

GENDER DISPARITIES IN EDUCATION AND CAREER ADVANCEMENT: STRUCTURAL BARRIERS, STEM UNDERREPRESENTATION, AND POLICY SOLUTIONS

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Article Received: 01 June 2026, Article Revised: 20 June 2026, Published on: 09 July 2026

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Doi: <https://doi-doi.org/101555/ijarp.9412>

ABSTRACT

Achieving gender equality in education is one of the current problems, even though there have been considerable achievements in terms of providing educational opportunities for everyone around the world. The present paper considers the main obstacles to gender equality and the measures that should be used to make education more gender inclusive. The gender stereotypes, social norms, and institutional bias can influence people's chances for getting an education, performance at school, choice of subjects to study, and future careers. The gender stereotypes may steer boys and girls on different educational trajectories, especially limiting women's possibilities for studying STEM disciplines. Moreover, there are certain biases within the curriculum, textbooks, and other teaching methods that prevent gender equality and limit the opportunities for men and women. Finally, this paper pays attention to the importance of the involvement of teachers who are able to change their attitudes and expectations towards their students.

KEYWORDS: gender equality, education, structural barriers, gender stereotypes, inclusive curriculum, STEM education, teacher bias, educational policies.

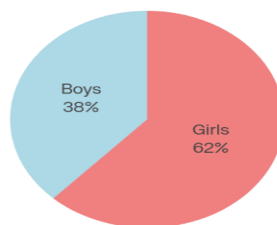
1. INTRODUCTION

The equal treatment of genders in educational opportunities is an indispensable human right, as well as one of the major contributors to the advancement of society on economic, political, and social fronts (Sen, 2020). Education has the potential to empower people, contribute to

the economy, and ensure gender equality in employment and leadership positions (Nair, 2018). Nevertheless, although various efforts have been made internationally towards addressing the gender gap in education, there are still numerous obstacles that impede the achievement of gender equality (Sharma, 2021). Structural factors like poverty, societal traditions, discrimination in legislation and pedagogy, among others, account for the existing disparity between male and female students (Patel, 2017). According to UNESCO, there are around 129 million girls worldwide who are not enrolled in schools (UNESCO, 2022). Moreover, even if girls and gender diverse students get enrolled in educational institutions, they face obstacles pertaining to infrastructure, security and gender insensitivity in educational processes (Mehta, 2012). This study presents an analysis of various barriers that play a part in perpetuating gender disparity in the educational process. It discusses the nature of these barriers at multiple levels: within the household, within educational institutions, and in the policies guiding education (Desai, 2019). In doing so, this study also brings into focus ways through which the current education system can be made more equitable (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2019).

New information points to the continued gender differences in educational levels on both the international and domestic fronts, thus stressing the need to overcome these obstacles. According to UNESCO statistics, there are roughly 122 million to 129 million girls who are not enrolled in schools across the globe, whereas in India, the GPI figure stands at 0.964 and the female literacy rate at 65%, against that of males being 82%. The proportion of women studying STEM disciplines across the world is estimated to be 35%, and even in full professor positions, it is below 25%. The figures show that although there is advancement in enrollment, completion rates, and subjects still favour men, especially in underdeveloped areas, where the girls' primary completion rate is 66% against 71% among boys.

Out-of-School Children by Gender (UNESCO 2025)



Source: UNESCO
129M girls (62%), 80M boys (38%)
of 209M total [web:30]

Figure 1: Gender Distribution of Out-of-School Children Worldwide (2025)

