

## Contemporary Challenges and Critical Issues of Equality and Justice in Society

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to identify innovative approaches and strategies for addressing issues related to justice in South Korea, Sweden, and Albania. The paper examined innovative solutions to these problems and explored the influence of political, socio-economic, and cultural factors on the implementation of the principles of equality and justice. The methodology of the study involved surveys and a comparative analysis of various social groups in the three countries – South Korea, Sweden, and Albania. The key findings reveal those existing disparities in access to resources, opportunities, and rights lead to social tensions and inequality. The development of educational and awareness-raising initiatives aimed at promoting understanding of equality and justice issues has a considerable impact on fostering a more inclusive society. The proposed approaches will contribute to resolving the most pressing social issues faced by vulnerable groups and ensuring their equal access to rights, opportunities, and resources in the long term.

**Keywords:** Innovation; Disparities; Technologies; Legal framework; Social cohesion

### 1 Introduction

In contemporary society, the issue of equality and justice has gained particular relevance, reflecting the complexity of social processes and challenges that arise in the context of globalisation and rapid technological development. Equality, as a social value, involves ensuring equal rights and opportunities for all citizens, regardless of their background, gender, race, religion, or other characteristics. In practice, the achievement of this equality faces numerous obstacles that arise in various spheres of life, including education, employment, access to health services, and participation in political processes. Justice, as a concept, is closely linked to equality but encompasses a broader range of issues related to ensuring social harmony and the fair distribution of resources. It not only includes legal and economic aspects but also moral and ethical dimensions, which shape social behaviour and relationships between individuals and groups within society. While equality seeks to eliminate discrimination and provide equal opportunities, justice focuses on creating conditions where these opportunities can be realised.

The emergence of new challenges, such as increasing social inequality, climate change, technological shifts, and migration crises, calls into question conventional approaches to

ensuring equality and justice. Social and economic reforms aimed at addressing inequalities often encounter resistance and can have negative consequences for certain population groups (Akshataeva et al., 2016; Spyska, 2023). In this context, there is a growing need for new approaches to exploring and addressing the issues of equality and justice, which requires an interdisciplinary perspective and consideration of cultural, economic, and political factors.

It is also important to consider the influence of social and cultural contexts on perceptions of equality and justice in different societies. This allows for the development of more tailored approaches that consider the specific needs of particular population groups while avoiding universal solutions that may not reflect regional or cultural nuances. Expanding research in this area will help to deepen understanding of the dynamics of social processes and contribute to the formation of a more just and equal society that can effectively respond to the challenges of the modern world.

Education plays a critical role in promoting social justice and equal opportunities, as inclusive and high-quality education systems contribute to long-term social cohesion and sustainable development (Schleicher, 2018; Bazaluk, 2019).

At the same time, gender equality in education and leadership is often shaped not only by institutional policies but also by deeply rooted cultural and social norms (Shah, 2019).

Many contemporary researchers explored this subject, offering diverse perspectives. For example, Barman and Barma (2022) compared approaches to social justice, demonstrating how different cultural contexts influence the understanding of justice. Research on gender equality and civilisational processes in the context of social justice formed the basis of Ali and Buratai's (2020) study. They emphasised the importance of social structures in shaping equality. Bericat and Sánchez-Bermejo (2019), and Kurzman et al. (2019) examined gender equality as an indicator of the quality of European societies and emphasised its impact on the overall well-being of the population. The researchers investigated women's perceptions of gender equality, analysing how these perceptions vary depending on cultural and social contexts. In addition, gender equality is often viewed as a strategic priority for social, economic, political, and educational development, particularly in transitional societies (Pacukaj et al., 2021; Fedenko et al., 2025).

The institutionalisation of social justice in higher education institutions and the related challenges were discussed by D'Enbeau et al. (2020). Complementing this, Dollarhide et al. (2020) proposed a new model of social justice supervision aimed at promoting equality within the counselling field. Çelik (2023) examined issues of political poverty, social justice, and the use of economic tools to reduce social inequality, a subject also explored by Emil et al. (2019). Notably, Karpenko (2023) emphasised the importance of considering gender aspects when addressing environmental issues and exploring the relationship between gender justice and environmental challenges.

