



# Gender Disparities in Educational Orientation within the Chinese Education System: An In-Depth Exploration and Pathways to Equity

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**Abstract.** With the continuous development of the economy, the issue of educational equity in China is gradually improving. However, it is undeniable that there are still problems in education caused by gender differences. This article explores the complex challenges faced by marginalized genders and makes recommendations for improving equity and inclusion. This study investigates the different factors that contribute to gender disparities in education. These factors include unconscious biases, socioeconomic disparities, and differences in students' experiences in the classroom. This helps to highlight the intricate and interconnected character of the issue at hand. The essay emphasizes the detrimental effects that gender stereotypes and unequal educational opportunities have on the academic accomplishment, well-being, and social mobility of pupils. The research highlights the significance of developing inclusive educational environments, questioning preconceived notions, and ensuring that all students, regardless of their gender, are provided with equal experiences and opportunities. Through promoting collaboration among educators, policymakers, and civil society, China can eliminate structural hurdles to gender equality in education and develop a learning environment that is equitable and empowering for future generations.

**Keywords:** Gender inequality, Education, Stereotypes, Equity.

## 1 Introduction

Gender inequality in education is a widespread issue globally, having substantial effects on personal growth, societal advancement, and economic development. Although there have been improvements in education access and gender equality regulations, inequities persist in many educational areas. Analyzing educational thinking, pedagogy, and student development can provide a thorough understanding of the difficulties of gender imbalance in education and help discover successful methods to solve them. One instance is the subconscious gender bias towards distinct gender roles in education that is ingrained in educational thought as a result of China's pervasive influence of Confucianism [1,2]. The paper aims to investigate the complex nature of gender disparities in educational orientations, analyzing the underlying issues,

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their consequences, and possible remedies. The paper examines the repercussions of these difficulties by evaluating the challenges that have emerged from the current situation.

## **2 Problem of Gender Inequality**

### **2.1 Status of Gender-Differentiated Educational Inequities**

Revisiting the topic of education in China, China has made notable advancements in improving school accessibility, although gender inequalities still exist in the education system [3]. The Chinese government has focused on education development and achieved almost universal primary education [4,5]. However, gaps between boys and girls still exist in all areas of the school system. Gender inequality continues to be prevalent, with gaps in education quality persisting across urban and rural areas as well as within various socio-economic categories, despite greater access to education. Girls from disadvantaged backgrounds may face restricted access to resources, experienced educators, and educational amenities, impacting their academic achievements and prospects for progress. Girls in certain rural and underprivileged communities encounter obstacles in obtaining education because of issues like poverty, school proximity, and cultural traditions that prioritize boys' education. Consequently, girls in these regions may have a higher probability of discontinuing their education or receiving inferior quality schooling compared to boys. Surveys indicate that while women's enrollment in colleges and universities has increased and even exceeded that of males, gender inequity in the education system persists.

### **2.2 Main Problems**

This paper discusses prominent gender disparities identified in China's education system. These include the unconscious prejudices held by teachers towards students' decisions, the development of unintentional stereotypes, the unequal treatment of men and women in educational settings, and the challenges in ensuring equal and mandatory education for both genders in challenging regions.

#### **Bias, Stereotyping of Student Choices.**

Before addressing genuine bias and genuine sexism exhibited by educators in the classroom, it is crucial to understand the definition of genuine sexism. Sexism is defined as aversion towards women, rather than the standard meaning. Bona fide sexism eliminates discrimination that holds negative feelings or uncertainty towards women, including benevolent sexism. Psychologists state that gender relations involve the simultaneous presence of male domination in society and intimate interdependence, leading to the emergence of ambivalent sexism [5,6]. Benevolent sexism undermines women's independence, making them reliant on or sheltered by men, ultimately restricting their career growth and ambitions. Genuine sexism in society is frequently manifested in the differing perceptions of family and social status between men and

