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A Review Study on Factors Causing Gender Inequality in Education with Reference to West Bengal

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ABSTRACT

Education is regarded as one of the most crucial tools for economic growth, social change, and empowerment. Gender disparity in education is still a serious topic in India, especially in states like West Bengal, despite various government initiatives and constitutional guarantees of equality. The disparity between boys and girls' access, involvement, retention, and academic success in the educational system is known as gender inequality in education. Disparities still exist in many areas, particularly among rural, economically disadvantaged, and socially marginalised people, despite notable advancements in female literacy and school participation. The issue of gender disparity in education in West Bengal is impacted by a number of institutional, cultural, and socioeconomic issues. Girls' educational chances are frequently limited by traditional patriarchal attitudes, poverty, child marriage, gender stereotypes, household duties, and a lack of infrastructure for education. Families from economically disadvantaged backgrounds usually place a higher priority on the education of boys than girls, viewing boys as future earners while girls are expected to take care of the home and get married young. In both rural and urban settings, these discriminatory societal norms still have an impact on women's educational attainment. The report also looks at how government programs like Kanyashree, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, scholarships, free education programs, and midday meal programs have improved education for women in West Bengal. Even though these initiatives have improved enrolment and decreased dropout rates, a number of societal and structural obstacles still stand in the way of achieving full gender equality in education. The review comes to the conclusion that social awareness, community involvement, economic empowerment, and a shift in conventional views toward women's education are all necessary to achieve gender equality in education. In order to provide equitable educational chances for both genders in West Bengal, the study highlights the necessity of inclusive educational policies and long-term solutions.

Keywords: *Traditional, Patriarchal, Attitudes, Poverty, Child Marriage, Gender Stereotypes.*

Introduction

Education is regarded as one of the most crucial tools for economic growth, social change, and empowerment. Gender disparity in education is still a serious topic in India, especially in states like West Bengal, despite various government initiatives and constitutional guarantees of equality. The disparity between boys and girls' access, involvement, retention, and academic success in the educational system is known as gender inequality in education. Disparities still exist in many areas, particularly among rural, economically disadvantaged, and socially marginalised people, despite notable advancements in female literacy and school participation. The issue of gender disparity in education in West Bengal is impacted



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by a number of institutional, cultural, and socioeconomic issues. Girls' educational chances are frequently limited by traditional patriarchal attitudes, poverty, child marriage, gender stereotypes, household duties, and a lack of infrastructure for education. Families from economically disadvantaged backgrounds usually place a higher priority on the education of boys than girls, viewing boys as future earners while girls are expected to take care of the home and get married young. In both rural and urban settings, these discriminatory societal norms still have an impact on women's educational attainment.

Studies conducted in West Bengal show that gender differences become more apparent at secondary and higher education levels, where female dropout rates rise sharply. Girls' education is discontinued due to a number of factors, including lack of financial support, distance from educational institutions, safety issues, poor sanitary facilities, and limited access to high-quality schools. Additionally, caste, class, and religious social stratification exacerbates the state's educational disparity for women. To promote girls' education and lower dropout rates, the government has implemented a number of programs, including Kanyashree, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, scholarships, and midday meal programs. Although enrolment and literacy rates have improved as a result of these initiatives, there are still issues with providing equal educational opportunities and high-quality education for all genders. By examining current literature, reports, research articles, and government regulations, this review study seeks to identify the primary causes of gender disparity in education in West Bengal. The study aims to comprehend the sociocultural and economic obstacles that impede gender equality in education and emphasises the necessity of social awareness, community involvement, and efficient policy execution to establish an inclusive and equitable learning environment.

MAIN FACTORS CAUSING GENDER INEQUALITY IN EDUCATION

There are numerous ways in which achieving gender equality and ensuring everyone has access to quality education are interdependent. Gender Discrimination in Education (2012) notes that India is not alone in its refusal to provide girls and women with access to education. Here are some reasons why there is a gender gap in education:

1) Conditions of Poverty

People in poverty face several challenges. Every now and then, they struggle to eat enough. The primary concern of low-income families and individuals is achieving financial stability. Many cannot afford the costs associated with a four-year university education. Even if nothing will cost them to attend this school, they will still need to cover additional costs. Transportation, books, bags, uniforms, and letters all fall under this category. For people with low incomes, paying these bills is a challenge. According to those living in poverty, education is essential for survival. Therefore, parents hope their boys will attend school. To be competitive for excellent employment when they grow up, they believe that males should earn degrees. Within the household, the girls acquire the skill of helping out with various tasks and errands. Growing up, many parents instilled a work ethic in their boys and girls by encouraging them to help out with the family business. It is expected that the men will finish this assignment following school. Girl students are deterred from pursuing higher education due to financial constraints. They learn the subjects they studied in school from their elder brothers, who assist them become better readers, writers, and mathematicians.



