The Paths to Equal: Multidimensional Framework to Measure Empowerment Deficiency and Gender Gap

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OPEN ACCESS

Manuscript ID:
ASH-2025-13018964

Volume: 13

Issue: 1

Month: July

Year: 2025

P-ISSN: 2321-788X

E-ISSN: 2582-0397

Received: 28.04.2025

Accepted: 10.06.2025

Published Online: 01.07.2025

Citation:
Nishanthi, PU. "The Paths to Equal: Multidimensional Framework to Measure Empowerment Deficiency and Gender Gap." *Shanlax International Journal of Arts, Science and Humanities*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2025, pp. 1–13.

DOI:
https://doi.org/10.34293/sijash.v13i1.8964

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Abstract

Paths to equal is a comprehensive view of nations' advancements in women's empowerment and gender equality because this is based on two indices WEI and GGPI. The main theme of this article is to analyse different aspects of multidimensional framework used by UNDP to measure empowerment gap and gender gap. This is a review article based on 'Paths to equal: Twin Indices on Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality'. Only secondary data has been used. Source of data is the report itself. In this article dimensions and indicators of each WEI and GGGI has been analysed. Women empowerment and gender gap has been analysed separately and jointly by country wise and region wise. A different picture of gender parity and women empowerment is derived when two indices are analysed separately and jointly across various countries, regions and dimensions. The results, when viewed through this new perspective, are dismal. No nation has attained complete gender parity, and women's autonomy and authority to make decisions and take advantage of opportunities are still severely limited. Significant gender disparities and low levels of women's empowerment are prevalent. Additionally, the data demonstrates that improving human development alone is not the solution. Some of the narrowest gender inequalities are seen in World nations that rank lower on the Human Development Index. Definitely, twin indices offer a clear synopsis of complicated topics, they can be helpful for policy analysis and decision-making. While each focus on a distinct set of concerns, taken as a whole, they offer a more comprehensive view of nations' progress towards gender parity and women's empowerment.

Keywords: Women's Empowerment, Gender Gap Measurement, Multidimensional Framework Gender Equality Indicators, UNDP Indices, Sustainable Development Goals

Introduction

The world is at a pivotal juncture because women's disadvantages have been made worse by a number of interconnected global crises, such as ongoing and new violent conflicts, growing societal polarisation, climate change and the increase in natural disasters, and the ongoing cost-of-living crisis brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic's aftershocks. Prior to these cascading crises, the world was already on track to reach gender equality by 2030, but current trends have further slowed development. There are numerous challenges in the way of equality. However, it is the only way to create a world that is more sustainable, prosperous, and peaceful. UNDP went for a multidimensional framework to measure gender disparity and empowering deficiencies that focusses on fulfilling the promise of gender equality, protecting women's and girls' human rights, and guaranteeing the full realisation of their fundamental freedoms. The UNDP and UN Women have partnered to broaden policies that direct national and international policy action, research, and advocacy on gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls as progress towards gender equality stagnates. The twin experimental gender indicators are the outcome of this partnership. The twin indices will offer a critical gender perspective and encourage policy change and group action to fulfil

the commitments made in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Beijing Declaration, and the Platform for Action. This article is trying to answer the question of whether the 'Paths to equal' is offering a more comprehensive view of nations' advancements in gender equality and women's empowerment because this is based on two indices WEI and GGPI. The main purpose of this article is to bring out the pluses of having a multidimensional framework used by UNDP to measure empowerment gap and gender gap.

Arriving at twin Index Approach

The international community's commitment to gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment has been highlighted by global development frameworks like the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995, the Millennium Declaration in 2000, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015. These frameworks have also underlined the importance of gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation systems. There is still more work to be done to identify game-changers, identify the root causes of systemic gender inequity, and inspire more pledges as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are just seven years away from completion.

The Women's Empowerment Index (WEI) and the Global Gender Parity Index (GGPI) are effective tools in this endeavour. They complement the United Nations Development Programme's current composite gender indices, the Gender Development Index, the Gender Inequality Index, and the Gender Social Norms Index. At the national and international levels, gender disparity has detrimental effects on the economy, society, and frequently the environment. In this sense, a gender gap is produced by inequity. Scientists from a variety of disciplines and international organisations were drawn to a comprehensive investigation of the gender gap phenomena at many levels when the Sustainable Development Goals emphasised the need to close the gender gap. A significant amount of gender inequity can be explained by women in public sector management, administration, and politics. Inequality as measured by the Gender Gap Index is reduced by policies that enhance the presence of women in parliaments, as heads of state, as ministers, and in management of the public sector. One of the primary elements of the Gender Gap Index is economic statistics. Together, they help answer two interlinked yet distinct questions at the core of women's rights and human development:

- Do girls and women have freedom to choose for themselves and take advantage of possibilities in life?
- Has gender parity been realised?

