

Essay:

Is education the most effective tool for achieving gender equality?

OUTLINE

1. Introduction:

1.1. Present gender parity between men and women in various sectors.

1.2. Bridging the gap through education as an effective tool

1.3. Thesis Statement

2. Education broadens the scope of women's capabilities:

2.1. Amartya Sen's capability approach

2.2. National female literacy rate in Bangladesh rising to 72%. (UNESCO 2023)

3. Education challenges the constructed social patriarchal structures:

3.1. Wolfcraft's concept of Liberal feminism

3.2. MU2oon Almellean as a global education activist as UNICEF's youngest good-will ambassador (2017)

4. Education promotes political participation of marginalised gender:

4.1. Refutation of Shakespearean women frailty by Simon de Beauvoir.

4.2. Post-genocide reforms in Rwanda

5. Fostering social equality through education:

5.1. Investment in education forms capital and enhances productivity (Human Capital Theory)

5.2. Increase in girls' school enrollment through Punjab Girls Stipend Program (Pakistan)

5.3. First female Mexican ^{President} ~~Premier~~.

6. Education enables economic independence:

6.1. Marxism and patriarchy

are interrelated.

6.2. FINCA International provides loans to women entrepreneurs in poor communities disabling women dependencies.

7. Education opens pathway for legal work and awakens among women:

7.1. Provision of rights to women and men equally.

7.2. Justice Aysha A. Malik as first-ever woman judge of the Supreme Court of Pakistan.

8. Education transforms social attitudes:

8.1. Educating men as a necessity to achieve gender equality in a patriarchal world.

8.2. Importance of men's education in words of bell hooks [sic].

9. Education as a fundamental right of all in Islam:

9.1. Quran and Sunnah regarding importance of education.

9.2. Historical instance of world's first University founded by a muslim woman.

10. Conclusion:

10.1. Restating the thesis statement.

Essay:

The condition of the gender inequality is not a present issue, rather it has been the topic of debate for centuries. The problem of gender discrimination has been repeatedly discussed and argued on leading to no productive outcome. The waves of feminism created ripples across the world, however the issue remains unresolved. Women deal with verbal and physical abuse in various ways and on various occasions, just because of their gender, revealing the underlying constructed mind sets of people. They suffer character assassination in politics, harassment in workplaces, payment discriminations and much more. The most viable method to deal with this issue is to educate not only the women but to educate the men as well. Education becomes the most effective instrument to challenge patriarchy, to reduce gender parity in political, social, economic and legal areas, and to transform the mindset of society as a whole.

On a broad level, education provides women with access to play their role in various sectors. They improve their capabilities in various fields, simultaneously reducing their dependency on other gender. The patriarchal mindset weakens here when women enable themselves to achieve what men achieve. Amartya Sen, a Nobel Laureate, argues that real freedom can be achieved by increasing one's own capabilities, by living a meaningful life that one values. This concept of Sen's Capability is not just limited to a single gender, rather encompasses both. Thus, education is an important tool to enhance one's own self as Bangladesh increased its female literacy rate to 72.1% according to UNESCO 2023 report.

Firstly, education challenges the patriarchal structures in the society by spreading awareness among the underprivileged sector of the society. The awareness of one's own rights creates an empowered

minds, these these debate and challenge the socially constructed ideals regarding genders. Wolfercraft, in her book, "A Vindication of the Rights of the Women", argues for liberal equality of women in economic, political and social fields. This equality can be achieved solely through education of women. UNICEF's youngest education global activist and ambassador, Muzoon Almelehan, actively works for spreading awareness regarding importance of education. In short, education challenges the patriarchal supremacy in society which is deeply rooted in social and cultural aspects of society.

Secondly, the role of women in political areas can be magnified by educating the women and making them realize their potential. Throughout history, women have been considered 'frail' and mentally inept to take their part in politics. Simon de Beauvoir's famous quote, "One is not born, ^{but} rather becomes, a woman," rebukes Shakespeare's concept of 'frail' woman. Beauvoir highlights that women are not

born weak, rather they are raised to become one. The historical association of women with innocence and weakness is not a reality, rather a forced concept. World is still far behind in achieving gender equality, however recently Rwanda achieved a feat of the most women representation in the legislature. Through post-genocide reforms the women representation is at 63.8%, the world's highest. To conclude, achieving gender equality is still an unachieved goal, but through education, the goal is not unachievable.