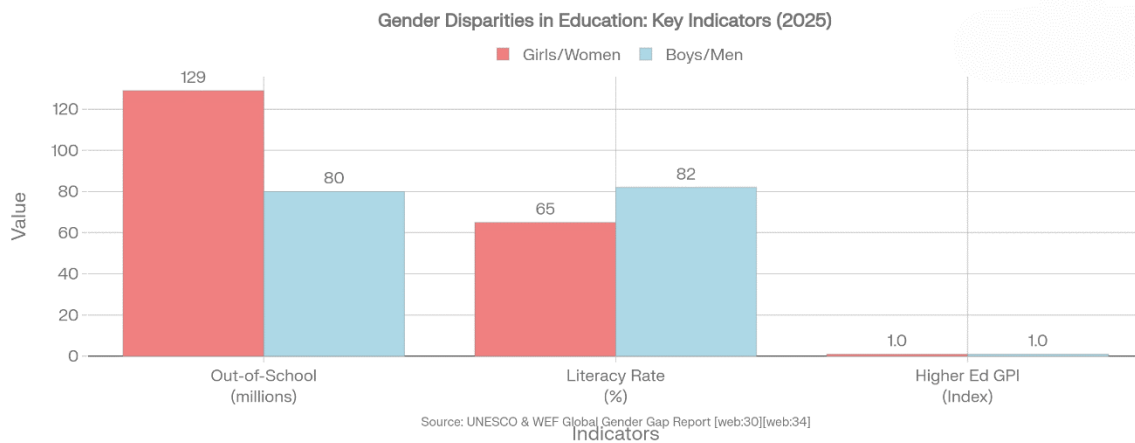


Figure 2: Comparative Analysis of Out-of-School Children by Gender. (2025)

2. Access to Education: Barriers and Challenges

Even after considerable efforts towards increasing enrolment, gender-based obstacles persist, thus restricting women and other genders from accessing education (Sen, 2018). Such obstacles are entrenched in economic inequality and cultural norms, among others (Sharma, 2019).

Economic Barriers

Metric	Global/High-Income	Low-Income Regions
Primary Completion (Girls vs Boys)	90% parity achieved in 2/3 countries	Girls 66% vs Boys 71%
Lower Secondary Completion	Girls often exceed boys	Girls 38% vs Boys 43%
Tertiary Enrollment	Girls > Boys by 5+ pts in 100+ countries	Significant gaps persist
Out-of-School Girls	122-129 million worldwide	40% of 15-18-year-old girls in India

One of the biggest hurdles when it comes to receiving an education is the problem of finances. Parents living under impoverished conditions usually give preference to their sons' education rather than that of their daughters, as they feel boys' education is more productive financially (Ravi, 2017). Girls face the risk of being pulled out of educational institutions as they are needed to assist within households with chores or other tasks (Kumar, 2020). The informal costs associated with education also add on to the existing problems, as uniforms, educational books, and means of transport become expensive (Basu, 2016).

Social and Cultural Barriers

Gender roles and cultural practices greatly impact education (Joshi, 2014). In most societies, the education of females is perceived as subordinate to their household duties, and early marriage is often favoured over education (UNICEF, 2021). As per the reports of UNICEF, more than 12 million girls annually marry before reaching adulthood, thus compromising their education and future independence (UNESCO, 2022). Moreover, societal pressure influences subject selection, dissuading girls from studying technical subjects (Das, 2013). The programs that aim at creating awareness and engaging communities play an important part in overcoming cultural hurdles (Gupta, 2011).

Gender-Based Violence and Harassment

Many times, schools do not offer safe learning conditions for females and transgender students because they have to endure verbal abuse, bullying, and sexual abuse by both teachers and fellow students (Supreme Court of India, *Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan*, AIR 1997 SC 3011). GBV is also the reason why many females suffer from school absence, poor grades, and ultimately drop out of school (Bhandari, 2012). It is essential to introduce stringent anti-harassment laws and create confidential reporting systems and a comprehensive sex education curriculum to make schools safe learning places (RTI Act, 2005).

Lack of Gender-Sensitive Infrastructure

Several schools in developing nations do not have gender-sensitive infrastructure (Mehta, 2018). Schools without the provision of separate bathrooms, sanitary products, and safe transport are likely to negatively impact the lives of female students more than male students (Rao, 2016). Several studies reveal that in schools without adequate menstrual hygiene facilities, female absenteeism tends to be much higher (Sharma, 2020).

Intersectional Barriers: Disability and Marginalisation

Disabled girls and gender non-conforming students experience a form of discrimination that is an obstacle to their educational opportunities (Sen, 2021). Poorly trained teachers, non-inclusive building design, and social stigma are other factors contributing to their marginalisation (Das, 2017). Inclusive education initiatives need to acknowledge the intersectional nature of gender and disability, using assistive technology, differentiated instruction, and awareness programs against exclusion (UNESCO, 2020).

