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Challenges of gender equality in access to education: A quantitative Study

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Abstract

Enjoying equal opportunities in rights, resources, protection, and education is called Gender equality. Gender equality is a base that creates a peaceful, flourishing, and sustainable world to live in. Gender equality enhances the productivity of the existing generation and improves the development of the coming generation. Education is a path that breaks the walls of gender inequality and puts a step forward for a sustainable and developed society. The development of a nation is only possible if there are no gender disparities and any kind of disparity and violence in the educational field. Gender equality in education is associated with four dimensions, which are: (a) Equality of accessing education, (b) equality of learning process, (c) equality of educational results (d) equality in external outcomes. The government is putting more stress on taking the proper steps that could strengthen the equality between the genders for smooth functioning and development of the nation. "Education for All" is the policy that acts just like the "Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education act (2009)." A sample of 191 respondents was collected from a "standard questionnaire" created on a five-point interval scale.

Keywords: Education, gender equality, disparities, gender inequality, gender discrimination

Introduction

Different schemes are being launched by central as well as state governments with reference to education that could help in increasing enrollment and also bring out the solutions for the dropout problems. The purpose of this paper is the study gender equality and study various challenges and the remedial measures to remove gender differences in accessing education for the benefit of society. Men and women both are responsible for shaping the culture and tradition of the nation. This further impacts the behavior, choice, and expectation of people. Society is complete without men or women. When a man or woman is educated, aware, responsible, and enjoys equal rights in society, it would automatically uplift to its full extent. This part of the study discusses the four dimensions of gender equality: (A) Equality of accessing education – equality of accessing education means equal access to basic and higher education by boys and girls in rural and urban areas of the world. (B) Equality in the learning process – means that both genders receive equal treatment and attention towards learning, exploring, and opportunities to develop their skills and talents in academic as well as extracurricular activities. (C) Equality of educational outcomes – this dimension states that both genders must get equal opportunities of achieving educational outcomes based on their individual efforts and talents. (D) Equality of external efforts – This dimension is about the equality of status for both genders of accessing resources, goods, and services, respect in the society, similar earnings from their qualification and experience, and equal opportunity of participating in social, political, cultural activities of the society (Devi, 2020) ^[1]. Along with studying how to establish a linear relation between male and females and their equality in accessing education but also the barriers that cause these gaps and the challenges faced in filling up these gaps. To meet-up the challenge of equality has become centered on achieving gender parity, which means that male and female students get the same learning results as mentioned in the national education program through different processes that would encourage fair treatment and equal opportunity. However, gender equality is known to be a constricted objective that does not involve with the more challenging concept of gender parity that raises the problem of, for instance, boys' and girls' labor and how it is distinctively valued, carried and with distinct influence on girl's and boy's learning, or with numerous considerations that influence different capabilities of transition of boys and girls through the formal education system (Aikman & Rao, 2012) ^[2].

In this study, the author has discussed the content and delivery of education and how it replicates and reproduce gender disparities.

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Learning and interaction of male and female with each other and teachers are impacted by methods of teaching, the content of the syllabus, and the environment of the classroom and school. The study advocates a gender parity approach in schools, the method of making teaching and syllabus equitable for both genders. The author concludes that establishing girl-friendly and gender parity means challenging the values of authority and social control in most schools and colleges. This also means changing the syllabus, breaking of hierarchy and power network excluding female students. Suggestions were given by the author to make required alterations to ensure educational provisions to promote gender parity in the educational system (Akpakwu & Bua, 2014)^[3].

Literature Review

Moges (2019)^[4] stated that gender disparity has constantly impacting the involvement of female student in a negative way in every dimension of development. The challenges related to gender equality in accessing education that is faced by the economy are child labor, lack of efforts to educate girl child, domestic work, preference of having a son, social beliefs, etc. makes a huge impact on stopping girls from getting equal opportunity of education like boys. Our education system still ignores the concept of equality in education. The system is considering equality as a satisfactory measure of parity without considering the limitation that is associated with it.

Esteves (2018)^[5] found that gender parity in education is related to the creation of an educational system that give male and female equal opportunity for human rights and benefits from social, economic, cultural, and political development. Some nations have already started taking essential steps to remove the challenges in the education system in order to obtain societal benefits and to give equal rights and benefits to both genders, particularly in the education field. The main purpose of introducing gender parity in accessing education includes not just establishing effective gender parity legislation but also introducing necessary transformations. It has become important to make the environment of school gender sensitive and assure addressing both genders.

