Practices of Teachers Regarding Gender Friendly Classroom At Primary Level: A Qualitative Investigation

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Abstract: *'Gender' refers to the roles, relationships, attitudes, values, behaviors, power, and influence that society ascribes to males and females. The process of developing a gender identity begins as early as age 2. 'Gender-friendly classroom' is one in which the teacher tries to structure their classroom appropriately for both genders and teaches students about potential gender issues, and how to overcome these issues. Its purpose is to enable to investigate gender inclusion within a specific classroom environment, uncovering the teacher's understanding of the role of gender within a primary classroom. The aim of this study record teacher's awareness of gender and how they incorporate gender into their teaching and learning experiences, observing classroom events and interactions for evidence of gendered learning and behavior. For this study, a qualitative method was used in which semi structures interviews and observation checklist was conducted. The data was collected by the researcher by conducting the interviews from 10 teachers of schools at primary level from 2 different schools. The researcher used observational checklist for observing the teachers' behavior regarding to general friendly practices. The data was analyzed using open and axial coding. The findings from this research confirm that teachers can refine teaching practices in ways that impact on gendered learning behaviors and outcomes in primary school classrooms. The project demonstrates that teachers can form and alter children's opinions and perceptions of gender. It recommends that teachers model and provide an environment that is free of stereotypes or bias.*

Keywords— Gender-friendly classroom; Gender Inclusive Practices; Classroom Environment; Behavior; Classroom Activities; Teacher Attitudes; Gender Biasness

1. INTRODUCTION

The meaning of the term gender can initially be in "the cultural difference between women from men based on the biological division between male and female" (Connell, 2003, p.9). Connell's position is that the concept of gender cannot be restricted to biology as bodily gender differences may not be present and therefore psychological differences and the influence of social structure was included into this current study's working definition of gender. The need for including behavioral aspects of gender is demonstrated by research that has suggested that "children learn that the world is gendered at a very young age and, soon after, develop a sense of their own gender identity" (Banks, 2007, p.79).

The socialization process for a child allows everyone to attain their own interpretation of sex roles, gender appropriate behavior and stereotypes. These interpretations are influenced by a child's family, their school, peer group and the media. A child's acquisition of gender and sex roles occurs gradually and can become "deeply ingrained within people's psyches and behavior and deeply inscribed within school cultures and education systems" (Kenway & Wasis, 1997, p.xvi).

'Gender' refers to the roles, relationships, attitudes, values, behaviors, power, and influence that society ascribes to males and females.

'Gender identity' involves what it means to be a man or a woman in a context and one's sense of oneself as a male or a female. The process of developing a gender identity begins as early as age 2. It includes learning the roles, behaviors, and activities that are appropriate for men and women, understanding the social and economic value given to what men and women do in the society.

'Gender-sensitive' acknowledging that the differences and inequalities between women and men require attention. A gender-sensitive policy incorporates and translates actions into programmers, strategies and activities in order to improve gender relations and reduce gender inequalities.

Here are some quotes on gender friendly practices and gender equality: **Monica Crowley** "True equality means holding everyone accountable in the same way, regardless of race, gender, faith, ethnicity - or political ideology." **Caitlyn Jenner** "Sexuality is who you are personally attracted to. But gender identity is who you are in your soul." **Gloria Steinem** "A gender-equal society would be one where the word 'gender' does not exist: where everyone can be themselves."

Gender continues to present as an influential component within education. Many research studies have investigated the influence of gender on learning and teaching. The intention of this current study was investigated how one Pakistani primary school teacher integrates and manages gender within their classroom. The current study was draws upon the findings of other Pakistani and international research current studies and inquiries that was be investigates the gender, to inform the

design of teaching practices that was in this current study become the focus for observation and data collection in the participant teacher's classroom.

Therefore, this current study was aiming to persuade readers to identify the benefits in a gender friendly approach to teaching and developing a gender friendly school culture. Although a gender friendly practices was involving the inclusion of all regardless of race, ethnicity, religion or gender; gender was the focus of this current study because teachers teaching experiences was leading to develop a curiosity for gender and its associate issues within the classroom. Everyone develops a gender identity through his or her engagement with gender practices in all aspects of their lives. This occurs at school, while interacting with family and the wider socio-cultural context both locally and through popular culture. For instance, students are exposed to their teacher's and peer's performances of gender through language, behavior and the organization of classroom practices.

- Teacher perception on teaching and learning practices in working towards gender friendly classroom.

- Student interpretations and reactions to a teacher's gender friendly teaching practices within the classroom.

