

Study Notes: Block 4 - Girl Child and Child Right (Course 506)

1.0 Unit 11: Gender Issues in Education

1.1 Introduction to Gender Issues

Girls and women represent a disadvantaged group that faces significant social disadvantages simply because they are female. Addressing this inequality is a matter of great concern and is crucial for the social, ethical, and economic development of the nation. This unit provides a comprehensive overview of the inequality between males and females, exploring its causes and various forms. It also discusses the essential role that schools and teachers play in fostering a gender-fair society where men and women are treated with equal respect and provided with equal opportunities for development.

1.2 The Concept of Gender

Concept of Gender

1.2.1 Distinction Between Sex and Gender

It is important to distinguish between the terms 'sex' and 'gender', as they have different meanings.

- **Sex** refers to the biological characteristics that make a person male or female. This distinction is based on natural, physical differences in the body, such as reproductive organs. Sex is generally constant and does not change.
- **Gender** refers to the socially constructed attributes, roles, and functions that a society expects of men and women. It is not nature-given but is shaped by upbringing, socialization, and culture. Gender is what a society makes of boys and girls, and it changes over time and across different cultures.

The major differences are summarized below:

SEX	GENDER
Biological construct	Socio-cultural construct
Nature made	Society made
Constant	Variable
Individual	Systemic
Non-hierarchical	Hierarchical
Cannot be changed!	Changeable

1.2.2 Biological and Gender Attributes of a Person

Biological Attributes

These are the natural, physical differences between males and females given by nature, primarily for functions like reproduction.

- **Males:** Have a prostate gland, testes, and vas deferens; produce sperms; have XY sex chromosomes; their voice becomes hoarse during adolescence; hair grows on the face.
- **Females:** Have a uterus, ovary, and fallopian tube; can conceive, deliver, and breastfeed a baby; produce ovum; have XX sex chromosomes; their breasts enlarge during adolescence; the menstrual cycle begins at adolescence.

Gender Attributes

These are the roles, expectations, and perceptions imposed on individuals by society and culture, not by their biology.

- **Societal Expectations:** Girls are expected to be soft, mild, and obedient, while boys are expected to be bold, aggressive, and strong.
- **Division of Work:** Household work (e.g., washing clothes) is often considered a 'female job' while work outside the home is for men. 'Difficult jobs' are perceived as being for men, and 'easy jobs' for women.
- **Play Materials:** Boys are typically given toys like bats and jeeps, while girls are given dolls and kitchenware.
- **Mobility:** Boys are encouraged to move out of the home, while girls are encouraged to stay indoors.

The table below details socially constructed attributes across different factors:

Factors	Male	Female
Body	Stronger, Rough and strong, Invulnerable, Impenetrable, Loud voice, Hoarse voice	Fair and weaker, Smooth and weak, Soft and Delicate, Highly vulnerable, Shrill voice, Soft voice
Social	Principal wage earner, Head of the household, Leader in the community, Born to lead, Controller, Resource allocator, Independent in thought & action, Adventurous, Masterful, Intelligent, Innate nature, Mastery in mechanical tasks, Poor in mechanical tasks, Good in Science and Math, Worldly wise	Family person, Ideal mother, Wife, sister, Sacrificing, Meant to Serve, Controlled, Resource consumer, Dependent in thought and action, Sensible, Graceful and Pretty, Strong in languages, Stupid
Psychological	Highly rational, High in social intelligence, Manipulative, Emotive, Impatient and disturbed, Careless and rugged, Wields power, Cares for money and status	Highly emotional, Poor in social intelligence, Patient and calm, Conscious of her body, Succumbs to it, Cares for good looks

1.2.3 Gender as a Socio-Cultural Construction

Gender differences are culturally influenced and socially constructed, which is why gender roles and expectations vary significantly across different cultures. Children learn to categorize themselves by gender early in life and model their behavior on patterns they observe in parents,

teachers, and the media. This process of learning gendered behavior is an outcome of socialization and enculturation, where children internalize the expectations and values of their society, reinforcing the idea that gender is a socio-cultural construction.