Policy Gaps and Governance Challenges

Several nations have implemented policies to ensure gender equity in education; however, the implementation process is still uneven (Kumar, 2015). Ineffective enforcement of legislation against discrimination, lack of monitoring systems, and inadequate financing of gender-specific educational programs are obstacles to achieving this goal (Ravi, 2013). The successful implementation of such policies requires a robust institutional framework, efficient resource utilisation, and cooperation between government agencies and NGOs (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2018).

3. Gendered Expectations and Stereotypes in Educational Institutions

Education-related gender stereotypes affect how students perform academically, select careers, and perceive themselves (Sen, 2015). Such stereotypes are created by societal standards, curriculum content, teaching practices, and institutional policies, thus resulting in the denial of opportunities for all students regardless of their gender (Rao, 2017). The existence of gender stereotypes in educational institutions creates occupational segregation, economic inequality, and gender gaps in positions of power and authority (Gupta, 2016). Solutions to such problems involve changes in education aimed at combating stereotypes (Sharma, 2018).

Subject Segregation and Academic Choices

Since childhood, students are encouraged to study subjects on the basis of gender norms (Kumar, 2019). Boys are usually advised to focus on subjects like mathematics, science, and technology, whereas girls are advised to study subjects like literature, social sciences, and caregiving professions (Das, 2020). The tendency for students to choose different disciplines according to their gender norms, commonly termed 'academic gender segregation,' has far-reaching effects on employment opportunities and salary gaps (Bhandari, 2017). According to a UNICEF report on gender and STEM education, despite having the same or even better performance compared to boys in the fields of science and math, girls do not opt for these careers because of a lack of motivation (Joshi, 2016). The gender-based division of subjects is influenced by:

- Curricula and textbooks that reinforce traditional gender roles (Patel, 2015).
- Teacher expectations that shape students' confidence in particular subjects (Verma, 2014).

- Parental influence and societal perceptions about "appropriate" careers for men and women (Singh, 2013).

In order to fight against this segregation, schools need to encourage gender-neutral career guidance, give equal support in scientific and liberal arts, and present diverse success stories of those individuals who have proved their mettle in non-traditional careers (Ravi, 2012).

Gender Bias in Classroom Dynamics

Classroom communication is important for developing the confidence and involvement of the pupils in their studies (Agarwal, 2011). Research regarding teacher-pupil interaction shows that:

- Boys are asked to answer questions more often, especially when teaching STEM-related subjects (UNESCO, 2022).
- Girls are encouraged to remain passive, obedient, and diligent but not bold and critical (Sharma, 2019).
- More criticism is offered to boys, allowing them to develop better resilience and the ability to solve problems (Das, 2018).
- Girls receive praise for being neat and well-behaved but not for being curious (Basu, 2017).

Representation in Textbooks and Teaching Materials

Curricula and pedagogical content material have a very important part to play in defining gender perceptions among students (Mehta, 2016). Several studies have established that textbook bias based on gender includes:

- Representations of males as dominant figures in literature and history books, who are usually represented as leaders, innovators, and fighters (Nair, 2015).
- Ignoring or underrepresentation of the work done by women scientists, politicians, and social activists (Desai, 2014).
- Diagrammatic representations in books showing males in professions while females are shown only at home (Gupta, 2013).

To foster gender equality in education, curricula must be systematically revised to:

- Ensure varied portrayals of women and gender non-conformists in contributions to history and science (Patel, 2012).
- Confront stereotypes in occupational roles and social statuses (Verma, 2011).

- Use gender-neutral language in learning materials to not perpetuate traditional binary systems (Singh, 2010).

The Role of Career Counselling in Perpetuating Gender Norms

Career counselling assumes great importance for the career of the students in the future (Ravi, 2009). However, traditional career counselling perpetuates stereotypical career expectations, forcing students to join professions considered suitable for their particular gender identities (Agarwal, 2008).