Martsenyuk's (2023) study highlights progress and challenges on the path to gender equality in Ukrainian society, with particular attention given to current achievements. Mashtalir et al (2022) expanded on this topic, discussing the importance of gender equality as a key component of social policy and its impact on society. In the context of contemporary studies on equality, Matsui (2022) and Ogbujan (2021) emphasised the difficulties in ensuring equal access to resources. Moreau (2020) focused their study on approaches to the concept of justice and its modern interpretations.

Although the aforementioned studies covered many important aspects, some issues remain that require further attention. For instance, the question of ensuring equal access to social resources in the context of globalisation and digitalisation remains underexplored. Further investigation of the impact of social reforms on different population groups, particularly their ability to adapt to new societal conditions, is also essential. Moreover, insufficient attention has been paid to the analysis of intercultural aspects of justice, which is becoming increasingly relevant in light of growing migration and cultural diversity.

The purpose of this study is to develop innovative approaches and strategies to address the problems emerging in societies across various countries. The objectives were:

1. To examine current problems and challenges in the field of social justice and equality.
2. To analyse the current state of equality and justice in society through a survey and comparative analysis of respondents from South Korea, Sweden, and Albania.
3. To develop new innovative approaches and strategies to address the identified issues.

## **2 Materials and Methods**

The analysis of modern challenges and issues related to equality and justice in society was conducted as a three-stage study, using surveys, comparative analysis, and the development of innovative strategies.

At the first stage, a survey was conducted involving 300 respondents, with 100 participants from each country (South Korea, Sweden, and Albania), consisting of 150 women and 150 men aged between 18 and 30 years. The survey was conducted online via Google Forms, allowing respondents to select one or more answers to each question. Selection criteria included age, gender balance, and internet access, ensuring participation from various regions.

The survey included the following questions, with answer options provided as in Table 1 (presented in the Results section):

1. In your opinion, what are the biggest challenges in ensuring equal opportunities?
  - Inequality in salaries and opportunities for women
  - Age-based discrimination
  - Limited access to education and professional development
  - Other
2. How do you evaluate the state of gender equality in your country?
  - Gender equality is improving, but there are still issues
  - The state of gender equality remains stable
  - Gender inequality is significant and requires urgent changes
3. What are the most pressing issues of social justice?

- Unequal access to social services
  - Lack of adequate government support
  - Inequality in access to education
  - Other
4. How do you evaluate the level of access to education, healthcare, and other social services?
- Access is sufficient, but there are issues in certain cases
  - Access is available, but needs improvement
  - Access is limited and requires reforms
5. How do you evaluate the effectiveness of current reforms aimed at improving equality and justice?
- Reforms are effective and need to continue
  - Reforms are partially effective, but need improvement
  - Reforms are insufficient and require major changes.

The results of the survey were calculated and converted into percentages to display the proportion of respondents supporting each answer. Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS software. The Wilkinson scale was applied to evaluate the degree of agreement and support for each response among survey participants. This scale measures the intensity of consensus, providing a numerical index that reflects the distribution of opinions across respondents. Higher values indicate stronger agreement, while lower values show more dispersed responses. The values obtained using the Wilkinson scale were interpreted to identify patterns of consensus in each country and across questions, which informed the comparative analysis of social attitudes. The scale is described in detail in Wilkinson (1997).

The second stage of the study involved a comparative analysis of social systems across South Korea, Sweden, and Albania. This analysis examined specific indicators such as social equality, gender balance, access to education and healthcare, and the effectiveness of government programs. Comparisons were made between countries to determine differences and similarities in challenges faced by different demographic groups.

The third stage focused on developing innovative approaches and strategies to address the identified social challenges, based on insights from the survey and comparative analysis.

