

# Understanding the Intersection of Gender Equality and Religion in Agenda 2030

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## Abstract

Gender equality and religion have a complicated relationship. Religion is essential in many parts of the world for any society's social, cultural, economic, and political development. This study examines how various religious traditions, denominations, and interpretations affect gender norms and stereotypes through systematically analysing the literature and empirical evidence. It investigates scenarios in which religious beliefs can encourage or hinder the growth of gender equality. Therefore, the research problem cited for the study is that women play a significant role in religion. However, in their religious community, there is an absence of neutrality at the highest decision-making level, which shows contradiction. While acknowledging the complexity of the problem, we can say that some religious traditions and norms may have a hand in demoralising the role of women in society and the perpetuation of gender inequality. The present study examines the intersectionality between gender equality and religion in the context of Agenda 2030 in India. The deductive research technique, based on qualitative data collected through secondary sources, is used for the present study. The paper uses an exploratory research design. The study uses SWOT analysis to reach the findings. This study concluded that over two decades have passed since adopting the Beijing Platform for action. No country has achieved absolute gender equality despite advances for women in legislation, society, and the economy. As the world's nations begin the enormous task of reaching this objective, an unprecedented number of human and material resources will be required to accomplish Agenda 2030.

Keywords- Agenda-2030, gender equality, religion, SWOT analysis, women,

## Introduction

One of the most ubiquitous forms of social inequality is gender inequality, which happens everywhere in the globe and has varying repercussions depending on where it occurs. The leading causes of these discrepancies include inherited cultural features, historical events, geographic location, and, last but not least, the pervasive religious standards in society (Ronald & Norris, 2003). Religion is an essential element for the culture existence of culture in different places. It affects the socio-economic-political part of society, which is widespread in human experiences (Dijkink, 2009). Similarly, Peach (2006) claims that religion is an essential factor for any social and geographic research compared to race and ethnicity.

Institutional, cultural and religious texts of religious communities are interpreted and impact how women are portrayed in society. There is no doubt that religion plays a complex and dynamic role in society. Religious practices have influenced how societies perceive gender roles and the distribution of power and wealth between men and women throughout history. While certain religious beliefs support women's equality and empowerment, others have been condemned for perpetuating patriarchal structures and gender-based discrimination. The research emphasises the importance of women's liberation and gender equality for the development of human society. Institutional norms, cultural norms, and traditional practices—all significantly influenced by religion—all impact this process. Due to the reciprocal interaction between religion and culture, religious systems are entwined in a circle of reciprocal impact with social values and norms of social organisation (Klingorová & Havlíček, 2015a).

A second element might be the hierarchical organisational structures that unite the most significant religions. Considerable organised religions enjoy different levels of access and control over material resources. They use their power to establish social norms, support existing power structures, and maintain control. Elite groups frequently seize control of institutions; therefore, patriarchal dominance in the marketplace is probably mirrored in religious institutions. According to this perspective, religious organisations may perpetuate patriarchal beliefs to support masculine economic, social, and political supremacy that proverbs are detrimental to female equality. Religious organisations may obstruct attempts to reduce gender inequalities in critical fields like education and work by imposing laws and customs that marginalise women, regardless of their other purposes, such as comfort and even social support (Sen & Gates, 2007).

The present study examines the intersectionality between gender equality and religion in the context of Agenda 2030 in India. Every religion promotes somewhat different values, establishes various institutions, and builds upon various cultural and historical pillars. There are significant differences in how each world religion affects the status of women. The current research paper has seven sections. The introduction, the first component, goes into further detail about the study's chosen concept. The construction of the theoretical foundation within a thorough literature review is covered in the second section. The third and fourth sections describe the research problem and research objectives simultaneously. An extensive explanation of the applicable methodological approach is provided in section five. The discussion and conclusion of the study are included in the sixth and seventh sections.

## 1. Literature Review:

### World Religion, Women and Their Social Status

This paper reflects the lively debates on the intersectionality between gender equality and religion. Such recent research is generally based on the belief that gender roles are predominantly constructed by religion, culture, lifestyle, and upbringing (King, 1995). For many geographers, the status of women in various religions – particularly Islam – remains a subject of study (Inglehart & Norris, 2003). Most feminist geographies focus on gender relations and gender identity in the context of religion (Hopkins, 2009). It is also possible to speak of a new paradigm in religious studies linked to the participation of women researchers in the study of religions (Kong, 2010). The social systems of all significant global religions currently support male social dominance (Young, 1987). In contrast, women are more likely to participate in religious activities (Renzetti & Curran, 2011).

