

# Exploring Factors That Obstacle the Gender Equality Education of Asian Society

Yurou Shen \*

School of Business, Macao University of Science and Technology, Macao, China

\* Corresponding author. Email: 2493176398@qq.com

**Abstract.** Within the past decades, research has been increasingly drawn toward understanding the factors that are obstacles to gender equality education in Asian society. However, examining the hindering factors requires research of its breadth and underlying mechanisms from an interdisciplinary approach. This paper begins by reviewing gender education in relation to its concept and significance. The main influencing factors are then explored from a macro-environmental perspective, including supportive policies, economic conditions, and relevant talents. Research shows that significant consideration should be given to the lack of top-level policy support, high learning stress on learners, insufficient distribution of economic funds, the current situation of gender opposition, and stereotypes and the solidification of Feudal ideas. For suggestions related to gender equality education, in addition to improving sex education, from the perspective of women of all ages, Asian fertility policies and corporate maternity leave policies need to be further optimized. The specific implementation of gender equality education courses can refer to examples from other developed regions outside East Asia while encouraging the development of people's thinking and creating an open, equal, and free new society.

**Keywords:** Gender equality, Education, Stereotype, Gender Issues, Gender education.

## 1. Introduction

In lower and single houses of national parliaments worldwide, as of 1 January 2022, there were 26.2% more women than in 2015. The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected working women, including those in managerial roles. Due to increased unpaid care work at home, many people have had their work hours cut back or quit their jobs. Before the pandemic in 2019, women made up 39.4% of the workforce. In 2020, women accounted for about 45% of global job losses. From 2015 to 2019, the percentage of women in managerial roles worldwide increased slightly, from 27.2 to 28.3%. However, that percentage did not change from 2019 to 2020, marking the first year since 2013 that it had not increased. Similarly, Central and Southern Asia remained unchanged at 12.7% in the global context of such growth, while Latin America and the Caribbean decreased from 38.9% to 37.7% [1]. The gender gap in social security has worsened due to the COVID-19 pandemic, climate emergencies, emerging conflicts, and growing inequality [2]. However, women were on the front line in the fight against the coronavirus, with 28000 female medical staff out of 42600 medical staff, accounting for 66.7% of health and social workers in China [3]. The position of women in society also contributes to the gender pay gap because they may have their education interrupted by early pregnancies, children, early and forced marriages, or being in charge of the majority of household duties, which restricts their access to formal employment and, consequently, contribution-based social security. Women still do not have the legal freedom to control their own bodies in many nations. According to data from 64 countries for 2007–2021, only 57% of married women between the ages of 15 and 49 make their own informed decisions about having sex, using contraceptives, and receiving reproductive health care. The degree to which laws restrict or permit access to pertinent medical care and information is crucial to this capacity for decision-making. An average of 76% of the laws and regulations necessary to ensure complete and equal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights were in place in the 115 countries with data [1]. The mainstream ideology in Asian society, gender stereotypes, indirectly causes this problem. A gender stereotype is a broad assumption or preconception about the traits or functions that women and men should or should not possess or

perform [4]. A gender stereotype is harmful when it restricts the ability of both men and women to grow personally, pursue careers in their fields, or make life decisions. Harmful stereotypes support injustices, whether they are overtly hostile (such as “women are irrational”) or appear to be benign (such as “women are nurturing”). For instance, childcare duties frequently fall solely on women because of the stereotypical perception of women as caregivers.

Such stereotypes affect gender equality and the thinking of contemporary women, causing problems in various aspects of society. In 2022, the number of births in South Korea was only 249000, setting a new low for the birth rate since relevant records began [5]. On March 21, 2023, the ruling National Power of South Korea considered measures to reduce the birthrate, such as exempting men from military service if their families have three children under the age of 30. Once issued, this quasi-policy was forced to be withdrawn after causing tremendous controversy. Many believe this policy plan is “opening the door to an exemption from military service for wealthy children” in addition to the public. South Korea’s largest opposition party (Common Democratic Party) has criticized this plan as “using women as a means of childbirth.” The standard for military service in South Korea is for males aged 20-28, with a minimum requirement of 24 months of service. Therefore, it is not realistic to have three children before 30. If the policy is implemented, for men they are the beneficiaries, while for women, the result of taking on more is that they do not receive objective benefits for themselves.