### **3 Results**

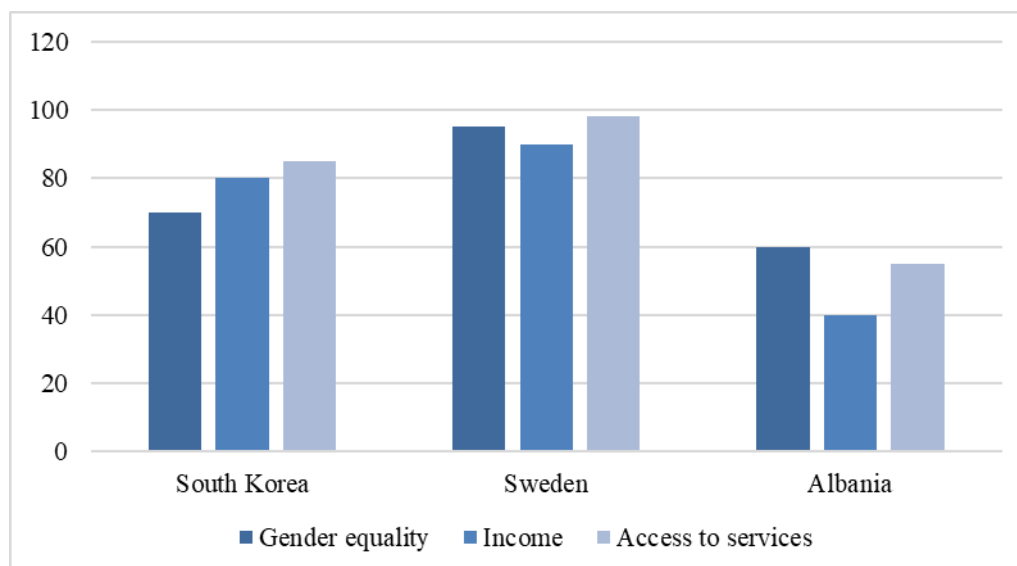
Issues of equality and justice remain pressing topics, touching on fundamental human rights and social stability. Gender equality is a key challenge, encompassing the need to ensure equal rights, opportunities, and conditions for all individuals, regardless of gender. One of the most persistent issues is the gender pay gap: despite progress in various countries, women often earn less than men for equivalent work due to stereotypes, workplace discrimination, and

underrepresentation in leadership (Nikaj and Titli, 2024). Women’s political representation also remains limited, affecting legislation related to healthcare, social policy, and equal opportunities.

Inequality is also evident in education, where women and disadvantaged groups face barriers to accessing quality schooling (Schleicher, 2018; Shah, 2019). These limitations not only hinder social mobility but perpetuate inequality in broader public life. Governments in South Korea, Sweden, and Albania implement various policies to address these issues. For instance, gender quotas, support programmes for women in business, and initiatives to combat gender-based violence are combined with efforts to ensure enforcement and societal norm change (Pacukaj et al., 2021). Monitoring the state of social equality is crucial to assess the effectiveness of these measures.

An important aspect of this study is the comparison of indices across three key indicators, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Comparison of equality and access to services in South Korea, Sweden, and Albania.



Note: The indices in Figure 1 were calculated based on survey responses and publicly available data, integrating metrics for Gender Equality, Income, and Access to Services. Values represent standardized scores on a scale from 0 (low equality) to 100 (high equality).

Source: compiled by the authors.

In addition to gender equality, broader social inequality remains a concern, encompassing economic status, access to education, healthcare, and political representation. In Albania, the Law on Protection from Discrimination (2010) and EU-backed programmes support women and minorities (Albanian President signs..., 2024; Proud to have rights..., 2024; (Llafiutiu and Shuli, 2024; Titili et al., 2024)). South Korea implements the Gender Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act (1999) and grants supporting women’s participation in political and economic life (Cho, 2024). Sweden maintains one of the most developed anti-discrimination frameworks, requiring employers and public institutions to conduct regular pay equity analyses and implement preventive measures (Wikstrom, 2024; Teta and Xhafka, 2023).

