



TRANSFORMING GENDER INEQUALITY THROUGH EDUCATION: ESSENTIAL INSIGHTS

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ABSTRACT: This article aims to raise awareness about gender inequality. It examines international agreements, constitutional guidance, and laws to fight sex-based discrimination, especially in education. It also briefly discusses how social and economic factors influence gender inequality. Teachers should encourage students to see everyone as equal. They should also uphold the values of the constitution to promote stability. Achieving equality requires providing equal chances for all. This includes access to education and the tools needed to succeed. Education should remind everyone that all are inherently equal. Its goal is to remove biases and stereotypes passed through society and chance. In India, it is crucial that education projects follow secular principles closely. Schools must help empower people and fight biases that are mostly created by humans. Building citizens aware of their rights and responsibilities, anchored in the constitution, is key to social and economic progress. India's constitution aims for a diverse, open society built on justice and equality. Discrimination can be hidden or obvious. It exists as a mindset shaped by social circumstances. All efforts should focus on changing this mindset with awareness of equality and justice laws. These rules are found in international agreements and national laws. Gender bias is a form of human behavior that has existed for ages. Its level depends on a society's level of growth. Many efforts are underway to end this discrimination. Laws and rules have been put in place, but success has been limited so far.

KEYWORDS: Gender Bias, Discrimination, Inequality, Human, Crucial, Awareness, Education.

GENDER ROLES: Boys and girls show many differences at home, on the street, in the classroom, and during play. Boys tend to be active, playful, confident, bold, loud, and hard to control. Girls are often gentle, quiet, passive, accepting, and easier to manage. Those in education need to understand how babies start to see themselves as boys or girls through grown-up images of men and women in their culture. It is also important to

see how this process of forming gender identity can be influenced by unfair treatment, which can lead to girls feeling bad about them. This low self-esteem can stop girls from expressing themselves and reaching their goals. It can also be passed from one generation to the next. People often think gender differences are natural and impossible to change. They see these roles as biological. But social roles of men and women are made by culture and can change over time and across different places. These differences come from many years of social experiences. Today's society offers new chances for men and women to have roles that are equal and complementary worldwide. Women now prove they can succeed in any field.

Educators need to understand self-concept and self-esteem. Self-concept is how a person sees themselves. It involves feelings, perceptions, attitudes, and knowledge about personal qualities. Self-concept can be negative or positive. Self-esteem is how a person judges their worth based on society's standards. High self-esteem usually goes hand in hand with a drive to succeed. Humans have a need to be loved or noticed. When this need isn't met, it can cause serious problems or even death. Five main needs help form this drive: food and safety, love, respect, and self-fulfillment. To feel good about ourselves, we need to interact with others who shape our identity. Family is the main social group for a child. Parents and family members teach values and goals that influence how the child behaves. They also tell the child who they are and how others see them. Supportive responses help a child develop a positive self-view and reach their full potential. When children grow up in a caring environment, self-actualization happens. But if they learn negative ideas about themselves, they may hold onto them even if they are wrong. Sometimes, we develop false views of ourselves, and others try to help us change these ideas. Roles are learned expectations for how people behave. Gender roles are taught by family members, especially parents and older siblings, who act as role models. How children are raised affects their self-concept. In many cultures, boys and girls are treated differently. Girls are often undervalued or seen as a burden. Boys are given more value, which affects girls early on.

Promoting gender equality through the school curriculum is essential. Even though India has a clear policy for equal education for boys and girls, biases still appear in teaching materials and among teachers. It is important to identify the issues that teachers and school leaders need to address to remove gender biases. The goal is to foster gender equality and a positive self-image in students through curriculum and life skills education. Every student should learn that biological sex and social gender are different from each other, and this understanding must be part of the teaching process.

The National Policy on Education (NPE) highlights key values like gender equality, ending social practices harmful to women, and encouraging smaller families. It stresses the importance of improving girls' social, health, and nutritional levels. The policy also calls for strengthening services such as clean water, food, fuel, and early childhood education as part of universal basic education. The Program of Action (PoA) urges the rewriting of textbooks to eliminate gender bias. It also emphasizes training teachers and school staff to understand and teach gender sensitivity. The aim is to embed equality into the curriculum and ensure it is understood and practiced through the way lessons are delivered.