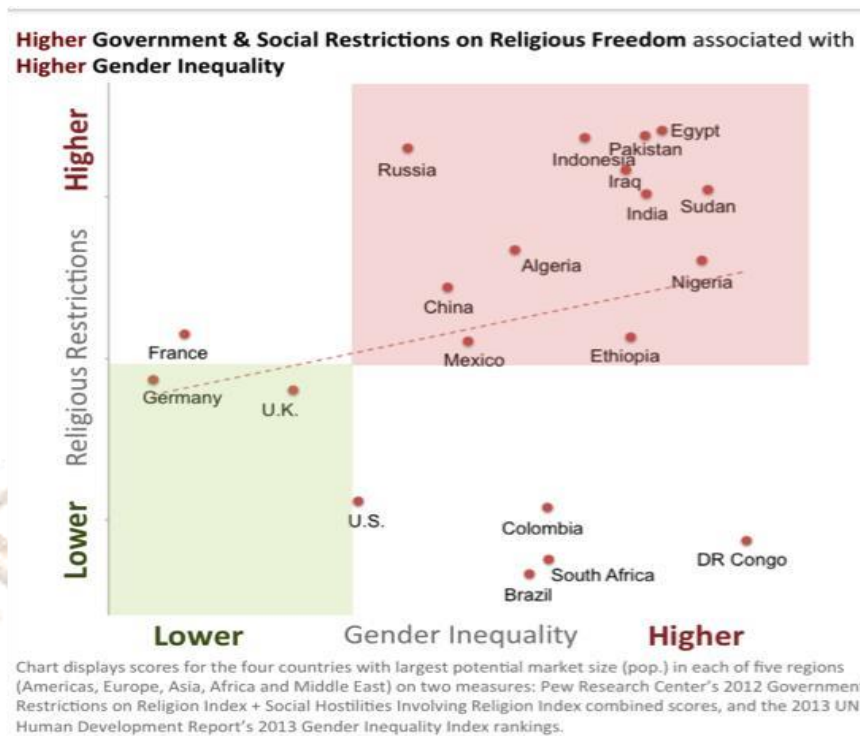
According to empirical studies on changes in the various faiths, especially in the case of Islam, the advent of the so-called evolved religions is linked to a detrimental shift in society towards a lower position for women. Furthermore, Nepor (2008) asserts that religious standards and biases may be a reflection of patriarchal attitudes, which are widespread in all communities and all world faiths (Seguino, 2011). Women are primarily revered as mothers, particularly moms of sons, while males always take the role of God or the founder of religion. She should not participate in official roles or religious rites; her place is in the house. However, the actual status of women is more problematic because certain women have gained significant roles in several faiths (Holm, 1994).

Women's voices are mostly absent from the history of religions due to the patriarchal inclinations of the communities in which these new faiths first emerged, which ultimately repressed some of the changes in women's status that these new religions caused. All significant global religions defend the worth of women and recognise their essential contribution to the upkeep of families, with a particular focus on mothers and wives. They do not, however, advocate liberation in the sense of being utterly equal to men. According to Holm (1994), Women are subject to the tightest restrictions throughout their menstrual and pregnancy cycles, for example, including being prohibited from touching the Quran or going inside the temple.

Consequently, men's and women's roles are distinct and imbalanced throughout all faiths. The effect of women on the creation of religious norms and traditions is minimal, even though we may find examples of women in particular doctrines who successfully won approval for their normative beliefs or men who worked for the equal integration of women in religious rituals. It is crucial to recognise the distinction between normative conditionality, which refers to what the specific religion teaches (equality of men and women before God),

and practical conditionality, which takes into account how women are treated daily in religious communities and state societies(Klingorová & Havlíček, 2015).

Figure-1



Source- World Economic Forum,2015

## 2. Research Problem

The intersection between gender equality and religion has been a significant subject of debate and study. While certain religious beliefs support women's equality and empowerment, others have been condemned for perpetuating patriarchal structures and gender-based discrimination. Women play a significant role in religion. Nevertheless, in their religious community, there is an absence of neutrality at the highest decision-making level, which shows contradiction. While acknowledging the complexity of the problem, we can say that some religious traditions and norms may have a hand in demoralising the role of women in society and the perpetuation of gender inequality. Therefore, the research problem cited for the study is how gender equality and religion intersect in different cultures and societies.

