

Gender Discrimination at School Level

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Abstract: In India, discriminatory attitudes towards women have existed for generations and affects women over their lives. Like male or even above them, female plays important role in the family and national development. But her contribution is not recognized by the male dominant society. Gender discrimination is not biologically determined but it is determined by socially and the discrimination can be changed by the proper and perpetuate efforts. Denial of equality, rights and opportunity and supplement in any form on the basis of gender is gender discrimination.

Education is the tool that can help break the pattern of gender discrimination and bring lasting change for women in developing countries.

The Constitution has recognized the significance of education for social transformation. Article 21(a) , Article 41 and Article 45 provisions

The following reasons are responsible for discrimination of girl child:-

Gender discrimination, Early marriage and pregnancy, Violence against girls in schools, Lack of Funding, Child/domestic labour, Lack of government schools

Many people are not aware of the importance of education. Some who are aware are ignorant. And many people don't want their daughters to study; they just want their daughters to serve their parents first and husband & in-laws next, they only want their sons to be educated.

In this research paper we will discuss the reasons and solutions for gender discrimination at school level.

Keywords: . Gender Discrimination, Lack of funding, School Level, Women,

1. INTRODUCTION

In India, discriminatory attitudes towards women have existed for generations and affects women over their lives. Like male or even above them, female plays important role in the family and national development. But her contribution is not recognized by the male dominant society.

When a boy is born, in most developing countries, friends and relatives exclaim congratulations. A son means insurance. He will inherit his father's property and get a job to help support the family. When a girl is born, the reaction is very different. Some women weep when they find out their baby is a girl because, to them, a daughter is just another expense. Her place is in the home, not in the world of men. In some parts of India, it's traditional to greet a family with a newborn girl by saying, "The servant of your household has been born."

Gender is a common term where as gender discrimination is meant only for women,

because females are the only victims of gender discrimination. Gender discrimination is not biologically determined but it is determined by socially and the discrimination can be changed by the proper and perpetuate efforts. Denial of equality, rights and opportunity and supplement in any form on the basis of gender is gender discrimination.

Half of the world's population is females. They are doing two-third of work of the total work in the world but received only one-tenth of the world's total income. Nearly two-third of the women is illiterates and they have possessed only one percent of the total world's assets. In the world only one-fourth of the families are headed by female. India is a male dominant society and gender discrimination is customised habitually.

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There are limited opportunities for women to access resources such as education, health care services and job opportunities to women as they decide the future of India.[3] Women are disadvantaged at work, and are often underestimated for their capabilities.[4] This has prevented Indian women from achieving a higher standard of living.

Education is not widely attained by the Indian women. Although literacy rates are increasing, female literacy rates lags behind the male literacy rate.

Literacy for females stands at 65.46%, compared to 82.14% for males.[5] An underlying factor for such low literacy rates are parent's perceptions that education for girls are a waste of resources as their daughters would eventually live with their husband's families and they will not benefit directly from the education investment.[6]

Parents reluctance to educate daughters has its roots in the situation of women. Parents have several incentives for not educating their daughters. Foremost is the view that education of girls brings no returns to parents and that their future roles, being mainly reproductive and perhaps including agricultural labor, require no formal education. Legislation for Women in India, several laws, legislations, policies and institutional reforms have been enacted to carry out the gender action plan for the development of women. Legislation is an important instrument for bringing about a change in the unequal economic and social status in India. In pre-independent India, few laws were passed in response to social demands and on the basis of humanitarian consideration[7].

What is sex discrimination in education? Discrimination in education can happen in several ways for example:

Direct sex discrimination- A mixed sex school attempts to maintain a gender balance in the school by admitting one sex and not another when places are limited. This is likely to constitute direct sex discrimination and to be unlawful.

Indirect sex discrimination - One may experience indirect sex discrimination if a condition or requirement of admitting one to a course or institution applies equally to both male and female applicants but, in fact, significantly fewer members of one sex would be able to comply with it. In order to show indirect sex discrimination has taken place, it is helpful to have statistics to show that the condition would adversely affect more members of one sex.

Harassment - It is unlawful for the governing body of an institution of further or higher education to subject one to harassment if a student at the institution or have applied for admission to the institution. Harassment is defined as either:

- unwanted conduct of a sexual nature which violates your dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for you or;
- unwanted conduct on the grounds of your sex which has the same effect. This does not have to be sexual in nature and could include, for example, being bullied, if you feel that the harasser would not treat somebody of the opposite sex in this way.