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2) The Presence of Conventional Opinions

Many people and organizations still adhered to more conventional views on the importance of girls' education. Due to financial constraints, they prioritized saving for their daughters' weddings over their schooling. Additionally, the idea that married women would be obligated to perform housework instead of utilizing their skills was advanced. They inculcate a sense of domestic responsibility in their daughters very early on. Girls and women were expected to remain indoors and avoid social interactions during the past. They couldn't figure out how to voice their opinions on the matter. Women were economically dependent on males and were expected to follow their traditions. In the sake of tradition, they were discriminated against and denied basic civil liberties. Traditional teenage practices influence girls' access to school. Some rural communities have cultural practices that hold women back from getting an education (Linda, 2014). Cultural norms and expectations prevent girls from gaining an education and reaching their full potential. All of these things stand in the way of autonomy. And thus, to empower women and girls, we must grant equal rights and opportunities and change traditional views.

3) Infrastructure of School

The physical plant of a school is crucial to the success of its students and the atmosphere it cultivates for learning. When schools have the proper tools, teachers and administrators can do their jobs well. Additionally, students are motivated to learn and have a positive classroom experience. Because of the lack of resources, kids drop out before they can advance academically, according to the research. This is especially true for women. Schools need spaces for learning, including playgrounds, libraries, labs, bathrooms, transportation, furnishings, equipment, materials, technology, and the overall school atmosphere. These facilities are well-kept, and everyone who works there, from teachers to kids, will love them. Schools necessitate teaching-learning resources, computer centres, science labs, and libraries to improve learning. These materials will be useful for educators and students alike as they map out lessons and activities. The majority of India's cities have advanced infrastructure. Those in more remote places are less advanced. Therefore, it is critical to improve rural areas' educational infrastructure. Increased enrolment and graduation rates could be achieved with better facilities.

4) Discrimination Against Women

Discrimination against women and girls is more prevalent among marginalized, economically disadvantaged, and economically disadvantaged populations, according to studies. Girls face a wide range of sorts of prejudice. They are discouraged from participating in social, economic, cultural, and political life; they are unable to leave the house and are responsible for meeting their own needs; they are also denied access to education, jobs, empowerment, property rights, a say in decision-making, and the ability to express themselves. They are subject to unfair treatment by both the food sector and healthcare institutions. While the women were provided with basic basics, the guys were served high-quality meals. Discrimination against women takes many forms, and it slows down not only women but also their communities and countries. Regardless of whether they are attending classes, working, helping out around the house, or contributing to the family business. They ought to have access to every right and opportunity. It should be a parental priority to ensure that girls have equal rights and opportunities. On an equal footing,



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girls should have access to healthcare, nutrition, education, property, finances, and all other resources. Equal rights and opportunities for girls would substantially improve their empowerment and overall well-being.

5) The Occurrence of Violent and Criminal Acts

Regardless of where you live, you're more likely to see crimes committed against women and girls. Sexual harassment, assault, rape, acid assaults, child trafficking, domestic violence, neglect, and female foeticide and infanticide are all forms of abuse. The emotional and physical health of women and girls is impacted by these behaviours. Their level of suffering was directly proportional to the severity of these crimes. Verbal abuse from peers is seldom a reason for a girl to quit school. Victims of crimes like sexual harassment may decide to leave school altogether. As a result, schooling faces significant challenges due to crime and violence. Victims of school violence and crimes include students, particularly female students. Evidence suggests that faculty, staff, and students have all engaged in such behavior. Therefore, in order to help women and girls succeed in school and in life, we must work to decrease violent and criminal activities in schools, especially those targeting girls and women, increase their access to equal rights and opportunities, and treat them with dignity and respect. Every parent has an obligation to ensure that their children, regardless of gender, reach their full potential. To get the job done, they need to be really nice to their girlfriends.

6) Marriage as a Child

Anyone under the age of 18 is considered a child bride. Most victims of child marriage are females. Girls lose out on opportunities like schooling and employment when they are married off at a young age. They are merely required to remain at home, attend to family members, and perform household tasks. Despite their reluctance, evidence shows that girls must obey their parents. Traditional beliefs in rural areas dictate that girls are wed at a young age. Older, more educated women, in their view, will have a harder time finding spouses. This is why they inculcate a sense of domestic duty in their daughters from a young age. This kind of conduct is so common that it discourages girls from pursuing education. Efforts have been made to prevent the marriage of minors. After stepping up its efforts, India outlawed child marriage in 2006. The punishment for child marriage rites was enhanced, the wedded person might annul the marriage up to two years after becoming an adult, and the courts could step in when necessary. Marital age for males in the country is 21 and for girls it is 18.

