



CURRENT PICTURE OF GENDER EQUITY IN INDIA

AUTHORS:

1. Name: *Dr. Sangeeta Singh Hada¹

Designation: Head, Department of Education

Affiliation: S.V.S.D.P.G.College

Bhatoli, Distt. Una

Himachal Pradesh

ORCID I'D: 0000-0001-6235-7476

2. Name: Dr. Piyali Sarkar²

Designation: Assistant Principal

Affiliation: Barabisha High School (H.S.)

Barobisha, Alipurduar

West Bengal

ORCID I'D: 0000-0002-5762-7432

ABSTRACT

Regardless of a person's gender, gender equality is a crucial idea that supports justice and fairness in treatment. It encompasses the notion that all people, regardless of gender identity, should have equal access to opportunities, rights, and responsibilities. Institutional barriers and cultural practices that sustain bias and stereotypes need to be addressed in order to attain gender parity. It means creating a welcoming environment where individuals may thrive on the basis of their abilities and attributes rather than being limited by gender stereotypes. In addition to being a matter of social justice, implementing gender parity is a catalyst for economic and social progress. In summary, attaining gender parity necessitates a thorough and systemic strategy rather than just tackling discrete problems. It calls for the demolition of deeply embedded cultural norms and prejudices that support discrimination against women. Adopting a comprehensive approach entails putting in place laws that support equitable chances for work, education, and leadership positions as well as encouraging a cultural movement towards tolerance and respect for a

range of gender identities. Governments, corporations, communities, and people must work together to confront and alter the systems that uphold injustice in order to achieve gender parity.

Keywords: *Gender equity, SDG5, gender equity in India, gender equity in rural India.*

INTRODUCTION

Gender equity is an essential concept that promotes justice and fairness in the way people are treated, regardless of their gender. It includes the idea that everyone ought to have the same opportunities, rights, and obligations regardless of gender identification. In order to achieve gender parity, institutional obstacles and cultural norms that support prejudice and stereotypes must be addressed. It entails fostering an inclusive atmosphere where people may succeed without being constrained by gender-specific stereotypes and instead based on their talents and qualities. Adopting gender equity is a driver for social and economic advancement in addition to being a question of social justice. Societies may fully use the potential of their varied people, promoting creativity, teamwork, and everyone's general well-being, by eliminating gender-based inequities. Essentially, gender equality is a means to a more equitable, affluent, and peaceful society rather than only an objective.

The idea of gender equality is based on the idea that every person should be treated equally and given equal chances and rights, regardless of their gender. It emphasises the equitable allocation of resources, obligations, and privileges in addition to quantitative equality. Gender equality recognizes and confronts ingrained cultural conventions, preconceptions, and structural impediments that disproportionately impact people according to their gender identity. This idea promotes the development of inclusive settings where a range of skills and viewpoints are respected and each individual has the opportunity to realize all of their abilities without facing prejudice. In addition to being morally just, pursuing gender parity is a necessary first step in creating more equitable, sustainable, and vibrant communities where all individuals, regardless of gender, may contribute and thrive.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 5: GENDER EQUITY

Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is about gender equity; it is about achieving gender equality and giving all women and girls more power. This objective acknowledges that equal treatment of women and men is a prerequisite for a society that is peaceful, wealthy, and sustainable in addition to being a fundamental human right. SDG 5's goals include giving everyone the opportunity for reproductive health care, guaranteeing equitable opportunities for management and decision-making, and banning all kinds of violence, discrimination, and harmful behaviours against women and girls. The aim also tackles the importance of appreciating unpaid caregiving and household labor, as well as making sure that everyone has equitable access to healthcare, education, and employment opportunities. To achieve SDG 5, an integrated and intersecting strategy including individuals, governments, corporations, and civil society is needed to eliminate gender-based inequality and advance an equitable and welcoming society.

A worldwide commitment to achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls is represented by Sustainable Development Goal 5. It includes a bold set of goals meant to eliminate prejudice and structural obstacles that have historically kept women at a disadvantage. In order to ensure women's full and effective involvement in leadership positions and decision-making processes, SDG 5 aims to eradicate all types of violence, harmful behaviours, and discrimination against them. The objective highlights the significance of equitable access to healthcare, education, and career opportunities, along with concerns pertaining to unpaid care work and reproductive rights. SDG 5 recognizes the intrinsic dignity of women and girls and their crucial role in advancing social justice, sustainable development, and the creation of a more equitable and welcoming global society by aiming for gender parity. Governments, civic society, the commercial sector, and people must work together to accomplish these goals in order to abolish gender-based inequality and establish a society in which women and girls may prosper on an equal basis with men.