The SDA[8] makes it unlawful for educational establishments to directly or indirectly discriminate on grounds of sex, (or victimise), in any of the following areas:

- Admissions policies.
- Access to classes, courses or other benefits, facilities or services provided by the school or college.
- Exclusions or any other unfavourable treatment.

Local authorities are also under a general duty to ensure that educational facilities and ancillary benefits or services are provided without sex discrimination.

Constitutional aspect-The Constitution[9] has recognized the significance of education for social transformation. It is a document committed to social justice. The Preamble affirms a determination to secure liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship and equality of status and opportunity and to promote amongst the people a feeling of fraternity, ensuring the dignity of the individual and the unity of the nation. Literacy forms the cornerstone for making the provision of equality of opportunity a reality. The objective specified in the Preamble contains the basic structure of the Constitution, which cannot be amended, and the preamble may be invoked to determine the ambit of Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policy. Judicial interpretation has brought alive many an Article of the Constitution, which if read literally may seem to be a colourless Article. Of relevance to literacy, for instance, is the wide interpretation given to the words 'personal; liberty'. In Francis Coralie Mulin[10], Justice Bhagwati observed:

“The fundamental right to life which is the most precious human right and which forms the arc of all other rights must therefore be interpreted in a broad and expansive spirit so as to invest it with significance and vitality which may endure for years to come and enhance the dignity of the individual and the worth of the human person. We think that the right to life includes right to live, with human dignity and all that goes along with it, namely, the bare necessities of life such as adequate nutrition, clothing and shelter and facilities for reading, writing and expressing oneself in diverse forms, freely moving about, mixing and co-mingling with fellow human beings.”

Again, the Supreme Court in its judgment in the case of Bandhua Mukti Morcha[11] specifically referred to the earlier judgments made in this connection as under:

“In Maharashtra State Board of Secondary and Higher Education[12], right to education at the secondary stage was held to be a fundamental right.

In J.P. Unnikrishnan[13], a constitution Bench had held education upto the age of 14 years to be a fundamental right.... It would be therefore incumbent upon the State to provide facilities and opportunity as enjoined under Article 39 (e) and (f) of the Constitution and to prevent exploitation of their childhood due to indigence and vagary.”

Article 14 of Indian Constitution says that the state shall not deny to any person equality before or equal protection of the law, Article 15 says that no women can be discriminated against on the ground of sex, race, caste, religion or place of birth, Article 15 (3) emphasis that the state shall make special provisions for women and children and Article 16 provides equality of opportunity in matters relating to employment by the state. Article 21(a) right to education, Article 41 right to work, to education and Article 45 provisions for early childhood care and education to children below the age of six years. Although the constitution of India has granted women equal rights but gender disparities remains.

The following reasons are responsible for discrimination of girl child:-

Gender discrimination - Cultural and social beliefs, attitudes and practices prevent girls from benefiting from educational opportunities to the same extent as boys. There is often a powerful economic and social rationale for investing in the education of sons rather than daughters, as daughters are perceived to less valuable once educated, and less likely to abide by the will of the father, brother or husband. In most countries, both the public and private sectors continue to be dominated by men, leading parents to ask themselves: why bother educating our girls if they will never make it anyway?

Early marriage and pregnancy - The low value attached to girls' education reinforces early marriage and early pregnancy keeping girls and their children trapped in a vicious cycle of discrimination. Too often marriage is seen as a higher priority than education, and the girls who are married (even where they have been forced into early marriages against their will), as well as the girls who are pregnant, are excluded from schools.

Violence against girls in schools - Another key issue around rights to and in education concerns the persisting violence against girls. Tragically, this issue is a daily reality for many girls around the world. The violence is not only a direct infringement of human rights as elucidated in the CEDAW[14], but it also plays a role in denying girls the right to access education by being one of the major causes of drop-out among girls. Taken together with the ever-present scourge of corporal punishment and public shaming by school authorities and teachers, a cycle of absenteeism, low self-esteem and violence at home and in schools, this perpetuates those cycles of discrimination which education is supposed to challenge and break.