women. Women are commonly linked to the family due to the stereotype that portrays them as the weaker gender requiring protection. For instance, they think women are supposed to support their spouses, be subservient, dependent on their husbands' decisions, and willing to forgo their professions [7]. When well-meaning prejudice occurs in the classroom, it significantly impacts the course selection and future opportunities for female students. An example is the disparity in gender representation in STEM disciplines. China's initiatives to advance gender equality in education have not significantly reduced the substantial gender gap in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). In contrast to Western societies, several regions in China mandate selecting between studying liberal arts or science before enrolling in university. Female students in China are frequently dissuaded from selecting science subjects because of cultural biases, prejudices, and social expectations that discourage girls from pursuing STEM-related fields and occupations. The enduring nature of these social expectations has resulted in the lack of women in science classes, which serves to perpetuate these harmful social beliefs.

### **Different Classroom Circumstances.**

Female students in China's educational system often experience a distinct classroom environment compared to their male peers within the same system. Several factors contribute to this differential experience, impacting the educational opportunities and experiences of girls in various ways. This is despite the advancements made in the field of gender equality. Initially, there are slight differences in the focus and standards that teachers set for their students. Teachers in numerous Chinese schools may exhibit varying levels of attention towards girls and hold different expectations for them compared to boys. Teachers may inadvertently show bias by giving more attention and assistance to boys, especially in subjects like mathematics and science. Some educators, driven by preconceived views, believe that boys are mischievous and need more encouragement. This disparity affects the self-confidence and academic achievements of girls, thereby influencing the educational and career pathways they pursue in the future. Society expects females to adhere to a "gentle" and "quiet" demeanor, making them believed to be more subdued compared to males. This is a result of the creation of social norms that, while well-meaning, are sexist. Moreover, Girls' participation and voice in the classroom are significantly affected by this. Girls may be deterred from being assertive by cultural norms, perhaps leading to reduced participation and visibility in classroom discussions and activities. This could lead to females feeling disengaged or inert, perhaps affecting their overall learning experience and academic progress.

### **Difficulty in Making Education Compulsory in Difficult Areas.**

China has made great headway in improving access to education, particularly in disadvantaged and rural areas. Gender equality in mandatory education in these regions encounters significant obstacles due to a range of socio-economic, cultural, and institutional reasons [8]. Entrenched cultural traditions and gender biases still impact the educational opportunities of females in underprivileged regions. Conventional

gender norms may favor boys' schooling over girls', resulting in differences in enrollment, retention, and completion rates [9,10]. Prejudiced views on girls' education, particularly in isolated and traditional communities, might worsen gender gaps and impede progress toward equality. Poverty-stricken regions frequently do not have the essential infrastructure, resources, and financial assistance needed to provide high-quality education to every child. Girls' access to education is disproportionately affected by inadequate school facilities, insufficient teaching and learning resources, and a dearth of skilled teachers. Gender disparity in rural China was exemplified by a case of deceitful contributions to the China Youth Foundation, a public fundraising platform. Donations meant for supporting female education and livelihoods in rural areas are redirected solely towards the male members of these households due to the common practice of favoring boys over girls. According to the website, all donations will be utilized to provide financial support for mandatory education and to acquire essential items for girls from impoverished households. Later on, it was disclosed that a substantial proportion of the recipients of the Spring Buds Programme were male. Subsequently, the unequal treatment of men and women becomes apparent in these disadvantaged regions, since despite the program's assertion of providing financial support to females, it eventually directs the funds to the males within the family. Consequently, girls are less likely to have the opportunity to acquire an education, and families that follow patriarchal norms are less likely to permit girls to attend school once boys have received financial support. The government has implemented legislation to enhance educational accessibility in these regions. However, the task of altering deeply ingrained patriarchal attitudes towards education proves to be a formidable challenge, leading to the persistence of educational obstacles for females in underprivileged communities [1].