Gender parity can be achieved at various levels of success, particularly when overall achievement is low and the full potential of both men and women is not being reached. It is impossible to dispute the two metrics' link and dependency, nevertheless. As long as women's rights and opportunities in society are not equal to those of males, women and girls will never reach their full potential. Eliminating the gap in results between men and women is essential to redistributing power, including the capacity to exercise rights and realise one's full potential.

Women and girls who have equal access to education will have more resources and possibilities in life, such as better chances to obtain respectable employment, more political representation, and so forth. Similarly, promoting gender equality and ensuring that decision-makers fulfil their responsibilities depend on women's power, especially collective activity. A conceptual framework for tackling gender equality and women's empowerment is provided by the capabilities approach, which forms the basis of human development. It seeks to fairly increase opportunities for all while respecting their fundamental freedoms and human rights, so that everyone, regardless of gender, has access to all options. Measuring gender equality in capabilities through new gender indices is also supported by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development's adoption of the capabilities approach, which holds that the "ultimate purpose of development is to improve people's well-being" (Paths to Equal). UNDP went for a multidimensional framework when the world is dealing with numerous interconnected health, climate, and humanitarian crises, as well as widespread and deepening societal polarisation that threatens human development and exacerbates existing power imbalances and gender disparities.

Various studies on WEI and GGGI have pointed out the need for arriving a new index. Women's empowerment is an umbrella term that includes, among other things, involvement in politics, wages, labour market access, education, and the ability to make important decisions. Improvements in women's empowerment raise a nation's degree of development (Medina and Herrarte). One important measure of gender inequality in the world is the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI). Disparities between men and women have been discussed throughout sectors and decision-making levels, and it's helpful to track the extent of access to resources and opportunities (Radha and Sonam). Governments are encouraged by Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) to track advancements in gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment. This mandate, which calls for women's empowerment to be precisely defined, sufficiently assessed using representative and targeted samples, and statistically comparable across nations, years, and socioeconomic groups, requires improved measurement. Women's empowerment is undoubtedly a complicated idea that presents numerous conceptual and quantitative difficulties, but these difficulties are most likely no more significant than those associated with other intricate development ideas like social inclusion or poverty alleviation. Moving the measuring agenda forward requires consistent analysis and improvement, as has been the case with these previous concepts. (Anju and Schuler). Despite being important components of gender equality, economic involvement and empowerment are not yet fully taken into account by gender equality indices, which primarily concentrate on labour force participation. It is imperative that women empowerment be adequately measured, as 80% of indicators used to track SDG5 do not have sufficient data, frequently due to a lack of reliable metrics. There is no standard or agreement on the best evidence-based measures of female empowerment, despite the fact that there are already some in place and others are being developed. There are ongoing discussions about what gender empowerment is (as a process and an outcome), how to measure it in various fields, including economics and health, and even whether it can be precisely and thoroughly quantified without obscuring or minimising complex gendered vulnerabilities that are culturally or contextually specific (Raj). Introduced the Multidimensional Women's Empowerment Index (MWEI), a new, policy-relevant multidimensional empowerment metric based on the Alkire-Foster approach and utilising data from partnered women in 45 low- and middle-income countries who were between the ages of 15 and 49. A woman is considered empowered by Measure if she satisfies at least six of its eight markers, which correlate to the four fundamental areas of life—health, material surroundings, social relationships, and physical integrity—where she can exert her authority. Only 21 of the nations in our study have a multidimensionally empowered women's proportion above 50%, with Mali and other nations having a 7.5% rate (Salcedo et al.). The gender gap in society is aggravated by poverty and reduced by economic development's gender-promoting initiatives. Women's empowerment and economic progress are correlated in both directions. Because it depends on intricate sociological and economic factors, women's empowerment must be evaluated using particular criteria such "access to resources," "decision-making capability," and "ability to take a stand" (Chandan et al.). One of the most well-known indicators of country gender disparity that is utilised by both scholars and decision-makers is the Global Gender Gap Index. This measure has several problems and presents a more straightforward way to gauge gender inequality at the national level (Stoet and Geary).

Methodology

The main objective of this article is to analyse the advantages of having new multidimensional framework for analysing women empowerment and gender parity across the world. This is a narrative review article based on 'THE PATHS TO EQUAL: Twin indices on women's empowerment and gender equality' published by UNDP and UN Women. The need for a new multidimensional index has been substantiated by literatures reviewed. Only secondary data is taken. Source of data is the report itself. In this article dimensions and indicators of each WEI and GGGI has been analysed. Women empowerment and gender gap has been analysed separately and jointly by country wise and region wise.

