



CONTEXTUALIZING INDIA: GENDER INEQUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

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Abstract

The gender gap in higher education in the Indian setting is the main topic of this paper. The reality of gender disparity in higher education in India is multifaceted and permeates many aspects of society. An attempt has been made to investigate the contributing causes behind this phenomenon in this study. This essay makes an effort to investigate the causes of gender disparity in Indian youth higher education. It makes an effort to highlight how important socio-cultural norms are in preventing women from being represented in higher education in India. Indian women who receive an education can become independent, well-socialized, and equipped to make substantial contributions to the development of their country. The importance of women's education must be made more widely known in society in order to improve the conditions for women to live in and prosper in.

Keywords: Higher Education, Equal Opportunities, Empowering Women, Inequality, Discrimination



1. Introduction:

The opportunities for growth in the twenty-first century are virtually limitless. However, even in the year 2024, it remains a significant question as to whether all segments of our society have access to all of these doors of opportunity. The knowledge and abilities of today's youth are the world's greatest wealth. One may draw attention to this development of the economy into a knowledge-based one, which led to a change in emphasis from elementary to higher education. Equality and equity are topics that are always brought up in discussions about higher education. In the past, it was thought that teaching females was unnecessary and a waste of time.

However, as time goes on, this concept becomes irrelevant in society, and everyone realizes how important it is to educate young females. Girls' education should not be disregarded, since research has shown that educated women are capable of revolutionizing society via a variety of techniques. Gender inequality in developmental policies and programs has far-reaching effects and frequently leads to the loss of important developmental changes. Girls' education serves as a potent catalyst for societal change in addition to being an issue of social justice. Ensuring gender parity in education is essential for the advancement of human capital as a whole.

It is well known that educating a woman has favorable effects on the family as a whole in addition to her personal development. Given the heavy burdens that women frequently carry for their families, an educated woman is better able to support her children's health, nutrition, and education while also actively promoting social and economic growth in her nation. It is evident in many different civilizations that economic prosperity and educational achievement are correlated. It has been said that education is the cornerstone of development, and that literacy is the essential building block for acquiring more information. But education has benefits that go beyond a person's ability to flourish financially.



It is essential for building social cohesiveness and forming national identity. Education helps people comprehend other points of view better, which improves public opinion and increases marginalized groups' active involvement in the democratic process. Historically, the absence of a strong base of educated women has prevented any society from achieving full emancipation, whether it be social, political, or economic. Women who are empowered by education are more aware of their rights, skills, and the range of options and possibilities that are open to them. Education is a transforming force that gives women the information and skills they need to overcome obstacles and make valuable contributions to both their personal and their communities' development. Moreover, an extensive body of research has demonstrated a strong association between female education and several important developmental markers. These metrics include higher economic output, better health outcomes, a later marriage age, fewer fertility rates, higher levels of political engagement, and the ability to make wise investments in the next generation. Several analyses emphasize how much education can do to promote equitable and sustainable development for women. This research paper attempts to investigate the crucial significance of addressing gender gaps in developmental policies and programs in light of these facts, with an emphasis on the transformational potential of education for girls.

This study aims to add to the body of knowledge by exploring the complex relationship between education and women's empowerment and the wider societal ramifications. It also hopes to offer insightful information to practitioners and policymakers.

2. Research Methodology

The paper analyzes the topic and provides insights into the status of girls' education in India using a narrative review method. The study's particular goals are to determine the causes of the gender gap in the Indian educational system, assess the current state of girls' enrollment and accessibility in higher education, and determine the overall effects of girls' education on the growth of the nation. Secondary information and data from other web databases were gathered to accomplish these goals. This page includes a wide range of research papers and publications because of its focus on the Indian setting.



3. Conceptual Structure

The foundation of each research investigation is its theories. The social role theory has been used in this study as the theoretical foundation to justify the disparities in gender in society. Social learning theory, also known as social structural theory is based on the idea of gender disparities and concentrates on the social structure, particularly the division of labor between the sexes. The fundamental aspects taken into consideration are the socialization process, Biological Process, Division of Labour, Gender Role Expectations, Gender Role Beliefs and Related Skills, Sex Differences in Behaviour. This hypothesis focuses on the variations in gender difference patterns across cultural boundaries.