The lack of gender education can lead to women losing more respect. Female genital mutilation (FGM), one of the numerous issues mentioned above, is a persistently harmful practice and human rights violation. FGM has affected at least 200 million girls and women alive today, primarily in the 31 countries where the practice is most prevalent. It is still prevalent in many nations, just as thirty years ago [1]. To meet the global goal of ending FGM by 2030, progress must be made at least ten times faster, even in nations where the practice has become less common. One way to eradicate it is through education. The majority of girls and women with education oppose FGM. Compared to girls whose mothers have no education, those whose mothers have a primary education have a 40% lower risk of being cut.

As women’s social status decreases, this group will eventually resist due to the unfairness they encounter. As one of the most potent forces driving gender issues in Asia, nearly 60% of Korean respondents in the age range of 10 to 20 believe that “having children after marriage is not necessary” (2022 South Korean Social Indicators released by the South Korean Bureau of Statistics). So, how should human society continue while maintaining relative gender equality? Without sexual violence and forced childbirth, in today’s world, where fertility rates have sharply declined, it is necessary to carry out gender awareness and sex education. In summary, gender and sex education in Asia and Africa have been very serious issues since 2019. It may lead to low fertility rates, aging populations, and other issues worldwide, affecting social continuity. This article will explore the reasons that hinder the smooth implementation of gender equality education in Asia from two aspects: social and physiological factors. Finally, some suggestions related to gender education in basic education will be proposed, which will be a possible measure to improve the current situation.

## 2. Review

Gender inequality can influence health problem. Research has shown that education can help reduce some gender inequality. Gender equality-based reproductive education can improve motivation and self-control, lessen the impact of sexuality, and alter attitudes and beliefs about traditional gender roles [6]. Gender equality education refers to differences that extend from physiological sexuality, including gender concepts constructed by social systems and cultures. Biken and Pollard proposed that the category of gender can be explained as the “social construction of sex,” which is reflected in social and cultural phenomena in addition to physiological differences. Through the presentation of quantitative data, people can understand gender ratio differences. The meaning of the word ‘equality’ is not only to uphold the fundamental dignity of human nature but also to seek

the establishment of fair and benign social treatment. Promoting gender education aims to enable both genders to develop their potential on a fair footing through the process and methods of "education" without being limited by physiological, psychological, social, and cultural gender factors. More people hope that promoting gender equality in education will increase opportunities for both men and women in society and thus jointly establish a harmonious and diverse society under equality and mutual assistance [7]. From a macro-environmental perspective, the main influencing factors include supportive policies, economic conditions, and relevant talents.

## **2.1. Education System**

### **2.1.1. Lack of Top-Level Policy Support and a Mature**

More is needed for gender equality than just more women in the classroom. Since more women than men appear to be interested in most adult basic education programs, achieving gender parity in these programs necessitates paying more attention to inspiring men to participate. In addition, more significant consideration must be given to women's own perceptions of empowerment when developing gender equality policies and program objectives for adult education [8]. Taking China as an example, gender equality education-related work is under the management of the Women's Federation and has not been included in the formal education system. Although the All-China Women's Federation has been actively promoting the construction of a harmonious society between men and women for a long time, starting in 2012, Zhongshan and Maoming cities in the Pearl River Delta region were selected as pilot cities to carry out teaching practices and integrate the concept of gender equality into the curriculum of primary and secondary schools, to cultivate students' awareness of gender equality from an early age. However, the results could have been more minimal. The Voice of Women's Rights, a non-governmental organization in Beijing, launched an online survey in 2015 inviting female citizens to assess, make recommendations, and express hope for gender equality issues that are directly related to their own lives from perspectives like education, economy, employment, health, and cultural values. The survey questionnaire was mainly published on social networks such as Weibo and WeChat, and 3094 valid questionnaires were collected. The respondents are mainly young, with 85.39% aged 19 to 39. On September 24th, the preliminary results of this survey were released. According to the survey, most young women are pessimistic about the advancement of gender equality in China over the past 20 years. More than 70% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction or extreme dissatisfaction with the conditions that women currently live in [9].