Dimensions and Indicators of WEI and GGGI

In order to fill in empowerment and gender gaps, the path to equal uses data for 114 nations, including fresh statistics on the progress made towards the Sustainable Development Goals. With the Global Gender Parity Index (GGPI) and the Women's Empowerment Index (WEI) as new twin indices, it presents a new multidimensional framework to assess the state of gender equality and women's empowerment globally. The WEI measures women's independence and capacity to make decisions and take advantage of chances in life. The GGPI identifies disparities in equality between men and women by comparing the status of men and women in fundamental areas of human development. The two indices work in tandem.

A careful trade-off was necessary to determine the final WEI and GGPI dimensions and indicators. They have to be theoretically pertinent, easy to understand, transparent in their methodology, and trustworthy, all while reflecting the fundamental capacities of human development and empowerment. The indicators were to be based on data with the broadest feasible country coverage, updated often, and comparable across nations. Additionally, the indicators and dimensions chosen had to be successful in promoting policy change. For the WEI, five dimensions and ten indicators were chosen, while for the GGPI, four dimensions and eight indications were chosen.Out of the five dimensions, first four of them are common to both indices. Fifth one is absent in GGGI.

Table 1 Dimensions and Indicators of WEI and GGPI

Dimensions and Indicators of WEI and GGPI	
WEI	**GGPI**
Life and good health	
Modern methods of contraception	Gender gap in fraction of life expectancy at birth spent in good health
Adolescent birth rate	
Education, Skill building and Knowledge	
Female population with completed secondary education or higher	Gender gap in population completed secondary education or higher
Female youth not in education, employment or training	Gender gap among youth not in education, employment or training
Labour and financial Inclusion	
Female labour force participation rate in households of couples with children	Gender gap in labour force participation rate in households of couples with children
Female financial account ownership	Gender gap amongwho owns financial account
Participation in Decision Making	
Share of seats in parliament held by women	Gender gap in share of managerial positions held
Share of seats in local government held by women	Gender gap in share of seats held in parliament
Share of managerial positions held by women	Gender gap in share of seats held in local government
Freedom from Violence	
Intimate partner violence prevalence among ever-partnered women and girls	NIL

Source: The paths to equal

Features of the Path to Equal

Indices included to build paths to equal are composite indices such as WEI and GGPI. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs that go along with it represent the universally applicable characteristics and indicators chosen for the twin indexes. The new global data sources and indicators are used by the GGPI and WEI to track SDG indicators make up eight of eleven SDG indicators, 114 countries, 86.2 percent of the world's female population. WEI and GGPI has been analysed across human development groups and Sustainable

Development Goal regions. Findings have been analysed on the basis of human development groups and SDG regions. For having more comprehensive picture on gender gap and women empowerment, the paths to equal analyses the data across human development groups and Sustainable Development Goal regions. Altogether four human development groups are there like very high, high, medium, and low human development groups. Sustainable development regions are grouped as Australia and New Zealand, central Asia and southern Asia, Eastern Asia and south-eastern Asia, Europe and Northern America, Latin America and the Caribbean, Northern Africa and Western Asia, Oceania excluding Australia and New Zealand, Sub-saharan Africa. Paths to equal has been arranged in the order of results by each index, combined analysis of WEI and GGPI and results by dimensions of twin indices across human development groups and SDG regions. Low or middle levels of women's empowerment defined as a gender gap of 20 percent or more and gender parity defined as a gender gap of 20 percent or more. WEI and GGPI are the two outcome indicators because combining the two types of indicators, outcome indicators with process indicators, in a single index is generally viewed as conceptually and methodologically imprudent. The Global Gender Parity index (GGPI) and the Women's Empowerment index (WEI), which measures women's power and freedoms in absolute terms, support advocacy efforts, increase awareness, and spark policy debate.

The WEI and the GGPI incorporate capabilities that are universally recognised as significant human goals and that necessitate a gender-sensitive agenda and policy intervention to achieve. They are based on human rights, the capabilities approach, and the gender equality principles embodied in important international human rights frameworks. When combined, the WEI and GGPI provide policymakers with simple and practical tools to assess how well they are fulfilling their commitments to attaining gender equality and women's empowerment. Policymakers can also use the indices to monitor and contrast their progress with that of other nations dealing with comparable difficulties and limitations.