Economic inequality, access to education, and healthcare are key indicators illustrating disparities between these countries. Social inequality manifests through wealth gaps, restricted access to quality education, and unequal healthcare availability, which are particularly pronounced in disadvantaged and rural populations (Yessimov et al., 2019; Yessimov et al., 2021). Political inequality further compounds these issues, as individuals with low income and education levels often have limited influence over decision-making affecting their interests.

Table 1 presents survey results reflecting citizens' perceptions of equality and justice in South Korea, Sweden, and Albania. These data complement statistical indicators and provide insights into social sentiments.

Table 1. Survey results in three countries

Questions		South Korea	Sweden	Albania
1. In your opinion, what are the biggest challenges in ensuring equal opportunities?	Inequality in salaries and opportunities for women	45%	38%	50%
	Age-based discrimination	20%	25%	24%
	Limited access to education and professional development	15%	20%	10%
	Other	20%	17%	16%
2. How do you evaluate the state of gender equality in your country?	Gender equality is improving, but there are still issues	50%	55%	49%
	The state of gender equality remains stable	30%	25%	30%
	Gender inequality is significant and requires urgent changes	20%	20%	21%
3. What are the most pressing issues of social justice?	Unequal access to social services	35%	30%	37%
	Lack of adequate government support	25%	20%	20%
	Inequality in access to education	20%	25%	20%
	Other	20%	25%	23%
4. How do you evaluate the level of access to education, healthcare, and other	Access is sufficient, but there are issues in certain cases	40%	45%	50%
	Access is available, but needs improvement	35%	30%	30%
	Access is limited and requires reforms	25%	25%	20%

social services?				
5. How do you evaluate the effectiveness of current reforms aimed at improving equality and justice?	Reforms are effective and need to continue	45%	50%	46%
	Reforms are partially effective, but need improvement	35%	30%	34%
	Reforms are insufficient and require major changes	20%	20%	20%

Source: compiled by the authors.

A comparative analysis of equality and justice in South Korea, Sweden, and Albania reveals significant disparities in current conditions and approaches to addressing social issues. In South Korea, gender inequality remains a challenge, particularly in employment and wage disparities. Despite notable economic progress and technological advancement, social barriers continue to restrict equal opportunities for women and youth. Efforts toward digitisation and the implementation of reskilling programmes have helped reduce unemployment; however, access to these opportunities is not uniform, especially for underprivileged groups.

Sweden, in contrast, maintains one of the most stable and cohesive systems of social justice, with inclusive policies ensuring access to healthcare and education, and strong emphasis on environmental justice, enhancing overall societal harmony. Innovative measures, such as adoption of “green” technologies and environmentally responsible practices, reflect sustainable development at all levels. Albania faces high youth unemployment and unequal access to educational and economic opportunities, particularly in rural areas and among ethnic minorities (Pacukaj et al., 2021). Vocational educational programmes and infrastructure investments are supporting improvements; however, access remains constrained in remote communities.

In comparison, Sweden, unlike South Korea and Albania, addresses equality at the highest level (The emergence of the welfare..., 2023). South Korea is advancing technologically but must still overcome social and gender barriers. Albania implements innovative programmes to support youth and vulnerable populations, yet economic and infrastructural challenges limit their reach, especially in rural areas (Bolsa Familia Program, 2024; Shevchenko, 2023). Each country demonstrates unique challenges while offering innovative solutions that can serve as examples for others.

The development of strategies to overcome social challenges varies depending on each country’s social, economic, and cultural context. South Korea has developed innovative strategies targeting social inequality through advanced digital infrastructure, expanding access to education and employment for broad population segments. Retraining and digital literacy programmes support engagement of young and older citizens in the modern economy (Tkachenko, 2024). Innovation centres and start-up incubators facilitate funding and development for small and medium-sized enterprises, enhancing social mobility and equitable economic resource distribution (Ihnatenko et al., 2020; Volkov, 2025).