Kaul (2015)^[6] revealed that education had become the area of conflict where the fights of marginalized are happening. Such conflicts are associated with castes, class, and gender, constituting a huge proportion of the deprived girl child population. The study has attempted to hold the interconnected process of excluding many girl children from education. Various strategies have been adopted by the government to address the challenges have tended to be inaccessible and fragmented. The fewer girls present in school is a sign of the difficulty they face because of gender inequality in accessing education.

Verma (2018)^[7] stated that even after so many years of Indian independence, huge inequality is found in education among all groups of the society, which include gender and region. One of the biggest problems faced in the education system is girl's education as there is a differentiation between boys and girls and in providing them the education. Regardless of many laws of the Indian constitution to remove gender disparity between male and female in society and education, India is still facing the problem. Though many schemes have already been launched by the Indian government to remove gender inequality, the bridging of

gaps in education between male and female is very low and slow. Along with the government, it is the responsibility of the society as well to take steps in removing such disparity between the genders, Education of female children is essential as they play a vital role in the development of the nation.

Osadan & Burrage (2014)^[8] opined that gender inequality in education is a long and struggling area faced by many countries even today. The developing nations are finding themselves more impacted by a such obstacles to social progress. There are various challenges, and they keep changing over time, but by being intended and goal-driven, gender inequality in education can be addressed quickly and permanently. It is evident that the level of awareness internationally on gender differences in school has increased in the past few decades, and the method to eliminate gender disparity has increased gradually. The reason behind this is the continuous initiatives taken by the government and other international groups that promote gender equality in education.

Gohain (2016)^[9] stated that gender equality or inequality, to a considerable extent, replicates the socio-economic development of the society or nation. In the past few years, it has been observed that many developed countries emphasize gender parity. The aim of removing gender differences has held a noticeable place in international organizations and statements of national strategy. Goals replicate the global focus on the issue of gender disparity and would provide the motivation for the government to remove gender disparities in education. It is often seen that girl children face discrimination from their early years of life till adulthood. They have low status and experience denials even in basic requirements and education.

Babu (2020)^[10] opined that being educated is very important for male and female both. It is unfortunate to know that still, there are some communities that discriminate between girls and boys to give them an education. Education is essential to make a girl independent, empowered, prosper, and for their development. India has made progress in the field of education but not enough. More efforts need to be taken by the government as well as people to remove gender inequality and provide education to girl and boy both. To fight such disparities, women must come forwards to take the required steps and become more powerful in society. Such strength in women would go only if she is educated and through the process of empowerment. Manjulata & Sapna (2018)^[11] found that gender inequality in education is an ongoing issue, particularly for female children in rural and less developed areas. Gender disparity is a big issue and challenge in India while pursuing its goal of universal education system. Several measures have been taken by the government to overcome the problem of gender inequality faced by girls in education. Gender difference in education shows the engagement of female child impacted in a significant manner because of the social behavior of our society towards education. Illiteracy, poverty, poor employment facility, social customs, practices, and attitudes of society are some of the major causes of gender differences. It is essential to remember that factors like risk and protection are indirect links. A boy who sees the behavior of their father toward their mother is what he will follow in life.

Pacalda *et al.* (2020)^[12] stated based on the findings that the impact of different factors was seen as a contributor to

gender inequality in education, factors such as lack of school infrastructure, poverty, geographical remoteness, and poor education system, etc. Even though, the quality of education has been stressed for the sustainable development goals. However, it is also looming that equality does exist because of the found factors that hamper gender equality in the education system. It is suggested by the study private sector must take some initiatives to address these issues related to gender differences in education.

Hussain (2018) [13] revealed that equal social, economic, and political opportunities had been guaranteed by the Indian constitution to be given to every citizen of the country. There will be no discrimination of any caste, creed, religion, or gender. However, even after so many decades of our independence, gender biasness is still present and sustains in our society. Thus, equality has still remained a vital subject of discussion for a long time. Equality explores why still females of our society are seen as a backbencher and a silent viewers in the process of decision-making even if they have more capability than men.

Chisamy *et al.* (2012) [14] found that the promise of girls getting equal opportunities in education and transforming the society still does not appear in many communities. The complicated practices of schools, labor market, early marriages, and tactics of family survival, safety, and security of girls always impact the schooling and education of a female child. Policymakers of education need to consider how educational institutes can play the role of transforming the entire education system by removing any kind of injustice to both the genders.

Yen-Ting (2018) [15] explained education is a key requirement for every country for its development and growth. However, the equality of education has always been an obstacle in this goal. Government and other agencies are promoting gender equality in education to give boys and girls equal opportunities of being educated and empowered. Giving educational opportunities to girl child is essential for the growth and development of the society. It is important to make people aware about the importance of education for female child.