The current study was conducted in Pakistan which recognized and utilized the importance of the role a teacher plays in influencing students' understandings of gender through the learning environments they create, how they interact with their students, the learning styles they incorporate into their teaching, and how they recognize cognitive differences in each child.

1.2. Objectives:
The objectives of the study are as follows:
- To explore the teacher's perception regarding gender friendly classroom practices.
- To find out the challenges teachers face in gender friendly classroom.
- To examine the teacher reflections on teaching and learning practices in working.

1.3. Research Question:
lTo explore the teacher's perception regarding gender friendly classroom practices?
- To find out the challenges teacher faces in gender friendly classroom?
- To examine the teacher reflections on teaching and learning practices in working

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

To effectively answer the research questions and attain a better understanding of the project's purpose, each component of the research problem and its questions must be discussed through an informing literature to reveal their meanings. Therefore, terms such as gender and inclusion must be clearly defined as these are key terms referred to

frequently throughout the thesis. This literature review focus on major areas:
- Concept of gender friendly practices
- Teacher behavior towards gender.

I (Kindlon & Thompson, 1999; Sadker & Sadker, 1994b) have found that some young boys have trouble adjusting to the elementary school atmosphere. Sadker and Sadker maintained that boys often have difficulty complying with the rules and regulations of the traditional elementary school. Raised to be active, aggressive, and independent, boys enter schools that seem to want them to be quiet, passive, and conforming? (Sadker & Sadker, p. 183). Kindlon and Thompson suggested the reason behind this problem develops from a combination of biology and society. The I asserted boys mature at a slower pace than girls. Additionally, boys are more active and slower to develop impulse control than girls? (Kindlon, & Thompson, p. 162). Although some boys will rise to the top of the class, Sadker and Sadker concluded that the issues will cause some boys to land at the bottom.

Furthermore, elementary schools have been characterized as feminine places where girls are largely ignored and rewarded for passive behavior (Kindlon & Thompson, 1999; Owens, Smothers, & Love, 2003; Sadker & Sadker, 1994a). In 1965, Patricia Sexton (as cited in Sadker & Sadker, 1994b) asserted, It is that school is too much a woman?s world, governed by women?s rules and standards. The school code is that of propriety, obedience, decorum, cleanliness, physical, and, too often, mental passivity? (p. 190). Owens, Smothers, and Love claimed that girls are rewarded for conforming to classroom rules by essentially being ignored by their teachers. Likewise, Kindlon and Thompson claimed, Grade school is largely a feminine environment, populated predominantly by women teachers and authority figures? (p. 155). Additionally, Sadker and Sadker (1994a) claimed that women who have spent years learning the lessons of silence in elementary classrooms have trouble regaining their voices later in life.

2.1. Defining the Gender Friendly Practices

Gender identity is defined as a personal conception of oneself as male or female (or rarely, both or neither). This concept is intimately related to the concept of gender role, which is defined as the outward manifestations of personality that reflect the gender identity. Gender identity, in nearly all instances, is self-identified, because of a combination of inherent and extrinsic or environmental factors; gender role, on the other hand, is manifested within society by observable factors such as behavior and appearance.

For example, if a person considers himself a male and is most comfortable referring to his personal gender in masculine terms, then his gender identity is male. However, his gender role is male only if he demonstrates typically male characteristics in behavior, dress, and/or mannerisms.

2.2. Gender and conceptions of equality in relation to education:

Concepts of equality and equal opportunities, and how they can be interpreted, have also developed historically and culturally. Equality as an educational aim is largely a twentieth century phenomenon. Before then, education was a means of preparing different groups for their station in life (as leaders, bureaucrats, workers and mothers). Wood (1987) argues that in the twentieth century, four main interpretations of the concept of equal opportunities emerged:

- Equal life chances

- Open competition for scarce opportunities

- Equal cultivation of different capacities

- Independence of educational attainment from social origins.

According to Wood, viewing education as the main instrument in producing equal life chances is unwise because that would require the precondition that outside-school influences must also be equalized such as family income and cultural expectations. In a society where girls and women are viewed as unequal to boys and men, there is little possibility for schools to compensate and so equalize girls' life chances.

2.3. Gender themes in current educational practice

A number of recurrent themes or topics are to be found in the literature on gender and education which deal primarily with educational practice (or what goes on in schools). These are the curriculum (official and hidden), school reading materials, subject preference and choice, motivational and psychological factors of students, school organization and management, teacher attitudes, assessment, teaching as a profession, co-education and singlesex settings, and the problem of boys

2.4. Gender Friendly Practices in Pakistani Context

In the context of Pakistan, the interlinkage of militarization and masculinization is reflected in textbooks at primary, elementary and secondary levels. The curricula reinforce and encourage the existing socially gendered division of labor, promote dependent roles of girls and women, and help to create the 'identity' of an ideal female in the Pakistani context from a male perspective (Saigol 1995). The poor quality of government textbooks, together with teaching approaches, does not make learning an interesting process, and dissuades children from reading. It also discourages the enrolment of girls, particularly in government schools which only rely on government-prescribed textbooks.