Schools fail to protect the basic rights and dignity of girls. Violence includes rape, sexual harassment, physical and psychological intimidation, teasing and threats. It may occur on the way to school or within the school itself, and is perpetuated by teachers, parents, persons of perceived authority and fellow students. Schools who also fail to provide adequate physical facilities, such as toilets and running water, cause inconvenience to boys, but spell an end to education for girls before education has even begun.

Statistics about the prevalence of violence against girls are hard to find: it remains under-reported, misunderstood and largely unaddressed, both because of the difficulty of

researching the issue, and because of the widespread cultural negligence and betrayal of those who have little or no rights in the first place.

Funding - Funding in girls' education is an important issue. No country has yet succeeded in rescuing girls' education from its continued status as the lowest budget priority and one of the least favoured areas in public policy.

“The direct costs of sending all children to school are usually too high for poor parents. While primary school tuition fees have now been abolished in many countries, nearly all developing countries still requires payment of various kinds; in many cases, these charges are far higher than direct tuition fees. They include: charges for books, stationery, exam fees, uniforms, contributions to ‘building funds, levies imposed by the school management committees, informal tips to teachers and travel costs”[15].

Household poverty and the need to prioritize reduce educational opportunity for girls because they are the first to suffer. The opportunity costs linked to sending girls to school are significant on poor households. Girls' labour is frequently used to substitute for their mothers', e.g. by caring for siblings. The loss of girls' labour during school hours thus has a detrimental impact on such families' ability to raise their household income, either through food production or wage labour.

Child/domestic labour -Girls are usually ‘needed at home’ and/or ‘need to earn money’. These are major reasons why poor girls drop out of school in most countries. Girls being employed as child labour, bearing the main burden of housework and taking on the role of caring for younger siblings, are impacting girls' performance and attendance in schools, and resulting in physical and mental fatigue, absenteeism and poor performance. “Opportunity costs refer to labour time lost to the parent when the child goes to school. The opportunity costs are usually much higher for girls than for boys, since girls are expected to do more domestic work than boys”[16]. While educating a boy is generally seen as a sound investment, sending a girl to school is frequently seen either as bringing no gain at all, or, worse, as an actual waste of resources.

Lack of government schools - Ministry of Education planners do not always take girls' enrolment targets into consideration when determining how many new schools should be built, or the need to secure girls education. Such deceptions are allowed to flourish, either due to ignorance or simply to bad intentions, despite the fact that education is the one single investment that is most likely to break the cycle of poverty for the family and for society. The need to travel long distances to school is also one of the main barriers for girls, especially in countries where a cultural premium is placed on female seclusion. This is due to concerns for girls' safety and security, and consequently parents are usually unwilling to let their daughters walk long distances to school.[17]

Lack of encouragement - The limited number of female teachers in both primary and secondary schools is a major constraint on girls' education. The presence of female teachers both makes schools more girl-friendly, and provides role models for girls.

It is also documented that there is an inseparable link between the well-being of mothers and the well-being of their children. Women who were educated in school frequently have fewer children, and are better able to provide health care and adequate nutrition for

the children they do have. They are also more likely to send their children to school and keep them in a school system.

Despite most countries having age-old policies aimed at recruiting female teachers, so far none have managed to fill these quotas, “primarily because governments have consistently failed to guarantee the equal rights of women in teaching, failed to challenge cultural prejudice against female teachers, and often failed to develop effective incentives to encourage female teachers to work” in poor or rural areas.

2. CONCLUSION

Many people are not aware of the importance of education. Some who are aware are ignorant. And many people don't want their daughters to study; they just want their daughters to serve their parents first and husband & in-laws next, they only want their sons to be educated.

The people in the society feel that girl child is burden and think that educating her is waste after all she is going to marry, some think that girl child will be safer in home and some due the old believes, custom and tradition don't educate the girls. This is reason for female illiteracy in India today.

Men still dominate women in every country in the world, resulting in widespread discrimination against women and girls. Inequality in society inevitably has an impact on the provision and content of education, as well as on the ability of girls to enter, and remain in, school.

“Education is a means of overcoming poverty, increasing income, improving nutrition and health, reducing family size as well as raising people's self confidence and enriching the quality of their lives. The gender gap in education however comes at a high cost to growth and development. The mother's education is the single most important determinant of a family's health and nutrition. Female discrimination must be overcome through increased awareness on the importance of education for all and in particular, increased female participation in education and formal sector employment....”

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