



Reducing gender discrimination for equity in education

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Abstract

The primary approach of attaining equality, inclusiveness, and economic and social mobility are through education since it levels the playing field. Initiatives must be put in place to guarantee that, in spite of insurmountable barriers, all students from such groups have access to a variety of focused opportunities to participate in and succeed in the educational system. Gender discrimination continues to be an enormous problem within the world and also exists in various areas i.e. sports, educational institutions and political organizations. Different approaches or strategies have been adopted in the past few decades with a view to promoting the advancement of women and gender equality as a whole but in course of time, it was found that the successive approaches failed to address gender issues in a proper manner and could not improve the status of women as it was expected. At present scenario, many government and non-government programs, policies are running not only at the country level but also at the international level, which are playing an important role in reducing gender discrimination. Despite this, there is a need for a big initiative and awareness. The present paper is a research article to highlight the discriminatory practices against gender and suggested to suggestion reduce discriminatory practices.

Keywords: gender discrimination, equity in education

Introduction

The standing of women will fundamentally change due to education. There will be a thoughtful advantage in favour of women in order to balance the accumulated distortions of the past. The National Education System will contribute to the empowerment of women in a constructive, interventional manner. By redesigning curricula, textbooks, training and orienting teachers, decision-makers, and administrators, as well as involving educational institutions actively, it will promote the formation of new values. This will be a social engineering and act of faith NPE (1986).

The globe still has a serious problem with gender discrimination. Because of long-standing, patriarchal standards, women are treated as second-class citizens and employees. This has a significant impact on women's political participation, financial security, education, and health. Different countries may have different causes and effects. The perception is that by granting everyone equal rights, discrimination may be eradicated as an anomaly. As a result, numerous organisations around the world have worked to recognise the equality of rights between men and women and to end all forms of discrimination against women. Although there were many worldwide endeavours in this direction, the United Nations had the most significant influence (UN).

The result of ongoing inequity between men and women in all aspects of life is gender discrimination. The scope and severity of prejudice against women varied according to culture, politics, race, area, nation, and economy. However, prejudice based on a person's gender is seen as a major barrier to growth and is linked to violence against women. (Jannatul Ferdaush, K. M. Mustafizur Rahman, 2011).

Gender Discrimination: As defined by the ILO (2003), "any distinction, exclusion or preference made on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity and treatment in employment or occupation" is discriminatory.

In this way the gender discrimination is the unfair treatment of a person because of gender. It is apparent in work situations where one gender is given preferential treatment or one gender receives less pay or job responsibilities because of gender bias and unfair stereotypes. Gender discrimination also exists in sports, educational institutions and political organizations.

Gender discrimination in India: Historical retrospect

India is a multi lingual, multi ethnic, multi religious and multi cultural nation and consequently the source of gender discrimination is culture, society, religion and home. Most of the cultures in India practice gender discrimination, and favour boys and men, under valuing girls and women. In families, sons are taught that they are superior over daughters. In most of the cultures women are forced to be submissive to men. In most families, women are not treated as partners. They are treated as servants, who are for serving the men. Some cultures practice female infanticide and dowry system.

Most of the religions in India teach the superiority of men and justify gender discrimination. This worldview brings discrimination in work place and affects the efficiency of a woman. Since long, the condition of women in Indian society has been marked by discrimination and inequality.

Ancient Period: In the Vedic period (about 2500 to roughly 1500 B.C.), women had a great deal of freedom alongside men and were not subject to many limitations. The situation of women deteriorated with the advent of the Sutra period (600–300 B.C.). Before this time period began, the Aryans' dominance was firmly in place. As soon as they were established, the status of women started to deteriorate. The girls consequently lost their ability to pursue an education, participate in ceremonies, select their partners, and engage in public life. As a result of her confinement to her home, males started to believe they were superior to women in social and religious concerns.

Medieval Period: The mediaeval era saw a further decline in women's status. In the Middle Ages (1206-1761 AD), Muslim sultans continued to have a significant influence over India. Invasion by outsiders occurred frequently during the Middle Ages, and Muslim Regimes were established and strengthened in India. The cost of education rose beyond the means of most women. Only women from aristocratic or upper-class households had the option of enrolling in school, and only for religious studies and mental training. Therefore, women's physical and economic dependence on men was caused by their incomplete education. Additionally, the resultant expansion in women's illiteracy and ignorance gave rise to a number of superstitions.

