and only individuals belonging to castes that are considered as backward are qualified to enjoy the reservations. As a ripple these reservations and quotas are increasing the rivalry between different castes, as individuals from higher castes feel that it is unfair to them as the quotas are not based on merit, but are based on the caste of the individual (Basu, 2011).

In spite of the reservations, the seats allotted to lower castes and SCs remain unfilled in many universities and governmental organizations. Only 3% of the students who receive degrees in fields like engineering and medicine in India are from SC and ST (Sowell, 2004). The main reason behind this is the expense involved in schooling (books, tuition, housing, and boarding) and the funding provided by the government is not sufficient to cover all the expenses incurred. While some categories of the lowest castes are doing better than others due to their financial status, governmental policies still need to be revised to reach the marginalized population suffering due to multiple identities (Basu, 2011).

In spite of legislation attempting to protect the basic human rights of discriminated minorities for more than a decade, the statistics on discriminatory practices and their effects on minorities are alarmingly high. This calls for a framework to help understand the effect of current policies on the lives of the downtrodden, so the policies can be reframed from the grass roots level of the society to work more effectively.

**Intersectionality and Cultural Conflict: Conceptual Framework**

Most developmental frameworks are focused on gender relations and fail to recognize that women are a heterogeneous group and the extent of impact is different for women in different groups. The problems experienced by women, who are at the margins facing maximum oppression most of the time, tend to go unnoticed.
Legal frameworks understand gender and caste discrimination as two distinct concepts and fail to realize that they intersect. As a result, victims in many cases of discrimination, as discussed in the previous sections, do not get the justice they rightfully deserve (Symington, 2004). It is very unfortunate that one of the biggest democracies in the world is not able to ensure that all its citizens have reasonable access to their basic human rights.

Frameworks based on tools like intersectionality help expose complexities involved in multiple identities and address women’s issues, analyzing them specifically with relevance to structure and context. Design and implementation stages of frameworks like this should be advanced with caution and care should be taken to encapsulate social, political, economic, and cultural situations to ensure results from the grass roots level. An effective framework would help develop rich analyses regarding the various factors involved in creating a situation, thus challenging the dominant beliefs of society in terms of hierarchy, patriarchy, power politics, and colonialism (Symington, 2004).

Intersectionality as a framework for action involves two major stages. The first stage involves focusing and defining the points of intersection, dynamic patterns, and complex structures that define access to resources by the focus group. Caution should be applied not to analyze the causes of the issues categorically. Eradication of the epidemic called discrimination and providing access to basic human rights to all should be the goal of the intervention. The second stage involves considering the voice and opinions of the victims themselves. This is a bottom–up approach. Instead of analyzing issues at the surface level using middle range theories, individuals from the dominated groups must be contacted to get a better idea of the impact of multiple identities, existing policies, and societal structures on their lives (Symington, 2004). The intent of this paper is to present a theoretical lens that will enable the exploration of this intersectionality of caste and gender as influenced by policy and social structures—Bourdieu’s (1980; 1987) cultural conflict theory.

Bourdieu’s structuralist conflict approach (Morrow and Torres, 1995; Turner, 1991) incorporates subjective schemes of the being of self within contexts—habitus—and objective orientations of positions within a common network—fields. Individual positions within any given field are partially determined by their habitus; interactions occurring between positions result in unequal distributions of power (i.e., capital). In turn, the use of capital to maintain dominant positions within a given field results in symbolic violence toward those in less powerful positions.

Habitus is not simply a representation of belief systems; it is the whole range of ways of thinking, feeling, and acting (Reay, 2004). In essence, these deeply rooted dispositions serve as our “common sense” or seemingly “natural” responses and
personalities. They are also adaptable enough to be generalized to guide behavior, thoughts, and feelings in fields outside of the one where they were originally developed (Topper, 2001). Habitus influences how we walk and talk, how we make decisions, what entertainment we pursue, when and how we display anger or joy or sorrow, and all of the other elements of “being” within a network of interconnected relationships. Some examples of habitus experienced by lower caste women include the demeaning remarks they suffer, domestic abuse, and dowries.

