



Teachers' Challenges and Strategies in Fostering Gender Equality in the Classroom

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Abstract. There have been several studies about gender equality in different levels of education. However, there is a lack of research which focuses on gender equality in senior high school education. Unfortunately, a possible reason is that senior high school is a relatively new curriculum introduced by the Department of Education (DepED) in 2016. The purpose of this narrative research study attempted to determine the perspectives of gender equality in the classroom using different strategies of six senior high school teachers in mathematics in the academic track in the Division of Quezon City in the school year 2023 – 2024. Data were collected using interviews to the participants, questions were checked and validated by three educational leadership, management and research specialists. After the conduct of the interviews, data were transcribed and analyzed. The study indicated that despite equal educational opportunities for men and women, issues of gender inequality still exist in different educational setting including the senior high school education. The challenges of teachers led to the themes gender stereotype and bias as well as gender-based discrimination. As with the teachers strategies themes were gender awareness, gender sensitivity and gender responsiveness. Furthermore, the study revealed that there are varied strategies for teachers to use to promote gender equality within the classroom like the use of gender-neutral language, group activities, group discussions, cooperative learning, avoiding stereotypes and gender bias. To contribute to the knowledge base that will be useful in fostering gender equality in the classroom. Thus, it is recommended that there is a need for a whole school approach to foster gender equality. Gender equality is not only a concern for all teachers in different levels of education but families as well.

Keywords: *Challenges; Gender Equality; Classroom: Senior High School mathematics teachers; Strategies*





INTRODUCTION

World leaders came together in 2015 and made a historic promise to secure the rights and well-being of everyone on a healthy, thriving planet when they adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Agenda remains the world's roadmap for ending poverty, protecting the planet, and tackling inequalities. The 17 SDGs, the cornerstone of the Agenda, offer the most practical and effective pathway to tackle the causes of violent conflict, human rights abuses, climate change, and environmental degradation and aim to ensure that no one will be left behind. The SDGs reflect an understanding that sustainable development everywhere must integrate economic growth, social well-being, and environmental protection.

While a fragile global economy, rising conflicts, and the climate emergency have placed the promise of the Goals in peril, things can still be turned around in the remaining seven years. Notably, there has been some SDG success since 2015 with improvements in key areas, including poverty reduction, child mortality, electricity access, and the battle against certain diseases.

Countries continue to supercharge efforts to achieve the SDGs. Annual High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development is seen — the central platform for reviewing progress on the SDGs — where for the last eight years, countries, civil society, and businesses have gathered to showcase the bold actions they are taking to achieve the SDGs.

Among the 17 SDGs is Goal 5, which is Gender Equality. Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable world. There has been progress over the last decades, but the world is not on track to achieve gender equality by 2030. Political leadership, investments, and comprehensive policy reforms are needed to dismantle systemic barriers to achieving Goal 5. Gender equality is a cross-cutting objective and must be a key focus of national policies, budgets, and institutions (United Nations, 2023).

Meanwhile, in 2017, the Department of Education (DepEd) issued the Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy in line with its Gender and Development (GAD) mandate as stipulated in the 1987 Philippine Constitution, Republic Act (RA) No. 9710 or the Magna Carta of Women (MCW), RA 10533 or the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, among others. Through this policy, the DepEd committed to integrating





principles including gender equality in the provision and governance of basic education. This aligns with the DepEd's mandate to ensure access to quality basic education for all and is consistent with its vision, mission, and values.

Furthermore, the DepEd committed to gender equality through gender-responsive basic education to holistically develop Filipino learners with access to quality, culture-based basic education in a learner-friendly, safe, and nurturing environment with the provision to continuously improve its support systems at all levels of governance. Specifically, one of these policies aimed to involve all including teachers in promoting gender equality and non-discrimination through their engagement in the teaching methodologies that should not only aim at eliminating gender stereotypes but also at transforming gender relations toward empowerment and social change.

According to Guerrero and Puerta (2023) there is a need to create appropriate and attractive activities in classes to bridge the existing gap between male-dominated activities and those that girls may find interesting. Additionally, it is essential to provide adequate education on gender equality and for teachers to be mindful that their behavior and language can greatly influence their students. Furthermore, appropriate training for promoting gender equality is also necessary for students and future educators. Classes can be a powerful tool for fostering gender equality as teachers make substantial methodological changes. Ultimately, the aim should be to create a more equitable society that encourages gender equality.