SDG 5 also emphasizes how gender equality and other sustainable development objectives are intertwined, showing how advancements in areas like health, education, and poverty alleviation are inextricably tied to women's empowerment and the advancement of their rights. SDG 5's multipronged strategy acknowledges that attaining gender parity is not merely a moral duty but also a calculated investment in building a more robust, equitable, and prosperous society for all. To create a society where every person, regardless of gender, has the opportunity to reach their full potential, SDG 5 calls for coordinated worldwide efforts to leave no one behind.

GENDER EQUITY IN INDIA

Gender equity in India has witnessed significant transformations over the years, yet disparities persist, reflecting a complex interplay of cultural, economic, and institutional factors. Traditionally, India has grappled with deep-seated gender norms and patriarchal structures that manifest in practices such as female foeticide, early marriage, and restricted access to education for girls. Despite legal provisions and campaigns promoting gender equality, rural areas often face challenges in implementing these measures, contributing to a persistent gender gap. Cultural expectations and stereotypes surrounding women's roles continue to shape societal attitudes, influencing opportunities for women in both urban and rural contexts. In recent years, strides have been made to enhance gender equity in India. The government has implemented affirmative action policies, such as reservations for women in local governance bodies (Panchayati Raj), aiming to increase their representation in decision-making processes. Education initiatives, including scholarships and awareness programs, seek to bridge gender disparities in access to schooling. Moreover, economic reforms and entrepreneurship programs target empowering women economically. Despite these efforts, economic sectors often reflect gender imbalances, with women facing wage gaps and limited access to formal employment opportunities.

Challenges persist in ensuring women's safety and combating gender-based violence. High-profile cases have spurred nationwide conversations on women's rights, prompting legislative changes and increased awareness. However, a comprehensive approach involving community engagement, educational reforms,

and addressing cultural attitudes is essential to create an environment where women can fully participate in all aspects of society. As India strives for gender equity, it necessitates a holistic strategy that not only focuses on policy changes but also fosters a cultural shift towards recognizing and valuing the contributions of women in all spheres of life.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kingdon (1998) discovered that the comparatively lower levels of education and employment among women are indicative of an ideological prejudice against the idea that women should provide for their families. A deeply ingrained cultural relationship exists between women and the structures of marriage and familial relationships as a result of the low market value placed on female work and the association of female employment with domestic tasks, such as childrearing. Most societies still underinvest in female education compared to male education, despite compelling socioeconomic evidence of the high benefits to female education. Discrimination against females in higher educational institutions and secondary schools persists despite increasing school completion standards, with gender differences in basic education falling dramatically. Gender-specific patterns of access are also influenced by social and economic advantages; females with secondary and higher schools are mostly from higher socioeconomic groups and have greater social standing.

According to Kabeer and Subrahmanian (1999), underinvestment in women is caused by a vicious circle of ideas that reinforce male and female identities in Indian culture. These institutions include the home, workplace, and community. This has had a negative impact on female education, despite the fact that it is widely known that providing both boys and girls with high-quality education may greatly aid in ending the cycle of successive deprivations. Education can help foster alternative socialization, question gender norms, level the playing field for men and women in terms of qualifications, skills, and credentials, and enable women to use comprehension to strengthen themselves in a variety of ways.

Chisamya et al. (2012) investigated how gender disparities in educational institutions and neighbourhoods were impacted by the sharp rises in gender balance in primary education in Malawi and Bangladesh. We contend that educational initiatives aimed at achieving gender parity, based on a comparative analysis of case studies of marginalised communities, offer insufficient evidence that the gender norms that girls encounter in their communities are markedly different from those of their educational experiences, or that the unequal gender relations that girls encounter in society are transformed by education. The results show that violence based on gender in schools and ongoing discrimination against women in relation to learning and educational performance are both present. These gendered violence and discriminatory patterns raised significant concerns about the transformative potential of the present gender parity and educational models since they closely resembled the experiences that both boys and girls had in their own homes and communities.

Schneider, Stier, and Kampf (2014) discovered that when comparing women's club and intramural football programmes to men's programmes, the degree to which gender equity-related things were seen to be provided for equally was desired. One thousand members and professionals of the National Intramural

Recreational Sports Association (NIRSA) served as the subjects; 41.2% were women and 58.8% were men. The data was collected using a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire that went from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Ten of the questionnaire's twenty-one items have to do with club and intramural sports programmes, ten with club sports programmes, and one with intramural sports programmes. Chi square values were calculated to see if there were any statistically significant differences between boys and girls participating in intramural and club sports. When compared to women's club sports programmes, the results showed that each of the 10 shared gender equity-related elements for women's intramural sports programmes was being provided for equally at greater perceived rates of agreement (the overall difference being 11.7%). The biggest disparities (bad for women's club sports programmes) were seen in off-campus (14.9%) and on-campus (14.8%) publicity. Less than 70% of the experts thought that women's club sports programmes were treated equally to men's programmes across the board, and almost 3/4 of them felt the same way about women's intramural sports.

