

Gender Inequality in Higher Education: A Sociological Perspective

Dr. Shweta Katti

Deptt. of Sociology, Gulbarga University, Kalaburgi

Abstract

This paper reviews a diverse literature on gender and higher education. Gender inequality is more pronounced in some aspects of the educational systems than in others. The analysis distinguishes access to higher education; college experiences; and post collegiate outcomes. Women fare relatively well in the area of access, less well in terms of the college experience, and are particularly disadvantaged with respect to the outcomes of schooling. Explanations of gender inequality in higher education should distinguish between these different aspects of education and should explain those contexts in which women have attained parity as well as those in which they continue to lag behind men.

Education has been important to the development of human society. The issues of class, race and caste have been of great significance to the educational discussions. Major stress has been laid on promoting equality through educating different classes, races & ethnic groups. Slowly & slowly gender added a new dimension to this education equality paradigm. Females criticize the discriminatory attitude towards women, the cause of which women have lagged behind in the field of education

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Dr. Shweta Katti,

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Introduction:

Gender inequalities, and its social causes, impact India's sex ratio, women's health over their lifetimes, their educational attainment, and economic conditions. Gender inequality in India is a multifaceted issue that concerns men and women alike. Some argue that some gender equality measures, place men at a disadvantage. However, when India's population is examined as a whole, women are at a disadvantage in several important ways. Free and compulsory education to all children between the ages of 6 and 14 is a fundamental right of citizens under the 86th Amendment to the Constitution of India. . Equality among human beings can be attained by providing sufficient opportunities for better health and education to the girls and women. Elementary education is important for enabling women to break through many traditional and social barriers for promoting Social development through higher education, which plays an important role in the Social and occupational mobility, personality and intellectual development.

The modern Economy of the 21th century i.e. the knowledge economy, requires highly educated people for accelerating the process of economic development. The higher education system of a country plays a significant role in the creation of skilled human resources in the light of the growing importance of higher education as an instrument of equality and vertical mobility, especially in the era of knowledge. The role of women in Shaping the society has been well recognized at National level as well as at international level. United Nations organization affirms equal rights of men and women with an objective to promote social progress and better standards of life. In the year 1995 united nations fourth world conference unanimously linked the women's rights to human rights for the first time in the UN history. Indian union in its constitution has safe guarded the interests of female population in all aspects

Gender inequalities are bound to exist in every male dominated society. In India, practically all the indicators of progress exhibit negative trend. Within the family the girls are discriminated against boys for education and the decision to send the girl to school or keep her at home is determined by people's attitude especially towards the relevance of education in the lives of women. A very low value is attached to her education as in a majority of cases, her world revolves around her household chores and unlike her male counterparts in the family her status is neither recognized nor respected in the society. As a result, the status gap arises between men and women and which lead women into low-skill, less paid and low-status occupations. In case of rural environment and girls born in the backward families

(particularly SC/STs), there is still more curse to get education and employment.

The reasons for such disparities in female education are differently stated by different authors in their respective studies. It has been generally observed that employment in the services sector is not gender neutral and is influenced, dominated and virtually controlled by males. Women find the working environment unfriendly and insecure. Questions of fair representation of genders and equality of opportunity have been pushed into the background under the guise of quality, merit and ability. The planning and implementation process must be possessed of a vision that encompasses both the public and private owned sectors, keeping its gaze fixed on ensuring equality of opportunity and being alive to gender sensitivities. The current 'ad-hoc approach' lacks a conceptual framework and is fraught with negative implications for women's access to higher education. A study of women scientists in biological sciences in the central universities and the national laboratories concluded that when it came to permanent faculty positions women were worse off as compared to men as a proportion of those that had obtained research degrees (Bal, 2004). It has been argued that researchers join as faculty members in their early thirties; this is a time when women are either getting married or in need of a break to raise a family. The break makes it impossible for to keep pace cannot compete with men in research and professional experience. This filtering out continues despite the fact that at junior faculty level one finds that there were more women in the faculty than there were men. Gender disparity at all levels and its adverse impact on women has become a fact of life. This is partly due to biological role and responsibilities of women as mothers, but mostly due to traditional mindsets, which visualize women as being child-bearers and homemakers, and men as breadwinners (Bamji, 2005). Hence, to analyze the gender stratification in backward as well as developed areas, the present study is made in Gulbarga University, Gulbarga and Bangalore University, Bangalore.