In turn, those interconnected relationships are known as fields (Grenfell and James, 1998; Menchik, 2004). A field is “a structured system of social relations” (Grenfell and James, 1998, p. 16), and that structure includes power relations as well (Topper, 2001, p. 39). Fields are made up of a variety of different positions that compete for capital and that competition results in conflict. These positions within fields are held by individuals, institutions, or actors, and the relationships and interactions (or conflicts) between different positions shape how the field is structured (Topper, 2001). Actors hold positions within these fields based on their ways of being (habitus), which are learned through socialization by way of family and education. Multiple fields (like gender, caste, race, and ethnicity) exist within any given society and new fields can emerge (Menchik, 2004). Lower–caste women experience two dominated fields—gender and caste. Their habitus as members of these oppressed groups reinforces the existence of social structures that continue their oppression, such as restricted entry to places such as police stations, temples, and hospitals and the lack of basic amenities such as water, electricity, and postal service.

As actors interact within their fields, they employ capital (Grenfell and James, 1998). There are four types of capital—economic, cultural, social, and symbolic (Grenfell and James, 2004); economic capital is the foundation from which the other forms of capital emerge. All positions within a field have some amounts of capital, but, the nature and influence of that capital is unequal and results in a hierarchical field structure (Naidoo, 2004). In other words, different positions within a field are determined by the extent to which individuals or institutions have access to capital that is considered valuable in a given field (Topper, 2001). These different types of capital are present in dominant, middle, and lower classes, and within each class there are dominant, intermediate, and dominated factions (Turner, 1991). Evidence of capital inequality includes the devadasi systems, sanctioned sexual assaults by individuals of higher castes, restricted access to education for dalit women, and child marriages.

Unequal power relationships are legitimized through the social construction of social and cultural values that are driven by access to economic capital (Grenfell and James, 2004). As a result, those who are dominated come to accept their positions...
as normal and natural. The use of economic capital to control the field of conflict is “symbolic violence”—those who have more capital are able to control symbolic meanings and to “impose them as legitimate by concealing the power relations which are the basis of its forces” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 4). Symbolic violence is not a physical or explicit violence; instead, symbolic violence is “a gentle, invisible violence, unrecognized as such” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 127). Examples of symbolic violence against lower caste women include aborting female babies, forcing girl children into the flesh trade for family subsistence, and preferential treatment of male children.

**Implications for Research and Practice**

This paper has valuable implications for international and domestic HRD professionals and organizations. Intersectionality as a theoretical lens illuminates how different Indian women’s experiences and contexts are dependent on their class in the caste system. This demonstrates the plausible reason why HRD professionals should not consider these women’s experiences as ones in a simply homogenous group. In addition, the framework is a useful tool to help employees in the organizations deal better with discrimination and oppression, which in turn can increase the commitment of the employees towards the organization. It would create awareness among the employees and would help foster a working environment that is minority friendly, thus increasing the productivity and efficiency of the employees. Many organizations like McDonald’s, Accenture, and Deutsche Bank have employed mentoring, sponsorship, and networking programs to enhance leadership skills and career advancement among their women employees (Shikari, 2011). With enhanced knowledge on the hidden impact of policies on different aspects of an individual’s life due to multiple identities, HRD professionals and organizational leaders can take informed decisions while revamping their policies.

Basically, the barriers faced by many women caused by the caste system are directly connected with the social structure in Indian society. This means that in order to alleviate the problems, more active and practical interventions on the part of the Indian government—the highest level of organization in nation—are required beyond the failure of affirmative action. In this sense, this paper highlights the importance of the responsibilities and interventions of the Indian government from national human resource development (NHRD) perspectives, keeping pace with socio-economic change in the global and domestic context. Cho and McLean (2004) suggest that desirable outcomes of excellent NHRD include the increase of education opportunity and higher quality, low illiteracy rates, the decline of employment in socially undesirable occupations (prostitution, drug dealing, and illegal
activities), and the improvement of health situations through education and training. Although NHRD may not be a perfect solution, the dream of NHRD that pursues developing individuals and organizations so that they can be productive, safe, supportive, successful, and ethical (Cho and McLean, 2004) will be a positive alternative for minority women to enjoy better conditions and their individual career development.

