

Gender Equality Through Education: Indian Perspective

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Abstract

To promote equal chances for all people, regardless of gender, education is a basic requirement. The goal of gender justice is to remove prejudice and advance gender equality, particularly in the field of education. Both of these ideas are essential to building an equitable and just society that benefits not only women but also society as a whole. The foundation of society is made up of families, and a strong society leads to a stronger country. Therefore, promoting gender equality is essential for the general growth of society.

When the Indian educational system and its approach to gender justice are closely examined, a protective and paternalistic attitude that aims to empower and provide women agency is shown. This essay starts a conversation on the basic problems with gender justice in the classroom. It questions whether a true dichotomy exists between men and women and contends that if there is one, applying a single criteria to judge justice may not be suitable if men and women are genuinely different as distinct categories. On the other hand, if their disparities are essentially personal characteristics rather than social class distinctions, the idea of gender justice as a whole may be erroneous.

In actuality, institutions and societal conditions that guarantee women's independence from socially imposed disadvantages must actively work towards their empowerment. Women are given the opportunity to engage equally in decision-making through this empowerment, putting them on an equal footing as partners with men. This transition could result in significant societal change.

INTRODUCTION

In some parts of the world, students are going to school every day. It's their normal life. But in other part of the world, we are starving for education... it's like a precious gift. It's like a diamond.

● Malala Yousafzai

The need for gender equality is the key focus of this article. What we should know and get information, or we can do things in favor of that equality that affect our nation's flow. As we know, education is the basic need of our society for the growth of individuals, families, schools, colleges, and national and international progress so that future generations have a real sense of life and a society of comfort that meets their mental and physical health needs. They need to achieve the extreme progress with less effort and be part of a nation with highly skilled and talented manpower with a humble and moral attitude. Education plays a pivotal role in promoting gender justice and equality. It serves as a powerful tool for dismantling stereotypes, empowering individuals, and fostering an inclusive society. This discussion will delve into how education can reshape perceptions, bridge gender disparities, and pave the way for a more equitable world. As we know, education and knowledge are different forms of information, and the act of learning is not the act of teaching others. To teach is just to impart information about what you know. If we are technically growing with the development in almost every sphere of life, we should be very passionate about this policy of gender equality, which will become a strong weapon for the future speedy development of the nation in all aspects of life in general. This equality will be a tool that expands our vision and outlook on the world. It will help to fight against the dogmas and the elements that are not in favor of the development of an individual and his or her relationships with family, schools, colleges, society, national and international affairs if the focus is not properly on gender inequality. If the people are educated, they should very much think about why things are like that in the 21st century of the global digital era. The main factor that is responsible for the safety of girls in every related affair is their dependency.

Keywords: Human Right, Women Empowerment, Global Gender Gap Index, Gender Equality.

Objectives of the study

1. To comprehend how education contributes to gender equality and the development of an egalitarian society.
2. To recognize the essential part education plays in empowering women.
3. To investigate how education affects transgender people's lives.
4. To locate constitutional clauses and government social programs in India that support gender equality.

Research Methodology

This study employs a mixed-method research approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. It draws upon research articles, books, government reports, newspaper sources, and various websites as essential resources for crafting this paper.

The Importance of Education for Women's Empowerment

Women make up almost half of the population and are an important part of the family unit. Families cannot function effectively without their active involvement. In order to eliminate gender inequality, which still exists in many sectors, women must be empowered. Women's empowerment is mostly fueled by education, which gives them the tools they need to challenge social norms and alter their life. Women's standing in India has improved somewhat in recent years, but it's crucial to keep in mind that things were better for women in the early Vedic period. Without a doubt, education has been crucial in improving the status of women in India. The census from 2011 shows that Indian women have a relatively high literacy rate and stands at 64.63%. While progress has been made in terms of literacy, there remains a pressing need for further improvements.