Pedrajas and Jalandoni (2023) found that education encompasses more than just knowledge acquisition. It plays a significant part in the process of socialization and the dissemination of standards and ideals like gender equality. As such, education can considerably impact attitudes about gender equality, either positively or negatively. Although most teachers have participated in gender training, they still have observed gender inequality issues in their classes or among their students. Gender inequality exists in education. While a variety of teaching strategies are used in gender equality promotion such inequality in gender can be traced to students' level of knowledge and behavior.

Dela Rosa and Castro (2021) believe that the classroom is considered one of the best platforms for executing the challenges in gender mainstreaming and that whatever the challenges it is, acceptance and sustainability of the program must be the top priority. Teachers should also cultivate the culture of love and respect for everyone for love equates to respect. Having love and respect can promote a sound atmosphere where hatred and discrimination have no place. One of the guiding principles of gender mainstreaming is practicing fairness and equality. Teachers must be fair at all-time





whatever circumstances it may be. To practice equality, teachers must decipher differences among students and everyone in the school community. Through careful identification, cultural biases, ideologies, and stereotyping will be addressed.

In the study of Kollmayer et al. in 2020, they stated that teachers are important starting points for promoting gender equality in education as their attitudes and instructional practices are known to influence students' motivation and performance substantially. To promote girls and boys equally in coeducational settings, teachers have to reflect on their own gender stereotypes. Moreover, they require knowledge about gender differences in education and about teaching methods to foster the motivation of all students regardless of their gender.

Gaitan (2018) concluded that teachers are aware of gender concepts, their instructional behaviors showed a gender-sensitive perspective and finally, they employ strategies for teaching their lessons. However, there is a lack of specific strategies to teach gender concepts, and teaching these concepts is not yet mainstreamed in the curriculum and not explicitly included in the learning outcomes. Seminars and training about gender sensitivity are powerful avenues for teachers to be equipped to bridge the gap between cognitive knowledge and creating a gender-sensitive learning environment.

While there have been several studies about gender equality in different levels of education, there is a lack of research focusing on gender equality in senior high school education. Unfortunately, a possible reason is that senior high school is a relatively new curriculum introduced by the DepEd in 2016. Indeed, if efforts to improve mathematics education in senior high schools in the country are to be properly guided, then the present study is quite important and valuable.

The issue that this study addresses is gender equality in senior high school education. To address this problem, this study aims to contribute to the knowledge base by determining mathematics teachers' perspectives of gender equality in the classroom using different strategies. Fostering gender equality in education can be achieved through a variety of strategies.

Framework of the Study

This study is based on the Gender Equality Framework of USAID (2008), which draws clear distinctions and demonstrates interrelationships among the concepts of gender parity, gender equity, and gender equality. In addition to drawing out the nuances between equity and equality, the framework reinforces other key concerns such as access, quality, continuity, relevance, and learning outcomes. The framework also





emphasizes the relationships between and among students and teachers and boys and girls, implying the need to transform deeply ingrained behaviors and gender norms that have negative impacts on the aspirations and life choices of girls and boys. Gender equality is a broad concept that is best understood within the wider context of social exclusion—the systematic discrimination of individuals based on characteristics such as ethnicity, race, sex, economic status, place of residence, language, or health status. Working children, indigenous children, street children, domestic workers, and children who are physically challenged, affected by HIV or AIDS, or living in conflict areas often do not have their educational needs met. In addition to addressing the injustices resulting from gender bias, a gender equality approach to achieving full participation needs to operate within the larger sphere of social justice so all children have a chance to succeed.

The four dimensions of gender equality in education include:

- equality of access,
- equality in the learning process,
- equality of educational outcomes, and
- equality of external results

Below are brief descriptions of each dimension:

Equality of access means that girls and boys are offered equitable opportunities to access formal, nonformal, or alternative approaches to basic education. Access is defined broadly and encompasses initial enrollment, persistence, attendance, and retention in an education system. Parity strategies can be designed with a broader understanding of how these contribute to achieving gender equality since equal access alone may not translate into meaningful processes and outcomes in education.