There is proof that sex education lowers SGBV and encourages gender equality, self-confidence, and healthy relationships. Additionally, it has been demonstrated to have a favorable effect on sexual behavior and health [10]. SGBV and other harmful and unhealthy sexual practices may be influenced by a lack of knowledge about sex and a reluctance to talk about it. It is crucial to invest in improving their competencies through comprehensive sex education, given the significance of their preventive role in reducing gender-based violence, implementing child protection, and in their sensitive position as agents of change [11]. Only when people understand the physiology and psychology of men and women can gender equality gradually be popularized. If we consider offering sex education courses as a prerequisite for equal education, this prerequisite course is challenging to popularize in Asia. Regarding ideology, Asian parents are like ostriches burying their heads in the desert, discussing "sex," and turning pale. A 2020 study by Singapore's independent research institute Blackbox and the Association for Women's Action and Research (AWARE) shows that more than half of Singapore's parents are reluctant to talk to their children about "sex," of which 25% have no confidence and 35% do not have the right tools or materials to open up about sex Education, 26% worry that discussions of sex education will instead encourage children to be sexually active [5]. It proved that parents have different occupations and educational levels, which will lead to different education they can provide, and it is difficult to impart correct knowledge. East Asia and the Pacific have 68.8% parity for the 2023 global Gender Gap Index, ranking fifth out of the eight regions. The region's party participation rate has been stagnant for more than a decade and has decreased by 0.2

percentage points since the last edition [13]. Eight nations, including China, the second-most populous nation in the world, received on the overall index, while 11 out of 19 countries saw improvements. One country remained unchanged.

### 2.1.2. High Learning Stress on Students

At the same time, the problem of academic pressure is severe, and Asian governments and schools generally pay excessive attention to subject education similar to mathematics. Families are also accustomed to forcing children to improve their scores, thus neglecting sex and gender education in the overall environment. South Korea and Hong Kong share many characteristics with other East Asian nations regarding college life, such as different requirements for higher education, fierce competition among students, and similar economic status levels. It has been demonstrated explicitly that college students in South Korea, which is a member of the intermediary East Asian cultural space, experience a variety of life stressors that affect their academic performance, employment prospects, and interpersonal relationships. According to a recent study by the Korean National Statistical Office (KNSO), many South Korean college students experienced “relatively high” (38.3%) and “extremely severe” (9.2%) levels of stress in 2020, which suggests that about half of South Korean college students did. A depressed mood was also reported by 18.7% of college students on at least one day per week. Only 48% of college students, however, claimed to use healthy coping mechanisms, such as engaging in extracurricular activities, attempting to think positively, talking to others about their stress, getting enough sleep, and engaging in appropriate exercise to manage their stress [14]. Without the establishment of relevant subjects, the only way to promote equality education remains at the level of open classes and performance classes, without incorporating gender education and gender equality education into the legitimate education system, which is also a major factor hindering its development. Secondly, there is no universal incentive policy for talents in disciplines such as gender education, equality education, and comparative education, which makes it difficult to introduce basic education such as primary and secondary schools.

Comparatively speaking, 92 Japanese sixth graders (aged 11 to 12; 46 boys and 46 girls) were taught the quota system as part of a course on gender equality. This research assessed the children’s perceptions of “women” before and after the class using a group performance implicit association test to determine which lessons were more and less successful. The findings demonstrated that the system significantly changed the boys’ perceptions of “woman” from neutral to positive. Additionally, it was discovered that girls’ implicit perceptions of “woman” were statistically higher than boys’ prior to learning and consistently improved after the lesson [13].

## 2.2. Economic Factors Affecting Education

A genuine shift in gendered norms toward advancing girls’ education and a more equitable distribution of unpaid care work cannot be brought about by theory or practice alone. Theoretical discussions improved public understanding of the mechanisms and standards that shape women’s perceptions, resources, and marginalization, but the practice is necessary and much harder [16]. The specific practice not only requires the implementation of relevant courses and tutorials but also economic support as a key factor. As the saying goes, quantitative change determines qualitative change and research on gender equality education in Asia will only be promoted when sufficient funds are invested.