Modern period: The 19th century in India may be recognized for the most accursed condition of women as well as for the initiation of their emancipation. When British authority first began, women's status was not sufficient. The women were completely subjugated to the male will, subjected to torture, humiliation, and education denial. The practises of polygamy, child marriage, Satipratha, and the prohibition of widow remarriage made women's personalities very weak. Raja Rammohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Swami Vivekanand, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and many more social reformers were among the leaders and pioneers in the fight for women's freedom. Social reformers believed that women needed to be educated.

The goal of education seemed to be to better prepare women to be wives and mothers rather than to change the situations of women. They believed that while education for men served important economic purposes, education for women served no such purposes and that the primary goal of teaching women was to increase their efficiency in tasks such as housekeeping, childrearing, cooking, etc. Therefore, it was believed that education was crucial for creating effective homemakers and upholding traditional beliefs. Different curricula were consequently advised for women.

The early 1970s different feminist groups, social workers, policy makers and networks had created tremendous pressure on their governments for policy reform and pursuing better strategies to address the gender issue (Faisal and Rizavi, 2011)^[3].

The gender discrimination in schools is an extension of what an individual think in the family, in the society and in the community in which that individual lives. Any program of gender discrimination elimination in educational institutions must take into confidence, the parents and guardians and undoubtedly the teachers (both men and women), for whom there must be continuous programs orienting them to equality in thought and deed. Eminent and ordinary persons in the community and the media have to be involved, for the program touches the lives of the children outside of schools also and it cannot succeed, if pursued in the school alone.

Some Researches on Gender Discrimination

Gender Discrimination is an aspect of individual discrimination which not only exists in schools in developing countries like ours but is evident worldwide. There is in fact evidence, which suggests that African American boys do report more classroom racial discrimination and gender discrimination compared to girls (Casteel; Chavous et al.; Cogburn et al.; Roeser, Eccles, & Sameroff as cited in Thompson, 2012)^[11]. Gender discrimination has found to negatively impact an array of physical, psychological, and personal factors, such as lowered self-esteem, depression, and restricted occupational aspirations among students (Brown et al.; Klonoff, Landrine and Campbell; Ro, Choi; Schmitt et al. as cited in Cogburn et al., 2011)^[2]. These discriminatory practices in schools are likely to affect students' perceptions which may result in different academic, psychological, and social outcomes.

Gautam (2021)^[4] investigated the discriminatory practices in secondary schools. The results revealed that there was significant difference in perception of discriminatory practices between boys and girls. Girls are experiencing highest level of discrimination within the school.

Matope, N. (2012)^[6] examined the Gender Discrimination in Educational Personnel. Analyzed data revealed that gender discrimination in learning institutions exists and is manifested in the appointments, promotion and assignment of duties and responsibilities. As a result, women seem to be negatively affected, in the low uptake of administrative positions.

Pandey (2006)^[9] notes that the behaviour of teachers within the classroom has been criticized for perpetuating gender stereotypes, with boys being favoured in many classroom activities.

Jones et al. (2000) ^[5] provided teachers with a self-directed module aimed at reducing gender bias in the classroom. The module contained research on gender equity in the classroom, specific activities to reduce stereotypical thinking in students, and self-evaluation worksheets for teachers.

Tuwor and Sossou (2008) ^[12] examined some of the reasons for the persistent gender gap between females and males in the three African countries of Ghana, Nigeria and Togo within the West Africa sub-region and discusses gender relations, cultural practices such as early marriage, child slavery, and child fostering/trafficking, poverty and multiple household duties for girls as some of the contributing factors. A number of additional strategies for improvement in school attendance and retention for females are also discussed.

