
Gender Inequality and Empowerment of Women through Education

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Abstract

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Numerous court rulings and gender discrimination laws have legitimized a women's right to equality and yet subtle sexist behaviors remind females that they are not truly equal in the workplace. These discriminatory practices are being legally challenged by women committed to attaining full equality and changing the inequities of employment compensation and benefits. Employment discrimination is considered to be unlawful when adverse treatment of employees is motivated by age, sex, race, creed, religion, national origin, disability, veterans' status or other protected class status.

Keywords:

Economic Discrimination,
Gender,
Education,
Equality.

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INTRODUCTION

Gender inequality persists in every aspect of performance and achievement not only in Indian society but all over the world. Most of the societies even in the globalising, liberalizing and privatizing world are male dominated. In this world of globalization, liberalization and privatization, inequalities persist in every country whether developed or developing. But the degree of gender inequality varies from one society to another. In this modern world of internet the people who are well educated can only facilitated with high tech facilities and the people who are illiterate and semi – literate have hardly space to survive. If we talk about Indian society it has about 25 percent population illiterate. They are surviving their life in traditional and customarily ways. Now we have realised that we can't survive without getting higher education in this world. Therefore most of the people now are paying their sincere attention towards getting education. It is very sad news that in our own society males and females are seen with two eyes. Females are discriminated in every sphere of life whether social, political or economic. In this modern era women are still suffering with patriarchal attitudes and other gender discriminatory socio – cultural norms and values in our loving Indian society. Because of illiteracy or semi – literacy women are not aware with their social and legal rights. Indian government is now making serious effort to raise the women's socio – economic, political and cultural status by using various perspectives like Welfarist, developmentalist and empowerment. Empowerment of women through education is one of the most powerful dimensions of empowering women. Empowerment can remove the discrimination against women in our society. It improves their status in the family, community and throughout the society. It ensures women's accessibility to modern development facilities and increases their participation in social, economic and political process and decision making.

Gender and Education

Education is the basic requirement and the fundamental right of the citizens of a nation. It is the most powerful instrument for bringing about a social change which is the only hope for this country but also for establishing a better social order all over the world. Education is one of the most powerful tools for determining the level of aspirations, technology, productivity and efficiency which are basic factors influencing the process of development. Gandhiji has stated long back that educating a man is educating an individual while educating a woman is educating a family; women education has been sadly neglected. It widens our mental horizon by imparting knowledge and developing the analytical skills. By increasing knowledge and skill education transforms human material into human capital. Education and knowledge not only hold strong position of women in home or society as a whole but also provide strength to retain that position against many critical conditions of life. According to Gunnar Myrdal (1969), education has an independent as well instrumental value that is the purpose of education must be to rationalize attitude as well as to impart knowledge and skills. Education for national development should include education for self reliance, personal development, productive capacity, social integration and political understanding.

Gender Inequality and Education

Gender inequality is one which has been publicly reverberating through society for decades. It exists at every level of education whether primary, secondary or higher. Women education never overstressed in our own society. The education system itself has been discriminatory against girls and women. It has always been in favour of boys and men. In schools boys and girls are treated differently. Gender stereotypes are stressed in school books. Curricular and extracurricular activities also reveal gender discrimination. It is not only in India but all over the world that women and girls always get less educational opportunities than men and boys. Boys have an advantage over girls in terms of access to education, retention and future use of their knowledge and training. At higher level of education boys go for prestigious professions while girls go for general education. At home parents give more importance to the education of sons and provide better facilities to them.

Gender inequality in education has been narrowed down slightly since last two decades but the situation is still miserable in context of women. Even after 68 years of independence, women are still one of the most powerless and marginalised sections of Indian society. Though the literacy rate among women has been improved from 39.29 percent in 1991 to 54.16 percent in 2001. Actually the increase in female literacy by 14.87 percent outnumbered that of male literacy (11.7 percent). Literacy gap between male and female has reduced from 24.84 percent in 1991 to 21.70 percent in 2001. Literacy rate still higher among males in comparison to females. The literacy rate of male has improved and gone up to 75.85 percent that shows an improvement of 11.72 percent. But on the other hand the female literacy has increased at a faster rate of 14.87 percent. According to Census 2011 literacy rate of male was 82.14 percent and of females 65.46 percent.

Education and Empowerment of Women

Education is one of the most important sources of enhancing women's empowerment. Despite slight improvement, the dropout rate of girls at every level is higher in comparison to boys because of various reasons like poverty, early child marriage, patriarchal attitude, girl's child labour, general social attitude so and so for. According to Nirmala Sharma (2006), women's education is source for liberation not only for women but Indian society as a whole. So it is recognised that without education women can not make themselves liberated out of their problems and unless women are developed in a country the nation cannot develop as a whole with men alone. Among the various parameters education of women is considered on the top position to improve the status of women in our country. Rekha Wazir (2000) writes that education plays very important role in breaking the cycle of female disadvantage. Education provides meaningful skills, which enhance women's labour market capabilities and permit them to claim benefits from the development process. Education surely serves as a catalyst of emancipator struggles.

The progress in women's education is not satisfactory till now in Indian society. The movements for improving women's status throughout the world have given emphasis on the role of education. According to Sarina Paranjape (1989) there is relation between the empowerment of women and their educational and economic status. If women are well

educated they are economically independent and their decision power in the family is strong. At present, women are not sufficiently empowered in the social, economic and political sectors and in terms of education. According to B.N. Singh (2006) both primary and secondary education produces high returns in terms of wage growth, whether for men or women. Female education promotes per capita income growth. Education not only just accompanies but also leads to economic growth. Women who are more educated have smaller, healthier and better educated families.

Recommendations for educational institutions:

- All educational and support staff should be trained and supported to be aware of the impact of gender roles and stereotypes on their students' self-confidence and personal identities in particular.
- The influence of gender norms and stereotypes on subject choice
- All educational and support staff should be trained and supported to address the gendered nature of bullying and harassment including an awareness of the different impacts of bullying on girls and boys.
- Institutions that train teachers should investigate their own gender norms and ideas and how these are likely to impact upon the student teachers that they train.
- Higher education institutions should investigate how their own gender norms and ideas impact upon women's academic career options
- Meso level educational institutions such as education departments or ministries must consider the wider influence and impact of social, and economic norms and practices which affect girls and boys differently, when designing policies for increasing educational access for girls.
- Careers advice services should ensure they are not reproducing gender or other minority group stereotypes in the advice they provide.
- Sexual education should adopt an empowerment approach, whereby women and girls are encouraged to take informed decisions about their sexual practices.

Conclusion

We can say that education is most powerful instrument to change the social status of women. It makes them known with their social and legal rights. Education makes women's social status high in all aspects of their life. Women are liberated through education to take every type of decisions in their children's life as well as in their own life. Educated women are free in most of the cases from most of the types of gender discrimination and they are more

productive in market. Therefore they can handle all types of problems happening in their families. Education develops the personality, rationality among individuals, makes them eligible to meet with socio – economic and political functions and in turn improves their socio – economic status to achieve desired goals. Women who are well educated have smaller, healthier and better educated families. As education opens up better opportunities for women to earn and as it changes women’s position in the family and society, couples tend to opt smaller families and to invest more in the health and education of every child.

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