

Is education the most effective tool for achieving gender equality?

Outline:

I Introduction

II How is education the most effective tool for achieving gender equality?

- A- Education gives women a chance in politics
(case in point: Benazir Bhutto, an Oxford graduate)
- B- Ensures women participation in de Policy-making
(case in point: Women in civil services of Pakistan)
- C- Provides women a decent social status in society
- D- Gives them equal rights in family affairs
- E- Empowers them to take advantage of technological world
(case in point: Pakistani female vloggers: Sisterology)
- F- Make women conscious of their rights and responsibilities
(case in point: Fatima ^{Jinnah} ~~Bhutto~~ & Asma Jahangir)

G- Makes women ^{financially and socially} independent of men

III Challenges in the path of achieving Gender equality through education:

A- Strong patriarchal and social taboos
(case in point: Afghanistan under Taliban)

B- Lack of Learning facilities for women
(case in point: Pakistan)

IV Practical and social acceptance rather than education is key to gender equality - Counter-view

V Gender Equality through Education: A case study of Finland and Japan

VI Conclusion

Even in the twenty first century, gender equality is a dream for many nations. There exist certain states that have achieved gender equality or ~~are~~ have succeeded in reducing the gender inequality gap. For example, Finland and Japan are among those nations that have significantly improved their gender equality ranking by providing equal learning opportunities to both men and women. Indeed, education is the most effective tool to achieve political, economic, and social equality for women; however, there exist certain challenges that prevent women's path to achieve equality. Education provides women a change in politics and ensures their participation in policymaking. Furthermore, it upgrades the social status of women in society, makes them conscious of their rights and ensures their financial and social independence. However, certain challenges, such as strong patriarchal mindset and inadequate learning

facilities hamper women path to equality. There exist a certain segment of society who argues that practical steps rather than education make gender equality a reality; however, they are ignorant of ~~that~~ the fact that practical steps without education is impossible. To sum up, education is the only way to address the issue of gender inequality and it can only be possible if certain pragmatic measures are taken.

To begin with, education provides a chance to women to participate in politics. This makes the women in a leading role. An uneducated women is unaware of the prospects of the role of women in politics. For example, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto, an Oxford graduate, actively took part in the male-dominated politics of Pakistan and ultimately achieved the position of premiership twice. In a senior leadership position, she took several decisions for uplifting the women of Pakistan.

education improves the standard of a women in the family.

Moreover, education provides an opportunity to women to take advantage of rapid technological revolution. It helps them to participate in online activities, earn online and share their views on diverse issues.

Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), in its reports on access to technological equipments states that only 16 women out of 100 have access to mobile compared to 46 out of every 100 male. Moreover, Pakistani female vloggers such as the siblings named "Sisterology" are earning a decent amount due to online activities. Therefore, education empowers the women to take advantage of digital tools.

In addition, education makes women conscious of their rights and responsibilities. Since ancient civilizations, women have been subject to brutal harassment, torture

and other forms of violence. However, education gives the women the strength to stand against injustice and patriarchal policies. Moreover, the struggle of Fatima Jinnah and Maclam Asma Jahangir are worth mentioning. During the Islamized regime of Zia ul Haq, Asma Jahangir stood as tall Pillar against Zia and bravely challenged the brutal policies that were against women. Hence, education ~~hel~~ motivates women to struggle for their rights.

Furthermore, another significant role of education to make financially and socially independent. Across the globe, women are subjected to physical violence by men because they are dependent on men for their survival. According to Pakistani senator Sherin Rehman, "Men torture women only because they consider it their right to abuse them as men are the only earners." This statement proves that once women get financially independent, they will be free from the violence of man. Hence,

made herself a symbol for others to follow. Hence, education gives women an opportunity to join politics.

Moreover, education takes women in senior positions in decision-making bodies. They get the opportunity to promulgate such policies which are beneficial for the women. To illustrate, hundreds of women are participating in the civil services of Pakistan. Ten years ago, the number of women in the bureaucracy was negligible. Today they are working in top administrative posts and are actively participating in the affairs of the country. Therefore, women participation in top positions is become possible only due to education.

Furthermore, education improves the social status of women in the society. In most of the third world countries, especially in South Asia, women face excessive social challenges such as harassment,

physical and sexual abuse, and mental troubles. However, contrary to an uneducated women, an educated women is mostly free from these ~~trama~~ troubles. According to report of an NGO named "Pakistani Women: The Change Agents" employed women such as doctors and teachers experience less domestic violence than their counterparts. To conclude, education provides better ^{living} ~~learning~~ opportunities to women.

Additionally, educated women get better opportunities in deciding family affairs. Due to strong patriarchal mindset, women are considered naive humans with no thinking and decision-making skills. They are denied the right to take decision of their reproductive rights and so on. However, according to UNICEF, educated women have a say in their reproductive rights, participate in the decisions of family matters such as family planning, upbringing of children and many other family decisions. Hence,

education is the one of the best tools to make women independent.

After discussing how can education promote gender equality in the above paragraphs, the next section will elaborate on what are the key challenges in achieving gender equality through education.

First of all, strong Patriarchal and social taboos are the biggest obstacles in the path of achieving gender equality through education. A large segment of the people believe that education is not for women. They argue that the primary role of women is to give birth to children and manage the affairs of the family. For example, the Afghan government under the Taliban regime closed girls' schools, colleges and universities, barring women to access to their fundamental right. Additionally, girls schools in Pakistan have often come under attack by militants. Therefore, strong patriarchal society is key impediment towards women education, thus blocking

chances of gender equality.

Furthermore, Lack of learning opportunities & and infrastructure facilities make gender equality a distant dream. In many states, especially in South Asia, the number of separate institutions for women is either ~~not~~ un-available or are very little. For example, Pakistan spend less than 2% of GDP on education which is much less than the UN's prescribed minimum limit i.e., 5%. However, ~~out~~ out of these 2%, very little is spent on women education. There exist several villages which are without girls' school. Therefore, inadequate learning facilities for women is another hurdle.

After discussing the challenges, the next paragraph present the view of people who argue that gender equality cannot be achieved with education.

Many people argue that practical steps are required for achieving gender equality. They believe that women must be provided direct jobs, opportunities and sponsorship to be equal to men. However, they are ignorant of the fact that it is not absence of opportunities that prevents women from getting jobs and social status, but it is in actual the absence of skills.

The women are unprepared and lack the skills that are required to compete with the modern world. Moreover, it is only education that can make the women skilled and trained, and as well challenge the deep-rooted misogyny against women. Therefore, any practical step without quality education will be futile.

Moreover, it worth noting to emphasize on how Japan and Finland made gender equality a reality. According to World Economic Forum (WEF), Finland stands at first while Japan is fifth

in gender equality parity. Both the countries made this possible through education. Both the countries made women education compulsory not in papers but as well in practical. They ensured job opportunities for females, and made their salary equivalent to males. To women in Finland and Japan lead top administrative jobs and giant companies. Hence, if these two countries can make gender equality through education, why can't other countries do the same?

To conclude, no doubt, education is the only and the best tool that can be used to ensure gender equality in political, social and economic domains.

If certain challenges, such as patriarchal mindset and access to educational opportunities are addressed, it will make the path towards gender equality much easier. Moreover, it will encourage the women to enter politics, make women-friendly policies and fight for their constitutional rights. In addition, education will uplift the social status of women in society, and make them financially and socially independent.

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