Sweden is recognised for progressive social policies, including “green innovations” to address resource inequality, gender equality measures such as equal paid parental leave, financial support for women, and programmes reducing the gender employment gap. Social protection mechanisms, including guaranteed minimum income for unemployed or underemployed citizens, reduce poverty risk among vulnerable groups and enhance social justice (Wikstrom, 2024). Investments in distance learning technologies ensure equitable access to education even in remote regions, fostering social integration and equal opportunities regardless of socio-economic status (Abbasova et al., 2023; Azim, 2026).

In Albania, innovative approaches target unemployment, youth support, and rural development. Vocational training helps young people adapt to labour market needs, while educational and social projects integrate vulnerable groups, including ethnic minorities (Volkov, 2012; Lakbaev et al., 2017). In healthcare, infrastructure improvements and enhanced qualifications of healthcare workers aim to increase access, particularly in sparsely populated regions. The government prioritises ensuring equal access to services for all citizens, irrespective of residence.

Evidently, South Korea, Sweden, and Albania adopt different strategies to address equality and justice, shaped by their unique social and economic circumstances. South Korea focuses on technological advancement, Sweden prioritises social inclusion, and Albania emphasises reducing unemployment and developing social infrastructure. Each strategy provides a potential model for other countries seeking to overcome similar challenges.

#### **4 Discussion**

In addressing contemporary challenges and issues related to equality and justice in society, it is crucial to consider how social justice interacts with other spheres of life. Beyond educational and professional aspects, social justice also encompasses human rights, economic equity, and cultural integration. The present study contributes to this discussion by examining the economic perspectives of social justice among young people, revealing specific patterns of inequality and their implications for sustainable development.

For instance, Paananen et al. (2018) highlighted how concepts of equality in early childhood can influence the future development of social structures. They emphasised the importance of early intervention and inclusive educational practices. Our findings support this view, showing that participants who had greater exposure to inclusive environments during their schooling expressed stronger beliefs in equitable resource distribution, suggesting that early educational experiences shape attitudes towards social justice in later life. This aligns with the literature but also provides empirical evidence connecting childhood experiences with adult perceptions of equality.

This approach to equality is important not only in education but also in social services. Peters and Luke (2020) stressed the need to integrate social justice into counselling to enhance understanding of clients’ issues. Our study extends this argument by demonstrating that young people recognize economic inequality as a significant social barrier, which implies that social support and policy interventions in counselling and welfare programs could be more effective if they address economic disparities explicitly.

Equality and justice are also essential in political and economic structures. Reitz (2022) underscored that ensuring equality is fundamental to human prosperity. Our survey results confirm that participants perceive access to economic resources as a central factor in achieving

social justice. This suggests that economic equity is not only a theoretical ideal but also a practical concern for emerging adults, highlighting a direct link between public perception and policy relevance.

Gender equality emerged as a particularly salient dimension in our study. Saputri et al. (2020) and Suleymanov et al. (2023) noted the necessity of integrating gender equality into legal frameworks for effective environmental governance. Similarly, our results reveal that participants consider unequal access to resources by gender a significant barrier to sustainable social development. This finding emphasizes the practical importance of gender-focused interventions and confirms prior research that underscores the broader societal impact of gender equity.

The role of education and professional training in promoting social justice was highlighted by Um and Wood (2023), who found that social justice training influences students' understanding of social issues. Our findings corroborate this, as respondents with higher educational attainment or exposure to social justice curricula showed greater awareness of systemic inequalities. Valencia Garcia (2019) argued for equal political participation as a means to achieve justice. Our data support this claim, revealing that young people see political engagement as a necessary step toward equitable resource distribution, thereby connecting theoretical proposals to contemporary attitudes.

Globally, our study aligns with the observation that inequality in resource distribution is a primary cause of poverty. International cooperation and development aid, as suggested in the literature, are therefore crucial. Participants' responses reflect an awareness of these global dynamics, indicating that social justice is not merely local but intertwined with broader international policies.

Persistent gender stereotypes also pose challenges. Vishkin et al. (2022) and Vincent (2023) highlighted that even in ostensibly gender-equal societies, stereotypes shape opportunities. Our survey confirms this, with respondents noting that traditional norms still influence access to economic and political resources, suggesting a gap between formal equality and practical realities.

