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FROM HISTORY TO HURDLES: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF GENDER INEQUALITY IN EDUCATION

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Abstract

Gender inequality is a social phenomenon in which individuals are treated unequally based on gender. It is a global issue. There are some factors like social, economical, political etc, which are responsible for gender inequality. This gender inequality is seen in various aspects of society, one of which is education. The term gender inequality in education describes the unequal access and opportunities in the education system that individuals face based on gender. The aim of this paper is to find out the background of gender inequality in India and the factors which are responsible for gender inequality. This paper also studies what is gender inequality in education and what are the issues or practice associated with gender inequality in education.

Keywords: Gender, Inequality, Gender bias, education, inequality in education

Introduction: Gender is a social construct that impacts attitudes, roles, duties and behavioural patterns of boys and girls, men and women in all societies (Manna et.al). Gender means social roles and relations between men and women in the society. It affects all aspects of our lives (social, economic and political). As a social construct it varies from society to society and change over time. Gender Inequality is also known as gender biasness. Gender inequality means gender stratification or making difference between male and female. It means disparity between male and female in different (social, economic, political and cultural) aspects (Jha & Nagar, 2015). The reality of gender inequality in India is intricate and multifaceted, because it exists in every field like education, employment, opportunities etc (Thomas, 2013). Gender inequality in education is considered the most important impediment for the overall progression of education system. It prevents both men and women from achieving their basic rights to education (Kapur, 2019).

Review of Literature:

Hooda (2021) investigated a study which aims to underline determinants of women inadequacy across basic indicators of development. The indicators such as access to education, wealth, economic participation and potency of decisions making among the marginalized groups are being analyzed. This study scrutinized women status in health, education and labour force participation rate in India. Sharma (2017) throws light on the played by culture and traditions specifically of Hindu religion in legitimising the subordinate position of women in Indian society. This paper presenting a brief account on the status of women from ancient times to contemporary situation. Karan (2017) This paper examines the content and the process of teaching and learning which appear in the form of delivering formal education, and expresses how these components reflect and reproduce gender inequalities in Indian context of classroom situation. It also highlights how, girls' and boys' learning, and interactions with each other as well as with the teachers are being influenced by methods of teaching, content and relations within the classroom. Sharma (2015) has highlighted this paper the various aspects of gender inequality in India. Gender inequality in India is a multifaceted issue that concerns men and women alike. This study represented the different root causes of gender inequality. Patriarchal society, son preference, dowry and different discrimination against girls are the main causes (which hinders the progress of women) of this inequality. Jha & Nagar (2015) conducted a study about Gender Inequality in India. This study indicates the inequality in economics, social, cultural and legal biasness which are great challenges for policy makers and social scientists to establish proper equality in the social field. The researchers also tried to suggest some important strategies and policies for reducing gender inequality which promote the dignified



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position for Indian women. Raju (2014) has examined the gender discrimination in India on the basis of demographic, social, economic and political context. The paper has broadly discussed the issue of gender inequality, women empowerment and reproductive health among women in India. Shastri (2014) conducted a study about Gender Inequality and Women Discrimination. This study highlighted some different discrimination (sati pratha, early marriage, dowry, domestic violence, preference of son, no decision-making power etc.) faced by women through ancient time till today. This study also gives some strategies which can decrease the gender discrimination.

Thomas (2013) has highlighted his paper the present scenario of gender inequality and also discussed the origin of gender inequality in India. This paper presents some facts and figures representing the inequality practiced in India and its comparison with other Asian and Western countries. Mehrotra & Kapoor (2009) This study reviews the status of gender discrimination in Asia as reflected in various human development outcomes. The paper closes with some policy implications and remarks on the impact on gender related issues of the global economic crisis that started in 2008. Sivakumar (2008) conducted a study entitled “Gender Discrimination and Women’s Development in India”. This paper deals with gender discrimination and its various forms and it causes. Importance of women development, legislation for women and solution for gender discrimination are also discussed in this study. Razvi & Roth (2004) conducted a study entitled “Socio-economic Development and Gender Inequality in India”. This paper describes and interprets recurrent themes indicating that the Indian government, non-governmental organizations and other International human rights organizations show growing concerns regarding gender inequality in India. This paper incorporates gender, economic and social development as a conceptual framework to explore the status of Indian Women. Tisdell (2002) conducted a study entitled, “Gender Inequality in India: evidence from survey in rural West Bengal”. The purpose of this paper was to report on gender preferences and inequality as revealed by a survey of wives in four rural villages of west Bengal in India. This survey provides evidences about the unequal treatment between female and male children, and wives compared to husbands. From the survey it can be seen that sons are given more preference than girls, that’s why daughters are deprived relatively in terms of education, availability of and medical attention. Dunn (1993) conducted a study which focused on the situation of women in scheduled caste and tribe groups which are referred to as, “weaker sections of people” and granted special safeguards and concessions under the Indian constitution. This paper represented a descriptive picture of scheduled caste and tribe women status in Indian society and also suggested that socioeconomic development plays an important role to reduce the disadvantage of scheduled group women relative to men.

