

EDUCATION A VIABLE OPTION FOR ELIMINATING SOCIETAL GENDER BIAS

Abstract

Citizens can be empowered via education to question preconceptions, break down barriers, and contribute to a more egalitarian society. With a total enrollment of 191.63 million students, 80.54 million (42%) are female, making India's educational system second-biggest in the entire world after China (MHRD, 2000–01). As an outcome of the 1990s government initiatives' strong gender focus as well as the decade's pro-girl child and pro-women policies and programmes, girls' education has improved and gender disparities have reduced. Despite increasing public perception of the absence of gender equity in education and a surge in diversity-related activities, progress has been gradual, and discrepancies continue. Gender bias is one of the primary causes of inequality and has an adverse influence on the job opportunities, time management, and psychological well-being of individuals who are underrepresented in education. The chapter will shed light on the significance of education in reducing gender prejudices.

Keywords: Education, Eliminating Societal Biases, Gender Biases, Gender Discrimination

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I. INTRODUCTION

*'Education is the process of the individual mind getting to its full possible development
.....it is a long school which lasts a life time.'*
'Zakir Hussain'

Education has been acknowledged to assist both citizens and the development of countries. By providing equal access to education for all genders, empower individuals to challenge and dismantle gender stereotypes, promote gender equality, and create a more inclusive society. Additionally, education equips individuals with critical thinking skills and knowledge that can help them recognise and address the underlying causes of gender bias, fostering a more equitable future for all.

Educating both boys and girls leads to similar improvements in subsequent wages and enhances future chances and choices. However, educating girls supplies several additional socioeconomic advantages that are advantageous to whole societies. Those advantages comprise higher profitability, higher household incomes, delaying marriages, reduced rates of infertility, and increased newborn and adolescent well-being as well as survival rates.

Offering a high-quality, relevant educational experience not solely boosts enrollment and retention but also guarantees that both boys and girls benefited fully from school. The predominant focus on girls' access to education may overlook boys' needs in terms of education. Additionally, this technique fails to target the standards and behaviour that contribute to inequality.

II. INDIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

India's ratification of "The Convention on the Rights of the Child" and "The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women", and additionally its agreement to sign on the "Global Fit for Children commitments", laid the groundwork for both the government and grassroots organisations to take decisive measures. The December 2002 Constitutional legislation proclaimed free and compulsory education a fundamental right for all children aged 6 to 14, leading to the Indian government's "Education for All Campaign", a national drive to achieve primary school universalization in general. The 14th article of the Indian Constitution guarantees women the entitlement to equality of opportunity, whereas Article 15 (1) clearly prohibits discrimination based on sexual preference, and the provisions of Article 15 (3) prohibit acts that harm women from authorising the state to draft special provisions concerning women. Article 16 of the Constitution guarantees equal opportunity for every person seeking public employment and nomination to any position and expressly outlaws discriminatory concerning sexual preference.

In terms of disparities between genders, India ranks 122 on the "Gender Inequality Index (GII)" in the year 2021 with a rating of 0.490. This rating is substantially greater compared to the rest of the South Asian areas (0.508), yet close to the worldwide standard of 0.465. This highlights the government's efforts and investments in more equitable progress and social safety nets, including gender-sensitive development.

The “Gender Inequality Index (GII)” rating for India declined from 0.493 in 2020 to 0.490 in 2021. It was 0.711 in 1991.

The World Economic Forum's "Global Gender Gap Index 2022" examines the expansion of gender-based disparities across economic involvement and accessibility to opportunities, educational attainment, survival and well-being, and political representation in 146 countries (World Economic Forum, 2022).

Despite the fact that the Index assesses gender parity instead of fundamental equality, it is an asset to monitor development & regression.

According to the 2022 Report, the average distances accomplished to equality remained 68%, calculated using scores ranging from 0 to 100. According to the World Economic Forum, in 2022, on the current scenario, they predict that the closing of the gender gap will take 132 years and achieving equal economic participation and opportunity will take 151 years.

Furthermore, India comes in 135th out of 146 nations worldwide with respect to gender parity in the "World Economic Forum's Gender Gap" Report for 2022. Parity is achieved when an equal proportion of boys and girls join the school system as a whole, achieve educational goals, and progress throughout each phase (UNESCO 2003).