Indian Perspective

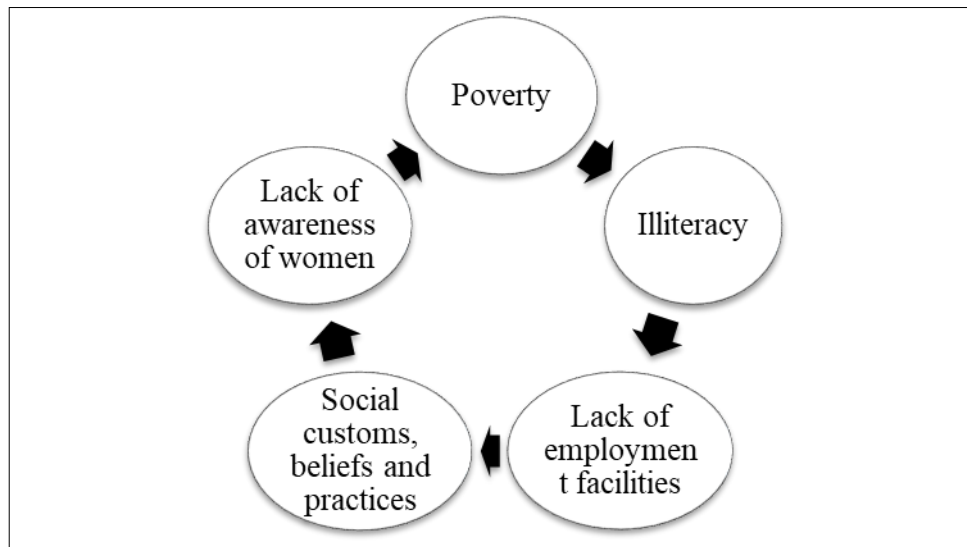


Fig 1: Gender Discrimination in India (Major Causes)

1. Poverty: The lack of economic opportunities and autonomy, lack of access to financial resources like credit, land ownership, and inheritance, lack of access to education and support services, and their negligible involvement in decision-making are all factors that contribute to the 30% of Indians who live in poverty. Men continue to receive a larger portion of the economic pie, and the position for women is not any better. Thus, in our patriarchal society, poverty is the root of gender discrimination, and our reliance on men for economic survival is a contributing factor to gender inequality.

2. Illiteracy: Despite the world's remarkable efforts to improve basic education, there are still 960 million individuals who lack literacy, with women making up two thirds of this group. Gender prejudice has its roots in the girls' educational underachievement.

3. Lack of Employment facility: Women in India spend a significant amount of time on unpaid domestic labour, both in rural and urban areas. Due to the distribution of tasks within the household, women tend to have limited mobility and are therefore less able to take advantage of new possibilities and change careers. Due to unemployment, women are unable to be economically independent, and their reliance on males for financial support contributes to gender inequality.

4. Social Customs, Beliefs and Practices: The traditional patrilineal joint family system restricts women's roles to the home, giving them a lower status, level of authority, and power than men. There are still numerous countries where people favour males over daughters, a complex phenomenon. So, the main reason for gender inequality in our culture is anti-female social bias.

5. Lack of Awareness of Women: The majority of women are ignorant of their fundamental rights and skills. Even worse, they lack knowledge of how political and socioeconomic issues influence them. They consent to any form of discrimination that endures in our family and society, mostly as a result of their ignorance and lack of knowledge.

Some other reason is Patriarchal society and Son preferences etc. Sex ratio, females per 1000 males, is a significant indicator of the status of women reflecting the gender discrimination.

According to the Global Gender Gap report 2022 released by World Economic Forum (WEF) highlighted that No country has yet attained complete gender parity, but the top 10 economies have reduced gender disparities by at least 80%, with Iceland dominating the world rankings (90.8%). 22 years, considering current rates of development, for the gender gap in educational attainment. India ranks 135th out of 146 nations. India falls dramatically in health and survival, ranking 135th out of 146 countries.

This report points out that the most important determinant of a country's competitiveness is its human talent - the skills, education and productivity of its workforce - and women account for one-half of the potential talent base throughout the world. A nation's competitiveness therefore depends significantly on whether and how it educates and utilizes its female talent. To maximize its competitiveness and development potential, each country should strive for gender equality and give women the same rights, responsibilities and opportunities as men.

The India Discrimination Report 2022 focused on differential access to labour market for different socio-religious and gender groups. The analysis attempts to capture the extent of identity-based discrimination explaining the gaps in access to employment and in wages, credit and health facilities in the context of formation of human capital across different castes, tribal and religious identities and gender.

Indian census was released on 31 March 2011 (and was updated on 20 May 2013).