Equality in the learning process refers to pedagogic processes and the school environment, which have significant impact on how and what students learn. Girls and boys should receive equitable treatment and attention and have equal learning opportunities. This means that all students ought to be exposed to the same curricula, although the coursework may be taught differently to accommodate the different learning styles of boys and girls. In addition, all learners should experience teaching methods and materials free of stereotypes and gender bias, and have the same freedom to learn, explore, and develop skills in all academic and extracurricular settings.

The school environment is molded, in part, by the nature of relationships between teachers and learners and between girls and boys. Students need to be safe from psychological, physical, and sexual abuse. A safe, supportive environment is a





prerequisite to effective teaching and learning. Unfortunately, in many cases, schools are risky environments for girls and boys. Schools, especially teachers, can reinforce negative gender stereotypes and replicate systemic inequalities that discourage and marginalize students. This can lead to poor academic performance, absenteeism, and high dropout rates. Alternatively, teachers can contribute to eliminating gender bias and expanding the choices and aspirations of both boys and girls. In the latter case, schools can be effective in helping young people learn positive and healthy models of behavior by challenging the harmful gender norms that limit academic achievement and influence students' life choices.

Equality of educational outcomes means that girls and boys enjoy equal opportunities to achieve and outcomes are based on their talents and efforts. To ensure fair chances for achievement, the length of school careers, academic qualifications, and diplomas should not differ based on a person's sex. Mechanisms for evaluating individual achievement should also be free of any gender bias. What tests, examinations, and assessments measure tells students what matters and to the extent that these mechanisms reflect a gender bias, they transmit messages to students that can discourage their interest in school or particular subjects. Results from classroom tests, national examinations, and international assessments can influence boys' and girls' confidence levels and their perceptions of their abilities and what is expected of them. They can also impact what is taught in the classroom and how content is delivered. Where tests or examinations are used to determine promotion into future grades, or other types of educational opportunities, the extent to which there may be bias in these mechanisms is an important consideration when trying to ensure equality of access and equality of outcomes.

Equality of external results is achieved when the status of men and women; their access to goods and resources; and their ability to contribute to, participate in, and benefit from economic, social, cultural, and political activities are equal. This implies that career opportunities, the time needed to secure employment after leaving full-time education, and the earnings of men and women with similar qualifications and experience are equal. While there is no guarantee that outcomes will be the same for those with the same level of education, ideally, equality in the educational process unlocks equal opportunities for men and women post-schooling. Although this dimension of equality falls outside the education system, it is nevertheless an important element of the framework. The achievement of equality in the broader society will influence how children access school and how gender norms are manifested in the classroom. Likewise, equality in education acts as a catalyst and contributes to the realization of equality for men and women in other spheres of life, including the labor market and the home.





The four dimensions of gender equality are related, but that relationship is complex and not necessarily linear. Parity in enrollment and greater gender equality in schooling can and often do, coexist with inequalities outside of education.

Based on the concepts, and insights gained and cited, the research framework was structured.

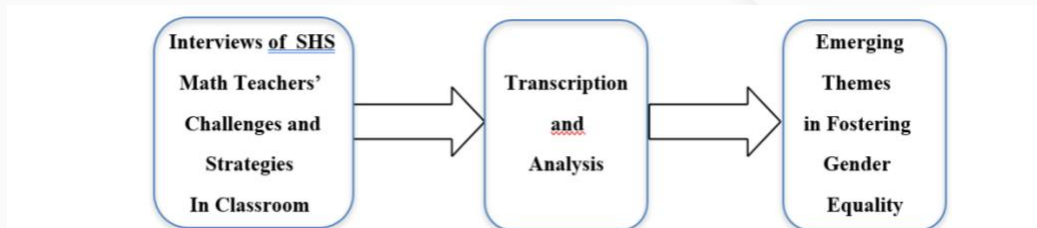


Figure 1. Framework of the Study

The researcher paradigm illustrate the IPO process where the input is the interviews of senior high school mathematics teachers. The process will be used in the transcription and analysis of their interviews, and the output will be the emerging themes useful in fostering gender equality in senior high school education.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this narrative study is to determine the teachers' perspectives of gender equality using different strategies in the classroom. At this stage in the research, the study is limited to six senior high school mathematics teachers in the Division of Quezon City in the school year 2023 – 2024.

