A Study on Globalization and Women's Education in Asia

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Abstract: This article aims to analyze the development and shortcomings in women's education in Asia during the past two decades. Asian women students have been subjected to numerous forms of discrimination and unequal treatment in school and the global labor market, despite the efforts of educators, politicians, and many related stakeholders. The article first critically examines several theories of globalization and education from the perspective of equity. It then analyzes several typical pieces of study on the obstacles that Asian women students encounter both before and after graduation to draw implications for future research.

Keywords: Globalization; Women's education; Education in Asia

1. Introduction

Globalization and its central ideology, neoliberalism, have a considerable impact on education in the twenty-first century, with education being increasingly intertwined with the financial and economic aspects of society. In today's environment of commercialization and market dominance, policymakers around the world are attempting to strike a balance between promoting economic growth and supporting equity and human rights. Meanwhile, many important stakeholders, particularly university students and educators, make every effort to stay away from the mainstream of privatization and decentralization in order to prevent devaluing specific disciplines (those are not directly linked to economic growth) and inequity among student groups [1].

The importance of Asian women's education for human rights and equity is highlighted in this annotated bibliography. Despite the efforts of educators and politicians, Asian women students have been subjected to many forms of discrimination and unequal treatment in school and the global labor market. Besides, their requirements for equity have not received the attention they deserve, and the number and scope of relevant research are restricted. This paper is separated into two parts to further analyze this issue. The first section, which serves as a theoretical foundation, critically examines several theories of globalization and education from the perspective of equity. In

the following section, several typical pieces of study on women's education in Asia are analyzed together to draw implications for future research. Given the importance of accessing the global labor market as a fundamental goal of education, the discussion in this article also covers the disadvantages that Asian women students face after graduation in the job market.

2. Theoretical structure to understand the impact of globalization on women's education

2.1. Study by Appadurai (1996)

Appadurai [2] presented an insightful theoretical framework for understanding women's current condition and challenges in modern society. According to Appadurai, the global economy has resulted in disjunctions among economy, culture, and politics, which are represented by five dimensions of global cultural flows: ethnoscapes, technoscapes, financescapes, mediascapes, and ideoscapes. These five dimensions of flow are intertwined with complexity, driven by powerful international cooperations and institutions, and exert varied levels of influence in different global areas based on the uniqueness of local development situations. Appadurai did not mention education or the cultural differences between poor and developed countries in this thesis. Nonetheless, it has significant consequences for understanding relevant education strategies. The research in this paper criticizing "The Girl Effect" program [3] could be an example.

At the end of this chapter, Appadurai mentioned the crisis of unstable families and social culture from the perspective of women. The unstable and ever-changing global political environment requires updating ideologies. Meanwhile, people transcend cultural borders, and the media amplifies public awareness of social conflicts. In this situation, women are under pressure from both their families and society, which forces them to reassess their identities within masculine cultures and "negotiate increasingly harsh conditions of work at home and in the nondomestic workplace" [2]. This tension between family responsibilities and working will be detailed in the following section of this paper. However, Appadurai's examination of women's problems is limited in this chapter, focusing primarily on women's struggles within families and the "honor of women" promoted by the media from a male perspective.

2.2. Study by Rizvi and Lingard (2010)

Rizvi and Lingard [4] examined the problem of gender equity in education in the global South from the policy and societal perspectives in this chapter of the book. The core argument is that women's education in the global South demands not only immediate legislative attention, but also a rethinking of its goals. The development of women's education in the South follows an instrumentalist logic, which trains women with skills because they require lesser wages than males, rather than for their rights: "gender equity appears to be a calculated and efficient strategy to provide corporations with a cheaper source of labor for both local and transnational companies" [4]. This inequity is serious, especially in South Asia, where women's rights are in the worst condition.

The fundamental root reason for this gender inequity, according to Rizvi and Lingard [4], is the neoliberal imaginary and the instrumental economic terms used by its proponents. To change this and enhance the status of women in education, social reform and a rethinking of education's fundamental purpose are required. Rizvi and Lingard [4] discussed the role of the state in developing equity policies and avoiding educational inequity later in the chapter. However, in Asia's less developed regions, local officials are more likely to have a constrained, patriarchal attitude and disregard women's rights to education, thus both government and governance should participate in the creation of a new logic network to guarantee women's rights to education.