7) Parental Education

Promoting education, inculcating morals and ethics in children, and ensuring their well-being are all goals of parental education. A good education is something that children of parents with advanced degrees and respectable occupations can look forward to receiving. Fair treatment of boys and girls is essential, and well-informed parents understand this. So, parents provide their children with opportunities for employment and send them to prestigious schools. Two things typically happen, though, when parents are illiterate and unable to read, write, or do basic math. To begin, they are strong proponents of educational equity for women and men. Girls should not be considered a burden and should have the same



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opportunities as boys in the classroom, in their view. They also stress the importance of boys going to school while discouraging girls from doing the same. The primary causes are a lack of knowledge and financial resources. The need of providing equal educational opportunities to females and boys has been recognized by these individuals.

8) Occupation of the Parents

Support for girls' education is associated with parents' employment, according to studies. The girls are unable to go to school since their parents cannot afford it. In order to keep up with the times, everyone's primary objective is to secure gainful employment. Earning a living wage allows one to cover basic living costs. Nowadays, it's challenging to get a good work. People have a tough time finding good jobs or recommendations. Working parents are better able to send their children to school. Both sexes are expected to put in significant effort when they enrol in school. Concentration, resourcefulness, and conscientiousness in the classroom are qualities that students should strive to cultivate. Other matters are of equal significance. Three of these factors are academic performance, enrolment, and retention. There is a strong correlation between the parents' occupation and these traits. Students are more likely to be admitted and stay enrolled when their parents hold respectable and well-paying jobs. On tests and homework, they do well as well. Student admission, retention, and academic performance are negatively impacted when parents hold low-paying minority employment or are unemployed. People need to look for work so they can put their finances in order.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Basu Priyanka and De Manasi (2024). Specifically, the focus of this research is on the gender bias that exists in current American culture. In the realm of the economic and social growth of the Indian subcontinent, this is a topic that is being discussed extensively. Gender discrimination is the term used to describe the way in which men and women are treated differently within of our culture. It is common for nations that have high rates of gender discrimination to have infrastructure that is of lower quality. A gap of this kind is widespread in many countries, and India is not an exception to this rule. According to the findings of this study, discrimination may be found in every facet of the society that exists in the Haora District. This study's objective was to investigate the various manifestations of gender discrimination, as well as the factors that led to their development and the effects they have on society. Furthermore, it makes an effort to provide solutions that can assist in reducing the effects of this gender bias and elevating the position of women in society.

Mahata Bubun (2024). Education is a crucial component in the process of empowering women. As a result of the pervasiveness of masculine ideas, women frequently face challenges when attempting to achieve the objective of getting equal opportunities. Disparities between the sexes in areas of education continue to be a significant problem in India. Before determining the present educational state of women in West Bengal in terms of enrolment and drop rate, the primary objectives of this study are to first analyze the regional variation of gender disparities in education in West Bengal and then to determine the current educational position of women in West Bengal. This study relies on secondary sources of information. Every piece of information has been gathered from a variety of sources within the Government of India and West Bengal. In order to conduct the data analysis for this study, the simple statistical method and the cartographic methodology were utilized. According to the findings of this study, the gender gap in enrolment is quite small in primary school. When it comes to upper primary education, the gender



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difference is quite small, and the enrolment rate for girls is higher than that of boys in virtually all of the districts that make up the state of West Bengal. On the other hand, when it comes to the examinations for secondary and upper secondary education in West Bengal, there has been a significant improvement in the education of our female students. The findings of this study will assist government officials and policymakers in developing a variety of strategies for the advancement of female education.

Bhunia, A. K. (2023). It is only through the education of women that our nation will be able to attain its entire expansion with success. Education is beneficial to women in many ways, including the improvement of their health and nutrition as well as their economic development. The purpose of this study is to investigate the current position of women in India in terms of their academic ladder. An overview of the evolution of higher education, the significance of female education, the position of female faculty, the factors that have contributed to this evolution, and other topics are included in this article. In this study, descriptive approaches are being utilized, and secondary data will be collected in the future. For the purpose of this investigation, a wide variety of sources, including books, essays, periodicals, journals, and online resources, were combed through. Additionally, the University Grants Commission (UGC) as well as the Indian and West Bengali government entities that are responsible for higher education supplied reports and information. In conclusion, the findings of the survey revealed that women have made significant progress in the field of higher education thanks to their efforts.

