

# *Causes of Gender Bias in China's Education and Its Countermeasures*

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**Abstract:** The existence of gender bias in education is a complex issue in the context of Chinese society. Through an in-depth study of the phenomenon of gender differences in China's cultural, historical, political, and economic contexts, this paper reveals the specific reasons behind it, its manifestations, and the effects it brings. Besides, some concrete suggestions and measures are also put forward. It can be concluded from the analysis that teachers hold different expectations and different educational attitudes towards students of different genders in the educational environment. The prejudice caused by such gender stereotyping will be consciously or unconsciously manifested in their teaching as well as in their contact with students. This will have an inescapable impact on students' academic development and career development. In order to eliminate gender discrimination in education, a series of measures need to be taken. Firstly, traditional cultural and socially perceived prejudices should be changed to improve the status and educational opportunities for women. Secondly, it is necessary to strengthen teachers' gender awareness and educational training so that they can focus on gender equality and justice in education. In addition, it is necessary to establish a fair and equal campus culture and evaluation system to encourage students to fulfil their potential and strengths.

**Keywords:** Gender Bias, Historical Causes, Educational Attitudes, Social Influences

## 1. Introduction

Gender bias has a significant impact on education, employment, social attitudes, and policies. This impact severely hampers women's opportunities in fields such as science, technology, and engineering. Meanwhile, it also limits career choices and room for advancement in different fields for both men and women. Gender discrimination in education is a long-standing phenomenon that has a negative impact on the equal development of male and female students [1]. With the progress of society and the change in people's mindsets, the problem of gender discrimination in education has gradually attracted people's attention and reflection. The existence of gender bias in education is related to many factors, the most fundamental of which is cultural and social cognitive bias. Against this background, this article is divided into three parts: the first part presents specific phenomena of gender bias in education in Chinese society and its impact. The second part deals with the specific historical, political, and economic causes of gender bias in education. The third part is about the measures that can be adopted to address gender discrimination in Chinese-style education. Gender discrimination in education is a complex social phenomenon that needs to be tackled from multiple

perspectives [2]. Only through the joint efforts and concerns of the whole society can we achieve equity and gender equality in education, so that every male and female student can enjoy equal rights to education and opportunities for further development. This paper aims to contribute to the promotion of gender equality and social progress.

## **2. Specific Phenomena and Effects of Gender Discrimination in Education**

### **2.1. Specific Phenomena**

In China, it is common for teachers to give preferential treatment to male students in the classroom, for example, by giving priority to answering male students' questions or imposing much lighter penalties on male students than female students for the same mistake. It is also common for teachers to assume that male students are better suited to science subjects than female students, and thus give preference to male students, resulting in an unfair education. Additionally, for students who fall in love at an early age, some teachers will give priority to blaming female students and even depriving them of their right to attend classes. There are also teachers and classmates who may use inappropriate words or behaviour to belittle females or males. Such words and behaviour can have a negative impact on the mental health of the victims, affecting their enthusiasm and motivation for education and learning.

In economically underdeveloped areas, the infrastructure of schools is relatively poor. Owing to the lack of funds, school decision-makers will first build basketball courts and football pitches, which are more suitable for boys' activities, while badminton courts and dance studios that are more frequently used by girls will be neglected or will even not be considered. In some impoverished areas, many girls drop out of school because of family difficulties. Traditionally, impoverished families will let girls drop out of school first. Although there are relevant legal provisions, they are rather general and lack penalties for offences, which makes it difficult for poor families to be sanctioned by the law for the offence of keeping girls out of school.

### **2.2. Impact of Gender Stereotypes**

Gender discrimination is not the right way to go in terms of equity in education, and to some extent, it contributes to the brain drain in a country, which is not a good thing for diversification and quality development [3]. It is also a serious cause of social unrest.

Gender stereotypes affect the distribution of educational opportunities. Traditional societal attitudes suggest that males are more suited to scientific and technological fields such as polytechnics, while females are more suited to fields such as humanities and social sciences. Such perceptions may lead schools to offer science, technology, and physical education programmes to male students and arts and language programmes to female students in allocating programmes, thus limiting the opportunities for female students to obtain a well-rounded education. Some women may be deterred from choosing certain careers, such as working as scientists, engineers, and doctors, because of gender discrimination. In other words, such discrimination can limit women's career development and advancement, resulting in a waste of talent and a loss to society.

Gender stereotypes can lead to unfairness in educational assessments. Male and female students often face different challenges and tests in examinations and assessments. As men are perceived by society to be more competitive and dominant, they are often subject to higher expectations and assessment standards. In contrast, females are often perceived as softer and more emotional, and therefore, tend to be subject to lower evaluations and expectations in examinations and assessments, resulting in their inability to reach their full potential.

Gender stereotypes can affect safety and equality in the educational environment. Gender discrimination and sexual harassment are a common problem in schools and campuses. These

behaviours tend to be more hurtful and disturbing to female students, resulting in their inability to learn and grow in a safe and equal environment. Traditional educational materials and curriculum content often reflect a male-dominated perspective that ignores the contributions and value of women. This gender bias not only creates learning difficulties for female students but also limits their interest and development in different fields.

### **3. Causes of Gender Discrimination in Education**

When it comes to sexism in education, it is inextricably linked to China's history, economy, and politics.