Objectives:

1. To find out the background of gender inequality in India.
2. To know about the different types of gender inequality.
3. To identify the factors which are responsible for gender inequality.
4. To study the concept gender inequality in education.
5. To find out the different issues and challenges associated with gender inequality in education.

Methodology:

The paper is basically descriptive in nature. Secondary data such as research article, books and internet resources have mainly been used for the present study.



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Background of Gender Inequality in India

Generally, gender inequality word used for “women” because they considered being most inferior and weaker section. Gender Inequality is not a new phenomenon in Modern India, Even so, it was a common feature in ancient times. Women are face all types of discrimination in this society. They are deprived from the basic facilities (Shastri, 2014). This inequality is very complex and diversified because it is present in many ways, fields and classes. Many fields like education, employment where men are always preferred than women (Thomas, 2013). The patriarchy system in Indian society is the main cause of gender inequality. According to the famous sociologists Sylvia Walby, patriarchy is “a system of social structure and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women” Women’s exploitation is an age-old cultural phenomenon of Indian society. As per ancient Hindu Law giver Manu: Women will be in the custody of the father in childhood, of the husband in youth and of the son in old age. They can’t regard themselves as independent anyway. They must rely on men for everything in their lives. Through Manu’s statement about women, we can understand what the social status of women was in the society of that time of our society. The practice of polygamy deteriorated the status of women and in the medieval period, the practices of purdha system, dowry and Sati came into being. With the passage of time, the status of women was lowered.

In India, many people who are happy on the birth of a son and remain upset on the birth of a girl child. Women face discrimination right from the childhood. They are discriminated in every aspect of life. People in Indian society prefer sons over daughters in almost every respect. For example, if they don’t have a son then who will look after their family, who will forward their family hierarchy and so on. That’s why the birth of a son in the family is celebrated with joy and happiness. On the other hand, birth of a daughter celebrated with lot of sorrow. (Shastri, 2014). Dowry is the payment in cash or some kind of gifts given to bridegroom’s family along with the bride. The practice is common in all regions, social classes and religions tradition. The belief that girls are a financial burden of families is influenced by the dowry system which exacerbates gender inequality (Sharma, 2015). This idea restricts the resources that parents can devote to their daughters. Poverty is one of the causes of gender inequality. A majority of India’s population lives below the poverty line. Also, many parents give more importance to their sons. On the other hand, they are not aware of the importance of girls’ education. They think that girls are suitable for housework. For this reason, they place greater value on the son’s education than the daughters. In this sense females who fall behind in their education are unaware of their basic rights and potential.

In many parts of India, women are considered as an economic burden despite their contribution to our society and economy. Crimes against woman are increasing at an alarming rate. The condition of an Indian widow is very woeful. The women’s contribution towards home as a housewife is not recognized. Domestic violence, rape, sexual exploitation, eve-teasing, forced prostitution, sexual harassment at workplaces etc. are common affair today. The main cause of this inequality or discrimination are identified as the need of a male heir for the family, Dowry, no financial support to girl child, poverty, domestic violence and caste system (Thomas, 2013).

Types of Gender Inequality

According to Nobel laureate Prof. Amartya Sen (2001) Gender inequality exists in most parts of the world and this inequality is not one homogeneous phenomenon but a collection of disparate and inter linked problems. According to him there are seven types of gender inequalities in India. Here is a brief explanation of these seven types of gender inequality.

Mortality Inequality: This type of inequality directly involves the matters of life and death between women and men and takes the brutal form of unusually high mortality rates for women and a consequent preponderance of men in the total



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population that opposed to the preponderance of women found in societies with little or no gender bias in health care and nutrition.

Natality Inequality: This type of gender inequality which can manifest itself in the form of parents' wanting a baby boy rather than a girl, and there was a time when this could only be a wish, a daydream or a nightmare depending on one's perspective. Given the more importance to boys rather than girls which characterized male dominated societies.

Ownership Inequality: In many Indian societies, property ownership can also be highly unequal. Because that time according to the law of inheritance male children were given more importance than female children in all properties. Basic assets such as home and land may be distributed very unequally. The absence of property rights can not only reduce the women voice, but also make it more difficult for them to enter and to flourish in commercial, economic and even social activities.

Basic Facility Inequality: In this type of inequality, there are some deficiencies in basic facilities availability to women, varying from encouragement to the development of one's natural talents in order to fairly participate in the social functions of the community.

Special Opportunity Inequality: This type of inequality occurs when there is a little disparity in basic facilities including schooling, opportunities for higher studies may be far fewer for women than for men. Indeed, there are some countries in the world where gender bias in professional training and higher education.

Professional Inequality: Women are often face more hurdles than men in terms of employment as well as promotion at work. There is no doubt that men are getting more priority than female to get better work opportunities.