## 3. Research Objective

Every religion espouses a set of relatively dissimilar moral principles, creates a variety of structures, and draws on various cultural and historical tenets. Each religion in the world has a distinctive effect on how women are portrayed, with a specific focus on mothers and wives; all considerable religions defend the dignity of women and appreciate their important role in preserving families. They oppose liberation, nevertheless, in the sense of absolute equality with males. Women are subject to the tightest restrictions during their menstrual and pregnancy periods; for example, they are prohibited from touching the Quran or going into the temple claims. Therefore, the research objective is to explore and analyse the intersectionality between gender equality and religion in the context of Agenda 2030.

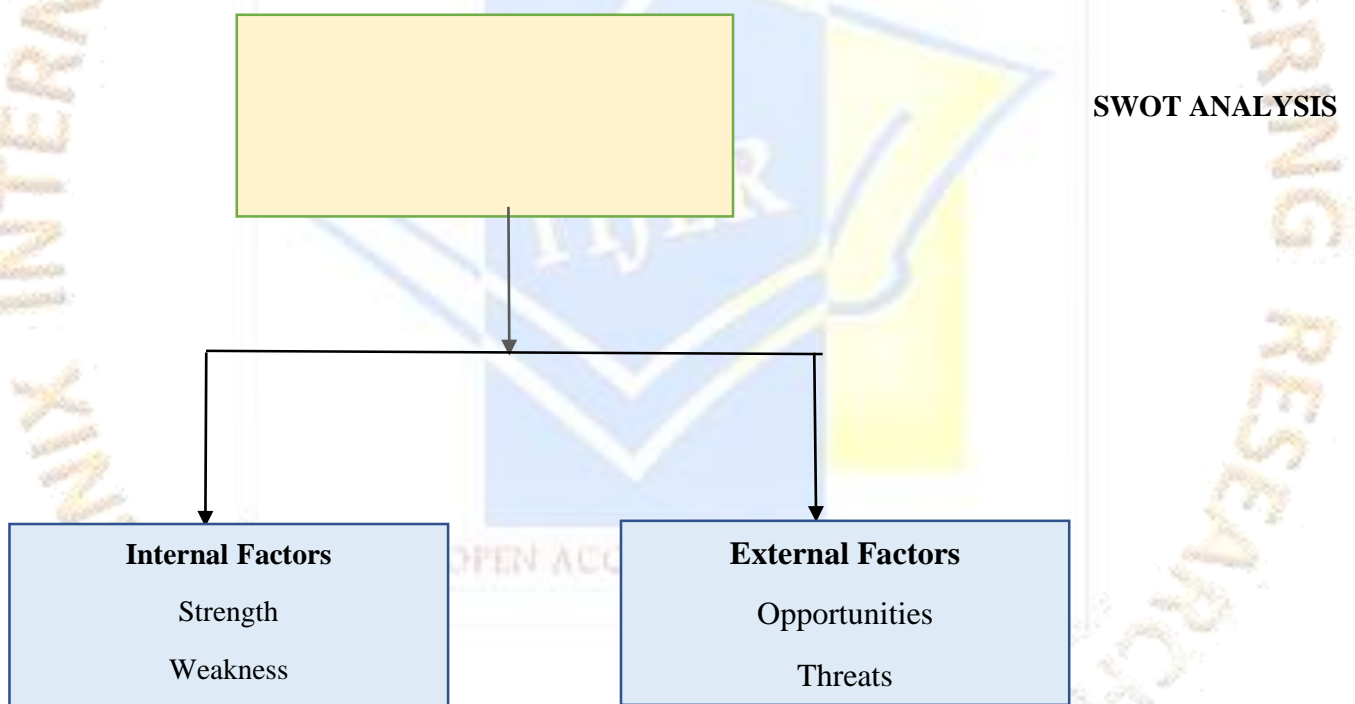
#### 4. Research Methodology

The present study is conducted on the intersectionality between gender equality and religion in the context of Agenda 2030. The deductive research technique, based on qualitative data collected through secondary sources, is used for the present study. The paper uses an exploratory research design. The exploratory research design was used for this study because it investigates the research issue in various levels of detail instead of attempting to deliver a conclusive answer to the research questions. The study uses SWOT analysis to reach the findings. Secondary data can be numeric, non-numeric, qualitative, population census, government surveys, research papers, articles, newspapers, books, journals, etc.

#### 5. Analysis and Discussion

SWOT Analysis- “SWOT Analysis is a simple but powerful tool for sizing up an organisation’s resource capabilities and deficiencies, its market opportunities, and the external threats to its future” (Thompson,2007). The abbreviation SWOT stands for ‘strengths’, ‘weakness’, ‘opportunities’ and ‘threats. The SWOT analysis process includes the division of four components into two dimensions. There are four sections: "Strengths," "weaknesses," "opportunities," and "threats." Opportunities and threats are extrinsic characteristics and features of the environment, whereas strengths and weaknesses are inside factors and traits of the organisation. A four-quadrant box is the traditional format for a SWOT analysis, which allows for an ordered summary based on the title of the four parts. The following table displays the four SWOT Analysis components in a 2x2 matrix. (Gürel, 2017).