### **3 Impacts Analysis**

#### **3.1 The Influence of the Spreading of Stereotypes**

If these issues remain unresolved, they will significantly damage Chinese education and society. If widespread gender stereotyping significantly impacts pupils, it will also influence their decisions regarding future education and ideological development. Stereotypes, sometimes based on cultural norms and societal expectations, can negatively impact students' academic experiences, career goals, and overall growth. Gender stereotypes in China are influenced by social and cultural variables, leading to the influence of traditional gender roles on academic interests and professional choices. Male students are often steered towards STEM fields, whereas female students are encouraged to pursue humanities, arts, and social sciences. The strict gender-specific ideas about discipline can restrict pupils from exploring many fields and suppress their intellectual curiosity and potential. Gender stereotypes not only influence students' educational decisions but also affect their job goals and prospects. Some industries and sectors in China are predominantly male-dominated because of prevalent preconceptions regarding women's capabilities and preferences. Female students may encounter obstacles when trying to enter professions like engineering, banking, or

politics, which contributes to the continuation of gender discrepancies in leadership and decision-making positions. Over time, this harmful pattern can suppress female students' curiosity to investigate other fields and chances. This results in individuals developing self-limiting views regarding their capabilities and potential. It might result in unequal distribution of resources, opportunities, and acknowledgment of academic success, reinforcing the gender gap and impeding social mobility.

### **3.2 Decrease Student's Well-Being**

The prevalence of gender prejudice in the school system can severely influence the physical and mental health of kids, hurting their psychological, emotional, and social well-being in numerous ways. The first is the pressure to comply. Gender stereotypes and expectations exert undue pressure on students to conform to traditional gender norms. Boys may feel obliged to do well academically and demonstrate masculinity-related attributes, such as competitiveness and self-confidence. Meanwhile, girls may feel apprehensive about not adhering to cultural norms regarding appearance, behavior, and academic achievement, resulting in feelings of inadequacy and uncertainty [11]. This implicit and explicit gender prejudice in the education system may thus lead individuals to develop unfavorable self-perceptions that influence pupils' inner health.

In China, influenced by Confucianism, boys who thrive in non-traditional disciplines or have feminine characteristics may be stigmatized or bullied, therefore damaging their self-esteem and feeling of belonging [1]. Girls who violate gender preconceptions and enter science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) professions or seek leadership positions may experience discrimination or social isolation, which can significantly affect their self-confidence and mental health. Gender disparities hinder pupils' prospects for personal growth and self-expression and squash their potential and creativity. Girls may be discouraged from pursuing their passions or interests if they are thought to be outside the norms typical of their gender, leading to disappointment and despair. Boys may be subjected to cultural pressure to conform to specific masculine standards, which may limit their capacity to explore a variety of interests and identities. Gender inequality in education can lead to stress and social isolation, which can be hazardous to students' mental health. Research has revealed that gender-based discrimination and stereotyping are connected with greater levels of anxiety, melancholy, and other mental problems in teenagers [12]. Without adequate treatments and support networks, students may struggle to cope with the detrimental effects of gender inequality on their physical and mental health.

### **3.3 Impact on Education Advancement**

The lack of gender equality between the wealthy and the impoverished in urban and rural regions, leading to limited educational opportunities for women in disadvantaged areas, must be resolved. This significantly affects the advancement of education and obstructs the country's journey towards attaining the objective of comprehensive