Deficiencies in textbooks are augmented by the limited exposure of female teachers to the world beyond the household, community or village. This does not imply that men are better teachers simply because they may be more informed. Unless otherwise instructed, teachers carry their gendered upbringing and prejudices to the classroom. This is equally true in the case of male and female teachers who are in fact the role models for their students. Almost all documentation on teacher education, and most definitely on teacher training, shows that female teachers participate more effectively in activity-based and child friendly learning programmers.

2.5. Significance of the Study:

This study would identify the various factors which influence the Gender Friendly Practices at Elementary Level. The study from this project will confirm that teachers can refine teaching practices in ways that impact on gender learning behaviors and outcomes in Elementary classrooms. The project will demonstrate that teachers can form and alter children's opinions and perceptions of gender.

It recommends that teachers were a model and provide an environment that is free of stereotypes or bias. While gender was a dealt with in a variety of ways, the findings will provide evidence that suggest an inclusive approach will possible and effective.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.2. Research Design:

In this study the qualitative method was used for gathering the data. This semi structured interviews were used to collect the in-depth information from primary level teachers of schools and do observation of those teachers while they are taking lecture to know about the strategies of a teacher regarding gender friendly practices at primary level.

3.2. Population:

Public schools will be taken from Karachi DHA for data collection. Primary classes will be taken for this research.

3.3. Participants:

The participants of the study were 10 teachers of primary level from 2 different schools. I observe as well as take interview of those teachers

3.4. Sample Size:

The sample size for this research was 2 public school and 10 primary teachers.

3.5. Sample Techniques:

Two schools were selected from the population in which all schools were public. From the selected school I selected 10 primary teachers (5 teachers from each school) from those schools through convenience and purposive sampling.

3.6. Data Collection tool & Technique

The study will use purely qualitative method for gathering the data. The semi structured interviews will use to collect the in-depth information from primary level teachers of schools and will do observation of those teachers while they are

taking lecture to know about the strategies of a teacher. The focus of the present study will on the gender friendly practices of teachers in a classroom

3.7. Data Analysis

All the data obtained from semi-structured interview was transcribed and analyzed by thematic analysis and frequency tabulation

4. Finding of the Study

The analysis of data obtained from qualitative methods used in this study. The semi-structured interview and checklist observation have been conducted to collect in depth and detail knowledge regarding the factors of gender friendly practices of teachers at primary level classrooms. To sum up the received data obtained from semi structured interview and checklist observations were transcribe and analyzed with thematic analysis and frequency tabulation.

4.1. Data analysis of Teacher's Interview:

There were total major themes these are as follows.

Teacher's Gender Friendly Practices

Teaching Approaches

4.1.1. Theme 1: Teacher's Gender Friendly Practices

The researcher asked question about understanding Gender Friendly Practices. The sub-themes are a) Equality b) Co-education c) Teaching Method.

a) Equality: Four respondents R 1, R 2, R 4, R 5, R 6 and R 9 responds that *"the student both boys and girls are equal in the classroom".*

b) Co-education: R 3 and R 10 responded that *"the Gender Friendly Practices is the co-education system in the school".*

c) Teaching Method: R 7 and R 8 responded that *"the Gender Friendly Practices are the teaching methods in the classroom having both genders".*

4.1.2. Theme 2: Teaching Approaches:

The sub-themes are:
a) Activities
b) Lecture
c) Group
d) Test
e) Life Example

The researcher asked about the students' performance to the teaching approaches which the commonly use in the classroom and which teaching approaches encourage both girls and boys. The respondents of part of this study, the researcher asked to know about in-depth knowledge and detail of their responses.

a) **Activities:** The R1, R3, R4, R6, and R10 described that *"students' learn more through activity teaching approach and they equally participate and show interest in all type of activities which I commonly use in the classroom".*

b) **Lecture:** R7 and R9 responded that *"the students commonly participate equally in lecture method teaching approach because they listen to me carefully and answer the question effectively which I use to ask them in the classroom during the lecture".*

c) **Group:** R2 responded that *"both girls and boys equally participate in the group activity teaching approach which I commonly use in the classroom".*

d) **Test:** R5 responded that *"I usually prefer quizzes and tests in my classroom for teaching approach to make them participate equally in my classroom".*

e) **Life Experiences:** R8 responded that *"I use life examples in the classroom during my lecture. So, through this both gender students participate and share their ideas and life experiences equally in the classroom"*