Table 1: Indian census

Literacy	Total	74%
	Males	82.10%
	Females	65.50%
Sex ratio	per 1000 males	943 females
Child sex ratio (0-6 age group).	per 1000 males	918

While The Literacy rate of the UP state according to the 2011 Census is 70.69%. With the literacy rate for Males at 79.20%, while it is 59.30% for the Females. Sex ratio is 912 per 1000 males and child sex ratio (0-6 age group) is 908 per 1000 males.

International initiatives to reduce the gender discrimination for equity

The Charter of the UN: The United Nations Charter, which was adopted on June 26, 1945, is the first international document to specifically establish equal rights for men and women. It highlighted encouraging respect for and observance of everyone's fundamental rights and human liberties.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR): This basic principle of equal rights and non-discrimination on the basis of sex and declared the All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth without distinction of any kind such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) adopted the Convention concerning Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value, and later, also issued recommendations on women's right to employment opportunities, pensions, retirement and social insurance. In addition, other conventions adopted for promoting women's rights and to end discrimination.

The General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) on December 19, 1979. The Convention is regarded as a milestone since it is the human rights instrument that has been ratified the most broadly and has publicly acknowledged the reality that women's fundamental rights are frequently curtailed by social norms that contain elements of discrimination against women. It is the most thorough document that established the foundation and global norm for women's equal enjoyment of civil, political, and cultural rights without experiencing any form of discrimination.

The declaration of International Women's Year in 1975, the International Women's Decade (1975–1985), and the four World Women's Conferences held in Mexico City in 1975, Copenhagen in 1980, Nairobi in 1985, and Beijing in 1995 are some of the most significant turning points in the fight for women's human rights and to improve the status of women at national, regional, and international levels. 1993 Vienna Conference The Second World Conference on Human Rights, which took place in Vienna in June 1993, is a further gathering that has special relevance for women. Women's rights are officially acknowledged as being human rights and as an intrinsic, fundamental, and inseparable component of all other human rights.

The gender issue is also emphasised in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were adopted at the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in 2000 and supported by 189 UN member nations. The third MDG aims to "promote gender equality and empower women." The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Millennium Declaration share the goal of building a more just and equitable world, where women and men have equal access to opportunities.

Women in Development (WID), a new paradigm that strives to engage women in development initiatives to increase their efficiency, was created during this time to solve the gender issue. The three phases of the WID paradigm, according to Moser (1993), are "Equity approach," "Anti-poverty," and "Efficiency." Later, some flaws in this development model were discovered. A new paradigm known as "Gender and Development (GAD)" evolved as an alternative WID attempt in the middle of the 1980s. To address disparities in women's and men's societal roles in connection to development, "Gender and Development (GAD)" was created. The most recent and seemingly most promising gender reform paradigm for changing public policy is gender mainstreaming (Faisal and Rizavi, 2011) ^[3]. Gender Mainstreaming is seen as the GAD with modifications. It places a strong emphasis on women's full participation in achieving sustainable development.

The UN General Assembly established UN Women in July 2010, and in May 2011, UNESCO introduced a New Global Partnership for Girls and Women's Education. In addition, the UN Secretary General has now declared

that a Global Initiative on Education will begin in 2012 with the advancement of gender equality as one of its primary focuses. In accordance with human rights standards like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, GCE believes all of these activities can be used as levers to address gender inequity in education and society at large. GCE contends that the existing multilateral initiatives must be compared to the set of commitments States have with regard to gender equality.

The following priorities were suggested by a global thematic consultation on education for the post-2015 development agenda: (1) Expanded access to high-quality education should be guaranteed for everyone and at all educational levels. (2) Emphasis on learning outcomes as well as the quality of education, including its subject matter and applicability. (3) A stronger emphasis on equity. (4) Promoting gender equality is still a top objective, with a renewed emphasis on providing girls and women with improved access to post-basic and postsecondary education in secure, encouraging learning environments.

The strongest organizing concept for a rights-based framework post-2015 is equity, which emphasises the need to address structural and historical inequities in order to guarantee access to high-quality education at all levels. This signals a rights-based approach that recognises that rights are indivisible, which was in fact one of the clearest themes to emerge from the post-2015 education consultations. This suggests that every aspect of education, including its structural components, delivery mechanisms, and subject matter, should be viewed from the perspective of human rights. To ensure that everyone has access to a high-quality education, structural impediments must be removed.