2.3. Study by Stromquist and Monkman (2014)

In this introduction to globalization and its effects on the global economy and education, Stromquist and Monkman [1] grouped cultural changes, identity preservation, and challenges to gender equity, noting that, while today's media has reinforced gender stereotypes, gender studies and the concept of gender equity have been circulating rapidly around the world as an important way of transmitting critical knowledge for marginalized people. However, with neoliberalism as the prevailing ideology, the focus of education has shifted away from a student-centered curriculum toward economic training. As a result, several majors in the realm of the liberal arts that were unhelpful for economic development are being neglected and denied in today's higher education. Women are frequently the victims of this disciplinary inequality.

This essay provides insight into the problems that Asian women confront in higher education. The global economy is deeply asymmetric in a complex and intersectional manner, as Stromquist and Monkman pointed out [1]. The North controls the majority of international money flows and promotes homogenizing tendencies in economic growth, education, and many other facets of the global society. The majority of Asian countries are developing nations that have adopted the neoliberal definition and goal of education as a tool for economic development. Local needs should be prioritized in these countries, where women's contributions to higher education and the global job market are undervalued. Stromquist and Monkman [1] did not discuss possible solutions to the weakening of feminist work within the universities by globalization. Still, they did mention counter-efforts to globalization at the end of the article, which calls for strengthening the state. However, these movements are few, and women's education issue is not included in the propaganda.

2.4. Study by Carnoy (2014)

Carnoy [5] stated in this article that two dynamics are driving the development of women's higher education and expanding women's engagement in the labor market. On the one hand, feminist values have pushed for gender equity. On the other side, the growing need for low-cost workers drives more women's participation in the global labor market. As a result, globalization-driven advancements in women's higher education do not result in educational fairness or equitable treatment of female workers in the workplace.

This research is important for understanding the negative consequences of globalization on women's education in developing Asian countries under the surface of prosperity. Women in less developed regions now have more options to receive higher and vocational education as a result of increased use of digital technologies and increased labor immigration (or what Appadurai [2] refers to as the ethnoscapes and technoscapes of flows). However, under neoliberalism and capitalism's dominance, the profit from recruiting women workers is a more powerful key motive for higher education investment, as women are paid less than men, which is especially true in developing countries.

Carnoy [5] claimed that education decisions should be made based on each country's unique situations and national curriculum standards as possible solutions to inequity concerns. Carnoy, like Spreen and Valley [6], emphasized the need to equip teachers with modernized technological skills to support pupils effectively. Higher education must be sponsored more for the public benefit rather than for the profit of international cooperations to eliminate discriminatory treatment of women students in school and after graduation. Virtual universities and MOOCs (massive open online courses) were shown to be unsuccessful in raising higher education quality in this study. However, Carnoy did not suggest any other ways to make beneficial use of technology and global communication to make the public education system more successful for everyone.

2.5. Study by Moeller (2014)

In this study, Moeller [3] criticized the Nike Foundation for funding girls' vocational education programs in Brazil, claiming that although the programs were intended to alleviate poverty and empower young women, in fact, they were problematic and risky for the students involved. According to Moeller, the Nike Foundation invested in these programs primarily to repair the company's reputation for mistreating female employees, and also to meet market demand for low-wage labor. The implementation is solely focused on accountability, ignoring the impact of gender and race intersectionality on young Brazilian women. Worse, the fundamental logic of these programs places the burden of regional development on young women, imposing needless moral obligations on them while denying their "unrealistic" career ambitions.

Moeller's study could serve as a model for women's education in Asia, as Asia is also a low-wage labor supply for transnational firms in the West. Many firms invest in education in poor areas of Asia under the effect of globalization for the sake of their brand and future profit, without addressing the discriminatory status of local participants. Later in the article, Moeller recommended an alternative: instead of teaching basic workplace skills, invest in helping girls pass standardized assessments [3]. This may be useful in Brazil, but it should be reassessed in Asia because the exam difficulty and competition intensity are different in these locations.

2.6. Study by Spreen and Vally (2020)

Spreen and Vally [6] highlighted the issue of violence directed at women and other vulnerable groups in their critical reflection on social and political levels. Rapes of women and children are part of the continued violence, which is accompanied by unequal pay for women in the job and widespread sex and race discrimination in education. As Spreen and Vally pointed out, these factors of violence are deeply rooted in the "political economy of racial and patriarchal capitalism" [6]. The government's corrective actions failed to address the prevalent racism and gender discrimination. The most important reason was "ignoring political history, particularly one that emphasizes the continued struggle against oppression and structural inequality" [6], which implies the importance of understanding and respecting historical facts rather than presenting empty slogans.