1.3 Gender Discrimination

1.3.1 Meaning of Discrimination and Gender Discrimination

- **Discrimination** is the treatment or consideration against a person or group based on their belonging to a particular class or category. It disregards individual merit and often involves exclusion or rejection.
- **Gender Discrimination (Sexism)** is discrimination based on a person's sex. It encompasses any unequal treatment, policy, or belief that restricts choices or denies opportunities for members of a particular sex. Today, this discrimination is largely directed against women and girls.

1.3.2 Sources and Forms of Gender Discrimination

Discrimination can be categorized as follows:

- **Direct Discrimination:** Occurs when gender is the explicit reason for unequal treatment. For example, a teacher selecting a boy as class leader over an equally capable girl simply because he is a boy.
- **Indirect Discrimination:** Occurs when certain provisions or practices unintentionally put women at a disadvantage. For example, a company providing new furniture only for its male workers.

Gender discrimination originates from multiple sources and takes many forms:

- Family and parents
- Government policies
- Educational opportunities
- Nutrition, Health and Leisure
- Laws and rules
- Education, Textbooks, Curriculum and teachers
- Property, Resources, and Control over resources
- Division of labour inside the house
- Appointment, promotion, placement

Examples of discriminatory practices include female foeticide, neglect of girls' nutrition and health, placing an unequal burden of household work on girls, denial of education, restrictions on movement, unequal property rights, and biased portrayals of women in textbooks where they are often depicted in subservient roles.

1.3.3 Causes of Gender Discrimination

1. **Religion:** Many religious texts and traditions place women in a subordinate position to men, conferring fewer rights upon them and shaping societal norms.
2. **Culture and Upbringing:** Culture shapes thought, and in some cultures, the superiority of males is deeply ingrained. Parents often perpetuate these stereotypes through differential treatment of boys and girls, providing different play materials, and holding different expectations for them.
3. **Sex Stereotypes:** A sex stereotype is a shared and often baseless popular belief about the qualities of females and males. These stereotypes influence behavior and expectations, reinforcing discrimination.
4. **Economic Perception:** Girls are often perceived as an economic burden. This leads to lower investment in their education and health, which traps them in a cycle of poverty, dependence, and further discrimination.
5. **Educational System:** The educational system can contribute to gender bias. Textbooks, curricula, and even teachers may reinforce stereotypes by making women and their contributions invisible in substantive roles.

1.3.4 Origin and History of Gender Discrimination

Materialist Theories argue that gender inequality arises from the way men and women are tied to the economic structure of society. According to these theories, men historically gained control over valued resources, which placed them in an advantageous position and led to the subordination of women.

In the historical context of India, the idea of female subordination is ancient.

- A rule laid down by **Manu in 200 BCE** states: "*Her father protects (her) in childhood, her husband protects (her) in youth, and her sons protect (her) in old age; a woman is never fit for independence.*"
- In the medieval period, the status of women deteriorated further with the prevalence of practices like Sati, child marriage, the dowry system, and the purdah (veiling) practice.
- Even today, issues of suppression persist, including sexual exploitation, trafficking, dowry deaths, and female foeticide.

1.4 Status Indicators of Gender

1.4.1 Sex Ratio

- **Sex Ratio** is defined as the number of females for every 1000 males in a population.
- According to the **2011 census**, the sex ratio in India is **940**, and the child sex ratio (for ages 0-6) is **914**.
- It is estimated that up to 50 million girls and women are 'missing' from India's population due to female foeticide and higher mortality rates among girls due to neglect.

1.4.2 Education

Female literacy levels and the gender gap in education are key indicators of women's status. Close to 245 million Indian women are unable to read or write.

The educational attainment among women in India shows a significant disparity:

- No schooling: 61%
- Primary: 13%
- Middle: 9%
- Formal: 7%
- Secondary: 5%
- Post-secondary & above: 4%
- Non-formal: 1%

1.4.3 Health

Key health indicators reveal significant gender gaps:

- **Infant Mortality Rate (IMR):** In India, the female IMR is higher than that of males, which is contrary to biological norms and reflects socio-cultural biases.
- **Nutrition:** The average daily nutritional intake for women is around 1400 calories, far below the required 2200 calories.
- **Early Marriage:** The legal age for marriage is 18, but many girls are married earlier. This leads to early pregnancy and severe health complications. The national average age of marriage for girls rose from 18.3 in 2001 to 20.6 in 2008.
- **Maternal Mortality:** Approximately 300 women die every day in India from causes related to childbirth and pregnancy.