- India's society is still battling enduring problems like dowry, underage marriage, and the preference for sons.
- The successful implementation of policies promoting gender equality is seriously hampered by these issues.
- Girls still face obstacles that prevent them from getting an education.
- Indian women frequently lack health awareness, which contributes to widespread problems like infertility, stress, hormonal imbalances, and nutritional inadequacies.
- Men and women still experience economic inequality; women's labor is frequently underestimated, and uneven remuneration for equal labor is still a major problem.
- Domestic violence typically targets women.
- Women endure a double load since they manage household duties while simultaneously working outside the home. Additionally, some women experience upsetting circumstances both inside and outside of their homes.

Women historically had a lower social status since they were not viewed as the main providers of income. However, things are changing quickly. According to the 2020 report on the Sustainable Development Goals, the fourth target emphasizes the value of providing accessible, equitable, and high-quality education while encouraging opportunities for everyone to continue learning throughout their lives. All Indian citizens are guaranteed equality under the constitution, regardless of their ethnicity, religion, caste, gender, or place of birth. Even with these fundamental guarantees, India's progress towards gender equality has not been adequate.

What is the rank of India in Gender Equality Index?

India has moved up eight positions to rank 127 out of 146 countries in terms of gender parity in the World Economic Forum's annual Gender Gap Report for 2023, indicating an improvement in its ranking. India's neighbours Pakistan ranked at 142, Bangladesh at 59, China at 107, Nepal at 116, Sri Lanka at 115 and Bhutan at 103. The report stated that the country has closed 64.3% of the overall gender gap, with most of the progress resulting from parity in enrolment levels across education. However, in economic participation and opportunity, India has achieved only 36.7% parity.

Fostering gender equity in the classroom

Although women's status has improved over time, there is no denying that sexual injustice still prevails. Although overt discrimination against women has considerably lessened, there is still a lot of gender inequality in the educational system. The environment can be changed in a way that benefits women by improving the educational system and providing greater career prospects. Three key aspects of gender justice respect for variety, gender equality, and the right to make personal decisions are included among many others. In actuality, achieving gender justice through the educational system in the context of Indian culture entails looking at teacher behavior as well as both overt and covert curricula.

French author Simone de Beauvoir argues that human society lacked intrinsic natural elements in "The Second Sex," one of her most famous works.

The Crucial Role of Education in Achieving Gender Equality

Amartya Sen, who is sometimes credited with being the creator of the notion of "human development," draws our attention to a line from H.G. Wells that reads, "Human history increasingly becomes a race between education and catastrophe." Sen contends that if we keep denying significant portions of the world's population access to education, not only will the world become less just, but it will also become less secure. Sen claims that there is a clear connection between illiteracy and women's security thanks to the gender dimension of education.

For underprivileged women, not being able to read or write poses a substantial barrier because it can make it difficult for them to fully use the little legal rights they may have, such the right to own property or the chance to contest unfair judgements and mistreatment. Statutes frequently contain legal protections that are rarely employed because the people who need them can't read them. As a result, education differences can contribute to insecurity by separating the disadvantaged from the resources needed to address their poverty.

- Sen views illiteracy and innumeracy as forms of insecurity in and of themselves, explaining that "being unable to read, write, count, or communicate represents a profound deprivation. The most extreme form of insecurity is the certainty of deprivation, with no opportunity to escape that fate.
- The connection between education and security underscores the vital role of education as a fundamental necessity in the twenty-first century's pursuit of human development.

The Relationship between Women's Education, Employment, and Gender Justice

It is crucial to empower women in order to achieve gender equality and stop their exclusion, discrimination, and violent encounters. Access to formal education and work possibilities can play a vital role in bringing about large beneficial changes despite the deep and multifaceted hurdles in this Endeavour.

Numerous centuries of socio-cultural traditions and economic activities have contributed significantly to the persistence of gender inequalities that exist today. Although a difficult task, eliminating these inequities' impact is definitely possible. Women's disempowerment is

manifested in many different ways around the world .Less opportunities exist for women in fields including work, education, and skill development. In addition, women are less wealthy than men in terms of both material and intangible assets. Gender wage gaps still exist worldwide, so even when women exhibit comparable professional skill and complete the same jobs as men, they usually receive less money. Additionally, care giving and household duties fall disproportionately on women worldwide.