For example

- Boys are often encouraged to pursue careers in engineering, finance, and technology (Bhandari, 2007).
- Girls are frequently guided toward teaching, nursing, and social work (Joshi, 2006).

Such biases are limiting and costly. According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2023 from the World Economic Forum, industries in which women are employed earn less than those in which men are predominant (UNESCO, 2023).

To create a more equitable approach to career guidance, schools must:

- ✓ Introduce gender-inclusive career counselling programs (Patel, 2005).
- ✓ Promote exposure to diverse career pathways for students of all genders (Verma, 2004).
- ✓ Encourage mentorship programs where students can interact with professionals from underrepresented groups in various industries (Singh, 2003).

The Impact of Gendered Expectations on Leadership and Confidence

The very important area, which also plays a significant role in shaping the educational achievements based on gender differences, refers to leadership development (Gupta, 2002). Boys are usually encouraged by schools to become leaders in their respective classes, taking up the position of a class representative or joining the school student councils or becoming the leaders of various sports teams, while girls are typically asked to play the role of assistants and not leaders (Desai, 2001).

To address leadership gaps, schools must:

- ✓ Ensure equal leadership opportunities in student governance and extracurricular activities (Ravi, 1999).

- ✓ Introduce mentorship programs to support female and gender-minority students in developing leadership skills (Agarwal, 1998).
- ✓ Implement confidence-building initiatives to encourage students of all genders to pursue leadership roles (Bhandari, 1997).

4. Gender Inequality in Higher Education and Career Prospects

While major progress has been made towards achieving gender equality at the level of primary and secondary education, this is not true of higher education and professional development. Gender inequality in these domains persists despite considerable efforts aimed at addressing this problem. The problem is especially acute within science, technology, engineering, and mathematics disciplines, leadership positions, and wages, where gender biases, organisational constraints, and sociocultural norms act as barriers (Sharma, 2018; Desai, 2019; Rao, 2020).

The Gender Gap in Higher Education Enrollment and Completion

Over the past few decades, women's participation in higher education has increased globally. In many countries, female students now outnumber their male counterparts in university enrollment (UNESCO, 2023). However, enrollment alone does not equate to equality. Several barriers persist:

- Lower retention and completion rates due to economic constraints, caregiving responsibilities, and social pressures.
- Underrepresentation in STEM and technical disciplines, limiting access to high-paying careers.
- Workplace discrimination and wage gaps reduce the economic returns on women's education.

Although access to higher education is increasing, structural barriers continue to restrict women's career advancement and limit their representation in decision-making roles (Kumar, 2017).

Underrepresentation of Women in STEM Fields

Another gender difference that continues to exist within higher education concerns the STEM disciplines. Even though women are just as qualified academically as men, they still represent a minority group within these programs.

Table 2: India-Specific GPI Table (2025 Data)

Education Level	Gender Parity Index (GPI)*	Female GER Higher Ed	Female Literacy
Primary	0.997-1.00	N/A	N/A
Secondary	1.00	N/A	N/A
Tertiary/Higher	1.00 (improved from 0.982)	46.3% (up from 42.5%)	65% vs 82% male
Overall Education Parity	0.964 (declined 2024)	N/A	17 pt gap

*GPI = Female/Male enrollment ratio; 1.0 = parity.

According to the World Economic Forum (2023)

- 35% of students in STEM disciplines are women worldwide.
- The percentage of women studying engineering and computer science is less than 20% in many nations.
- Less than 30% of researchers globally are women.

Barriers to Women's Participation in STEM

1. Gender Stereotypes and Early Socialisation: Underrepresentation of females in STEM careers is connected to stereotypical and cultural attitudes about gender roles that shape educational decisions of girls during their childhood years. At a very young age, girls are faced with socialisation processes that may indirectly or directly dissuade them from pursuing mathematics and sciences, since these are considered male academic disciplines. Stereotypes associated with technical careers make girls feel inferior, even when they do well academically and show interest in pursuing these subjects further. In addition to stereotyping, the expectations from families, the influence of popular culture, and social dynamics between peers impact girls' future career decisions. Stereotypical attitudes towards STEM professions lead to gender disparity that remains constant throughout education and working life.