1.4.4 Participation in Workforce

- Women's participation in the workforce has remained low, never crossing 35% for rural women and 15% for urban women over the last three decades.
- **Wage Parity** (equal pay for equal work) is a goal, but a significant wage gap between men and women persists, especially in the unorganized sector.
- Women perform two-thirds of the total manual labor in the country, but much of this work is unpaid or in low-paying jobs, and their contribution is often not recognized.

1.4.5 Atrocities and Crime

Crimes directed specifically against women are a stark indicator of their status. These include female foeticide, eve teasing, molestation, dowry-related violence, rape, and domestic violence.

- According to **2005 National Crime Records Bureau statistics:**
 - A rape occurs every 29 minutes.
 - A molestation occurs every 15 minutes.
 - A case of sexual harassment occurs every 53 minutes.

- A murder of a female occurs in every 14 minutes.
- An act of cruelty occurs in every 9 minutes.
- A dowry death occurs every 77 minutes.

This creates a vicious cycle where domestic responsibilities and traditional beliefs lead to low or no education, which in turn results in limited choices and early marriage, leading to poor health and perpetuating the cycle for the next generation.

1.5 Overcoming Gender Discrimination and the Role of Teachers

1.5.1 The Need to Overcome Gender Discrimination

Overcoming gender discrimination is essential because it is fundamentally unfair and unjust. It holds back the growth of individuals, the development of the nation, and the evolution of society. Gender equality is a basic human right that liberates both men and women from restrictive stereotypes and pressures, creating a better social order.

1.5.2 Gender Discrimination in Classrooms

Studies have shown that teachers often unconsciously perpetuate gender bias in the classroom. Common practices include:

- Giving more attention and praise to boys.
- Providing more academic help and feedback to boys.
- Placing lower academic expectations on girls.
- Using sexist language (e.g., "mankind" instead of "humankind").
- Allocating classroom resources with a bias toward boys.

1.5.3 Role of Teachers in Creating a Gender-Fair Society

The **National Policy on Education (1986)** states, "*Education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of woman.*" To achieve this, teachers must actively promote gender equity.

Gender Equity is the process of being fair to both men and women. It often requires specific measures to compensate for historical and social disadvantages to create a level playing field.

Teachers can take the following actions to promote a gender-fair society:

- Conduct themselves in a gender-fair manner at all times.
- Use gender-neutral and inclusive language (e.g., "chairperson" instead of "chairman," "human-made" instead of "man-made").
- Avoid assigning gender-stereotyped jobs. For instance, have mixed teams of boys and girls for tasks like cleaning the room and moving furniture.
- Place equal academic and behavioral expectations on both boys and girls for all tasks.
- Ensure girls have equal access to all areas of the school, including sports fields, equipment, and leadership roles.

- Actively challenge gender stereotypes when they arise in classroom discussions or textbooks.
 - Encourage girls to participate equally in all activities and work to strengthen their self-esteem.
 - Create and maintain a safe learning environment that is free from verbal and physical harassment.
 - Recognize and celebrate the achievements and contributions of women in history and contemporary society.
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2.0 Unit 12: Empowering Girl Children

2.1 Introduction to Empowerment

Although women constitute nearly 50% of the world's population, they are often the largest excluded group, living in conditions of poverty due to a lack of opportunities, autonomy, and resources. This unit explores the concept of empowerment, its key indicators, and the vital role that education plays in empowering girl children to achieve equality and realize their full potential.

2.2 The Concept of Empowerment

2.2.1 Meaning of Empowerment

Based on the case study of Rama, who overcame poverty through education to become a self-reliant pharmacist, **Empowerment** literally means "to make powerful." The concept of power is central to empowerment and operates in four distinct ways:

- **Power over:** A relationship of domination or subordination.
- **Power to:** The ability and authority to make decisions and solve problems.
- **Power within:** Self-confidence, self-awareness, and assertiveness.
- **Power with:** Organizing with others to achieve collective goals.

Women's Empowerment is the process of redistributing social power and control over resources (natural, intellectual, human, and financial) in favor of women. It enables them to challenge oppressive power structures and gain greater autonomy. Empowerment is a bottom-up process; it cannot be given but must be acquired by women themselves.