Although this study takes place on a different continent, it has lots of implications for studies of women's education in Asia, where a majority of countries are developing countries and have suffered from colonialism and financial difficulties in the history of being marginalized and exploited by Western countries since the beginning of globalization. To combat racism and sexism on both continents, the political-economic and cultural roots of xenophobia and patriarchy must be transformed. Furthermore, because low-income schools lack proper support from the government, instructors are unable to arm young people without themselves first receiving adequate training; therefore, "poverty and pervasive inequality out to be better understood and more intentionally incorporated into the curriculum" [6]. Another problem worth noting is that within relevant social movements, race-based and sex-based discrimination also exist. This article does not offer a solution to solve the problems; however, because political economics is at the root of the concerns raised above, viable solutions might be found in the articles discussed above on the topic of globalization and local economic development.

3. Representative research on globalization and women's education in Asia

3.1. Study by Habu (2000)

Habu [7] conducted interviews with Japanese female university students in the United Kingdom and derived conclusions regarding their motivations and attitudes about studying abroad. Habu focused on the impact of

globalization and commercialization on higher education and people's perceptions of it in this study. There are strong push factors driving women students to leave Japan for education. In Japan, even though women students have equal opportunities to be admitted to universities, there is discrimination against "feminine" disciplines, much similar to the condition of Indian women students in the research by Chanana in the following article in this paper [8]. The job market is also unfriendly to women graduates, who are discouraged from continuing working once they are married and have little opportunity to be promoted into management positions. Socio-cultural factors also cause women under great pressure to pursue independence and individual achievements. In conclusion, although Habu's article did not directly discuss women's education environment in Japan, implications could be drawn from the various reasons for women students leaving the Japanese educational system that are mentioned above.

In discussing the influence of education privatization and commercialization on both universities and students, this study recalls Stromquist and Monkman [1]. Foreign students from Japan are viewed by many British colleges "in financial terms, not as members of a scholar community" [7]. As a result, Japanese female students experienced feelings of alienation and neglect from university officials. Eventually, these female students left a restrictive Japanese school system for Western education, but they were not treated with the respect and care they deserved by today's commercialized universities.

3.2. Study by Chanana (2007)

Chanana [8] systematically collected and evaluated statistics on the number of women students and their proportion in various disciplines in Indian higher education, and described the trends and problems for Indian women's higher education. Under the social current of privatization, the government has reduced investment, leaving higher education depending on funds from the market, industry, and tuition from students, which echoes the research by Rizvi and Lingard on education commercialization [4]. As a result, the developments of disciplinaries are more adapted to the needs of the market. In India, subjects with higher future salaries, such as engineering, commerce, and science, are regarded as "masculine" disciplines, and women students are discouraged from choosing them. Admittedly, in recent years, there have been more women students in traditional "masculine" majors, and the percentage of women graduates and researchers has been increasing. However, women are generally still facing discrimination in higher education.

Women students in India face distinct problems depending on their geographical location, social class, and family background, according to Chanana [8]. Because of the patriarchal socio-cultural setting in which they live, women students are expected to marry after graduation, and their education is oriented toward the marriage market rather than the labor market. Furthermore, private universities for professional education are costly, and students rarely get a return on their investment shortly after graduation. As a result, parents and groom's families rarely allow women from low-income families or underdeveloped regions to pursue higher education. Chanana acknowledged that the government plays a significant role in promoting women's higher education and that it has done so in a disappointing manner. However, in her analysis of data, she did not include the implications for government investment and policies.

3.3. Study by Yeung and Yang (2020)

By analyzing the issue of youth unemployment in developing Asian countries such as China and South Korea, Yeung and Yang [9] criticized the uncertain job market and the educational system that failed to prepare students with the skills required by the market. As global competition intensifies, employee incomes and working conditions have worsened, and more young people in developing countries have become "NEETs" (not in employment, education, or

training). The failure of young graduates to transition to the labor market has its origins in colonial history (such as in Hong Kong) and workplace inequities among racial, gender, and socioeconomic groups.