Results by Women Empowerment Index

Women Empowerment Index has been analysed on the basis of five dimensions. According to the WEI,women's ability to make decisions and take advantage of opportunities is still severely limited. Worldwide women are enabled to realise, on average, only 60.7% of their full potential; this means that there is a 40 percent or less gap in women's empowerment. In nations with very high levels of human development, women are empowered to 73.4 percent of their potential, compared to 43.2 percent in those with low levels. The empowerment of women in sexual and reproductive health is the main emphasis of the two women-specific indicators in the life and good health dimension. The WEI's global average score for this dimension is 0.769 out of 1.000, indicating a greater than 20% achievement gap. Out of 195 nations, five—Belgium, Canada, China, Finland, and France—have met or surpassed 90% of the demand for family planning using contemporary contraceptive techniques. To meet the demand for family planning using contemporary contraceptive technologies, Albania, Chad, Mauritania, Somalia, South Sudan, and other nations must make significant and quicker progress. Adolescent birth rates in Angola, the Central African Republic, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Mali, Mozambique, and Niger are more than three times higher than the global average of 41.9, with over 135 births to women aged 15 to 19 per 1,000.

Women's potential is also considerably behind what it should be on a worldwide scale in the areas of education, knowledge, and skill development. With the exception of nations with extremely high levels of human development, women's empowerment in this area is still low throughout all human development categories. According to the WEI, women are not reaching half of their potential. Many women and girls still lack access to secondary school or higher, despite advancements in basic education. Out of the 174 countries that were examined, just nine—Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, the United States, and Uzbekistan—achieved a completion percentage of 90 percent or greater. Less than 5% of women aged 25 and older in the Least Developed Countries of Burundi, Chad, Guinea, Mali, Niger, and the United

Republic of Tanzania have at least a secondary education. In war-torn and post-conflict nations like Afghanistan and Yemen, almost two-thirds of young women and girls are not enrolled in school, working, or receiving training. There is still more work to be done to ensure that women are fully included in the workforce and in the economy. According to WEI's global average score for this dimension is 0.620 out of 1.000.

Due to discriminatory laws, gender norms, and the disproportionate amount of unpaid care and household work that women must perform, many women are still excluded from labour and financial inclusion during their most productive and reproductive years. In Egypt, just 24.2 percent of women aged 15 or older have an account at a financial institution, and only 22.5 percent of prime working-age (ages 25–54) women who live in a household with a partner and at least one kid under the age of six are employed. In the eight out of 158 nations, such as Australia, Germany, and Sweden, where anyone can open an account at a financial institution, this is a stark contrast to women. Women suffer the biggest barriers when it comes to decision-making, despite the fact that it is crucial for their agency, empowerment, and transformative development. On the WEI, this dimension has an average score of 0.413 out of 1.000 worldwide. In 12 countries, including those with very high levels of human development, women hold less than 10% of seats in local government. Given that women occupy at least 50% of management roles in just nine nations, the average score also reflects limited participation in workplace decision-making more generally. However, certain nations—such as Sweden, Costa Rica, and Cabo Verde—are defying the trend, with women's representation at or over 40% in all three decision-making metrics.

Lastly, the freedom from violence dimension's global average score of 0.786 on the WEI is unacceptable. Countries with low human development have an average score of 0.664, while those with very high human development have an average score of 0.891. At least one in four women in 19 nations have experienced intimate partner abuse over the past 12 months. As one of the most severe types of capability deprivation, violence against women and girls impacts and limits other forms of capabilities and functioning in the other dimensions. This is why the WEI is the first UN global index on women's empowerment to include violence against women and girls as a stand-alone dimension. Women's most basic human rights are violated if they receive a score lower than 1.000 in this important area. With the exception of Australia and New Zealand, sub-Saharan Africa and Oceania have scores below 0.700, per the geographic region study.

Results by Global Gender Parity Index

On average, women worldwide only attain 72.1% of what men do in important areas of human development, which translates to an average gender gap of over 28%. With the narrowest gender difference of 20.7 percent, very high human development countries have performed the best in terms of gender parity, followed by high human development countries 26.7 percent. In low-human-development countries, the difference is 39.7 percent, while in medium-human-development countries, it is 37.1 percent. With a GGPI score of 0.531 out of 1.000, Northern Africa and Western Asia are the region's most distant from gender parity, followed by Central Asia and Southern Asia 0.575. Gender disparity in South-eastern and Eastern Asia is 0.741. The regions with the smallest gender disparities include Europe and North America (0.823), Australia and New Zealand (0.878), and Latin America and the Caribbean (0.751) and sub-Saharan Africa (0.697), which are around the global average (0.721). The gender difference in the region with the lowest performance is over four times that of the region with the highest performance. With a global score of 0.970 and relatively minor variances in score among human development groups and locations, the life and well health dimension has the smallest gender differences among the four GGPI dimensions.