- ✓ The young girls are discouraged from entering STEM education at a very early age through subtle messages conveyed by families, schools, and mass media.
- ✓ Social stereotypes define STEM as a “boy’s game”, which creates a mental barrier for women that prevents them from entering STEM.
- ✓ Gender norms in society assume that technical studies are more appropriate for boys than girls.
- ✓ The social stereotypes that exist within the mindsets of parents and teachers are not conducive to women to excel in STEM.

- ✓ The portrayal of women in media discourages girls from following their dreams of entering STEM professions.

2. Lack of Female Role Models in STEM: The lack of representation through visible female role models becomes an obstacle to entry into and progression in STEM-related fields for women. In instances where females are poorly represented in STEM-related industries and educational institutions, it becomes difficult for potential women scholars to envision their path through such career opportunities because there will be no visible role models. Additionally, history has made it possible for the achievements of women scientists to be erased completely from educational materials like textbooks, and instead, their male contemporaries have been cited for making the discoveries. This further propagates the perception of STEM being a masculine area of study and makes it unappealing to many women who might want to explore STEM-related fields as career options.

Critical Issues

- ✓ The underrepresentation of women in leadership roles in academia and research institutes involved in STEM is another problem that dissuades women from choosing STEM majors.
- ✓ In addition, omission of the contributions made by women in science in academic textbooks and coursework reinforces this perception that women are unable to make contributions in science.
- ✓ Women do not have sufficient mentoring opportunities to guide them through their STEM studies and prepare them for careers in science.
- ✓ There is a lack of representation of women in media and academic texts as role models for girls.

3. Workplace Discrimination and Limited Opportunities: The rate of attrition among women in the STEM industry is considerably higher when compared to their male counterparts. Hostile work environments, gender discrimination, and lack of adequate institutional support have made the situation even worse. However, although women have the same level of education as their male colleagues in the STEM sector, they still face numerous issues, such as discrimination during the hiring process, fewer promotion chances, and inadequate networking opportunities that could possibly help them further in their careers. Furthermore, women earn less than their male colleagues who work in the same disciplines. This can be another difficulty for women to stay in the field of work. A leaking pipeline can

be explained by factors such as hostility, mentoring, and low payment. For instance, in many cases, women leave the workforce because they lack career support at the beginning or middle stage of their careers.

Strategies to Promote Gender Inclusion in STEM

In order to solve these obstacles that have kept women from being part of the STEM community, a series of interventions would need to be put into action for an extended period of time, starting from childhood until the end of their career lifespan. First of all, the intervention that involves the early introduction of STEM education is very significant as it inspires girls to pursue STEM careers through the proper classes and scholarships provided to them. This type of intervention can also debunk gender stereotypes as well as the assumption of differences regarding interest in STEM among men and women, which leads girls to engage in studying STEM disciplines. Second, mentoring and networking would enable establishing connections with people who are part of the STEM community, inspiring and advising individuals on various matters while providing them with opportunities to learn new skills within STEM. Finally, some changes must be made institutionally to get rid of existing structural barriers, such as imposing gender quotas on educational programs and allocating resources equitably.

The Leadership Gap in Academia and Professional Fields

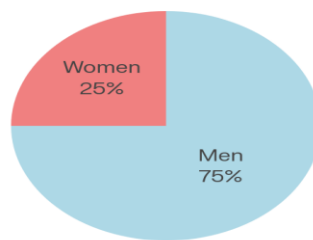
Nonetheless, even with the advances made towards making education accessible, in certain nations, women have been doing better than their male counterparts at accessing higher education, but they have not been adequately represented as decision-makers in education institutions, businesses, and government establishments. This shows clearly that there exist some frameworks that have prevented women from occupying such decision-making posts despite being more capable. Women's underrepresentation in leadership is especially pronounced in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics disciplines, corporate executive positions, and academic leadership roles like full professors, deans, and vice chancellors. Several studies reveal that women encounter a glass ceiling phenomenon, whereby they have increasingly fewer opportunities for upward mobility with each ascending organisational layer, based on gender stereotypes surrounding their preferred leadership behaviours, work-family conflict considerations, and unconscious bias in promotion procedures. The lack of women leaders undermines not only their personal advancement prospects and economic empowerment but also the organisations' loss of varied viewpoints

necessary for efficient management, creativity, and impartial policymaking. In addition to this, there is no presence of women at the higher-level positions, and this leads to an ongoing cycle of discrimination where there is no inspiration or mentor for young women in the professional world. This issue can only be sorted by making certain policies regarding affirmative actions and changes in promotion practices, among others.