Taking China as an example, before 1949, China had a low production level, with a dominant small-scale and natural economy. Implementing the compulsory education system could have been faster, and the enrollment rate of school-age children in the country was only 20%. In 1978, China’s socialist planned economy system transformed into a market economy system, and the rural production responsibility system promoted economic reform. The central government began to demand the strengthening of rural primary education. On March 5, 2005, Premier Wen Jiabao of the State Council stated at the National People’s Congress that students from poverty-stricken families in the national poverty alleviation key compulsory education stage would be exempted from the textbook and other expenses, and boarding students would be subsidized for living expenses. This

policy was popularized in rural areas throughout the country in 2007. The new law ensures the investment of compulsory education funds through legal means, and compulsory education is fully included in the scope of financial security nationwide [17]. From this, the innovation and transformation of the education system cannot be separated from economic support. The education system and the socio-economic system are in a homomorphic development relationship. In the social system, every new element that appears in the education system corresponds to a new element related to it. Scholars refer to this relationship as the homomorphism of the socio-economic system [18]. Overall, economic sufficiency will promote educational reform.

It is well known that there is a positive correlation between higher education enrollment growth and economic development. Numerous empirical studies have revealed a significant relationship between the expansion of higher education and economic growth in developed and developing nations [19]. Regarding the control variables, higher education can develop to varying degrees depending on the per capita GDP, the proportion of national GDP spent on higher education, and the rate of urbanization growth [20]. Asia lacks awareness of economic investment in gender equality education. In addition to backward regions, there are many examples of reference and benchmarking learning in Asia, such as Chinese Taiwan, which actively awards research results of projects and master's and doctoral theses on gender equality education, compiles and publishes promotional textbooks, establishes global information websites and databases on gender equality education, and encourages colleges and universities to offer gender-related courses through general education. These are good positive incentives. Many developing countries in Asia, except for Singapore, Japan, and others, have limited economic development. Under such economic influence, the overall popularity of education is not high, and gender equality education is not essential in families with low economic levels because it cannot directly affect earning money. Even in the field of education itself, gender inequality is reflected. Indeed, findings indicate that when children are taught about paying fees in various contexts, some households with limited resources rely on culture to choose the gender of the children whose gender will be specified to improve survival. After adjusting for the grid and year-fixed effects, this study discovers that when local households experience droughts and teaching requirements payment of fees, they sacrifice their daughters' teaching in favor of their sons, but not matrilineal households [21]. Men and women cannot receive fair education, and it is even more difficult for equal education to enter life.

### **2.3. Historical Legacy Issues and Ideological Backwardness**

#### **2.3.1. Current Situation of Gender Opposition Intensifies Contradictions**

The data indicated that most social workers strongly believed in the value of sex education. However, it is challenging to eliminate the false beliefs they held [22]. From the perspective of the microenvironment, physiological factors, social thoughts, and the intensification of the COVID-19 epidemic are the main reasons. Consulting economic factors, technology such as in vivo fertilization cannot achieve equal access for everyone. Its methods of extracting speed and eggs vary, and the degree of damage also varies, leading many women to fear the long and pointed egg retrieval need to stick into their bodies. In other words, society places too much responsibility on women beyond the amount of rights they receive. Narrow paths account for greater responsibility, which has led to the risk of postmodern feminism as a necessary milestone in historical development. For example, this will extend to the survival space of women in the workplace. There has been gender discrimination in the workplace since the initial selection, and it has been proven that most positions prefer a male worker who does not require material leave to retain a workforce with more hours. Even if most people understand the unfairness involved, such concepts and screening methods will only exist once the government introduces effective measures to compensate for the economic losses caused by women in enterprises and they are willing to recruit women. The issue of having a child in a family, discussed from multiple perspectives such as appearance, physical function, or psychological state, is more of a focus for the female community. In summary, physiological problems are difficult to solve in the foreseeable short term, which will be the most difficult part to overcome.