4. Relevance of the Research

In recent years, women's empowerment has become a major social concern. Since education gives women the equal opportunity to engage in the socio-cultural, political, and economic realms, it is essential to their empowerment. Therefore, given the current situation, it is essential to do an in-depth study on gender discrepancies in higher education. This essay focuses on examining the particular problems associated with gender inequality in higher education and pinpointing the underlying causes. The results of this study can help policymakers understand the socioeconomic variables influencing this issue and create efficient policy solutions to deal with and eradicate these kinds of disparities.

5. Findings and Discussion

Gender inequality in education serves as a primary reason impeding women's access to equal opportunities in society by perpetuating their inferior socio-economic position. Even though it is widely acknowledged that education is essential for both economic progress and the development of human resources, gender inequities persist in many emerging and impoverished nations. Over the past three decades, this has led to limited growth and advancement in South Asia and Africa (Moheyuddin, 2005). It's interesting to note that gender inequality in professional training and higher education continues even in some of the wealthiest nations in the world, such as Europe and North America, pointing to the possibility that there are other variables at play.



There are several well-known reasons for girls' low educational involvement, both within and outside of schools. Among these are: a) lack of support for females' education stemming from societal prejudice and preference for boys' education. b) Lack of a supportive environment or market for females' education. c) Assumption that girls' assistance with household chores, taking care of their siblings, or meeting the family's financial requirements would be given priority by parents. d) Upholding gender norms that prevent females from pursuing higher education. e) Dearth of female role models due to the underrepresentation of female instructors. f) Discouragement and unfavourable views about females' education that serve as barriers.

It is often acknowledged that gender prejudice is pervasive in Indian culture. A patriarchal system is embedded in the structure of families, with the father being tasked with providing for the needs of the family. In India, women have long been marginalized and depicted differently in a variety of fields, including history, literature, religion, art, education, and culture. The practice of foeticide, female infanticide, son preference, early girl marriage, the dowry system, domestic violence, sexual harassment, and other traditions that devalue women and girls are only a few examples of the widespread persistence of gender prejudice throughout all spheres of society. This kind of prejudice persists throughout an individual's life.

Approximately 1 billion people, mostly women, live in extreme poverty in the developing countries today. Moreover, gender-based differences in the allocation of financial resources also contribute significantly to the persistence of poverty among women (Rustagi, 2004). A sizable portion of females still do not have access to basic primary education today. A number of cultural and economic factors, such as incidents of physical and verbal abuse, poor hygienic conditions, and long travel times between home and school, and possible threats to girls' education, are responsible for the high rate of illiteracy among girls. In India, women's education is a multifaceted and intricate topic. The unusually low incidence of female literacy in the country cannot be linked to a single source or cause.



Rather, a multitude of elements, including those related to social, cultural, educational, political, administrative, and demographic dimensions, all combine to impact it. Several variables, according to USAID (2008), contribute to the obstacles that girls confront in their educational pursuits. First and foremost, religious considerations are important since certain religions treat women differently than males. Women sometimes rely on males for support, whether it be from their husbands, fathers, or sons, which makes women's education less important. Second, there are geographic considerations, such as females' perceived fragility keeping them from attending distant schools.

While females are frequently denied the opportunity to attend school because of worries for their safety, boys are permitted to do so. Last but not least, biological considerations also come into play because girls are naturally smaller than guys. Its differentiation is due to biological reasons. A fundamental requirement for the full implementation of human rights for both men and women are the achievement of gender equality. Justice, equality, diversity, and peace are core principles that are deeply ingrained in the goals of global citizenship education, which is becoming an increasingly popular endeavour in many nations. Teaching youngsters about the most serious social and economic issues facing the world's population is the main goal of global citizenship education.

Deliberate attempts are made to engage in conversations on gender equality and to show the wide-ranging impact of gender-based challenges encountered by female citizens on global, national, and local communities within the framework of global citizenship education curricula. In India, gender inequality includes differences between men and women's political representation, health, education, and economic prospects. Many foreign indexes assess India's performance on various fronts, separately and collectively, however there is still debate surrounding these indices. India's sex ratio, women's general health throughout the course of their lifetimes, women's educational attainment, and the country's economic circumstances are all greatly impacted by the existence of gender inequality and its underlying socio-cultural causes.