Women in Academic Leadership

- In higher education faculty positions, women hold less than 25% of full professorships globally.
- University leadership remains male-dominated, with women occupying only 20% of vice-chancellor or dean positions in many countries.

Gender Distribution in Academic Leadership (Full Professorships)

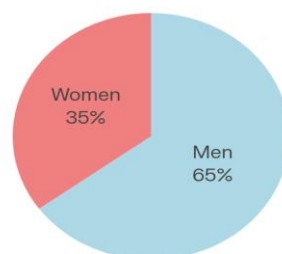


Source: UNESCO & WEF | Women: 25%, Men: 75% of full professors |

Figure 3: Global Gender Distribution in STEM Higher Education. (2023)

The underrepresentation of women in academic decision-making roles limits their influence on research funding, curriculum design, and institutional policies.

Global Gender Distribution in STEM Higher Education (2023)



Source: World Economic Forum | Women: 35%, Men: 65% |

Figure 4: Gender Distribution in Academic Leadership Positions.

Barriers to Women's Leadership in Academia

Several elements have been identified to hinder the development of women in leadership positions in academia. Some of these include structural, cultural, and institutional barriers that can emerge at various stages throughout their careers. It is challenging for women to obtain leadership roles because of implicit biases in the recruitment and promotion processes based on long-held ideas that male leadership is better than female leadership, and because of stereotypical qualities of a leader. Societal gender stereotypes usually attribute stereotypical qualities of a dominant leadership role to male leaders while associating women leaders with femininity. These stereotypes manifest themselves in the evaluation process of hiring, tenure, and peer reviews that underestimate the contributions of women scholars more than those of men. Women are expected to balance their families and careers, thus posing difficulties in obtaining such positions because of their stereotypical qualities as the primary caregivers with priority over career advancement. Furthermore, due to the absence of mentorship programs and sponsorships, the career development of women becomes difficult because of the absence of senior women mentors in academia. Due to this reason, female aspirants to academic leadership lack a sponsor or mentor to guide them strategically, connect them with the right networks, and support their candidature for the positions of leadership. Consequently, the resultant cycle that is generated by these obstacles ensures that the underrepresentation of women continues.

To bridge the gender gap in leadership, universities and workplaces must:

- Adopt affirmative action policies to facilitate women's entry into leadership positions.
- Support work-life balance initiatives within institutions.
- Set up mentorship and sponsorship programs to facilitate women's progress in academic and research careers.

Workplace Discrimination and Wage Gaps

Despite women acquiring educational degrees and joining the workforce at levels that are equal to or even better than those of males, women still experience wage discrimination as well as a lack of upward mobility within the workforce. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), women earn about 20% less than men worldwide for doing the same job. However, this pay gap becomes wider in jobs in STEM, finance, and management, where men control the decision-making process regarding promotions and salaries because they dominate in these fields. Moreover, the pay gap between the sexes becomes wider

among women because women experience career stagnation after maternity leave and are paid less than men in the same position or are even demoted. In addition, women experience discrimination when applying for employment and during promotion processes, and they have been found to be less likely to get a promotion despite having the same qualifications as men because they suffer from gender biases that affect their chances.

Key Manifestations of Workplace Gender Discrimination

- 1. Wage Gap Worldwide:** Women receive roughly 20% fewer wages than men worldwide for identical jobs; however, the difference widens to 25% to 30% in STEM, financial services, and managerial occupations, where decisions are primarily made by men.
- 2. Penalty for Motherhood:** Women who opt to take maternity leave or have responsibilities in childcare suffer career setbacks, limited opportunities for high-visibility projects, poor performance reviews, and wage stagnation when compared to child-free women and all men.
- 3. Promotion Challenges:** Women have a harder time being promoted to higher levels in the corporate hierarchy, even though they are equally or more qualified than men, because of unconscious gender bias in promotion evaluation standards.
- 4. Gender Bias in Performance Evaluations:** Gender discrimination in appraisals works against women employed in predominantly male environments since their efforts and achievements are undervalued relative to those of male colleagues.