Specifically, the study sought to:

1. determine teachers' perspectives of gender and gender equality;
2. identify challenges in fostering gender equality in the classroom, and
3. determine different teaching strategies teachers use to address gender issues and promote gender equality among students.



METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study utilized the narrative research design which aims to determine the teachers' perspectives of gender equality using different strategies in the classroom. Narrative research is a design of inquiry from the humanities in which the researcher studies the lives of individuals and asks one or more individuals to provide stories about their lives. This information is then often retold or restored by the researcher into a narrative chronology. Often, in the end, the narrative combines views from the participant's life with those of the researcher's life in a collaborative narrative (Cresswell, 2018).

Sampling Procedure and Participants

The non-random sampling technique was utilized in this study. It consisted of six senior high school teachers in mathematics in the academic track in the Division of Quezon City in the school year 2023 - 2024. Information about the research was given to the teachers before the study.

Instrument

This study utilized interviews in collecting the data. The instrument elicits the teachers' challenges and perspectives in fostering gender equality in the classroom. The interview questions were checked and validated by three educational leadership, management, and research specialists.

Data Collection

To gather data, the researcher secured a permit from the Superintendent of the Schools Division Office of Quezon City to conduct the research. The nature of the study is anchored on the gender-responsive basic education prior to the DepEd and Division Memorandum. The letter for data gathering was sent to the principal as a formal endorsement of the study, emphasizing the purpose of the study, the three interview questions, and ethical considerations. High ethical consideration in the conduct of the study by securing permits and utmost confidentiality of the data gathered from participants who were available the scheduled date for data gathering. Interviews with six senior high school mathematics teachers were conducted and digitally recorded using a cellphone. Each participant interview lasted approximately 30 minutes and was conducted individually in their respective school, in a comfortable setting. After the conduct of the interview, the researcher transcribed the data and analyzed the conceptual categories, and themes. The researcher interprets the meaning of themes useful in fostering gender equality in the classroom.





Data Analysis

The focus of qualitative analysis is to reduce the data by developing codes or categories to uncover common themes and find significant patterns. Interviews are used to obtain significant statements, the meaning of statements, meanings of themes, description of the phenomenon and insights that were collected from the responses of the six participants who were interviewed based on their experiences in the different strategies of gender equality in the classroom. The responses from the interviews were interpreted and analyzed through transcripts, coding, and themes.

Ethical Consideration

The ethical issue is adhered to in the conduct of the study by securing permits. The data collected from the participants involved in the study were treated with the utmost confidentiality. The researcher sought teacher consent for participation in the study.

RESULTS

Despite equal educational opportunities for men and women, issues of gender inequality still exist in different educational settings including the senior high school education. Teachers are said to be vital in promoting gender equality in education. This part discusses themes from the collective responses and addresses the research questions.

1. What are the teachers' perspectives on gender and gender equality?

From the interviews, Participant 1 said gender is "Limited only to the characteristics of women, and men that are socially constructed . Gender equality talks about the fairness of treatment for men and women". Participant 2 answered, " I think gender is neutral. Gender equality is whatever identity, we all have the same rights and privileges". Participant 3 stated, "Gender are the reference to social and cultural differences. Gender Equality is equality for everyone regardless of their cultural differences". Participant 4 mentioned that gender is "the characteristics that describes a person's sexual identification as per natural distinction in physical form as to masculine, feminine, neuter or common. Gender equality means providing equal opportunities to both men and women." For Participant 5 replied that, gender "refers to the social, cultural, and behavioral characteristics and roles associated with being male or female. Gender equality ensures that individuals of all genders have equal rights, opportunities, and treatment in various aspects of society." According to Participant 6, defining gender is like selling your whole self to people as they want to buy your preferences, likes, dislikes, activities, and societal norms that are considered





appropriate to one's gender. Gender equality is the idea that all individuals, regardless of gender, should have equal rights, opportunities, and treatment in all aspects of life. It advocates for breaking down traditional gender roles and stereotypes, ensuring that men and women have the same chances to participate in society, pursue their goals, and enjoy the same privileges and responsibilities. It's not just about promoting the rights of one gender over the other but creating a more inclusive and just society where everyone can thrive."