A few ideas can help make the curriculum more gender-sensitive. First, illustrations should show women in many roles, such as teachers, doctors, engineers, and professors, not just as mothers. These images should be included in textbooks. Second, textbooks should show men and women sharing responsibilities. Third, they can highlight women's talents. Fourth, any biased or prejudiced content in textbooks should be corrected. Education materials must be free of stereotypes and gender biases.

A gender-sensitive life skills curriculum covers important areas like family life, legal rights, and basic safety skills. This approach aims to change unfair gender roles and give boys and girls equal opportunities. It helps break down stereotypes and barriers in skill building. Such education empowers both genders to share, learn, and grow together.

GENDER SCENARIO IN SCHOOL EDUCATION: Gender in school education shows progress in India. India ranks second in the world in education size, after China. Out of 191.63 million students enrolled, 80.54 million are girls, making up 42%. Government efforts in the 1990s focused on promoting girls' education and supporting women, which helped close some gender gaps.

- Women's choices in studies and jobs are influenced by many factors. Although confidence and belief in success help decide careers, they are not the only factors. Research shows that positive expectations are necessary but not enough to determine career paths. Believing in one's ability to succeed is crucial for choosing a specific job. The importance placed on different job qualities also impacts these choices.
- Gender socialization deeply affects how women and men see themselves and their goals. It influences their self-image, success beliefs, and what they value. These experiences shape what they see as important in life and work. For example, gender socialization can make women and men value different core goals. Women often value different long-term goals and activities than men. It can also affect how they define

success and the roles they see as fitting. These influences lead to different goals and values for each gender.

- A study shows that parents and teachers often see girls and boys through stereotypes. When asked about abilities in areas viewed as masculine, like sports or physics, they tend to underestimate girls' talents and overestimate boys'. This bias affects how they judge children's skills.
- Gender and individual differences in career choices link to what people expect they can achieve and how much they value certain jobs. Women tend to choose less math and science work more often than men. They often feel less confident and see less value in these fields. Social rules at home, school, and with friends shape these views and feelings.
- To understand women's career choices, we need to see all options open to them. These choices are linked to major life decisions, like marriage or having children. Women also try to balance work and family. Many talented girls and women face a conflict between traditional female roles and competitive, male-dominated work.
- Most women understand that working in male-dominated fields often involves facing discrimination and harassment at work. They also encounter more subtle disapproval from colleagues, friends, and family members. The fear of these negative experiences can keep women from choosing careers that are heavily male-focused and require long hours. Fair treatment and social policies that support families could make women more willing to explore a wider range of job options.
- Gender plays a big role in how academic careers develop. To understand inequality in academia, it's important to look at how men and women differ in time use, behaviors, and opportunities. Studies show that women faculty prefer to spend more time teaching and less on research, but these preferences are shaped by the opportunities available to them. Research also suggests that differences in time spent on research and teaching depend on the type of institution where men and women work. This indicates that women's choices may partly be limited by the barriers they face in getting jobs similar to those of men.
- Spending more time on research generally increases research output. In contrast, more teaching time tends to lower research productivity. Since research output is important for tenure and promotions, gender gaps in research time could help explain why women and men progress differently. Women are also more likely to leave academia. If a woman's real work and her preferences don't match, she may be more likely to exit her job. Women often find it harder to be marketable than men. They tend to do more work tied to their current institution, which makes it harder to move to another one. Men, on the other hand, invest more in research that can be transferred to a new job. With these pressures, some women may choose

jobs outside of academia.

GENDER EQUALITY IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF ALL: Achieving gender equality is a responsibility shared by everyone in society, not just women. Helping women and girls participate more in development means creating fairer relationships between men and women. Some worry that helping women might take something away from men. But equality doesn't mean giving women more power and taking power from men. It benefits everyone by allowing both men and women to fully take part in social and economic activities. This leads to better outcomes for all involved. The idea of 'power-over', where some are subordinate or dominated, is unfair and harms development because it creates inequality. To truly promote gender equality, it must be included in every development project and at every stage. Some think that equality efforts belong only to sectors like education, health, and social services, but that's wrong. Gender equality should be a focus in all areas, including big projects like building infrastructure and in political decision-making. Addressing these issues helps ensure women and girls who are disadvantaged can catch up. Because current inequalities are often large, simply treating men and women the same now is not enough. Special measures are often needed to fix deep imbalances. These steps help women participate equally and share in development benefits just like men.