4.1.3. Theme 3: Feedback Mechanism from Students:

The sub-themes are:
a) Activity method
b) Formative assessment
c) Questioning

To collect information regarding question what mechanism do you use to get feedback from your students?

a) **Activity Method:** The respondents R1, R3, R4 say "*I get feedback from student through activities method. Students take interest and enjoy it a lot.*"

b) **Formative Assessment:** The respondents R2 and R10 say: I get feedback during class from student to know that student take interest or understand the lesson.

c) **Questioning:** The respondents R5, R6, R7, R8 and R9 say "*I ask questions from student to get feedback and this is a best way to know what student learn or not"*

4.2. Descriptive Note of Observation Checklist:

The descriptive notes of checklist shows the Teaching Mechanisms of teacher towards the students throughout the period of observation, the first thing which I have observed was either the Who do you think give more attention in your classroom 75% boys and 25% girls were gain attention.

The second thing which I have observed was either the Who do you think talks more or in general dominates the class 60% boys and 40% girls dominate in classroom.

The third thing which I have observed was either the During group activities, who were the leaders in your classroom or learning activities might be more efficient 50%boy and 50% girls equal level of learning in classroom. In classroom 20% boys and 80%   girls participates during lecture.

35% boys and 65% girls follow the rules of the classroom. 80% boys and 20% girls' strategies that helpful for teacher use in the classroom.

The last thing which I have observed was either in your classroom, activities were common interests 75% boys and 25% girls of teacher for student.

, the Teacher's Behavior towards the students throughout the period of observation, the first thing which researchers have observed was either the behavior of teacher is friendly or not 90% of teachers have showed friendly behavior towards the students in the classroom but 10% teachers were not so friendly with their students throughout in the classroom.

The second thing which researcher have observe was the teaching both genders in same way, so the results were that 75% of the teacher were teaching both of them in a same way and 25% of the teacher make differences in the both genders.

The next thing researchers have observed about the teacher's control on themselves from sexually harassment to his students. So, the results were that 95% of teachers did not sexually harass the students but 5% of the teachers sexually harass the students.

The next point researcher has observed about the school's rules and regulations for the sexual harassment on the students, so the results were 100% all the schools have rules and regulation for the sexual harassment on the students in the school. The last point in this table is to check about the gender friendly practices in the school so the 80% schools have the Gender Friendly Practices while 20% schools did not have it.

4.2.1. Infrastructure:

Infrastructure of the school throughout the period of observation, the first thing which researchers have observed that It is helpful to have separate play activities for girls and boys the results were 5% of schools have separate play activities for girls and boys while 95% of schools did not have separate play activities for girls and boys.

The second thing which researcher have observe was separate and adequate toilets for both boys and girls, so the results were 100% not because all the schools did not have separate and adequate toilets for both boys and girls.

The next thing researchers have observed the classroom's instructional environment is friendly, so the results were 85% of the classrooms friendly instructional environment while 15% schools did not have the friendly instructional environment in classrooms. The next point researchers have observed about the classroom arrangement according to the taste of the students, so the results were 55% classrooms have been arranged according to the taste of the students while 45% of the classrooms have not arranged according to the taste of the students.

The other thing researcher have observed about the gender equality in classroom is important or not so, the results were that 100% of the teacher think that gender equality is important in classroom. The last point in this table is to check about the students were active in the classroom at the end of the school so the results were that 35% students have been active in classroom at the end of the school while 75% students did not active in classroom at the end of the school.

4.3. Major Findings and Discussion

This study investigated the factors lies behind the gender friendly practice by taking interview from the teachers of the school. There are very few researches conducted in Pakistan with reference to gender friendly practice. The qualitative method was used to for gathering data. The present study also aimed to investigate gender inclusion within a specific classroom environment, uncovering the teacher's understanding of the role of gender within a primary classroom.

The research will also record one teacher's awareness of gender and how they incorporate gender into their teaching and learning experiences, observing classroom events and interactions for evidence of gendered learning and behavior. For this semi-structured interview was conducted to explore the in-depth knowledge from teachers who already teach in school, and also observed them.

The collected information from semi-structured was transcribed and analyzed with All the data obtained from semi-structured interview was transcribed and analyzed by thematic analysis and frequency tabulation.