Globally, gender parity has not been attained in the areas of knowledge, education, and skill development. Low human development nations get the lowest score (0.680) on the GGPI for this dimension, which indicates the biggest gender disparity. Medium, high, and very high human development nations are next in line,0.715, 0.908,

and 0.978, respectively. The regions with the biggest gender gaps and the lowest scores include sub-Saharan Africa (0.740), Central Asia, and Southern Asia (0.678). In Mali, 43.3 percent of young women aged 15 to 24 are not enrolled in school, working, or receiving training, compared to 15.2 percent of young men, while just 3.2 percent of women aged 25 and older have completed secondary education or higher, compared to 7.8 percent of males.

In the majority of regions, gender parity is poor in the GGPI's labour and financial inclusion dimension. With women attaining less than half of what men do, Northern Africa and Western Asia (0.436) have the lowest score and, thus, the biggest gender gap in this category. All human development groups and geographical areas have widespread gender disparities in decision-making participation, and these disparities are greater than those found in the other three GGPI characteristics. The average gender gap in Northern Africa and Western Asia is an astounding 77 percent, which means that women in these regions are unable to take advantage of the great majority of possibilities to influence society through political and economic power.

Results by Combined analysis of the Women's Empowerment Index and the Global Gender Parity Index

Until gender disparities are closed, women's and girls' empowerment will not materialise, and reaching gender parity requires accelerating women's empowerment. Although gender equality and women's empowerment are essential elements of human development, neither can be guaranteed by greater human development alone. Out of the 114 countries that were examined, 85 had low to moderate levels of women's empowerment and mediocre levels of progress towards gender parity. Over half of these nations fall into the very high, 26 countries, or high, 21 countries, human development categories. This demonstrates that women's empowerment and gender equality are not always correlated with high human development. Women's empowerment deficit and gender gap remain common. 3.1 billion women and girls, or 91.3 percent of all women and girls, reside in 114 countries that have low or middle levels of women's empowerment and gender parity. This group includes some of the most populated regions in the world and 26 extremely high human development countries in addition to low, medium, and high human development countries. Approximately 8% of women and girls worldwide reside in nations with low to moderate levels of women's empowerment but excellent achievement in reaching gender parity. Nearly two-thirds,14 out of 23, of the nations that fit these requirements are classified as having very high levels of human development. The remaining 1% of women and girls reside in nations where women are highly empowered and high performance in achieving gender parity. All of these nations have extremely high levels of human development. No nation has maintained a significant gender gap while achieving high levels of women's empowerment. This implies that low or mediocre achievement in reaching gender parity cannot be accompanied by high levels of women's empowerment.

Results by Dimensions of Twin Indices across HDGs and SDG Regions

This section discusses what these twin indices reveal about the status of women and girls across these dimensions and the patterns, if any, across Human Development Groups and Sustainable Development Groups.

Across all human development groups, women have a slightly lower percentage of life expectancy at birth spent in good health than males, at 85.6% against 88.3%. Northern Africa and Western Asia have the biggest gender gap, with 85.4 percent of women and 88.5 percent of males. The fact that longevity varies, however, emphasises that not all women and girls in every nation have the same chance to live long, healthy lives. Large empowerment deficits in sexual and reproductive health in low and medium human development countries. Among women of reproductive age, the average need for family planning provided by contemporary contraceptive techniques is low in low-human-development nations (50.3 percent) and medium-human-development countries (73.2 percent). In extremely high human development nations, the adolescent birth rate in 2022 was 13.5 births to women aged 15-19 per 1,000, while in low human development countries, it was more than six times higher 88.0. Sub-Saharan Africa

had the highest rate of adolescent births,99.4 births per 1,000 women aged 15–19, followed by Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) and Latin America and the Caribbean 52.3. This exacerbates their vulnerabilities throughout their lives and perpetuates the economic and social injustices they encounter. So concluded that long life is not enough but health and quality of life matter. In order to support and encourage long and healthy lives for everyone, health policies must acknowledge the distinct requirements of men and women throughout their lives. National development strategies must completely incorporate universal access to sexual and reproductive health, especially by implementing family planning programs for all.