Although most participants have not attended any gender-related training, yet they know that gender is beyond being male or female. The findings in the study show that the views and understandings of the teachers are similar to the definition that states that gender refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relation between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relationships between women and those between men. These attributes, opportunities, and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes. (UN Women, 2017). On the other hand, gender equality refers to the principle asserting the equality of men and women and their rights to enjoy equal conditions realizing their full human potential to contribute to and benefit from the results of development, and with the state recognizing that all human beings are free and equal in dignity and rights (Magna Carta for Women, 2009).

2. What are the teachers' challenges in fostering gender equality in the classroom?

2.1 Gender stereotype and bias

In relation to the theme associated with gender stereotypes and bias, I asked the participants about their views about it and how it affects their students learning. Participant 1 said, "From my end, it includes sexual discrimination, gender bias, and gender stereotyping. There was this one time, I tended to pay more attention to boys in my classes, calling on them more often and asking them harder and more complicated questions than I do girls. This is especially true in our subject math, where I (likely subconsciously) expect boys to be more capable. Those experiences mentioned, it affect my students' learning. For example, boys I think are slightly better at math and girls slightly better at reading and literature." Participant 3 answered, "Gender stereotyping, let me give an example, if a girl falters when answering a math question, I am more likely to repeat it and then ask another student, usually a boy, to provide the answer. When boys falter, however, I tend to give them extra time, reframe the question, or break it down into a series of simpler problems. It somehow reflects





in their academic performance.” Participant 4 replied, that there was this one time, when “while boys are disciplined more frequently and harshly, they also get more praise and feedback, while girls’ work is lauded for its appearance rather than its content.” When you are not heterosexual (LGBTQ), society judges easily you when you commit mistakes. They tend not to pay attention to you and your class because they don’t take you and your lesson seriously.”

From the interview data, the findings in the study show that the teachers’ challenges are similar to the discussions in the literature that, gender stereotyping occurs when “ascribing certain attributes, characteristics, and roles to people based on their gender. More accurately, it involves ascribing traditional gender expectations associated with one’s assigned sex at birth. Gender stereotypes can have an impact on their educational and professional expectations, the skills they acquire, and their future goals (UNICEF, 2017).” Brussino and McBrien(2022) explained that as is true with all humans, teachers have conscious and unconscious biases and stereotypes that affect the way they reflect, act, and make decisions. They communicate these stereotypes and biases through their attitudes and interactions within the classroom. Biases can be detrimental to students because of its negative effects to the development of students’ academic and social self-concepts. Research is not always clearly distinctive in assessing social, emotional, and academic effects.

2.2 Gender-based discrimination

In this section, the main focus is on gender-based discrimination, Participant 1 said “discrimination, one example was boys receive more attention during classroom interactions and when they interrupt, while girls are generally scolded when they interrupt. In particular, I am more likely to call on boys than girls, so boys actively participate more in math class discussions. Boys also tend to be more active than girls and, as a consequence, I pay more attention to boys to maintain control over the classroom, discriminated students through gender identity makes them inferior learners.” Participant 2 added one example that I rely on so-called “target students”—often male—who ask more questions and typically call out answers, to keep the pace of the classroom going. I use gender as a classroom management strategy, seating, for example, an unruly boy next to a quieter girl, a tactic that indirectly pushes girls to take responsibility for boys’ behavior rather than asking boys to exert more self-control. Participant 3 mentioned, “I always remember about the grading of girls may be higher relative to the grading of boys because I see girls as being more diligent and hardworking than boys, I think it affects the way students develop their social and emotional skills, make sense of the world and develop their identities. So girls are more likely to see their teachers as figures they wish to emulate compared to boys.





Participant 5 said, a lack of legal protection, teenage pregnancy etc. Schools need to be supportive, inclusive, and responsive to all students regardless of their gender.” Participant 6 voiced out, that when you are not heterosexual (LGBTQ), society judges easily you when you commit mistakes. They tend not to pay attention to you and your class because they don't take you and your lesson seriously.”