Furthermore, education can also be instrumental in creating an atmosphere of social equality between men and women. Patriarchal mindset considers women inferior because they are dependent on the men - financially and socially. If this dependency can be annulled through acquiring capabilities, it will be able to transform the societal mindset. Human Capital theory defines how capital is not just the monetary element, rather the capital outcome from investment

in education, health and political sectors. When the education of women will be prioritized, it will make them capable, simultaneously improving human capital. The independence of women will narrow the gender gap and female dependency on men and empower them.

Despite the increasing violent narrative against women and deplorable condition of gender equality in Pakistan, measures for redefining the condition are still commendable. The provincial government's initiative of Punjab Girl's Stipend Program has increased the enrollment of girls in educational institutions. In addition to this initiative, the recent election of Claudia Sheinbaum as the first female president of Mexico proves that though the change is gradual, it is still in motion towards the goal.

Moreover, gender equality can be achieved through economic independence of women, and economic independence is achievable through education and skills. The deep rooted

extremist and cultural beliefs of men do not allow education of women as they fear the loss of their own power. Marxist feminism explains how the capitalism and patriarchy are interconnected. The economic systems empower men and marginalise women through employment and wage, salary payment. The more economically independent a woman is, the more empowered she is as an individual. The proletariat suffers at the hands of the elite, similarly women suffer at the hands of patriarchy. The only way to escape this nexus is education and financial independence. FINCA ~~Intertel~~ International is an example how financially aiding the poor women to start their own business and becoming financially independent can shrink the economic gap between genders.

Furthermore, having legal education and awareness regarding one's own rights provide the knowledge required to fight for one's own rights. The legal procedures and constitution are intact, however

women are not ~~ten~~ aware of their own rights. Mostly, women participate in health and teaching sectors; their role in legal field is minimum as it is a men dominated field. Receiving education necessary for employment in judicial sector can help pave way for other women to join, in short, increasing women participation. For instance, Pakistan has women representation in legal area through female lawyers and high court justices, however Ayisha A. Malik became the first female judge appointed in Supreme Court of Pakistan. This ^{is a} stepping stone for future female appointments in judiciary. Thus, educating women reduced the gender gap in legal field and promotes equality.

In addition to reducing gender parity in social, political, economic and legal sectors, education is a crucial tool for transforming social attitudes. Only educating women is not enough to attain gender equality, rather it is important to educate men as well on respecting and accepting women on their social status. Men

are raised to believe themselves as the superiors and controllers. Changing this paradigm is possible through education. bell hooks [sic] highlighted the significance of mental health and education of men. Her famous quote, "The first act of violence that patriarchy demands of males is not violence against women. Instead, patriarchy demands of all males to engage themselves in psychic self-mutilation, that they kill off the emotional parts of themselves;" (bell hooks [sic], The Will to Change), ~~explains how~~ the patriarchal mindset primarily desensitizes the males and produce an emotionless and insensitive individual, who suffers from superiority complex. Such individuals then undermine female empowerment and independence because they do not think emotionally.

Lastly, education is a fundamental right of all as described in Quran and Hadith. Islam ensures the education of all its followers, regardless of the gender. The importance of education can be inferred from the first ayat that

was revealed to the Prophet (PBUH).
"Read in the name of thy Lord..." (96:1)
Allah (SWT) stressed on the importance of education by revealing the first verse and first word, "read". In addition to this, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) also encouraged education of all men and women.

"Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim (men and women)."
Furthermore, the role of Islam in propagating knowledge can be analysed from the historical example of Fatimah Al-Fihri. She was a muslim woman who founded the world's first university, Al-Qarawiyin. Such examples endorse the importance of educating men and women as they both are basis of a society.

To conclude, the most important tool for reducing ~~education~~ gender inequalities in various fields is through education. The world is currently facing gender inequalities in social, political, economic and legal areas, however education is the only way to reduce the gap and empower women. Empowering women and reducing

gender gaps is possible through educating women in all fields and making them independent, simultaneously breaking the patriarchal barriers.