Gender inequality in India is a complex topic that affects both men and women. While some contend that some policies toward gender equality may harm males, a thorough analysis of India's population shows that women suffer grave disadvantages in a number of important areas. India's higher education sector has grown significantly over time. According to the most current AISHE Report, the number of higher educational institutions (HEIs) has significantly increased, from around 30 universities and 695 colleges in 1950–1951 to over 1,043 universities and 42,343 colleges as of 2019–20. With respect to the scale of its higher education system, India is now ranked third in the world, behind only the United States and China. The increase in enrollment numbers over time is consistent with HEI expansion.

The Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) grew from 0.40% in 1950–51 to 27.1% in 2019–20, while the total number of students enrolled in higher education climbed from 0.21 million in 1950–51 to almost 22 million in 2011–12. (Swain, 2022). With a few exceptions, such as M.Phil., Post Graduate, and Certificate programs, an examination of the male-female ratio based on the AISHE 2019–20 survey shows that, overall, more male students than female students are enrolled in each educational level. Male students make up 50.8% of the undergraduate enrollment, while female students make up 49.2%. Nonetheless, there is a notable gender imbalance in diploma programs, with 34.9% of students being female and 65.1% of male.

Male students make up 55% of Ph.D. students, while female students make up 45%. The male to female ratio in integrated programs is 56.2% and 43.8%, respectively. Male students make up 53.6% of PG Diploma program enrollment, while female students make up 46.4%. In most states, there is a tendency toward higher male enrollment than female enrollment. When it comes to total enrollment, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Karnataka rank first through sixth. The order is significantly different when looking at the overall number of institutions, with Uttar Pradesh having the most (8985), followed by Karnataka (5806), Rajasthan (4036), Andhra Pradesh (3634), Tamil Nadu (3583), and Maharashtra (6952).



Remarkably, over 53.8% of all students enrolled in India reside in these six states with the highest enrolment rates. According to Kanti (2018), male students from these states make up 54% of all male students in India, while the proportion of female students in these states is around 53.7% of all female students enrolled. One cannot stress the importance of education in promoting a country's growth and development. Through a number of programs and regulations, the government has been aggressively promoting equitable access to higher education since the post-independence era. However, there are a number of barriers that prevent women from enrolling in higher education, including poor completion rates in upper secondary school, financial limitations, low mean per capita consumption expenditure (MPCE), and parents' restricted educational level and profession.

Moreover, social and cultural conventions hurt girls' schooling. To solve these gender gaps and work toward a more equal future, we must band together and undertake joint initiatives. Ideas to Shatter Obstacles in Education for the Future of India: Encouraging girls to pursue higher education is essential to the country's overall development. We can help guarantee that girls acquire their proper education by offering the following forms of support: Promoting Equal Learning possibilities: The plan supports neighborhood-based programs that promote inclusive perspectives on equal access to education and increase awareness of the importance of education for people of all genders.

In addition, the plan advocates for the creation of gender-responsive educational settings to ensure that every boy and girl may fully realize their right to an education. Teaching Boys about Gender Equality: The plan aggressively includes boys in activities targeted at attaining gender equality because it recognizes the advantages of gender equality for all people, regardless of gender. Plan aims to change social norms in entire communities and cultivate a collective consciousness that supports gender equality by involving boys. Encouraging Gender Role Transformation: We may foster good attitudes on girls' education by increasing knowledge in families and communities. It's also critical to challenge prevailing gender stereotypes by encouraging honest conversations with parents.



It is the duty of higher authorities, community members, non-governmental organizations, and each and every individual in India to remove the obstacles that impede the education of females in our society. Every person has a responsibility to actively support girls' education since they are the future of our country and must understand that progress cannot be made without it.

6. Conclusion

Regarding influencing societal change and living quality, education is essential. It is a tool for raising awareness among people, encouraging countries worldwide to work toward gender parity in education at all levels. Girls receive special privileges to encourage their involvement in education, such as fee reductions and grants. However, women are excluded from many areas of life, which hinders the advancement of nations. Women's confidence and self-esteem may be increased by education, which promotes a good self-image.

Additionally, education gives women the ability to think critically, which improves their decision-making and gives them the authority to decide what is best for their children's and their own education. Education also helps women become more aware of their rights and privileges, which allows them to participate equally in all spheres of life. Women's empowerment via education would have a significant positive impact on the economy, politics, and society as they became more independent and involved in all facets of life.

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