Whether the emphasis is on intermediate or early childhood education, guaranteeing accessibility to and providing excellent educational opportunities is of the utmost significance if countries are to achieve their development objectives. Economies in developing nations that do not provide adequate, equitable access to fundamental education bear an enormous price. Failure to attain gender equality in education would result in weaker economic expansion as well as increases in fertility rates, infant mortality, malnutrition, and misery.

III. GENDER ROLES

Many research find out the distinctions between boys and girls in home, on the street, in the school, and on the playground. For example, boys are frequently lively, sociable, confident, brash, aggressive, and tough to regulate. Girls are more restrained, kind, calm, tolerant, complacent, and easily controlled. It is critical for individuals working in education to understand whether infants and toddlers grow to identify themselves as females and males in their adult representations of women and men in their cultures. Additionally, there are some broad notions about roles for each gender.

1. Men's and women's social roles, as cultural artefact, fluctuate over geography and time.
2. There are no disparities between girls and boys, but these distinctions appear to be natural and inherent in both sexes. Researchers infer that they are biological and hence unchangeable.
3. These disparities are a product of the onset of social interactions between the two parties; they are socially generated and identified, making them changeable.
4. Modern human civilization needs and generates new opportunities for the positions in society of the sexes to be On a global scale, they are both complementary & equivalent. There is no question that women have proven to be equally capable in all disciplines.

IV. GENDER EQUALITY IN EDUCATION

It is essential to address the issue that, despite India's explicit policy on gender-neutral educational programmes, prejudices and preconceptions infiltrate into learning materials and the people who handle them. One should point out the problems that teachers and administrators must address in order to eliminate sex prejudices. Through education and a life skills approach, we hope to encourage equal opportunities for women and men, along with a positive self-concept. In terms of development, everyone should be educated in school that biological sexuality and social sexual orientation are separate concepts.

V. NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION (NPE)

The NPE emphasizes key ideals like as gender equality, the abolition of societal problems and practise that are degrading to women, the small family norm, and so on. The "National Policy on Education" (NPE) and "Programme of Action "(PoA) emphasize the necessity of improving girls' social, nutritional, and health status, as well as strengthening assistance resources such as drinking water, food, and "ECCE (early childhood education) as a vital element of "Universal Elementary Education" (UEE).

There is a significant disparity between India's laws and regulations, as well as its strong educational practices interwoven within structures and organizations. Gender norms and obsolete traditions frequently bind girls and women, exposing gender inequities. Approximately multiple times, nearly as many girls as boys have been removed or fail to go to school, particularly when they belong to a lower socioeconomic strata. Numerous girls who dropped out from school at the young age of ten or eleven see their future as establishing a career in fields including construction projects. An additional obstacle to women education is an inadequate level of sanitary conditions in schools across the entirety of the nation. Many schools also lacking the dedicated restrooms for girls. When girls hit adolescence, they require separate restroom facilities. Many females drop out from high school for the reason that they lacking the necessary seclusion and amenities to deal with their cycles of menstruation. When girls penetrate puberty in India, 23% drop school. Moreover, female students who pursue their education might miss up to 50 school days owing to menstruation each year.

Education should be deployed as an inducer for significant advancements in the status of women. Education, as an inherent human right, must encompass standards such as egalitarian treatment, equality, and justice. It cannot be delivered to those who are able to afford it as a commodity. It should be regarded as a right guaranteed by the federal government. It should be deemed a watershed phase in women's empowerment, which contributed to national development through making it possible for females to cope with obstacles with the desire to establish a healthier existence for themselves, including their children. The aforementioned facts are profoundly connected to the establishment and execution of educational policies. As a consequence, the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals will perpetually remain a charade regardless of inventive, deliberate, and constructive legislative updates that are transparent and uniform and will adequately tackle these concerns. It is essential that society as a whole recognise the significance of education.

VI. CONCLUSION

Despite any uncertainty, the school system may serve a significant role in diminishing gender disparity. Spreading awareness of the positive consequences of achieving gender parity is crucial. It is pertinent to recognise that the insertion of the concept of gender equality in school curricula and the enforcement of policies aimed at eliminating gender disparity have a significant influence on the requirement of accomplishing the constitutional goal of establishing a community that is equitable. Government officials, educators, as well as communities need to prioritise and devote resources to high-quality education that fosters inclusion, equitable opportunity, and gender equality. Only through education can we anticipate eradicating prejudices based on gender obsolete of the past and ensuring real equality prevail.

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