Equity is affirmed as a fundamental value in education. Several inputs noted that inequality in education remains a persistent challenge. This is connected to a focus in the Millennium Development Goals on averages without an accompanying consideration of trends beneath the averages. Numerous comments in the consultation on education as well as in the other topic consultations emphasised the neglect of vulnerable and marginalised populations. Addressing the wide-ranging and pervasive disparities in society is necessary for ensuring equal access to high-quality education. This effort should place more emphasis on how various kinds of inequality interact to produce unequal outcomes for disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. According to post-2015 consultations, reducing inequality necessitates a target that holds national governments responsible for upholding minimum standards and carrying out nation-specific strategies for essential services, including education. Equity in education also entails a variety of proactive and focused actions to provide disadvantaged groups with progressive support.

Various Indian programmes for reducing Gender Discrimination in Education

Mahila Samakhyia Programme: In order to carry out the goals of the National Policy on Education, 1986, the Mahila Samakhyia programme was established in 1988. It acknowledged that education may be a powerful weapon for women's empowerment, with the following conditions:

- enhancing self-esteem and self-confidence of women;
- building a positive image of women by recognizing their contribution to the society, polity and the economy;
- developing ability to think critically;
- fostering decision making and action through collective processes;
- enabling women to make informed choices in areas like education, employment and health (especially reproductive health);
- ensuring equal participation in developmental processes;
- providing information, knowledge and skill for economic independence;
- Enhancing access to legal literacy and information relating to their rights and entitlements in society with a view to enhance their participation on an equal footing in all areas.

In order to revive the primary education system and fulfil the goal of universalizing primary education, the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) was introduced in 1994. These are the program's goals:

1. To provide all children with access to Primary Education either in formal system or through Alternative Schooling Center.
2. Provides Reading Writing Materials and free textbooks to all SC and ST children and General girls.
3. Providing Access to Primary Education for all children.
4. Reducing the Gap among Gender and disadvantaged social groups to less than 5.
5. Increasing learning achievement of primary school students by 25 percent.

Since its inception in 2000–2001, the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) has operated to provide a range of interventions for universal access and retention, closing gender and social category disparities in elementary education, and enhancing the standard of learning. SSA interventions include, among other things, the establishment of new schools and alternative educational facilities, the building of schools and additional classrooms, restrooms, and drinking water, the provision of resources for teachers, regular teacher in-service training and academic resource support, free textbooks and uniforms, and assistance with raising learning achievement levels / outcomes. SSA recommended the following values: Access implies understanding of the educational needs and plight of the traditionally excluded categories, such as the SC, ST, and other sections of

the most disadvantaged groups, the Muslim minority, girls in general, and children with special needs. Access does not just mean making a school accessible to all children within a certain distance. Concern for gender suggests not only working to stay up with boys but also viewing education from the National Policy on Education's 1986–1992 point of view, i.e., taking bold action to fundamentally alter women's standing.

In order to provide educational opportunities for girls from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, minority communities, and families living in poverty in Educationally Backward Blocks, the Indian government introduced the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya scheme in August 2004. It was later incorporated into the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan programme. By establishing residential elementary schools with boarding facilities, KGBV seeks to ensure that girls from underprivileged sectors of society can afford and attend high-quality education.

A savings programme supported by the Indian government and geared toward parents of girls is known as Sukanya Samridhi Account. The programme encourages parents to create a fund to cover their female child's future school and marriage costs. On January 22, 2015, Prime Minister Narendra Modi introduced the programme as a component of the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao campaign.

All India Survey for Higher Education (AISHE) in 2011-12, Total enrolment in higher education has been estimated to be 28.56 million with 15.87 million boys and 12.69 million girls. Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education in India is 20.4 which is calculated for 18-23 years of age group. GER for male population is 21.6 and for females it is 18.9.