Aims of Higher Education:

Higher education plays an important role in every aspect of life. To say it increase individual knowledge, inculcate analytical thinking, and bring name and fame and it is the major means to get good employment. The conventional ideas that boys are for education and outside employment and girls are for kitchen and housework was changed and girls are increasingly participating in higher education

Religion/ Community Determine the Career/ Occupational Choice:

In the historical times, the occupations or careers of the people are decided by the caste and religion of the people. But due to the increase in awareness

and educational development, such conceptions were transformed and the career or occupational choices are not decided by religion, culture, community or castes to a greater extent now.

Male Members are Preferred for Higher Education and Research in Family:

As the Indian society is basically a male dominated society, there is preference to males in the family over the female members in the family as well as in the society. As such education is such an aspect, in which the male family members are preferred over the female family members. The orthodox and male dominated society emphasized the role of women to house work and kitchen only and men are allowed to work outside the family. As a result, the role of females in the family and society was lower. Now due to the increased awareness among people, majority of the people are treating their sons and daughters as equal and also giving equal educational opportunities to their children irrespective of gender.

Girls are Getting Lesser Opportunities in Education and Employment

As discussed in the previous chapters, the status of women was low and at present the status is increasing due to the efforts of the governments and education among girls. As such there is need to know about whether the girls are getting lesser opportunities in education and employment compared to men in the family as well as in society.

Facing Discrimination

Since the historical times, the girls are discriminated in many respects, social, economical, educational, political, religious and such other aspects. But the education is playing an important role in curbing the discrimination in all the respects. As the present study covered the higher education students, it was asked to them whether the girls are facing any kind of discrimination .

Adequate Freedom to Choose Employment and Job:

It is highlighted from many of the studies that the students are not given adequate freedom to choose their employment or job on their own. Many of the relatives such as parents, brothers, sisters and others influence on the Employment and job of their younger. Hence, information was collected from the respondents, that whether they have adequate freedom to choose their career.

Gender Influence Career and Course:

As many people think, most of the courses are suitable only for the boys, but few courses are not suitable for the girls. That is for instance, Science and Technology is not suitable for the girls. Further, Nursing courses are suitable to a major extent to the girls rather than boys, depending on the nature of work they get in the future.

But due to the globalization, such assumptions were transformed and today the girls and boys are not differentiated in choosing a particular course in education.

Gender Determines Type of Job in Future

Many of people believe there are some jobs, which are gender-specific. For instance, nursing is meant for girls only. Further, driving, civil engineering, etc are only meant for boys. In this way in many cases, the gender determines the type of job in future for the students. But due to increase in participation of girls in education, these conceptions are changed now. Girls are competitive and confident to take up any kind of jobs.

Status of Women Improved in all Aspects

It was asked to the respondents that whether they agree that the status of women is improved in all aspects, that is to say, socio-economic, educational, cultural, religious, political and such other aspects

Marriage is an Obstacle in Education, Career and Profession

It is already discussed that many of the parents think that their daughters' marriage is a big responsibility in the family. As such, they will arrange their daughters' marriage at an early age. Indirectly it makes females to become deprived of higher education. Of course, many of the married women are also participate in higher education, but their rate is low

Gender Stratification in Higher Education

As analyzed by statistics on the enrolment of the male and female students to various post-graduate courses in Gulbarga University and Bangalore University, it was already observed that the female participation in higher education is comparatively low. Hence, it can be said that there is gender stratification in higher education

Conclusion

The study revealed that the women are more actively participating in higher education, but it is emphasized that only urban women are getting more educational opportunities rather than rural women. There is need to establish more and more colleges in the rural areas. As the present study covered the responses from both backward and forward regions, it shows that in backward areas, still there is more male domination, orthodox conventions and traditional culture, which became restrictions to the women's higher education. Even though in developed areas, women are increasingly participating in higher education, they are also affected by male domination in the society. Parents and Family members to a greater extent are responsible to suppress and restrict the higher education of the girls in backward regions. In developed regions, education and employment opportunities motivating

women to take up and participate in higher education with more interest.

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