Two further global patterns are noteworthy: women are disproportionately vulnerable to violence and women's healthcare requirements are frequently underemphasized while being more complex than men's. International comparisons show that the most pronounced gaps still exist in parts of the global south, despite the fact that perfect gender equality has not yet been achieved anywhere. A number of actions are necessary to advance gender equity: Increasing women's access to material and intangible resources, giving them more say in private and public decision-making, and emphasized the importance of women's and girls' wellbeing on par with that of men's and boys'.

Gender Discrimination

When someone is treated unfairly or disadvantageously based on their gender, although not always in a sexual manner, this is known as gender discrimination. This includes sex-based, gender-identity- or gender-expression-based harassment or discrimination. Preconceived , erroneous societal and individual beliefs about what gender is, how gender "should" seem, or how gender is performed are frequently the source of gender discrimination. For instance, a common misconception is that a person's gender, and thus, their attitudes and behaviors, are always determined by their biological sex. But it is never acceptable to treat someone poorly because of their gender or how you believe they should be acting.

Gender discrimination cases include, but are not limited to

- Purposely using erroneous pronouns or gender identities (misgendering or mispronouncing) when addressing someone.
- Limiting access to bathrooms with separate areas for men and women.
- Displaying prejudice against someone because of their gender.
- Using language that is rude and degrading because of a person's gender or gender expression.
- Using intimidating tactics against someone based on their gender.

A fundamental right is the right to education, correct?

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act of 2009, a law to facilitate the application of the fundamental right, was passed by Parliament in 2009. The 86th Constitutional Amendment, which made education a fundamental right, was passed by Parliament in 2002 by inserting Art. 21 A.

The Purpose of UNESCO in Relation to the Right to Education

Education is a basic human right that can help both men and women escape poverty, lessen inequality, and advance sustainable development. However, a whopping 244 million children and youth globally continue to lack access to an education because of social, economic, and cultural problems. Without regard to age, education is one of the most effective weapons for lifting marginalized people out of poverty and opening doors to other crucial human rights. It stands for a reliable investment in the future. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and several international legal accords, many of which are the result of UNESCO and the United Nations' work, already firmly establish the right to a high-quality education. Additionally, it is true that education not only eliminates poverty but also promotes societal harmony and balance.

NGO Project to Increase Girls' Education Access in India

In order to raise awareness of the inequities girls experience in Indian culture, the Ministry of Women and Child Development founded National Girl Child Day in 2008. This day's main goal is to raise awareness of the discrepancies that females face in a variety of areas of life, including job, education, clothes, and other areas.

We observe International Day of Education on January 24 each year, which also happens to be National Girl Child Day in India. Without a doubt, one of the most effective methods for empowering is educating girls. It is commonly acknowledged on a global scale that ensuring females receive an education may dispel long-standing prejudices and exclusions that impede their advancement. Better educated women from economically disadvantaged homes often advance their family out of poverty, increase their participation in the workforce, bring in larger revenues, and inspire their offspring to prioritize their education. They also marry later, have fewer children if they decide to become moms, and are more knowledgeable about diet and healthcare.

We examine the top 10 NGOs assisting female children from low-income households in rural and urban regions who lack access to education as India commemorates the International Day of Education and National Day of the female Child.

Top 10 NGOs actively advancing gender equality and achieving gender justice in India while also working to educate girls.

1. K.C. Mahindra Education Trust.
2. Educate Girls.
3. Aarti for Girls.
4. Milaan Foundation.
5. Ibtada.
6. Ek Tara.
7. Sukarya.
8. Snehalaya.
9. Vishvodayaa Trust
10. Dream girls foundation

Government programme for women's empowerment and gender equality

In India, women are revered as goddesses, and the country is referred to as Mother India. The Indian government operates a number of programs to educate and empower women.

- Development of women and children in rural area, 1982
- Support to Training & Employment Program for Women (STEP), 1986-1987
- Nari shakti puraskar, 1999
- Swadhar Greh Scheme, 2001-2002
- Swadhar scheme, 2001-2002
- Rajiv Gandhi National Creche Scheme, 2006
- Udaan Scheme, 2014
- Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme, 2015
- Women helpline Scheme, 2015
- One stop centre scheme, 2015
- One Stop Centre (Shakhi) Scheme, 2015
- Mahila-E-Haat, 2016
- Mahilla Police Volunteers Scheme, 2016
- Working Women Hostel Scheme, 2017
- Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, 2019
- National Education Policy , 2020

These programs aim to educate girls, encourage them to pursue higher education, establish a safe environment for women, offer all-encompassing services, offer financial support, and recognize women who make significant contributions to the empowerment of women.