Last, this paper also provides valuable insights into Indian culture and societal norms for feminist and critical researchers. According to McLean (2006), the field of HRD can make valuable contributions to community development and is not confined to the boundaries of organizations. This paper can contribute as a guiding framework for the NGOs working in India towards the betterment and human rights of the downtrodden. Informed intervention would result in program designs with wider reach, thus ensuring individuals at the fringes are represented.

**Future Research**

This paper is an attempt to address the gap in the literature on intersectionality that is grounded in culture specific context (Brewer, Conrad and King, 2002). More research needs to be done in this direction. The current paper addresses Indian culture in general, but India is a diverse country where practices and cultures vary from state to state. Inter-state analyses of intersectionality would help provide better insight into the problems faced by minorities and help design intervention that is specific to each state, thus making them more efficient and effective.

Another area that needs further attention is different kinds of intersectionality—gender and literacy, gender and class (social, economic, etc.). Also, the effect of literacy, marriage, career, and financial background on gender and caste discrimination can be studied to give a better understanding of the interrelations. The scope of this paper has been limited to introducing a conceptual framework that can be used to empirically study the interlocked phenomena of caste and gender. Conducting qualitative and quantitative studies among the communities of the target group can further enhance knowledge and spread awareness regarding gender and caste discrimination.

**Conclusion**

In a developing country like India, which has undergone a lot of change in terms of its economic, industrial, and technological structures, it is very distressing to see the condition of oppressed groups that comprise up to one third of the country's
population. In spite of women being worshipped as goddesses and equality being preached in the Vedic verses, the reality seems to be harsh and ironical. Weak theoretical frames addressing the issue of discrimination at the intersections, male-dominated governing bodies, and corrupt structures have been found to be the main reasons of oppression (Singh, 2010). A strategic framework that is sound in its basic building blocks is needed to address the burning issue of gender and caste discrimination, especially as this practice has been rooted historically into the Indian society.

A framework of this magnitude, if not implemented accurately, can be a dismal failure, just like the existing policies and reforms currently in place. The main objective of the program should be development of human resources, both at the societal and the organizational level, depending upon the magnitude and context of the intervention. The foci of the program should be individuals at the fringes and data sets collected should include their specific experiences. Project resources need to be allocated to benefit the target group in particular. Empowering the individuals to access their basic human rights and educating them on informal and formal employment opportunities would, to a great extent, solve the problem of extreme oppression and violence (Symington, 2004).

References


Gender and Caste Intersectionality in the Indian Context


Intersekcjonalność płci i kasty w Indiach

**Streszczenie**

W artykule przedstawiono ideę intersekcjonalności (intersectionality) zwracając szczególną uwagę na współzależność dyskryminacji ze względu na płeć i ze względu na kastę, występujących w społeczeństwie indyjskim. Choć globalizacja przyniosła rozwój i dobrobyt, to zwiększyła także przepaść pomiędzy bogatymi a biednymi. Nierówności wynikające z płci oraz kasty są głęboko zakorzenione w kulturze Indii, a nagła fala dobrobytu sprawiła, że niektórzy oligarchowie zaczęli stosować politykę siły, pozbawiając przedstawicieli różnych mniejszości podstawowych praw ludzkich. Kobiety o wielowymiarowej tożsamości (multiple identity) nadal nie są reprezentowane w parlamentach, a ich opinie nie są brane pod uwagę. Nie ma wielu badań na temat wpływu konwergencji cech dyskryminujących na życie danej osoby. Aby zająć się potrzebami osób uciśnionych w Indiach, badamy zagadnienie intersekcjonalności płci i kasty przez pryzmat konfliktu kulturowego. Chcemy w ten sposób określić, które systemy, struktury i doświadczenia można poprawić dzięki zastosowaniu idei rozwoju zasobów ludzkich (Human Resource Development).

**Słowa kluczowe:** płeć, płeć kulturowa/dżender, kasta, intersekcjonalność, wielowymiarowa tożsamość, konflikt kulturowy, Indie, Bourdieu.

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