Relating the issues that came from the interviews is in line with existing literature. According to Save the Children(2023) gender discrimination means any exclusion or restriction made based on gender that creates barriers for girls, boys, women, and/or men in recognizing, enjoying or exercising their full and equal human rights. Gender equality is a basic right for all people, including both girls and boys. Based on this understanding, Save the Children believes that it is critical to directly address gender discrimination and gender inequality to ensure that no harm comes to the young ones, and to advance our vision for a world where every young person attains equal right to grow up healthy, educated and safe.

One of the challenges facing the tackling of discrimination in schools is a lack of data. Statistics specifically focused on discrimination in schools are scarce. Children with disabilities, for example, do not always appear in national statistics and may be ‘invisible’ to decision-makers, service providers, and the public. Such children are particularly vulnerable to discrimination, however, and are often segregated in terms of educational provision. These are not the only ‘invisible’ minorities in schools. For example, LGBTQ students often feel they have to hide their sexual orientation at school to avoid victimization. Another key challenge is the existence of negative stereotypes about minority groups among teachers, parents, students, and other school stakeholders. Such stereotypes are often deeply embedded in everyday school life and practice, so much so that they are taken as ‘normal’, e.g., stories and images in textbooks that reflect a stereotyped portrayal of the roles of women and men, Stereotypes help to fuel prejudiced and aggressive behavior between students, lower expectations from teachers and negative attitudes from parents. Stereotyping is difficult to root out in schools because its origins lie in wider society. This is exacerbated by the current preponderance of hate speech, fake news, and conspiracy theories in digital media, especially social media (Council of Europe, 2023).





3. What are teachers' different strategies used to address gender issues and promote gender equality among students?

3.1 Gender Awareness

Gender awareness refers to the ability to identify problems arising from gender inequality and discrimination, even if these are not immediately apparent (UNGEI, 2000). The researcher asked the participants about their experiences with the different strategies used to address gender issues and promote gender equality among students. Most of the participants are males, and the majority, whose ages ranged below 45 years old, observed this ability in the strategies used, as revealed in the interviews. Participants 1 and 3 said that they are reflective and objective. First, they have to pay attention to such contributing factors of gender inequality, like boys being slightly better at math and giving more attention to boys than girls, and do their best to offer more gender-neutral responses to their students. They may feel like they already do a good job of this, but it can be difficult to judge their teaching objectively. In what they read, it may help to record a video of their classroom to take a closer look at their teaching methods and interactions with students. Their language, standards, and beliefs about gender—that girls learn one way or prefer one kind of teaching, grouping strategy, etc.—can promote gender inequality in the classroom without knowing it. Participant 5 mentioned the strategy of seating alternately and grouping together students intentionally. According to her, it's common for boys and girls to segregate when choosing friends and seating arrangements.

“During class, I sometimes encourage this by asking girls and boys to form separate lines in the hallway or even by organizing separate activities for each group. I think by creating a dynamic seating chart, I can break up boys'- or girls'-only distinctions and encourage both groups to engage with each other.”

Participants 1 to 5 agreed that they employ group activities, discussions, and cooperative learning tasks, such as project-based learning. They are intentional about integrating a mix of boys and girls within small group projects. They noted that there are many types of project-based learning in math, each suited to different applications both inside and outside the classroom. The work can be purely academic, with lessons on gender equity being indirect and implied. When supported effectively, collaborative efforts can help girls and boys better understand individual behaviors instead of reinforcing stereotypes about 'girls' and 'boys.' They also suggested that such group activities could be designed to explore concepts related to gender and cultural equity or to engage with select communities to foster healthy human interdependence.