Political initiatives, such as gender quotas, were examined by Pereira and Porto (2020), who noted ambivalence in public opinion. Our results mirror this, indicating that young people recognize both the necessity and contentiousness of such measures. Choi (2020) stressed that legislation must be effectively implemented to produce real change. Our study reinforces this point, revealing that awareness of legal measures does not always translate into perceived effectiveness, highlighting a critical area for policy evaluation and refinement.

At the regional level, Mazur and Engeli (2020) and di Bella et al. (2020) proposed the Regional Gender Equality Index (R-GEI) to assess localized disparities. Our findings similarly suggest significant regional variation in perceptions of gender and economic equality, emphasizing that context-specific approaches are necessary for meaningful improvements. These results point to the importance of monitoring and tailored interventions, echoing the literature while providing new empirical insight into young adults' perspectives.

Overall, this study demonstrates that achieving equality and justice requires a multifaceted approach, integrating social, economic, political, and educational dimensions. The comparison with prior studies confirms the importance of inclusive policies, early education, legal

frameworks, and regional monitoring. Furthermore, the empirical evidence from this study highlights the specific perceptions and priorities of young people, filling a gap in understanding how contemporary populations perceive and engage with social justice issues. Emil et al. (2019) proposed automatic stabilizers to regulate social justice through policy. Our findings suggest that such strategies could be adapted based on youth perceptions and regional contexts, enhancing the effectiveness of interventions aimed at reducing inequality and promoting a more just society.

In conclusion, the results of this study not only support prior research but also provide new evidence on the role of economic and gender-related factors in shaping perceptions of social justice. By comparing these findings with existing literature, it becomes clear that achieving equality requires both structural policy measures and targeted interventions informed by local contexts and public awareness.

## 5 Conclusions

In the course of exploring contemporary issues related to equality and justice in society, it was established that a comprehensive approach, involving innovative methods and the improvement of existing strategies, is required to address these problems effectively. It was discovered that current disparities in access to resources and opportunities lead to social tension and inequality, highlighting the need for changes in policies and approaches to ensure equality and justice. An analysis of modern approaches to resolving these issues demonstrated that new technologies could greatly improve the situation. In particular, data monitoring and analysis technologies have proven effective in identifying problem areas within social justice. Early warning systems for rights violations and discrimination aid in timely responses and policy adjustments, reducing negative outcomes for vulnerable populations.

It was also confirmed that educational and awareness-raising initiatives aimed at increasing understanding of equality and justice issues have a substantial impact on fostering a more inclusive society. Improving education levels and access to information about rights and opportunities is crucial for reducing social inequality. It is important that educational programmes cover various aspects of social justice, including minority rights, gender equality, and economic justice. Innovative approaches, such as automated resource allocation systems, can reduce levels of social inequality. These systems ensure a fairer distribution of resources, which can help alleviate economic and social tensions. Such systems must be adapted to the specific conditions and needs of different social groups.

The comparative analysis revealed that for sustainable development to be achieved, it is essential to integrate the principles of equality and justice into all aspects of societal life. The development of inclusive policies and programmes is a key factor in ensuring equal access to opportunities for all citizens. This not only involves improving existing legislative and regulatory frameworks but also actively implementing new approaches to social policy. Moreover, the study identified certain limitations, including the need for a more detailed analysis of specific case studies and regional particularities. This implies that the results obtained may require further refinement and adaptation to different contexts. The qualitative indicators derived from the study point to the considerable potential of utilising emerging technologies; however, further studies and empirical validations are necessary for a more comprehensive understanding of their impact on various aspects of social justice.

The findings underscore the need for continued development of technologies and methodologies in these areas. Future research prospects lie in the ongoing integration of

innovative approaches and the adaptation of strategies to changing circumstances, considering regional specifics and the latest technological advancements, to achieve sustainable development and a just society. A limitation of the study was that the sample was restricted to young people aged 18 to 30, which does not fully reflect the views of other age groups. Moreover, the equal number of male and female participants may not accurately represent the actual gender distribution of the population in each country.

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