Challenges in Achieving Gender Equality: Thirteen Forms of Injustice Requiring Attention

In order to eradicate extreme poverty, gender equality must be achieved. The data is clear: Communities emerge from the shackles of chronic poverty when women and girls have access to quality healthcare, education, sustainable livelihoods, and active participation in decision-making processes. In order to make real progress, gender inequality must be eradicated in all of its forms, as there are many ways that it manifests itself and feeds the cycle of poverty. Here are few examples to think about

1. Poverty
2. Prevalence of Traditional Viewpoint
3. Gender bias in education.
4. The gender pay gap.
5. School Infrastructure
6. Gender disparities in agriculture.
7. Poor access to healthcare.
8. Discriminatory treatment among girls

9. Program promoting women's education
10. Education of the parents
11. Child marriage and other forms of gender-based violence.
12. Lack of representation for women and girls at the policy level.
13. Concern and Gender Equality
 - Girls are to be given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity, their protection against exploitation of any type must be ensured by the school authorities.
 - Good sanitation, good infrastructure, severe punishment for those found guilty in girl abuse of any type ,power to be exercised by National Commissions for protection of child rights in pursuance of provisions of this bill can serve the purpose.
 - Pre primary skill development in skill development group of girls of 0-6 years should be taken care of.
 - Some remedial teaching for those weak girls who do not find time in their homes due to their involvement in domestic work should be stressed.
 - Girls involved in child labour should be motivated to learn. Teachers can be sensitised for taking care of girl students. If something foul on the part of male teachers /principal /or fellow boys is found should be dealt severely.
 - Awareness programmes for parents/community/School faculty with regard to importance of girl child skill development and also about this bill must be focused. Media as T.V. can act excellently.

Suggestions

To ensure that the state's legal system operates correctly, legal measures must be implemented effectively.

1. To improve the majority-male society's knowledge of women's contributions and duties in all facts of life, moral education should be given to them.
2. Due to their domestic duties and care giving obligations, several married women encounter challenges when trying to work outside the home. This problem can be solved by starting skill development programs that are specific to their employment requirements.
3. The government should place a high priority on raising literacy rates among all societal genders, including women, men, and transgender people.
4. In order to promote inclusion of boys, girls, and transgender people and to create a more balanced social climate, teachers can play a critical role. They should actively encourage transgender people to pursue higher education and foster an environment that is accepting and encouraging of them.
5. Increasing the number of scholarship programs available to transgender people and women can encourage them to pursue higher education.

Conclusion

As Ban Ki-Moon put it, "Achieving gender equality necessitates the involvement of both women and men, girls and boys, and it is a collective responsibility." Gender equality through education refers to the process of providing girls, women and transgender with the knowledge, skills and confidence to participate fully in society and make informed decisions about their lives. Gender equality is a fundamental human right that promotes fairness and equal opportunities for all, regardless of gender. Achieving gender equality requires ongoing efforts in education, workplace policies, and societal attitudes. It's essential for fostering a just and inclusive society where everyone can thrive. Due to the dominance of some societal groups, the goal of establishing gender equality remains unattainable. Historical evidence shows hints of gender equality from the early Vedic era, which eventually led to gender justice. Significant changes resulted from progressive rule innovations, and as a result of societal anxiety, Indian culture established several practices, including child marriage and the "parda pratha" (veil system). Men and women today have equal status in our society as a result of the tremendous landscape and environmental changes that have occurred in the 21st century. The adoption of Article 21A in our constitution, which symbolises society's dedication to establishing stability and harmony, serves as an example of this development. In addition to potentially reducing poverty, gender equality can also improve society as a whole. The male population of India must now actively promote women's education and accept the idea of "Ardhanareeshvara" which denotes the harmonious fusion of male and female energies.

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