3.2 Gender Sensitivity

Gender sensitivity is the ability to perceive existing gender differences, issues, and inequalities and to incorporate these into strategies and actions (Intrahealth International, 2003). Most of the participants have been teaching for 6 to 15 years and have attained units in post-graduate studies and observed this ability as shown from their interviews. For Participant 1, he uses gender-neutral language when appropriate. "I change the language within our lessons to help extend students' perspectives beyond gender stereotypes. For example, in assignments, I challenge students' expectations by including such professions typically associated with a particular gender. Also, when referring to the group as a whole, I avoid using gendered terms like 'guys,' which may make my female students feel excluded. Instead, reach for gender-neutral pronouns like 'everyone.' Similarly, I should not refer to stereotypical characteristics like 'boys don't cry' or 'girls don't fight.' This language might lay a foundation that may limit my students' understanding of gender roles." While, Participant 6 explained the situation. "If I hear students using phrases like 'you act like a girl' or 'be a man,' I think it's important to point out the social implications of these statements rather than simply reprimanding the use of that kind of phrasing. The struggle for and history of gender equity likens similar struggles and histories for race and religious equity. Understanding how individuals and groups become sidelined through the most basic of cultural tools like language can, depending on the grade level of our students, be more important than having 'clear rules' to simply 'protect students' from bias."

3.3 Gender Responsiveness

Gender responsiveness refers to taking action to correct gender bias and discrimination to ensure gender equality and equity. It entails consistent and systematic attention to the differences between men and women to address structural constraints to gender equality.

There are many dynamics in classroom interaction that impact teaching and learning processes, one of which is gender relations. Teachers need to be aware that their students consist of both boys and girls, each with specific gender needs. Consequently, gender roles and relations influence classroom interaction processes. Gender-responsive classroom interaction takes gender considerations into account in all dynamics of classroom interaction, such as teacher-student interaction, student-student interaction, teacher presentation (including dress, physical appearance, and walking style), teacher behavior (such as being harsh, arrogant, late, or intoxicated),





and teacher and student morale (including commitment and motivation) (FAWE, 2005).

From the interviews, Participant 6 highlighted this awareness, stating, "I always start with classroom management, and I talk to my students delicately because some of them are members of LGBTQIA+. I advise them that there is nothing wrong with them; the problem lies with the judgmental society."

In relation to the themes associated with teachers' strategies to address gender issues and promote gender equality among students, the findings from the interview data show that the strategies used by teachers to foster gender equality in the classroom align with the literature. According to Ablaza (2021), facilitating gender-fair education requires that instruction, curricula, and materials be free from gender bias and promote equality in gender relations.

Students' perceptions of themselves and their projected roles in society are shaped, to some extent, by their experiences at school, including the representations found in textbooks. Teaching and learning materials should portray female and male characters in equal numbers and involve them in similar activities. If this is not the case, teachers should encourage students to challenge stereotypes in the portrayal of female and male characters in the materials used. Displaying posters on the walls that depict female and male characters equally engaged in activities together is also beneficial.

In addition to the influence of official curricula and materials, teacher practices in the classroom are shaped by their assumptions and stereotypes about gender, which in turn affect students' beliefs and learning. Promoting gender equality in education involves implementing a classroom seating plan that enables both female and male learners to participate and have equal opportunities to learn. Providing guidance and counseling, as well as mentoring support to both female and male learners regarding the continuation of their studies, job prospects, or psycho-social needs, is essential. This support should be delivered in a gender-sensitive manner to prevent both boys and girls from choosing stereotyped paths.

Teachers should also seek advice on more gender-sensitive teaching methods from other teachers, school heads, and formal training courses.

In the study by Paqueo and Orbeta Jr. (2019), it is revealed that in the Philippines, there is a need for a more nuanced view of gender equality. Historically, Filipino males were somewhat more educated than females; however, males are now lagging behind females, and the education gender gap is widening. This reversal was predictable as





early as the 1970s, before it became evident in national statistics. The study argues that contemporary gender equality advocacy should go beyond the stereotypical focus on girls' education and pay more attention to issues that are negatively impacting boys' education. Failing to pursue win-win strategies to address gender bias in education that works against boys will mean the country is missing valuable opportunities to enhance equity and economic returns on its investment in education. To conclude, the study suggests some experiments to deepen the current understanding of boys' educational issues and to develop tools for effectively removing existing impediments to schooling and learning.

CONCLUSIONS

Education plays a crucial role in achieving gender equality. It is a powerful tool that can break down barriers and empower individuals, especially women, to reach their full potential. However, ongoing efforts are needed to address the various challenges facing gender equality in education. This includes tackling issues such as lack of access to education, gender-based discrimination, and inadequate resources and support for marginalized groups. By continuing to work towards gender equality in education, we can create a more equitable and just society for all.