A high education rate is not always correlated with high gender parity in education. Over the past 20 years, girls have been catching up to boys in terms of their fundamental educational skills. At all three educational levels, the gender disparity in enrolment and attendance is less than 1% worldwide. Around 90 females were enrolled in primary and secondary school for every 100 boys worldwide in 1995; parity was achieved in 2018. Additionally, among 15-year-old students, girls had surpassed boys in reading learning outcomes and done equally well in maths, according to results from the Programme for International Student Assessment in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries. For females who face the combined disadvantages of poverty or handicap, the situation is much worse despite this tale of progress: Many girls continue to experience some of the most severe types of exclusion in the world's poorest nations. Girls and young women can acquire the skills necessary for future employment, respectable occupations, and entrepreneurship by completing their secondary school. In nations with very high levels of human development, where the gender gap is the narrowest, 75.8% of women aged 25 and older have completed secondary school or above. In countries with high human development (40.4 percent), medium human development (27.2 percent), and poor human development (14.5 percent), the share is significantly lower. To fully understand these challenges, it is imperative to examine gender parity and women's empowerment together. In Australia and New Zealand, 78.4% of women and girls aged 25 and over have completed secondary education or above, compared to 45.1% in Northern Africa and Western Asia. There are still significant barriers preventing women from completing secondary education. Less than half of women aged 25 or older have finished secondary education or above in 87 out of 174 nations. Less than 10% of people in 22 of these nations have finished secondary school, including less than 5% of women in the six Least Developed Countries (Burundi, Chad, Guinea, Mali, Niger, and the United Republic of Tanzania). The trend in tertiary education has been different. With the exception of Central and Southern Asia, where there is parity, and sub-Saharan Africa, where there were 76 women enrolled for every 100 males in 2019, female enrolment currently surpasses male enrolment in the majority of regions. However, in keeping with conventional notions of "feminine" and "masculine" areas, women are heavily concentrated in the arts, humanities, social sciences, health, and education. On average, women make up 36.8% of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) graduates in 107 nations. Training or work experiences can also help develop the education, skill-building, and knowledge-related capabilities. Nearly one in three young women (ages 15 to 24) globally were not enrolled in school, working, or receiving training in 2022. According to the GGPI, the gender difference between young people who are not in school, work, or training is greatest in medium-human development countries, where 14.5 percent of young men and 39.6 percent of young women are not in these fields. Compared to 14.2% of young males, 45.5% of young women in Central and Southern Asia are not enrolled in school, work, or training. With 41.4 percent of young women and 17.9 percent of young males, Northern Africa and Western Asia come next. In addition to being over-represented among those without education, jobs, or training, young women also have a tendency to remain in that category for longer. This can be explained by the necessity of taking care of household duties and family obligations in addition to institutional obstacles like discrimination at work and limited access to reasonably priced childcare. Opportunities for skill development are more likely

to be blocked for young women. Not just generally, but also specifically, equal access to education and learning is required. To attain equity at the subnational level, more work must be done to reach the most marginalised women and girls. To empower women and girls in the digital age, particularly in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) disciplines and online education, it is imperative to address educational and skill disparities.

There are significant regional differences in the female labour force participation rate among prime-working-age women who live with at least one kid under the age of six and in a household with a partner. One of the key conclusions is that women in their prime working years who have small children encounter significant obstacles when trying to enter the workforce. Women's educational attainment has caught up to or even exceeded men's in the majority of the world's regions, yet they still do not have equal access to paid employment. The unequal allocation of unpaid caregiving and household chores is one of the obstacles that women encounter in their pursuit of equitable access to high-quality paid employment. The WEI estimates that women's empowerment is currently at 62.0% of its potential worldwide. In the labour and financial inclusion facet of the GGPI, women typically only attain 72.9% of what men do. Women's choices are limited by gender disparities in paid and unpaid labour, which stem from power disparities and discriminatory social norms. Around the world, women are thought to devote 2.5 times as many hours to unpaid caregiving and household chores as males. Closing the gender gap in the amount of time spent providing unpaid care will take 209 years if current trends continue. Unequal career choices, income, and financial dependency, as well as resilience to external shocks, are manifestations of the disparities in freedom and power. Compared to men, women are more likely to work in low-skilled jobs with less favourable working circumstances.

There is a definite motherhood penalty for mothers of little children. Women of prime working age (ages 25–54) who are married and have young children (those who live in a household with a couple and at least one child under age 6) have a labour force participation rate of 54.2 percent worldwide, which is 20.8 percentage points lower than that of women of the same age who live alone without a live-in partner or child (75.0%). For men, the corresponding percentages are 90.2% and 95.9%. Coupled women with young children are more likely to be employed in low, high, and very high human development countries than in medium-developed ones. This U-shape illustrates how access to good employment is not always guaranteed by being employed. Coupled women with 20 young children have a similar labour force participation rate in sub-Saharan Africa (70.9%) as in Europe and North America (69.7%). However, due to economic hardship, women are over-represented in sub-Saharan Africa as unpaid labourers on family farms and in jobs with low pay and unfavourable working conditions. On the other hand, almost 90% of prime-working-age men with small children are employed across all human development categories. Significant changes in the norms and policies that impact how care work is viewed in society are indicated by narrowing differences in the labour force participation rates of prime working-age couples and males with small children. Sticky social norms and a lack of policy support for unpaid care work may be the cause of low labour force participation rates for moms with small children that show little to no change over time. In Northern Africa and Western Asia, the labour force participation rate for prime-working-age women with small children is 26.3 percent; in Central Asia and Southern Asia, it is 28.1 percent.