According to Sahin (2014), gender equity, also known as equality in education, denotes the equal possibilities that men and women have in terms of advancements in the social, cultural, political, and economic spheres. If gender parity is precisely attained, girls and boys will gain from public and home life to the same extent as boys, and this will be beneficial to their future more than methods that are centred on males. On the other side, important concerns like disparities, divides, and conflicts between sexes in society are lessened when gender equity in education, whether formal or informal, is given emphasis. Gender disparities in school access persist despite the efforts of several governmental and non-governmental organisations and businesses. Girls are kept at home by patriarchal households and strict social norms in rural and eastern parts of our nation, as they are in many other nations. The opportunities available to men and women are far from equal; many women lack literacy due to prejudice, poverty, unfinished education, and denial of access to higher education. Males completely benefit from the benefits bestowed by societal conventions, while girls are confined to the house as helpless objects, housekeepers, victims of patriarchy, or slaves supporting their moms. But due to a lack of interest, gender parity in education fails millions of women and girls who face difficult circumstances worldwide. As a result, advocates must act quickly to break down the long-standing barriers that prevent girls from receiving an education. In the topic of gender and higher education, Morley (2005) carried out a thorough literature study using sources from the UK, USA, Northern Europe, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. However, there is also a lot of work being done on gender equity in the Commonwealth's low-income nations. However, there hasn't been any global distribution and no systematic mapping of the Commonwealth's gendered transformation or barriers to gender equality in higher education. The researcher drew attention to the ways in which literature on the evolving political economics of higher education and the growth of borderless provision has neglected to include gender as a category of study.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, achieving gender equity is not merely a matter of addressing isolated issues but requires a comprehensive and systemic approach. It demands the dismantling of deeply ingrained societal norms and stereotypes that perpetuate gender-based discrimination. Embracing a holistic strategy involves implementing policies that promote equal opportunities in education, employment, and leadership roles, while fostering a cultural shift towards inclusivity and respect for diverse gender identities. The journey towards gender equity necessitates collaboration between governments, businesses, communities, and individuals to challenge and reshape the structures that perpetuate inequality.

Moreover, the benefits of gender equity extend far beyond addressing a moral imperative; they contribute significantly to societal progress and economic development. Research consistently demonstrates that diverse and inclusive environments lead to enhanced creativity, innovation, and productivity. By harnessing the full potential of all individuals, regardless of gender, we can unlock new perspectives and talents that drive progress. Ultimately, a commitment to gender equity is an investment in a more just, prosperous, and harmonious future for all members of society.

REFERENCES

- Bailyn, L. (2003). Academic careers and gender equity: Lessons learned from MIT 1. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 10(2), 137-153.
- Bandyopadhyay, M., & Subrahmanian, R. (2008). *Gender Equity in Education: A Review of Trends and Factors. CREATE Pathways to Access. Research Monograph No. 18.*
- Blaise, M., & Taylor, A. (2012). Using Queer Theory to Rethink Gender Equity in. *Young Children*, 67(1), 88-97.
- Chisamya, G., DeJaeghere, J., Kendall, N., & Khan, M. A. (2012). Gender and education for all: Progress and problems in achieving gender equity. *International journal of educational development*, 32(6), 743-755.
- Esiobu, G. O. (2011). Achieving gender equity in science class: Shift from competition to cooperative learning. *Multicultural Education & Technology Journal*, 5(4), 244-257.
- Harris, G. L. A. (2011). The quest for gender equity. *Public Administration Review*, 71(1), 123-126.
- Meier, M. (2000). *Gender equity, sport and development*. Biel: Swiss academy for Development.
- Mills, M. (2010). Gender roles, gender (in) equality and fertility: An empirical test of five gender equity indices. *Canadian Studies in Population [ARCHIVES]*, 37(3-4), 445-474.
- Morley, L. (2005, May). Gender equity in Commonwealth higher education. In *Women's studies international forum* (Vol. 28, No. 2-3, pp. 209-221). Pergamon.
- Rahman, L., & Rao, V. (2004). The determinants of gender equity in India: examining Dyson and Moore's thesis with new data. *Population and Development Review*, 30(2), 239-268.
- Sadker, D. (2000). Gender equity: Still knocking at the classroom door. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 33(1), 80-83.
- Sahin, E. (2014). Gender equity in education. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 02(1), 59-63.

- Schneider, R. C., Stier, W. F., &Kampf, S. (2014). Gender equity perceptions related to college and university campus recreation programs. *Recreational Sports Journal*, 38(1), 2-13.
- Sutherland, M. B. (1999). Gender equity in success at school. In *Education, Equity and Transformation* (pp. 431-443). Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands.
- Taylor, C. (1994). Gender equity in research. *Journal of Women's Health*, 3(3), 143-153.