Indeed, teachers play a pivotal role in promoting gender equality in schools, as students begin building habits and opinions from a young age. Creating equal educational opportunities for students starts in the classroom, with the teacher. A strong teacher is one who treats their students fairly, creating an environment where all students feel equally encouraged to participate.

In senior high school, students become more aware of the differences between themselves and their peers. At this stage of education, teachers significantly influence the construction of social expectations of gender roles. These interactions can have lasting effects on students' self-image and their perception of the opportunities that are available or appropriate for them.

There are various strategies teachers can use to promote gender equality within the classroom, such as employing gender-neutral language, facilitating group activities and discussions, encouraging cooperative learning, and avoiding stereotypes and gender bias. Such earnest efforts in the classroom will enable educators to turn the age-old promises of gender equality into action while ensuring adherence to the agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.





Recommendations

There is a need for a whole-school approach to foster gender equality. The entire school community—including school leadership, all teachers, support staff, parents, and students—must understand the current status of gender equality both within the school and across the country. It is essential to appreciate the range of factors contributing to these inequalities, recognize the benefits of achieving gender equality, and support the need for school-wide strategies to address the known gender inequalities in classrooms, including mathematics classes.

Gender equality is a concern not only for teachers at various levels of education but also for families. Countering gender bias and addressing the inequalities that create learning disparities in the classroom is crucial, as these issues can limit students' future potential. Students who are socialized into stereotypical gender roles often behave in ways that hinder their holistic development and may experience learning, behavioral, and emotional problems. Teachers can promote gender inequality, sometimes consciously but often through a lack of awareness.

Addressing gender inequality requires awareness and proactive steps to counter the development of stereotypical gender roles. These behaviors manifest in early childhood, as children learn from what they hear, see, and are guided to do. Therefore, active measures to counter gender inequality must begin with shaping early experiences. Teachers are generally encouraged to use gender-neutral and inclusive language. Schools should ensure that the curriculum is inclusive, representative, and appropriately gender-affirmative, sensitive, and balanced. It is important to monitor participation and ensure that all students are encouraged to engage actively. Schools should promote the same positive behaviors in both girls and boys and ensure that feedback regarding learning and behavior is equitable for all.

The scope of discussions may be considered a limitation of the research, as the researcher may not have extensive experience in conducting research and producing academic papers independently. As a result, the scope and depth of discussions in this paper may be limited compared to those of more experienced scholars. For future research, similar studies could be conducted in other parts of the country with a larger number of participants to gather more comprehensive and high-quality information on the subject, allowing for better generalization.





Implications

In fostering gender equality in the classroom, teacher participants used different strategies. Gray Group International (2023) suggested that schools can work hand in hand to provide equal access to resources and opportunities for girls and boys, such as providing equal funding for girls' and boys' sports teams or offering girls the same opportunities to participate in STEM education programs. Other strategies include:

1. Inclusive education policies and practices involve creating an environment where all students feel valued and respected, regardless of their gender, race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic background. This involves providing language and cultural support, providing accommodations for students with disabilities, and creating a safe and inclusive learning environment.
2. Communities and families play a critical role in promoting gender equality in education. By engaging with families and communities, schools can work to address cultural and economic barriers that prevent girls from attending school. This usually involves working with families to provide girls and boys with the necessary resources to attend school. Likewise, working communities to promote cultural change and eliminate practices that discriminate against girls.
3. Investing in teacher training can ensure that teachers are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and resources to provide a quality education for all students, regardless of their gender. Additionally, teacher training in addressing school-related gender-based violence will help to create a safer and more inclusive learning environment for female and male students. By providing teachers with the appropriate training and resources, they will be better equipped to recognize and address gender-based violence in the school environment and provide support for affected students. This not only creates a safer and more inclusive learning environment for all students but also helps to break the cycle of gender-based violence and promote gender equality in education.





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Funding: This research received no outside funding.

Conflict of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Ethical Statement: All teacher participants gave their informed consent for inclusion in the study before participating.