Policy Solutions to Address Gender Inequality in Higher Education and Careers

The elimination of systemic barriers to gender inequality in education and the workplace requires governments, universities, and private institutions to undertake systematic and policy-based approaches to rectify the institutional inequities that affect women in both academia and the labour market. These policies need to be multidimensional and focus not only on access to education but also on the retention of women students, career promotion, and financial independence for women. In order for evidence-based policy changes to be effective, there needs to be cooperation between educational institutions, private firms, and governments to ensure that accountability is enforced. Without systemic change and legal enforcement of regulations as well as organisational reforms, gender imbalances in science, engineering, mathematics careers, faculty appointments, and even the hiring process will continue from one generation to another.

Critical Policy Interventions

1. **Gender Responsive Policies In STEM Education And Employment:** Adoption of mandatory quota systems that ensure equal participation of women in STEM fields, as well as provision of scholarships and research funds to enable equal representation of women in STEM.
2. **Institutional Gender Audit:** Institutions such as universities and companies conduct a gender audit, which should include the identification of gender disparity in salaries, employment, promotion and any other form of discrimination.
3. **FAMILY-FRIENDLY REFORMS IN EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT:** Creation of a family-friendly environment in the workplace, such as paid paternal and maternity leaves, and childcare services for mothers who have children while still working.
4. **Mentoring Programs:** A mentorship program is created by matching female students and professionals in the workforce with accomplished women and encouraging them to participate in networking through women's professional networks.
5. **Pay Transparency Law:** Mandatory legislation requiring public disclosure of pay structures by firms and gender disaggregated information.

Though great progress has been made towards gender parity in higher education, systematic inequalities still remain within academia and the workplace. Women and gender minorities continue to experience a number of obstacles within STEM education, leadership positions, and pay parity, which negatively impact their professional development and financial stability. For gender equality to be achieved in higher education and the workplace, there is a need for stakeholders such as universities, government bodies, and employers to work together in dismantling barriers and implementing gender-based policies.

Table – 3: STEM & Leadership Gaps.

Area	Women %	Gap/Note
Global STEM Students	35%	<20% in engineering/CS
Global Researchers	<30%	Reinforces imbalances
India STEM (Girls Dropouts)	N/A	23M due to facilities
Academic Full Professors	<25%	Leadership diminishes as it goes up the ladder
India Higher Ed Leadership	Low	Female GER rising, but parity uneven

5. CONCLUSION

The equality of educational provision irrespective of gender is crucial for ensuring the formation of an equitable and contemporary society. While considerable success has been made toward creating equal opportunities for access to education regardless of gender, there remain a number of structural obstacles that limit educational success and access to further education and employment for females and other genders. These barriers include financial, cultural barriers, gender roles, and gender bias in educational institutions. Prejudiced attitudes toward women as learners and employees during career planning become one more structural barrier that limits chances for the educational and professional success of learners and contributes to segregation of the labour market. A small percentage of women choosing careers in STEM education and taking on leadership and high-paid positions highlights the negative influence of gender barriers on education and work. Even though female representation among university students increases each year, women face discrimination and inequality during hiring, payment, and promotion due to gender stereotypes and gender segregation in workplaces. Gender norms must be addressed by revising textbooks, adopting an objective stance during career counselling, and cultivating leadership qualities in both sexes. Also, actions can be taken to prevent gender-based violence, improve the infrastructure of schools, and provide a supportive atmosphere that encourages marginalised individuals to remain enrolled in educational institutions. It is also important for educational institutes and organisations to consider steps such as salary transparency, equal access to leadership roles, and work-life balance to enable women to pursue their careers successfully. The issue of gender equality in education requires a change in culture that respects diversity in gender identification in all social contexts.

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