Across all human development groups, there are nations with significant gender disparities in financial account ownership. Having an account at a financial institution or with a mobile money service provider is a crucial sign of women's access to financial resources. In nations with very high levels of human development, where the gender gap in account ownership is the narrowest (less than 1 percentage point), the GGPI indicates that gender parity has nearly been reached; in more than a dozen countries, account ownership is nearly universal for both men and women. The gender gap typically exceeds 10 percentage points in nations with poor levels of human development. It surpasses 20 percentage points in Algeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Jordan, Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria, Oman, and Turkey. Reducing poverty is intimately linked to financial

inclusion, which is essential for women who run small enterprises. They are more susceptible to losing their jobs because they do not have access to official finance methods or account ownership. To improve participation and reduce the gender gap, certain nations are depending on new financial technology. However, the findings of a survey conducted in 28 major economies indicate that there is uneven adoption of these items. Compared to just 21% of women, 29% of males use financial technology goods and services. Therefore, there are still noticeable differences in financial account ownership between nations.

Gender equality in management, local administration, and parliament is not guaranteed by higher human development. A leadership gap is always a sign of a power imbalance. Women still face a glass ceiling for roles with more responsibility, authority, leadership, and social rewards in markets, social life, and politics, despite their right to be equally heard, consulted, and represented at all levels of decision-making. males and women already vote at comparable percentages when it comes to political participation, and in many nations, women participate at higher rates than males. However, gender disparities are more pronounced in roles where concentrated power is involved. Women are under-represented in leadership roles in legislative and executive offices.

Since 1995, the proportion of female heads of state or government has hovered around 10 percent. Higher human development does not guarantee gender equality, as evidenced by the large disparity between men and women's shares in managerial, local government, and parliamentary leadership posts across all human development groups. amongst all human development categories, the gender difference in parliaments ranges from 41.3 to 55.2 percentage points, whereas amongst regions, it ranges from 7.2 to 87.1 percentage points. The biggest disparity is seen in Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) (87.1 percentage points), followed by Northern Africa and Western Asia (64.0 percentage points), and Australia and New Zealand (7.2 percentage points). Even if there is a significant difference in managerial employment and local government participation, there are differences in parliamentary participation of over 80% in 23 countries and in local government participation of over 80% in 13 countries. The only nations with a majority of female lawmakers are Cuba, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Rwanda; the only nations with a majority of female local government representatives are Antigua and Barbuda, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, and Iceland. In terms of economic involvement in leadership roles, medium-human development nations have the largest gender disparity in employment in overall management. More women than males hold management roles in Botswana, Burkina Faso, Comoros, Jamaica, Jordan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Liberia, the Philippines, and Togo, however 15 nations still have discrepancies more than 70 percentage points. Even if representation has improved, it is insufficient to help women advance to more powerful positions. Both the reaction caused by discriminatory gender norms and structural hurdles must be addressed. The disruption of formal processes, technological constraints, childcare shortages, and online abuse are cited by female lawmakers as additional challenges that are undoing the progress made in advancing gender-responsive legal reforms and gender-sensitive parliaments. Long-term, ambitious policies that promote parity at all levels are necessary to achieve gender equality in politics.

Empowerment is hampered by violence against women and girls. In many contexts, whether in peace or conflict—and in a variety of spheres, including intimate relationships, the family, the community, online, and public places—women and girls are subjected to various and intersecting forms of violence (physical, sexual, economic, and psychological), which are primarily committed by men. Nearly one in three women (736 million) who are 15 years of age or older have at some point in their lives been victims of intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence. The WEI's measure of women's empowerment in this area is 78.6%, with significant regional and human development group differences. It is unacceptable to allow violence against women and girls, and complete empowerment in this area is required. In practical terms, this figure indicates that millions of women still experience sexual and physical abuse. According to the most recent

estimate, 245 million women aged 15 and older who have ever been married or in a relationship reported having been the victim of physical or sexual abuse within the previous 12 months. However, because over 60% of women do not report these crimes or seek any kind of assistance, surveys and research often understate the actual prevalence of violence against women. Less than 10% of those who do make an appeal to the police. Although violence affects women and girls everywhere, it is more likely to afflict those who experience numerous forms of discrimination and those who are more marginalised, according to some research. These factors include poverty, location, education, handicap status, ethnicity, and race. Those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, or any other sexual orientation or gender identity, as well as women who are indigenous, disabled, or have precarious migratory status, are all affected. It is still crucial to change societal conventions and stereotyped mindsets in order to foster equality and nonviolent societies. However, there are still a lot of gaps in the creation, application, and enforcement of laws and rules. Despite these initiatives, victims and survivors frequently do not have access to complete support services or protection. The shadow pandemic of violence against women and girls, especially domestic abuse, grew worse during the COVID-19 epidemic.