2.2.2 Indicators of Empowerment

An empowered woman typically exhibits the following characteristics:

- Self-reliant
- High self-esteem
- Participates in the developmental process
- Participates in the decision-making process
- Is present in various professions

- Participates in social change
- Is aware of her rights
- Is economically independent

2.2.3 Need for Empowering Girls

Empowerment is necessary for girls to break free from traditional barriers and question societal power imbalances. It enables them to gain control over their own lives, increase their access to knowledge and resources, and achieve greater autonomy. The development of a nation is not possible without the full participation of 50% of its population.

2.2.4 Role of Education in Empowering Girls

Education is a vital source of consciousness, information, and knowledge, which gives individuals the power to challenge inequality and oppression.

- **Formal Education** refers to the structured system of schools and colleges with a standardized curriculum. However, its rigidity can make it inaccessible to many rural and disadvantaged girls.
- **Non-formal Education (NFE)** offers a flexible, learner-centered alternative. Its features—such as practical, need-based curriculum, convenient timings, and no restrictions on entry age—make it highly suitable for "hard-to-reach" girls who are out of the formal school system.

2.3 Initiatives to Empower Girl Children

2.3.1 Constitutional Mandates

Several constitutional provisions and international treaties support the education and empowerment of girls:

- **Article 45:** Originally, this article imposed a direct responsibility on the state to provide free and compulsory education for all children until the age of 14.
- **Article 15(3):** Empowers the state to make special provisions for the welfare of women and children.
- **CEDAW (1980):** The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women is an international treaty that obligates signatory states, including India, to eliminate gender discrimination.
- **Right to Education Act (RTE, 2009):** Makes free and compulsory education for all children between the ages of 6 and 14 a fundamental right.

2.3.2 Government Policies

- **National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986:** This policy recognized the need to redress traditional gender imbalances and explicitly stated that education should be used as an agent of change in the status of women.
- **National Policy for the Empowerment of Women (2001):** This policy defined key action areas, including ensuring equal access to education, creating a gender-sensitive curriculum, and reducing the gender gap at all levels of education.

2.3.3 Programmes for Rural Girls

1. **NPEGEL (National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level, 2003):** An component of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), NPEGEL targets the "hardest to reach" girls in educationally backward blocks. Its features include community mobilization, gender sensitization of teachers, and the development of 'model schools' in clusters to serve as resource centers.
2. **KGBV (Kasturbha Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya, 2004):** These are residential schools designed for up to 100 out-of-school girls, primarily from Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST), and minority communities in educationally backward blocks. Key features include free residential facilities, bridge courses to help dropouts re-enter mainstream education, and life skills training.
3. **Mahila Samakhya (MS, 1989):** This autonomous program focuses on empowerment as a precondition for achieving equality. It views education not just as literacy but as a process of learning to question and analyze one's reality. The program operates through Mahila Sanghas (village-level women's collectives), which provide a space for women to articulate their needs and take collective action.

2.4 Developing Life Skills

Alongside formal education, life skills are essential for empowering girls to navigate challenges effectively. The ten core life skills identified are:

- Problem solving
- Critical thinking
- Effective communication
- Decision making
- Creative thinking
- Interpersonal relationship skills
- Self-awareness building
- Empathy
- Coping with stress
- Coping with emotions

2.5 Role of Agencies in Empowering Women and Girls

- **Government:** Provides financing, ensures equal access to education, involves all stakeholders in planning, recruits female teachers, and promotes innovative programs for girls' education.
- **NGOs:** Generate community awareness, support government initiatives, implement independent programs like alternative schools and adult literacy camps, and engage in advocacy for girls' rights.

- **Local Bodies, Communities, SDMC:** Persuade parents to send girls to school, mobilize community participation, monitor school activities to ensure they are girl-friendly, and help solve local problems that act as barriers to education.
 - **Schools and Teachers:** Create a gender-sensitive learning environment, act as positive role models, ensure equal opportunities for boys and girls in all school activities, and encourage participation in non-stereotyped roles.
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3.0 Unit 13: Child Rights and Entitlements

3.1 Introduction to Child Rights

For the holistic and healthy development of a child, their childhood must be protected and nurtured. Every child is entitled to certain rights that ensure their well-being and allow them to grow to their full potential. This unit covers the concept of child rights, common violations of these rights, the mechanisms in place for their protection, and the crucial role that teachers play in safeguarding them.