The National Educational Policy (NEP, 2020) makes an effort to address the rising inequality and injustice that are now afflicting the nation's educational system. More crucially, obstacles like tiny school campuses and factors that lower girl involvement in rural areas are acknowledged as contributing to inefficient resource allocation. The GER for Grades 6–8 was 90.9%, but it was only 79.3% and 56.5% for Grades 9–10 and 11–12, respectively, showing that a considerable fraction of enrolled students drop out after Grade 5 and especially after Grade 8. 3.22 crore children in the age range of 6 to 17 years are not enrolled in school, according to the NSSO's 75th round household survey conducted in 2017–18. In India, the GER for higher education in the fiscal year 2021 was 27.1 percent. It will be a top priority to bring these children back into the educational fold as early as possible, and to prevent further students from dropping out, with a goal to achieve 100% Gross Enrolment Ratio in preschool to secondary level by 2030. A concerted national effort will be made to ensure universal access and afford opportunity to all children of the country to obtain quality holistic education—including vocational education - from pre-school to Grade 12. In order to keep girls students and others from socioeconomically disadvantaged groups interested in attending school, NEP 2020 also suggests ensuring quality education. In addition, the new policy suggests setting up a "Gender-Inclusion Fund" to improve educational opportunities for women and transgender people in recognition of the crucial demands of girls' education.

With the help of these programmes and policy reducing gender discrimination and provide equality in access to educational opportunity.

Different ways to reduce gender discrimination for equity in education

The Global Campaign for Education (GCE) recommends CEDAW to offer concrete suggestions for States on how to abolish gender discrimination in the educational system, which might include:

- States make education free and mandatory at the elementary, early childhood, and secondary levels; this should be seen as essential to the advancement of gender equality in education.
- States provide well-designed, targeted and appropriately structured demand-side incentives, such as stipends and cash transfers, to counteract indirect and opportunity costs and ensure that girls complete primary school and move on to secondary;
- States must make sure that laws and practises allow females to complete their education regardless of their marital status or parental role, and that educational systems are flexible enough to accommodate these many circumstances.
- When building school and transportation infrastructure, states take into mind the requirements of girls, including providing separate restrooms for girls, secure transportation, and schools in rural locations.
- States implement gender impact analyses in planning and gender-sensitive budgeting for education.
- States develop legislative and policy frameworks aimed at eradicating gender prejudice and stereotypes in education, encouraging positive depiction of women, and providing instruction in gender-equitable classroom practises.
- States monitor achievement against equity-based goals for enrollment, advancement, and learning in a fashion that breaks down data by, among other things, gender, age, grade, wealth, and region.

Suggestions to reduce gender discrimination-

- Provide women with access to legal representation and opportunities to pursue justice against perpetrators of violence through the formal legal system.
- Promote gender equality in schools and widen access to education for girls. It has been proven time and time again that girls enrolled in school are less likely to be married early and become pregnant. If that weren't reason enough, girls that obtain higher levels of education are more likely to find employment and become empowered as a result of their financial contributions to the family and community

- End forced early marriage and premature pregnancy, the leading cause of death of girls between 15 to 19 years of age. With more than 142 million girls expected to marry before they turn 18 over the next decade, programs like *Apni Beti Apna Dhan* (ABAD), which offer conditional cash transfers to incentivize families to delay their daughter's marriages, will likely help reduce arranged marriages and allow girls to develop both physically and mentally before marriage and child-birth
- Revise marriage laws that are institutionally biased against women, particularly those that deny women custody over their children, inheritance, and land rights in cases of death, separation or divorce. The revised national constitution in Kenya is one example that has brought about unprecedented rights for women, including the right to oversee property-related transactions, manage family land and resources and retain a portion of land to live on and cultivate if widowed or divorced.
- The most effective means of attaining social justice and equality are education. The achievement of an inclusive and equitable society where every citizen has the chance to dream, grow, and contribute to the country depends on inclusive and equitable education, which is a crucial aim in and of itself.
- By using appropriate counselling and mentoring programmes, provide all such students with academic and socio-emotional help and mentoring.
- Ensure that teachers, counsellors, and students are made aware of the gender identity issue and that it is included in all facets of the HEI, such as courses.
- Strictly enforce all anti-harassment and anti-discrimination laws.

Conclusion

Gender discrimination is the consequence of persistent inequality between men and women in all spheres of life. The dimension and degree of discrimination against women manifests itself in different cultures, politics, race, region, countries and economies differently. However gender discrimination is considered as tremendous constraint towards the development process and it is found as a causal factor of violence against women. Different approaches or strategies have been adopted in the past few decades with a view to promoting the advancement of women and gender equality as a whole but in course of time, it was found that the successive approaches failed to address gender issues in a proper manner and could not improve the status of women as it was expected. Thus, a some significant changes are required to promote gender equality at national and international levels.

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