Men support the division of labor model of “male-dominated outside and female-dominated inside”, partly due to the labor supply faction proposing the Theory of Sex-role Socialization, which holds that children start from a young age through social media such as family, school, and media, accept established gender roles in society, gradually establish their expectations for future careers based on the current division of labor, and develop in compliance with social expectations, Receive relevant education and training. Under social and cultural constraints, women are “chosen” to engage in professions that match their personalities. Men may also perceive this as their own world in the economic market, believing that women are not suitable for competition and, therefore, directly or indirectly being assigned to work for their wives, invisibly exacerbating gender segregation [7]. Upon further investigation, women are often classified within certain boundaries in the public sphere. Unlike men, who are legalized by laws and social customs to engage in political and public life, women have been isolated from political life for a long time. Their feelings and experiences have also been ignored and alienated, resulting in women’s work and status being disrespected for a long time. Gender equality education cannot achieve effective development, clearly reflecting the distorted constraints of patriarchal society.

The world is still striving to transform the patriarchal society. The global trend is that people are paying more attention to women’s human rights and interests year by year, and there have been some significant improvements in data. However, there has still been no basic improvement in the Asian region. Taking education, employment, and political participation as examples, in the field of education, it appears that women’s opportunities in education have been significantly improved, and the promotion of female students is consistently increasing. The promotion of women in higher education is gradually approaching that of men. However, behind these appearances, women’s proposal in disciplines such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics is still relatively low. Similarly, in the field of employment, the employment rate of women has been increasing year by year, and the wage gap between men and women is gradually dragging. However, the promotion of women in senior management positions and senior professions is still relatively low. In the field of political participation, the promotion of women at all levels of government is also gradually increasing. However, the promotion of women in decision-making is still relatively low.

In terms of social structure, most upper-class power holders are predominantly male, which is more common in Asia. Is it possible that the hierarchy of social structure rights is male superior and female inferior, and as a result, their policies and choices will be more inclined towards their interests? Many social views suggest that men are more capable, but such views are too one-sided, and no authority has ever included that men are stronger than women in every aspect. Small banks with female CEOs and board chairs were less likely to fail during the financial crisis, according to recent financial industry research, and they are only linked to better lending performance and lower default risk following significant real estate price shocks. Extra Quality has discovered that female leaders in non-financial companies have lower debt issues and lower acquisition and return volatility, indicating they are more cautious when making important corporate decisions. The issues are as follows: When female directors are in leadership positions, the risk of default is reduced. The advantages and disadvantages of policy conservatism differ, but this does not mean that reducing default risk is a disadvantage because, for a company, company profit is the criterion for judgment.

### **2.3.2. Stereotypes and the Solidification of Feudal Ideas**

Anthropologist Sherry Ortner proposed in his study of humans’ origin that “gender role allocation (female inferiority and male superiority) is a cultural essence”. If the cause of this problem is summarized, women’s social roles and physiological structures are closer to nature, while men are not. Therefore, they are committed to creating cultural identity and various means of cultural superiority [23]. However, the field of household chores limits women, and the issue of childbirth is a crucial focus alongside women’s issues, which is also a factor in forming a patriarchal society. Therefore, in the face of this gender phenomenon in the private sector, only by understanding the meaning of gender can we break free from the constraints of Asian patriarchal systems and continue to correct gender discrimination in legal culture.