3.2 Concept of Rights of the Child

3.2.1 Meaning of Rights and Human Rights

- **Rights** are just conditions to which people are entitled. They are considered fundamental and essential for a person to lead a meaningful life.
- **Human Rights** are those rights that are necessary for every individual, simply by virtue of being human, to live a life of dignity and meaning.
- The **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)** was proclaimed by the United Nations on December 10, 1948. This day is commemorated annually as World Human Rights Day.

3.2.2 Rights of the Child

A **Child** is defined as any person below the age of 18 years. Children are a vulnerable group and require special protection and care. Key rights of the child include:

- To get proper health services
- To have freedom of expression
- To have a name and be cared for by parents
- To get basic education
- Right to life, rest, leisure, and play
- To be protected from all forms of exploitation, corporal punishment, torture, and illicit drugs

3.2.3 UN Initiatives on Rights of the Child

The United Nations has undertaken several key initiatives to protect the rights of children:

- Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948)

- Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959)
- **Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1989):** This is the most significant international treaty on child rights. It defines who a child is, outlines their rights in detail, and legally obligates signatory countries, including India, to ensure these rights are protected and fulfilled.

Specialized UN agencies concerned with child welfare include **UNESCO, UNICEF, WHO, and ILO.**

3.2.4 The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009 (RTE)

- The RTE Act came into force in India on **April 1, 2010.**
- Its core mandate is to make elementary education a **Fundamental Right** for all children between the ages of **6 and 14 years.**
- The RTE Act is directly linked to Child Rights by guaranteeing quality education, abolishing physical punishment and mental harassment, and promoting a learner-centered approach to education.

3.3 Protection of Rights of the Child

3.3.1 Violation of Rights of the Child

- **Child Labour** is defined as any work for children that harms or exploits them physically, mentally, or morally, or that blocks their access to education.
- The primary reason for child labor is **poverty.**
- India formulated a **National Policy on Child Labour** in 1987 to address this issue.
- Several NGOs, such as **CARE India, Child Relief and You (CRY), and Pratham**, work to eradicate child labor.

3.3.2 Violation of Rights of the Child within the School

Schools, which should be safe havens, can sometimes be places where children's rights are violated. Common violations include:

- Corporal punishment (e.g., being hit with a scale or duster, made to stand in the sun).
- Mental harassment, such as humiliation in front of peers.
- Lack of qualified teachers, denying the right to quality education.
- Poor facilities, including inadequate and unhygienic toilets and a lack of safe drinking water.
- An unsafe or insecure environment, which may include bullying or harassment.

3.3.3 Commissions and Legal Provisions for Protection

India has established specific bodies to protect child rights:

- **National Commission on Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR):** Set up on March 5, 2007, this national body monitors the implementation of rights guaranteed to children in the Constitution.

- **State Commission on Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR):** These commissions operate at the state level to perform similar functions.

The **RTE Act** provides a legal framework for protection, explicitly stating that "no child shall be subjected to physical punishment or mental harassment."

3.3.4 Role of Teachers in Protecting the Rights of the Child

Teachers are on the front lines of protecting child rights within the educational system. Their key roles include:

1. **Respect the Dignity of the Child:** Teachers must cease all forms of corporal punishment and instead use positive discipline methods. They should demonstrate genuine care and respect for each child as an individual.
2. **Increase Pupil Participation:** A democratic classroom environment where children are encouraged to express their views should be fostered. Structures like a Students' Council can help ensure their voices are heard in school matters.
3. **Create an Atmosphere Free of Fear and Anxiety:** Teaching and evaluation methods should be adapted to reduce student anxiety. Teachers must respect individual differences in learning pace and style, creating a supportive atmosphere.
4. **Demonstrate Gender Equality:** Teachers must treat boys and girls equally and avoid reinforcing gender stereotypes in tasks and expectations. Where necessary, they should practice positive discrimination (providing specific privileges or facilities to a disadvantaged group to address historical inequality), such as ensuring a clean and functional restroom for girls.