

EQUITY & EQUALITY

Equity means giving everybody the fair opportunity or equal chance in every aspect of life. Equity is an ethical principal and implies to health, social welfare, employment. In fact it encompasses every domain of community life.

Specifically in health it is defined as the absence of systematic disparities in health (or in the major social determinants of health) between groups with different levels of underlying social advantage/disadvantage—that is, wealth, power, or prestige. Inequities in health systematically put groups of people who are already socially disadvantaged (for example, by virtue of being poor, female, and/or members of a disenfranchised racial, ethnic, or religious group) at further disadvantage with respect to their health; health is essential to wellbeing and to overcoming other effects of social disadvantage.¹

In Pakistan gender equity is a major area of concern for all working in social welfare and particularly in the health care sector. Gender inequity in the health sector can be described as the unequal access to basic health care among males and females across Pakistan. Women in Pakistan do not have access to basic health care due to social and cultural norms that bars them from seeking health care. The major reason behind this inequity based on personal professional experience in healthcare is that women are not decision makers and are dependent upon male members of the family for access and cost of health care.

Another sector in Pakistan where equity is conspicuously absent is education. Not only is there gender inequity but also inequity in terms of socioeconomic strata, ethnic, racial and urban rural inequity. The causes are deep rooted and include economical as well as cultural issues.

Equity is a matter of basic human right and must be upheld by the society and state. Particularly in a state that proclaims to be a welfare state equity in health and education sector should be of paramount importance.

Equality on the other hand means providing everybody equally. This concept of equality stems from the basic teaching of Islam “All men were created equal”. Not only is this a core message of Islam but in fact of all monotheist religions since the time of Adam.

Equality is like equity a core principal of human rights. Again inequality prevails in a society like Pakistan where there is gross inequality in distribution of not only resources like developmental funds but also basic essentials of life like water, electricity, housing, food etc.

Giving every individual in a community the equal share of resources and equal access to every opportunity is the foundation of a strong and just society. Inequity especially gender inequity in healthcare and education system is basic hurdle in achieving our millennium developmental goals. In developing countries the underprivileged and marginalized segments of society outnumber those who are privileged and well sustained. In these circumstances giving the same resources to all segments is unfair. In these countries extra measures must be taken by the state and civil society to provide more opportunities and resources to the high risk segment. This fact has been well established in the healthcare sector where special emphasis on mother and child health care has led to improvement in mortality and morbidity.

Regards,

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