Factors of Gender Inequality

There are so many factors which are responsible for gender inequality in India. These factors are as follows:

1. **Economic Factors:** The economic factors that are responsible for gender inequality are Labor Participation, Access to Credit, Occupational inequality, Property Rights, Women's inequality in proper inheritance, Employment inequality etc.
2. **Social Factors:** The economic factors that are responsible for gender inequality are Education, Health, Patriarchal Society, Dowry, Gender based violence, Women's inequality in decision making etc.
3. **Cultural Factors:** The economic factors that are responsible for gender inequality are Old age support from sons, Patrilineality System, role of son in religious rituals, son preference etc.
4. **Legal and Political Factors:** Both men and women are equal in the eyes of the laws and hence they have equal rights. But unfortunately, legal and political bias has prevented the law to attain the success of equality in gender

Gender inequality in Education

The term gender inequality in education describes the unequal access and opportunities in the education system that individuals face based on gender. In any nation's progress both men and women make unique contributions. We should not forget that men and women are the two wheels of a cart whose equal participation is necessary in nation progress. We can't imagine the development of one without the development of other. And if women are deprived of education the overall development of the country will never be possible. Women play an important role in the development of children. Therefore, women's education is very important for the development of any country. In ancient India the status of women was very



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high. At that time women were considered as mothers or goddess. Women had equal right to read the Vedas like men. At that time women were not only studying the Vedas but also known for their special skills in dance, song etc. In the education system of the Buddhist era, the place of women's education was initially secondary. Later women's right to education was recognized. In medieval period, due to the practices of purdha system, women were deprived of education. Over time, the status of women was lowered. Women Education was somewhat expanded during the nineteenth century. The name of Raja Rammohan Roy is especially known as a social reformer for the upliftment of women status and their education. Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar is also remembered for his contribution to social reform and women education. He believed that the social status of women would be restored only if education was promoted among them. He established various schools to spread female education and as a social reformer prevented polygamy, child marriage and introduce widow marriage. Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore and other also notable for the spread of Indian women education. After the Independence of India, different Commission and committees made various recommendations regarding the development of women's education.

Issues and Challenges associated with gender inequality in education

A good learning environment in the classroom is very important for effective learning. Students are able to feel pleasurable within the classroom environment and get motivated towards their studies (Kapur, 2019). In the school learning situation, there are some issues and challenges which are associated with gender inequality.

- Gender bias is particularly noticeable in the teaching-learning process in the classroom. It has been observed that teachers frequently ask only male students to respond to their questions. In this case they think that the male students are more courageous than the female students. In some cases, when female students try to answer of asked questions, she is interrupted by male students, or in some cases, male students laughed at female students who fail to answer the questions. It is important to eliminate this kind of discrimination in the classroom. To create an environment of gender equality in the classroom, teachers should give equal importance to both boys and girls as it builds confidence in both and encourages them to participate in classroom activities.
- It is a common scenario that all male learners sit together on one side and all female learners sit together on the other side of the classroom. Therefore, there is no interaction between students, collaborative learning, discussion in the classroom. Sometimes, for debate or collaborative learning, the teacher divides the students into different groups based on gender. To make classroom learning effective, teachers should ensure equal participation of students in classroom activities and sitting arrangement in the classroom should be randomization.
- Curriculum, teaching learning materials are the important component of learning process. If there is any gender discrimination in the textbooks then it can adversely impact on learner's cognitive development. It has been noted that male and female are presented in a biased manner in various images of the text books. Women are typically seen doing nursing and house work whereas men are pictured working in offices and other higher-level tasks. It should not be presented in textbooks that girls are weaker than boys. Hence, the curriculum and teaching learning materials need to be effectively prepared to eliminate such gender discrimination.
- Choosing the appropriate subject for higher education plays a crucial role for students. In this context, it has been observed that boys usually select male-dominated subjects and choose career paths accordingly, while girls tend to opt for female-dominated subjects. Teacher as a counsellor would advise students to prioritize their interests and abilities over gender when choosing subjects.
- Most of the time, whether knowingly or unknowingly teachers use masculine word like "He" to address the whole class which includes both boys and girls. Teachers call on boys more frequently than on girls to get response or



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answer from the class. So, a biased perception is created among students in the classroom. Therefore, when addressing the class, the teachers must use gender neutral language such as “students”, “pupils”, “Dears” etc.

- Disparities in school management lead to significant gender equality issues in teaching and learning. It is seen that most of the school management members are male teachers. Due to this inequality curriculum, learning objectives, teaching learning materials, classroom infrastructure framed by them give more emphasis on the reflection of life experiences of male students. To ensure equality and equity in all aspects of teaching and learning, an adequate number of female teachers shall be included in school management.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, gender inequality in education is still a significant global problem that hinders individual potential and limit social progress. To reduce gender inequality, the first step should be to develop a positive attitude towards girls. In this regard, families should encourage girls to pursue education, motivate them to enhance their career prospects, increase their opportunities for empowerment and also encourage the development of their personality. The prevention of gender inequality relies heavily on the societal acceptance of girls’ equal capabilities relative to their male counterparts. If gender inequality is eradicated, women will contribute their knowledge, abilities, and potential to build a family and a country. Gender equality in education is not just about justice and human rights; it is a fundamental investment in the creation of more equitable, successful and sustainable societies for all.

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