Limitations of Twin Indices

When indicators offer a clear synopsis of complicated topics, they can be helpful for policy analysis and decision-making. Thus, composite indicators are appealing for monitoring gender equality and women's empowerment. They do have certain restrictions also. Not all topics pertinent to gender equality and women's empowerment are represented in the indices. Due to insufficient nation coverage and comparability problems, the wage gap—a crucial indicator of gender differences in the labour market—is not included. Large data gaps also restrict other areas, such as the relationship between gender and environment, digital literacy, discriminatory societal norms, power imbalances in household decision-making, and violence by nonintimate partners. As the use, accessibility, and availability of high-quality gender-sensitive indicators increase in the context of monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adding indicator dashboards to indices can be a useful intermediate step in quantifying gender equality as a multifaceted, intricate concept. Many scholars and advocates actually favour a combination of dashboards and indices, such as dashboards on women's empowerment and gender equality in addition to three composite gender indices like the Gender Development index, the Gender Inequality index, and the Gender Social Norms index, in order to maintain the focus on the breadth and depth of the agenda for these issues. As data coverage grows, some of these extra indicators might be reassessed for inclusion in the GGPI and WEI. Importantly, these indication displays can draw attention to data gaps that need to be filled right away.

Research on the gendered aspects of other technological advancements and their tendency to not only reinforce preexisting biases but also to multiply them and perpetuate gender inequalities is lacking, despite the fact that it is well known that women and girls have less access to mobile phones, computers, and the internet—and are even less likely to possess the skills necessary to use them. Moreover, paths to equal has not incorporated information on women's access to household income and other assets, as well as their involvement in decision-making within the home, into the indices maybe due to paucity of data. The advancement of the agenda for women's empowerment and gender equality will depend heavily on national, regional, and international commitments to data, evidence, and knowledge about women's status and wellbeing. Expanding data on various groups of women and girls, such as those with disabilities, living with HIV, or experiencing discrimination because of their race or ethnicity; those who are migrants, refugees, or internally displaced; and those who are subjected to discrimination because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, is also necessary for a thorough examination of intersecting inequalities.

Conclusion

The Global Gender Parity Index (GGPI) and the Women's Empowerment Index (WEI) provide

distinct but complimentary perspectives for evaluating women's autonomy, power, and human development. The world still has a long way to go before women's and girls' rights and fundamental freedoms are completely realised, as the Sustainable Development Goals are less than ten years away. Less than 1% of women and girls now reside in a nation with a small gender gap and strong levels of women's empowerment. Of the 114 nations examined, none have attained complete gender parity and women's empowerment. Furthermore, no nation has both high levels of women's empowerment and poor or mediocre success in attaining gender parity, indicating that the two cannot coexist. The new indices imply that while nations with greater levels of human development typically have fewer gender inequalities, this is not enough to empower women and girls and achieve gender equality. In order to measure both new and established aspects of social fragility that disproportionately affect women and girls but are not currently included in the experimental WEI and GGPI because of methodological and data deficiencies, it is imperative that these gaps be filled going forward. Positive gender norms and the elimination of gender discrimination in legislative frameworks are also necessary for the human development of women. Prevalent gender inequality is significantly impacted by gender biases ingrained in organisations, laws, policies, and budgetary allocations. It is more crucial than ever to pinpoint the barriers to empowering women and bridging gender inequalities in the face of an increasingly unpredictable future filled with interlocking crises. To remove exclusion and overcome structural impediments, bold action is required. Although women's and girls' equality and empowerment have advanced significantly, there are still numerous obstacles to overcome.

A different perspective on gender equality and women's empowerment emerges when examining two indices separately and together across various countries, regions, and dimensions. The findings are concerning when approached from new angles. No country has achieved total gender equality, and women's ability to make choices and seize opportunities remains significantly constrained. Widespread gender imbalances and low levels of women's empowerment continue to exist. Furthermore, the data indicates that merely enhancing human development is not enough. Some of the most pronounced gender inequalities are found in nations that score low on the Human Development Index. While these twin indices provide a concise overview of complex issues, they can be useful for policy evaluation and decision-making. Although each addresses a unique set of issues, together they provide a broader perspective on the advancement of countries in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women. The newly developed twin indices aim to facilitate policy reforms and collaborative efforts to honour the commitments outlined in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. For effective policy making, these multiple indices could be combined, multidimensional framework of indices is suggested.

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