Objectives

1. To identify the challenges of gender equality in education.
2. To ascertain the challenges and issues faced by girl child in accessing education.

Methodology

The study is empirical in nature. Number of participants was 191. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data. To identify the outcome of the Mean and t-test were applied. Sampling method was convenience sampling.

Outcome

Table 1 displays Respondent’s gender, male respondents are 57.59%, and females are 42.41%. Looking at the age group, respondents Below 18 years were 32.98%, respondents who were 18 years to 22 years were 25.65%, and those who were more than 22 years were 41.37%. About Education of parents, Highly Educated are 31.93%, less educated are 29.84%, and Uneducated are 38.23%. About the Regions, Rural is 59.69%, and Urban is 40.31%.

Table 1: Respondent’s Demographic Details

Variable	Number of respondents	Percentage %
Gender		
Male	110	57.59%
Female	81	42.41%
Total	191	100%
Age		
Below 18 years	63	32.98%
18 to 22 years	49	25.65%
22 years & above	79	41.37%
Total	191	100%
Education of Parents		
Highly Educated	61	31.93%
Less educated	57	29.84%
Uneducated	73	38.23%
Total	191	100%
Regions		
Rural	114	59.69%
Urban	77	40.31%
Total	191	100%

Table 2: Challenges of Gender Equality in Accessing Education

Sr. No.	Survey Statement	Mean Value	T-Value	Sig.
1.	Negative attitude of parents towards educating girl child, and positive attitude towards boy child	4.13	15.892	0.000
2.	Lack of female teachers in schools is a challenge that give rise to gender equality in education	4.23	17.408	0.000
3.	Insecurity of female student in schools stops parents to educate their daughters	4.27	18.260	0.000
4.	High costs and fees of education is another challenge that occurs and cause gender disparity in education	4.00	14.088	0.000
5.	Child labour is another challenges, as most of the young girls start working for wages in their early ages	3.13	1.861	0.032
6.	Early marriages of girls stop them for attaining education at high level	4.33	18.723	0.000
7.	Education of girl child is not considered important majorly in rural areas	3.17	2.416	0.008
8.	Girls child has to take care of domestic household work and their siblings	3.13	1.856	0.033
9.	Parents do not want to spend money to educate girl child	4.29	18.192	0.000
10.	Parents educate their boy child as he will be the one to take care of them in old age	4.33	19.084	0.000

Table 2 shows mean values of the “Challenges of Gender Equality in Accessing Education” the first statements of T-test is about the attitude of parents towards their sons and daughters “Negative attitude of parents towards educating girl child, and positive attitude towards boy child” mean value is 4.13, next statement is about the lack of female teachers “Lack of female teachers in schools is a challenge that give rise to gender equality in education” the mean score is 4.23. Statement “Insecurity of female student in

schools stops parents to educate their daughters” has scored the mean value of 4.27, next statement tells about the high school fees “High costs and fees of education is another challenge that occurs and cause gender disparity in education” the man value is 4.00. The fifth statement is about child labor “Child labor is another challenges, as most of the young girls start working for wages in their early ages” mean value is 3.13, next statement is regarding the early marriages of daughters “Child labor is another

challenges, as most of the young girls starts working for wages in their early ages” scored the mean value of 4.33, seventh statement is “Education of girl child is not considered important majorly in rural areas” mean value of 3.17, statement “Girls child has to take care of domestic household work and their siblings” is with the mean value of 3.13. The last two statements are “Parents do not want to spend money to educate girl child” and “Parents educate their boy child as he will be the one to take care of them in old age” with the mean score of 4.29 and 4.33 respectively. T-value of each statement of the survey in the context of Challenges of Gender Equality in Accessing Education are significant because t-value of statements are positively significant as the value is less than 0.05.

Conclusion

As education is important for the genders, the discrimination between boy and girl needs to be removed to give both of them equal opportunities for education for a better future of the nation. Government along with many other agencies and NGOs are taking measures to make people aware about gender equality and also taking efforts to remove the causes of gender disparities like poverty, poor school infrastructure, protection, and safety of girl child, low socio-economic conditions of the family, etc. There is a need to provide free education as the high cost of education is one of the major cause of gender inequality in education. Women of the society must come forward to take up the step of educating their girl child and stop child labor, early marriages of girls as these are also causes that stop girls from getting educated even at the basic level. Policymakers of the education system must develop policies that could encourage people to remove gender inequality in education and give equal opportunities to all for education, prosperity, empowerment, and becoming independent. The find out the major challenges of gender equality in accessing education and to identify the result of the study Mean and T-test has been applied.

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