Figure 2 SWOT Analysis of Gender Equality and Religion



Source- The Journal of International Social Research

An organisation may accomplish its objectives with the support of opportunities and strengths. They are helpful to society. Threats and weaknesses make it difficult for society to accomplish its goals. They harm society in negative ways. Therefore, the basis of any effective strategy decision is an analysis of the organisation's internal strengths and weaknesses and the opportunities and threats posed by its external environment.

To understand the intersectionality between gender equality and religion in the context of India's Agenda 2030, this study looked at the methodological framework of the included studies, along with the description of the existing situation for disabled women in India and the verification of general statistics. SWOT analysis is a method of analysis that provides broad perspectives and general clarification. The analyses that would

follow the SWOT Analysis would focus more on the specifics and challenges. In this way, a SWOT analysis is a road map that takes you from the broad to the specific. The SWOT Analysis method of interactional analysis makes macro assessments possible. SWOT analysis provides the opportunity to focus on the positive and bad aspects of the organisation's internal and external environment or the elements in this environment that provide positive and negative value, all from one interconnected perspective. In this study, we will look at the opportunities and threats to achieving gender equality within the context of Agenda 2030, as well as the strengths and weaknesses from the perspectives of gender equality and religion.

**INTERNAL FACTORS**

STRENGTH	WEAKNESS
<p><b>STRENGTH</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The principles of equity, compassion, and equality are taught in many religious beliefs. Advocates aim that building empathy and understanding across religious groups, these teachings may act as a solid framework for advancing efforts to promote gender equality.</li> <li>• Feminist religion activists are advocating for a re-evaluation of regulations as well as for women's rightful participation in religious interpretation. They are making up fresh narratives about how religion and belief should help bring a gender equality.</li> </ul> <p><b>EXTERNAL FACTORS</b></p>	<p><b>WEAKNESS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faithable to religious institutions have not yet been successfully challenge patriarchal attitudes, and norms that have fueled inequality and injustice against women and girls. Although these helped individuals improve their spiritual, social, and physical well haven't made a significant contribution to the structural transformation required to achieve fairness and justice for all organisations.</li> <li>• Women's movements have a significant impact on politics and society, limiting women's access to legal, property, and reproductive rights as well as their ability to receive education and social services and fully participate in political life.</li> </ul>

**EXTERNAL FACTORS**

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participating in interfaith dialogues can assist to break barriers and promote understanding between religious leaders and followers by providing forums for open talks under equality.</li> <li>Equality legislation of 2010 discrimination based on religion or belief.</li> <li>Platform for Action - the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing that call for gender equality and the empowerment of women.</li> </ul> <p>regarding</p> <p>declarations made</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Religious teachings may be misinterpreted or represented incorrectly and used as justification for anti-women discrimination.</li> <li>More than 20 years have passed since the Beijing Platform for Action's adoption. Despite improvements for women in discrimination, law, culture, and economy, the country has believed absolute gender equality.</li> <li>In religious settings, efforts to advance gender equality may encounter opposition, which can polarize communities and hinder development.</li> </ul>

**Conclusion**

In the context of Agenda 2030, the SWOT analysis offers insightful information on the delicate link between gender equality and religion. It draws attention to the potential strengths and opportunities that religious institutions and beliefs may have for advancing efforts to achieve gender equality. However, it also draws attention to the weaknesses and threats that hinder progress. Formulating successful measures to advance gender equality while respecting religious variety and beliefs necessitates understanding these elements. Societies may strive towards attaining the objectives outlined in Agenda 2030 and building a fairer future through open discussions, promoting inclusion, and correcting patriarchal practices.

The Internal Factor of SWOT analysis and the strength aspects conclude that religion significantly influences cultural norms and values, which may be applied to promote gender equality within religious organisations. Moreover, the Weakness of the historical perpetuation of patriarchal structures and attitudes by several religious organisations and practices hindered the progress of gender equality. In addition, the SWOT analysis external factor summarises that Participating in interfaith dialogues can assist in breaking down barriers and promoting understanding between religious leaders and followers by providing forums for open talks regarding gender equality. Moreover, the other side of an external factor of SWOT analysis is threats, which conclude that religious teachings may be misinterpreted or represented incorrectly and used as justification for anti-women discrimination.

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