Historically, China has had a history of male domination for more than 2,600 years, and men have usually played the role of rulers since ancient times, while women have lived for nearly a thousand years under the rule that a woman's lack of talent is a virtue [4]. With the deepening of the reform and opening-up process, people's thinking has been liberated to a certain extent, but the traditional gender concepts of inequality between men and women still exist in people's subconsciousness, including the idea that men are strong and women are weak, men should work outside and women should take good care of the family, and men are superior to women. During the long period of feudal society, the traditional concepts of Confucianism and feudal rites have long suppressed women. This traditional thinking is deeply rooted in the minds of the Chinese people, and it has been externalised into a phenomenon of linguistic gender differences that is unique to the Han Chinese people.

From an economic standpoint, China is and will remain a developing country. China is in dire need of development. In the process of "revitalising the country through science and education", more importance is attached to the quality and speed of education development instead of gender equity in education. As the means of production and lifestyles changed, men were gradually pushed into a dominant position in society. The "patriarchal centre" has become a social order and a norm of behaviour, with men becoming the highest representatives of human culture and the masters of society, and women in a subordinate, supporting position.

At the political level, the laws protect the equal status of men and women, which is conducive to equity in education for females. However, the actual political status of women is relatively low, especially in government decision-making, where the number of women participating in decision-making is much smaller than that of men. Therefore, the actual political status of women is lower than that of men, which can lead to a tendency to infringe on women's interests due to the lack of a female perspective in the formulation of specific policies. Moreover, these factors can have a negative impact on women's participation in education and cause a lack of equal opportunities for political participation. In some countries with strong traditional attitudes, women's participation in politics is still subject to many taboos and restrictions, and they are also subjected to violence frequently in the political arena.

In addition, physiological and psychological factors also contribute to gender discrimination. Physiological studies have concluded that women are better than men in terms of physical endurance, and therefore, show more stamina than men in performing menial household chores. However, from the psychological aspect of women, male consciousness has long been the dominant consciousness of society. In such a male-dominated society, many women have become accustomed to positioning themselves as subordinate to men.

### **4. Measures to Address Gender Discrimination in Chinese-Style Education**

From the perspective of family education, parents should cultivate their children to have equal gender concepts through family education. At the same time, parents should participate in their children's

education, avoid over-emphasising the differences in gender roles between men and women in family education, and encourage their children to develop their potential and interests.

From the perspective of school education, schools should balance the ratio of male and female teachers, strengthen gender equality education, and create a better classroom climate for female students to create a better learning environment for all students [5,6]. This will help students to understand the concept and impact of gender discrimination, guide them to realise the importance of gender equality, and cultivate their awareness of equality, thereby eliminating gender discrimination and prejudice and promoting the common development of male and female students.

At the same time, reforming curricula and teaching methods will also help to eliminate gender bias and restrictions and ensure that male and female students are treated equally in their studies. This includes focusing on gender balance in the curriculum, further developing teaching materials and teaching methods, and encouraging male and female students to give full play to their strengths and interests. Finally, an equal assessment system should be established within schools to avoid over-emphasising gender differences in the evaluation of students. Teachers should focus on students' individual characteristics and potential rather than making judgements solely on the basis of gender.

From the perspective of social education, the Government should actively set up outstanding female role models and demonstrate women's abilities and achievements, so as to inspire women to be self-confident and self-reliant and to break the boundaries of gender stereotypes; women should also be encouraged to participate more in decision-making on education and raise the status and influence of women in education management. This will help to promote gender equality at the decision-making level. In addition, legal and policy safeguards should be strengthened to ensure women's right to education and equal status through the formulation and implementation of relevant laws and policies. Effective measures should be taken to correct and punish any violation of the relevant provisions. It is also important to promote social and cultural change. Through publicity, education, and social media, social and cultural changes should be promoted to eliminate discrimination and prejudice against women. This will help create a more equal and inclusive social environment. Lastly, resources for women's education should also be increased to ensure the adequacy and equitable distribution of resources for women's education and improve women's access to education and the quality of education. This includes the provision of resources such as equal funding for education, teaching staff, and learning facilities.

## 5. Conclusion

Gender discrimination in education is a pervasive problem that negatively affects the development and equal opportunities of male and female students. Educational equity is an important foundation for social equity and a necessary condition for achieving comprehensive human development. With the progress of society and the change of people's concepts, educational equity has received more and more attention [7]. This paper summarises the following points based on the discussion of the literature survey: firstly, gender discrimination is particularly serious in the context of education in China. Secondly, gender discrimination in education in Chinese society is caused by many factors such as political factors and economic factors, and the most important ones are mostly historical reasons. Thirdly, gender inequality in education leads to many social problems, the most important of which is the problem of brain drain in talent training programmes. Fourthly, gender discrimination should start with the implementation of new policies and the cultivation of gender equality awareness among teachers and students. In conclusion, educational equity is a long-term and arduous task. Eliminating gender bias in China's educational context requires the joint efforts of the whole society. Gender inequality can be gradually eliminated through measures such as raising awareness, reforming teaching materials and curricula, establishing mechanisms and platforms, and encouraging female participation in decision-making. It is only through the continuous promotion of reform and

innovation that every male and female student can enjoy equal rights to education, thereby achieving the goal of all-round development.

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