The Indian constitution plays an important role in supporting gender justice today. It is proper that the highest law in the land should stand up for women's rights and push the legal system to protect women better. Laws can't change society overnight, but they can prevent unfair treatment of the vulnerable. Courts can go beyond basic laws to protect women from injustice caused by biological or social factors. India's courts have been careful about women and related issues. The Supreme Court often takes special care to meet its legal duties and safeguard women's interests as society changes. Article 14 of the Indian Constitution guarantees women the right to equality. Article 15(1) bans discrimination based on sex. Article 15(3) allows the government to make positive rules to help women. Article 16 offers equal opportunities in government jobs and forbids discrimination on sex. All these laws can be enforced by the courts and form the base of India's legal system.

Our duty to reject practices that dishonor women's dignity has become a fundamental obligation under Article 51-A. The Constitution's Part IV, which contains the directive principles of State policy, guides the government to defend women's rights. These include equal pay for equal work, access to health and safe working conditions, maternity benefits, and adherence to international standards. These principles form the basis of constitutional feminism. Laws like the Equal Remuneration Act of 1976, the Maternity Benefit Act of 1961, the Prenatal

Diagnostic Techniques Act of 1994, the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961, and the Immoral Traffic Prevention Act of 1956, all trace their roots to those constitutional provisions.

Although these principles are not directly enforceable, the Supreme Court has pushed for their realization through judicial activism. The Court issues directions to ensure the government implements these ideas effectively. The 73rd and 74th Amendments (1993) improved women's participation in democratic processes.

In landmark cases, the Supreme Court struck down unfair treatment of women. In *Muthamma v. India and Air India v. Nargesh Mirza*, the Court invalidated rules that forced women to seek government permission to marry and barred married or pregnant women from employment. In *Vishaka v. Rajasthan*, the Court said gender violence like workplace sexual harassment harms equality. It issued guidelines to protect women at work.

In *Mackinnon Mackenzie v. Audrey D'Costa*, the Court found wage discrimination against women stenographers. It ordered equal pay and said financial hardship could not justify lower wages. The Hindu Succession Amendment Act of 2005 gave Hindu women equal inheritance rights. This law promotes true equality, as intended by the Constitution. In *Githal Hariharan v. Reserve Bank*, the Court used Article 15 to interpret guardianship laws. It recognized that mothers should have the same rights as fathers in guardianship cases.

INTERNATIONAL TREATIES AND CONVENTIONS: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted in 1948. It affirms belief in basic human rights, dignity, and the value of every person. It states that all men and women have the same rights and freedoms. It emphasizes that no one should face discrimination based on sex or any other reason. The 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights and the 1966 Covenant on Civil and Political Rights both highlight the importance of gender equality. The 1979 treaty known as CEDAW is a key step in fighting for women's rights. Often called the Bill of Rights for women, it explains what discrimination against women looks like. It promotes a fair, non-discriminatory approach, making it clear that denying women the same rights as men is a violation. The treaty bans all forms of discrimination and restrictions that limit women's rights and freedoms. These include civil, political, economic, and cultural rights. The 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women sets international standards to protect women from violence. It outlines norms that countries agree are necessary to end all violence against women. Serious or ongoing violations can be investigated and punished, especially after the Optional Protocol was introduced in 2000. However, laws alone cannot fix inequalities or ensure justice, growth, and power for

women. Laws can serve as a starting point, but real progress depends on changing social attitudes and involving all parts of society. All legal rules and international agreements should be included in education programs to promote awareness and action.

CONCLUSION: Gender discrimination has existed for a long time and remains a serious issue. The education sector can play a key role in ending this inequality. Raising awareness about the benefits of gender equality is very important. Including gender equality topics in school curriculum and creating laws to fight discrimination can make a big difference. These steps help in reaching the goal of a fair and equal society. Still, real change depends on shifting social attitudes and involving all parts of society. Only then can true equality be achieved. Education is a powerful tool for transforming gender inequality by empowering individuals, promoting equal opportunities, and challenging harmful gender norms. By embracing gender-transformative education and working towards a more inclusive and equitable education system, we can create a society where everyone, regardless of gender, has the opportunity to thrive.

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