education. Girls encounter ongoing inequities such as restricted access to education, discriminatory practices, and societal norms that prioritize boys' education, which hinder the overall progress of education. Denying girls equal access to school hinders their potential and impedes societal advancement. Gender disparities in educational achievement restrict the available talent, deprive educational institutions of varied viewpoints, and impede innovation and creativity in the education sector. Moreover, the persistence of gender disparities contributes to broader societal inequities by constraining girls' opportunities for pursuing higher education and socio-economic progress. This maintains a cycle of poverty and social inequality that impedes the country's overall development and competitiveness internationally. Gender stereotypes deeply ingrained in the school system restrict girls' aspirations, sustain disparities, and hinder the establishment of a diverse and fair learning atmosphere. To address these difficulties and enhance education in China, collaboration is essential to eliminate institutional obstacles, advocate for gender equality, and guarantee equitable access to high-quality education and developmental prospects for all students, irrespective of gender. Indulging in this perverse gender bias can have significant economic repercussions by perpetuating gender differences in education, which in turn contribute to wider socio-economic inequality and hinder educational advancement. Restricted school access for females in impoverished communities results in reduced labor market participation and earning capacity, causing economic inefficiencies and impeding total economic progress. This results in economic inefficiencies and impedes overall economic growth. In the long term, families in these regions also hold the belief that women are unable to provide equivalent value and financial resources as men, leading to a cycle of disadvantage. Minimizing the disparity in education between genders is crucial for optimizing human resources and fostering economic growth. Gender disparity hampers innovation and creativity in the school system. Excluding girls from educational opportunities hinders the diversity of ideas and views necessary for creativity. Gender imbalance in schooling hinders societal cohesion and growth. Denying a significant percentage of the population access to education based on gender perpetuates social divisions and worsens systemic imbalances. Promoting inclusive education that provides equal opportunity for all students fosters social cohesion, enhances communities, and contributes to long-term stability and development.

#### **4 Advice**

To eradicate the influence of gender stereotypes on kids in China, it is essential for educators, governments, parents, and civic society to work together collaboratively. Advocating for gender-sensitive education, creating inclusive learning environments to embrace diversity, and ensuring equal opportunities for all students to pursue their interests and aspirations are crucial in combating the adverse effects of gender stereotypes on educational decisions and intellectual advancement. This paper will offer helpful remarks on three topics aimed at addressing gender disparity issues in China's education system.

#### **4.1 More Discussion Orientated or Encourage Class**

Firstly, educators should prioritize facilitating debates or promoting group discussions in the classroom setting. The discussion classroom offers an opportunity for all students, irrespective of gender, to actively participate and engage in learning. By fostering open discourse and collaboration, these spaces establish an equitable platform for students to exchange diverse viewpoints, question preconceptions, and encourage mutual understanding. Group discussions can help students question and examine gender stereotypes and biases in the curriculum and broader societal standards. Educators can increase students' understanding, develop critical thinking skills, and empower them to challenge stereotypes and promote gender equality by fostering discussions about gender roles, expectations, and disparities. Simultaneously, critical thinking can assist pupils in refining their worldviews and resisting conformity to societal norms. Group conversations enable students to hear other viewpoints, fostering empathy and understanding and promoting active listening and learning from various views. This also encompasses gender-influenced viewpoints. Engaging in meaningful discourse allows students to get a greater awareness of the issues and experiences of peers of other genders, promoting mutual respect and empathy within the classroom community. Group talks can enhance self-confidence and foster communication skills, particularly beneficial for female students who can encounter societal expectations to stay quiet or yield to their male classmates. Educators may empower female students by offering opportunities for all students to express their thoughts, exchange ideas, and participate in constructive discussions, enabling them to assert themselves and cultivate the necessary skills for academic and professional success. Discussion-based classroom settings and group conversations are effective tools for addressing gender inequities in education by promoting inclusivity, challenging stereotypes, cultivating empathy and understanding, and enhancing self-confidence and communication skills. Implementing these ideas in education can help China move towards establishing a fairer and more empowered learning environment for all students.

#### **4.2 Rigorous Training for Teams of Teachers**

The second aspect is implementing more thorough screening and training procedures for the teaching staff. Teachers are significant role models and influencers in students' lives. Well-trained teachers can influence students' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors toward gender equality by promoting it and confronting stereotypes in and out of the classroom. Rigorous and diligent training can assist improve China's education system by addressing the issue of invisible gender inequality. Rigorous screening and training can assist teachers in identifying and dealing with unconscious biases that could impact their interactions with students. Teachers can promote fairness and equity in their teaching methods and classroom management by educating about biases and offering tools to mitigate them. Chinese educators can overcome invisible or well-intentioned sexism by introducing gender sensitivity training into teacher education programs to enhance awareness about the impact of gender stereotypes and prejudices on students' educational experiences. Educators can acquire the skills to pro-