Hopefully, the analysis of this study will be helpful for students who were teaching in schools because they would be able to know the factors lies behind the gender friendly practices at primary level classroom

4.3.1. Interview:

The findings drawn from teacher's perception regarding gender friendly classroom practices have shown that they were not much aware of this concept. The all teachers were almost 7 to 15 years experienced and many of them have said that Gender Friendly Practices were "the both student boys and girls are equal in the classroom" and some teachers said that "the Gender Friendly Practices are the teaching methods in the classroom having both genders" While the past studies reported that the Gender Friendly Practices are "The goal (of gender friendly classrooms) is not to treat boys and girls equally, but to create equity by purposefully addressing the particular needs of each gender." (Kommer, David. (July/August 2006). The findings show that teachers are less aware of the concept of Gender Friendly Practices in the classroom.

The researcher has learnt that teacher's awareness of gender friendly practices were not well theorized and it remained an area that little thought was given to beyond practical dimensions such as class ratios, seating positions and teaching and learning activities. Although the teachers were aware of learning styles associated with genders, they already formed educational philosophy dominated their

design of learning experiences which, they stated, more than likely favored so-called male learning styles. Therefore, researchers can conclude that with more knowledge, comes more awareness, and more skills lead to teachers including gender friendly as a significant factor within their planning, teaching and reflection.

4.3.2. Observation:

This was the most open-ended component of the research, as this question relied mostly upon my observations and analysis of the teachers' practices those gendered learning experiences that have been described in the observations. Although we have learnt a lot from these observational analyses, we found out more about the children's assumed ideas about gender, rather than how gender impacts upon their education.

The findings drawn from the observation such as Teaching Mechanisms in which we have observed about the gender friendly teacher practices in classroom among boys and girls through which results have shown that boys were more attentive and dominant in the class, while girls were active, participative and followed the rules more efficiently in the classroom then the boys.

Based on our observations and their responses, our conclusion is that the children were well aware of gender in the social dimension of the classroom and that whether you are a boy or a girl makes a significant difference in your friends, how you are disciplined, what you play at recess, and what you say you are interested in. However, not one child referred to gender influencing what, or how, they learn or whether the teacher treats them differently outside of discipline.

We have come to the view that analysis of gender is something that must be explicitly taught (at this age) and that teacher behavior may need to be more obvious (than what we have observed) for students to truly understand gender bias within their learning environment.

5. Conclusion:

The following conclusions present the base on findings drowns from the current research. The study has concluded that the factors that make gender friendly practices effective. It also reported the positive and negative factors of the gender friendly practice. It has concluded that all the stakeholders (teachers and student) behavior and relation is very important factor of efficient gender friendly practices.

Data analyzed show that gender friendly practices have important during classroom. The finding shows that all responses say that "yes the gender equality is important. At this age when student learns about the gender equality concept that help in future." GFP help student to make confident and help in gender awareness. Supporting both girls and boys in their learning. Give each student equal attention and equally specific feedback.

Give all students equal attention in advising and mentoring in gender friendly practices. As the participant said that *"I get feedback from student through activities method. I take test quiz of course completion from student to get feedback from class"*. *"I ask questions from student to get feedback and this is a best way to know what student learn or not"*.

Inequities in teacher attention and class participation begin long before a student walks into your classroom; however, these patterns can be changed. The studies mentioned previously, which showed male students receiving more classroom attention from both male and female teachers, also found teachers who observed these behaviors on videotape and participated in structured training changed their behaviors. Afterwards, the teachers called on male and female students in nearly equal proportions and gave more precise responses to all students' comments, thus helping them further develop their thoughts.

As shows, the Teacher's Behavior towards the students the behavior of teacher is friendly or not 90% of teachers have showed friendly behavior towards the students in the classroom but 10% teachers were not so friendly with their students throughout in the classroom. Teacher responded to these extra measures quite positively, which benefited the overall quality of class discussion.

The study recommends that it is crucial demand of conducting other researches to have profile of factors of effective gender friendly practices in classroom. To accomplish inclusive information about the factors of gender friendly practices in classroom, there is requirement conducting other research methods like observations and longitudinal studies.

For provision of clear and detailed knowledge, there is also need of conducting researches on various factors influencing the effectiveness of gender friendly practices in classroom such as effect of environment on class and school, student's achievement, school goals and behavior of teachers.

In the qualitative part of the study researcher used interview tool with teacher but the participant size was small so the participant size of teacher should be increased to attain detailed information in term of factors of effective gender friendly practices in classroom. Keeping in mind the significance of gender friendly practices in classroom, it should be considered as a course and given more important as it demands.

There is requirement of updating the methodology of gender friendly practices in classroom and increasing the number of workshops for capacity of building effective gender friendly practices in classroom.

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