There are stereotypes left over from history. The speed of updating and iterating Asian concepts is lower than the efficiency of genetic inheritance, and many still have reminders of the “male superior and female inferiority” factor in their bones. This may be due to the uneven distribution of social responsibility and division of labor in early primary society. Women’s future responsibility is to educate their children at home, “if they get married, they should have children,” and “If they do not get married, life is incomplete.” These words often appear on the family dining table in China. On the contrary, few people demand that men meet certification standards during goodwill and how to take care of their partners. Even if the child in their lamb belongs to them, society still accepts that the child should be by the mother’s side more than the father’s. In fact, a situation that is completely different from stereotypes is that investing more in female education has a positive effect on the Asian country’s GDP [16]. MGI established a strong connection between gender equality in the workplace and society in the original “Power of Party” report 2015, arguing that the form cannot be achieved without the lattice. The MGI Gender Parity Score (GPS) measures each nation’s progress toward parity, which is set at 1.00, using 15 indicators of gender equality in the workplace and society. The GPS for Asia Pacific is 0.56, significantly higher than the GPS for the world, which is 0.61. Examining the comparative growth effects of gender-aggregated and level-specific control rates in a sample of Asian economies using extreme bounds analysis (EBA). Researchers use both endogenous and exogenous growth frameworks to test their hypotheses. At the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels, the external effects of education are favorable and strong for both males and females. The findings point to a gender productivity gap. By increasing funding for female education, Asian economies can expand more quickly. Unfortunately, no single Asia Pacific journal is dedicated to gender equality. These research reports tell society that placing women in such an unequal position is meaningless, and unfair gender opposition is not conducive to national development.

Asia has not grasped the significance of gender equality, and even its sex and gender biology education has not improved. Comparing Sweden to demonstrate the overall benefits, Sweden started sex education for children over the age of 7 in 1942. Regarding the course material, their knowledge of teacher identification and childbirth in primary school and physiology and body function in middle school. The remarkable effect of this achievement is that the validity of STDs in Sweden is extremely low. There are also no cases of goodwill and childbirth among girls under the age of 20. The HIV-positive rate is only 5132 cases in the country, the incidence rate is extremely low, and the promotion of STDs and sequential fines is also increasing decline. Moreover, the benefits are considered in the long run for both personal growth and the social environment.

### 3. Conclusion

For suggestions related to gender equality education, in addition to improving sex education, from the perspective of women of all ages, Asian fertility policies and corporate maternity leave policies need to be further optimized. The Theory of Role Conflict emphasizes that the conflicts caused by the women's dual roles (wives and mothers) are the reasons for the special forms of women’s political participation. However, if there is a wife, there is a husband, a mother and a father, and men also have their dual roles. It is the distribution of social responsibility that makes them gradually forget their dual roles and instead pay more attention to the dual roles of women. Ultimately, it is the policy that fails to give men a sense of presence in the family, resulting in East Asian men’s desire for expression not being satisfied in family relationships but rather choosing more careers. Having a child is a joint decision of two people, and upbringing should also be arranged jointly by both parties to better balance the roles of both genders in the family [7]. Compared to Europe, its shared maternity leave policy allows fathers and mothers to share maternity leave to support family balance and gender equality. Men can enjoy paid maternity leave in the UK, France, and Germany. In Sweden, 2 months of the 16-month men must enjoy shared paid maternity leave. This policy helps to increase fertility rates and encourage more men to participate in childcare work. Maternity leave in Finland can start 31 to 50 working days before the expected delivery date. During this period, employers must pay a

portion of their wages, and the government also provides certain subsidies. Fathers enjoy 54 working days of separate paternity leave, allowing them to spend more time with their loved ones and children before and after childbirth, giving them more time to participate in parenting work. It promotes family harmony and reduces the spread of the new generation of young people's fear of marriage and childbirth from a social perspective. This good fertility policy is an important part that Asia can learn from.

If gender equality education in East Asia develops towards establishing disciplinary courses, it can refer to the development of the discipline of educational history. At the end of the 19th century, under the influence of European and American academia, the history of education became a specialized field of research in history and education. In East Asia, this new knowledge was first expanded by Japan and then influenced by Japan, especially China. At first, the curriculum was taught in normal schools, with arrangements for internal and external and national education history. Later, national education and foreign education were gradually arranged separately. By the 1930s, works on educational history reached their peak. Until 1950, research on the history of education in East Asia was centered on the education history of schools, as traditional school education in East Asia was a manifestation of national governance. Among them, during the period from Taisho to Showa in Japan, due to the influence of the democratic movement, there were many publications on the education history of the common people, and the academic style was prevalent [25]. Therefore, the specific implementation of gender equality education courses can refer to examples from other developed regions outside East Asia while encouraging the development of people's thinking and creating an open, equal, and free new society.

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