Singh et al. (2023). In the course of their research, they investigated the changing landscape of gender bias in education spending within families, as well as the underlying socioeconomic factors that contribute to these phenomena. In addition, the study has demonstrated the significance of socioeconomic factors in the phenomenon of gender prejudice, as well as the gap in educational spending that exists between male and female students. For the purpose of addressing the aforementioned challenges, this article makes use of the unit-level statistics from the 52nd, 64th, 71st, and 75th rounds of the National Service Officers' Organization (NSSO), which take place during the years 1995–1996 and 2017–2018. Estimating the dynamics of factor-induced average education expenditure is accomplished through the utilization of the log linear regression model. When attempting to quantify gender discrimination, the Oaxaca–Blinder Decomposition technique is utilized. On the other hand, the Lorenz curve and Gini coefficient are utilized in order to assess the inequality that exists among females who are subjected to bias. The findings of the study indicate that during the time period during which the research was conducted in India, there was a gender bias in the distribution of funding for education, which favored males over females. In addition, studies have demonstrated a decrease in the incidence of discrimination based on gender against female students.

Furthermore, gender discrepancies can be ascribed to a variety of factors, including age, religion, castes, MPCE (income quantile), kind of institution, current enrolment, and different types of schooling. When it comes to originality and value, this study makes use of a dataset that spans twenty years at the household level in order to investigate the influence that discriminatory behaviour and credit limits have on investment in girls' education in countries that are economically disadvantaged. As a result, the government ought to supply financial support for the education of girls by means of the distribution of scholarships and by providing education that is either completely free or greatly discounted.



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Bhowmik Debesh (2023). Research on the causes and consequences of gender inequality in the nation is necessary due to the widening gap between men's and women's living and working circumstances as well as cultural upheavals. This article's goal is to do a thorough analysis of the variables that lead to gender inequality on a large scale. The main focus of the research is the academic environments of a few nations in the Americas, Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. This study's main hypothesis is that measures of a nation's socioeconomic progress, such its human development index (HDI) and educational attainment, are correlated with gender inequality in educational institutions. Research strategies used in this study include trend and structural analysis techniques. Data collected between 1950 and 2021 by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the World Economic Forum, and the United Nations forms the basis of this analysis. The Gender Equality Index's four dimensions—health, socioeconomic resources, gender disparity in households, and gender disparity in politics—show that a significant gender gap exists in some countries worldwide between 1950 and 2000, despite the fact that countries in Eastern and Western Europe are more developed than those in South and Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa. In certain Middle Eastern and North African nations, this is also the case. Empirical estimates have shown a relationship between human development level and gender disparity; a country's educational inequality decreases as its level of human development rises. A review of fifty international journals, the book collections of the Bengal Economic Association and the Indian Economic Association, and other academics from prominent Indian and foreign universities served as the basis for the study on gender imbalance in scientific research. The book collections were assembled, and the survey was carried out. The survey's results indicate that women publish less frequently than men. The poll found that women wrote just 22.07% of articles published in national and international journals, 23.64% of volumes included in book collections, and 27–90% of book chapters. Numerous factors, such as restricted access to research facilities, field surveys, and laboratories; limited opportunities for basic and advanced training through seminars and classes; insufficient time to conduct research; bias and discrimination based on gender and personal interests; social, psychological, and physical barriers; heavy parental responsibilities; and so forth, contribute to the under-representation of women in scientific research.

CONCLUSION

West Bengal has made great strides in literacy, school enrolment, and government educational programs, but gender imbalance in education is still a big problem. This literature analysis shows that gender disparity in education has its origins in institutional, cultural, and socioeconomic variables. Limited educational opportunities and quality education for girls are greatly hindered by poverty, patriarchal social norms, gender discrimination, child marriage, housework, ignorance, and insufficient educational infrastructure. Educational deprivation is more common among females from economically disadvantaged families, those living in rural areas, and members of marginalised communities, according to the study. Despite an uptick in female enrolment in elementary schools, dropout rates in secondary and higher education continue to rise as a result of factors such as economic hardship, fear for one's safety, societal pressures, and the demands of one's family. Parents' choices about their daughters' schooling are still coloured by traditional views of women's duties and gender stereotypes.



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West Bengal's female enrolment and dropout rates have been significantly impacted by government programs including Kanyashree, scholarships, free textbooks, mid-day meal programs, and awareness campaigns. While these initiatives have helped increase girls' access to education, the fact that social and economic obstacles remain shows that policies cannot eradicate gender disparity on their own. In addition, the review finds that a multi-pronged strategy including better educational infrastructure, raising awareness, community involvement, social reform, and financial assistance for underprivileged students is necessary to achieve gender equality in education. Society must acknowledge the significance of educating girls and eradicate discriminatory behaviours in order to provide equal educational chances. Hence, in order to establish a gender-sensitive, inclusive, and equitable educational setting in West Bengal, it is imperative to make efforts that are sustainable over the long run.

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