vide inclusive and fair learning settings that question stereotypes, advocate for gender equality, and cater to the varied needs of every student. Furthermore, instructors can receive training to implement gender-neutral teaching strategies aimed at questioning conventional gender norms and stereotypes. This involves utilizing gender-inclusive language, integrating varied perspectives into the curriculum, and ensuring equitable chances for all students to succeed in academic and extracurricular endeavors. Teacher training programs can help implement gender-responsive pedagogy, considering the distinct needs and experiences of male and female students. This approach entails modifying teaching methods, curriculum content, and classroom relationships to tackle gender inequities and foster positive outcomes for all students. By addressing and correcting the distorted gender perceptions passed on by educators, the issue of gender prejudice in the classroom can be somewhat improved. Therefore China may empower educators to overcome gender imbalance in the school system by investing in thorough screening and training of its teaching personnel. Teachers may contribute to a brighter future by establishing inclusive and equitable learning environments that provide all students, regardless of gender, with an equal opportunity to excel.

### **4.3 Promoting Policies to Help Improve Bad Thinking in Different Regions**

This paper argues that the Government should implement measures to encourage the dissemination of the concept of gender equality in rural areas by doing ideological work inside families. This will guarantee gender equality. China can achieve equal access to education for all children by tackling gender inequality. This will foster equity and social justice by enabling everyone to reach their full learning potential and make meaningful contributions to society, irrespective of gender. Simultaneously, equitable education is a crucial element. Every family should have access to equitable education. China has prioritized ensuring equitable access to education for all children, irrespective of gender or location. The policy promotion involved enhancing school infrastructure, increasing educational resources, and offering financial aid to families in rural and impoverished regions to boost the enrollment of both boys and girls in school, ultimately supporting more impoverished families in promoting girls' education. Incorporating the topic of gender equality in education is crucial for raising awareness and improving the issue of disparity between men and women in impoverished regions. Curriculum reform focused on advancing gender equality and questioning conventional gender norms. This involves updating textbooks and educational materials to remove gender stereotypes and biases, as well as integrating gender-sensitive content across all topics to enhance students' understanding of gender-related issues. The Government should simultaneously implement specific interventions in underserved and disadvantaged communities at the policy level. Focused interventions in underprivileged regions can assist tackle the particular obstacles to education encountered by girls. This involves offering transportation aid, constructing residential schools, and offering scholarships and rewards to motivate girls to continue their education and pursue further studies. Furthermore, thorough testing and assessment are crucial elements that might enhance improvement. Governments can



oversee and assess special districts to enhance their strategies and programs aimed at tackling gender imbalance in education. This involves gathering data on enrollment, dropout rates, academic achievement, and other indicators to evaluate advancements toward gender equality objectives and pinpoint areas needing enhancement. China's education policies for gender equality strive to establish an inclusive and fair education system that guarantees equal chances for all children, irrespective of gender or background, to learn and excel. China is striving to diminish gender inequality in education and empower girls to achieve their full potential by tackling systemic impediments and implementing gender-sensitive policies and practices.

## 5 Conclusion

In conclusion, this article provides an in-depth exploration of the persisting gender imbalance in education in China. By investigating subconscious gender bias, the divide between rich and poor, the subsequent lack of access to education for girls in impoverished areas, and the differing classroom experiences of male and female students, the study gives a complete overview of the various obstacles faced. Examining how these issues affect educational development and well-being underlines the urgent need for action to overcome gender disparity in China's education system. Going forward, measures must be taken to improve awareness of subconscious biases, shrink the gap between affluent and poor to provide fair access to education, and build inclusive classroom environments where all students, regardless of gender, feel respected and encouraged. By prioritizing gender equality in education policy and practice, China can pave the road for a more fair and prosperous future where everyone has the opportunity to fulfill their full potential.

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