Yeung and Yang [9] highlighted the difficulties confronted by young women students in China and the Republic of Korea: they are disadvantaged in wages than their male counterparts, and married women have a significantly higher risk of being in NEET. They struggle with a mismatch between what they learn in school and what businesses want. Lower-ranking colleges, as well as social science and humanities areas, are also facing discrimination.

According to Yeung and Yang [9], changing education policies is required to solve the unemployment problem. Women and other excluded groups encounter uncertainty problems in the global job market. As a result, more training, internships, mentoring, and protections for women students and other vulnerable groups are required to foster equity. However, this research in Asia is limited to East Asian countries, ignoring other regions where vulnerable groups of students face similar issues but require different types of support based on their historical and social backgrounds.

3.4. Study by Khoja-Moolji (2021)

Khoja-Moolji [10] presented a practical solution for the promotion of human rights education in Pakistan in this podcast: equipping teachers with a decolonization mindset. Pakistan has a Euro-centric logic of knowledge, with girls' roles constrained under a post-colonized patriarchal framework, due to its colonization history. Khoja-Moolji organized a teacher training program as a volunteer that focused on what she called "politics of knowledge" and aimed to educate teachers in low-income community schools (who are underpaid and unsupported by the government) to recognize and criticize colonialism in and outside of the classroom. Because religion and family play important and unique roles in Pakistani society, they were also included in the discussion in her teacher training program.

Although the government claims to support it, girls' education still relies heavily on outside aid, causing obstacles to education volunteers. As Khoja-Moolji explained, international corporations and their investments in developing countries involve a "network of privilege," which is a type of colonialism in essence. As a result, Khoja-Moolji and her colleagues had to evaluate foreign organizations and corporations critically and selectively engage with them as human rights educators. Otherwise, their programs may be seized by these overseas aid providers, and "then their political edge gets blunt." This is exemplified by Nike's "The Girl Effect" program in Brazil, which dealt with similar issues but achieved little practical progress [3]. However, Khoja-Moolji's program is still in its early stages. She did not mention the future of decolonized teacher training, nor did she provide implications for educators to keep politically independent from international aid providers.

3.5. Study by Maheshwari (2021)

Women leaders in higher education encourage policies supporting women students and offering social models for them, which is crucial for women's education in South Asian nations with substantial gender inequities in both education and the workplace. Maheshwari [11] compared women's leadership in higher education in Western countries with that in Vietnam to draw implications for the strengthening of women's role in Vietnam's higher education realm. Similar to other Asian countries, although Vietnam's economy has witnessed quick growth in recent years, the percentage of unemployed women remains high, and their promotion in the workplace is highly confined [7-9]. As the report demonstrates, there exist impediments in Vietnam, particularly for women, when they complete their studies and move into leadership positions. On a macro level, the dominant socio-cultural perspective demands that women

prioritize their families. Women's accomplishments are also frequently overlooked by educational institutions. On a micro level, internalized stereotypes cause women to lack self-confidence in their abilities. On the contrary, developed Western countries have cultures that are more supportive of women participating in politics, the labor market, and higher education. In conclusion, Maheshwari [11] argued that in Vietnam, women need self-motivation, self-confidence, family support, and social modeling (role models and mentors) to gain success as leaders in higher education.

In Vietnam, the gender gap is widening, according to this report. However, addressing gender inequality in education and workforce participation will take time and effort on the part of the government. Maheshwari emphasized the role of government in the future; however, this study does not address how governments may better promote women's leadership.

3.6. Study by Orazova and Cohen (2021)

Orazova and Cohen [12] interviewed Ayna, a woman from a rural family in Turkmenistan, Central Asia, whose life was transformed by learning the English language. Despite policies in Central Asian countries that encourage women's rights, women students in rural areas continue to be excluded from higher education. Elders in her family discouraged Ayna from pursuing a university education. However, she overcame many obstacles, stuck to her principles, and eventually graduated with honors. Her ability to communicate fluently in English was essential in her achievement since it led to a job and an opportunity for further education. Ayna adopted a Western attitude during her university studies, acknowledged and analyzed gender issues using Western academic thinking, and reflected on the barriers to women in her culture. She became a role model for girls in her home nation as she adopted an English-speaking mindset and joined the English-speaking culture.

Orazova and Cohen [12] emphasized the importance of the English language in Central Asia after the fall of the Soviet Union, which echoes the theory of Appadurai [2] in that in today's world of globalization, social ideology, cultural flows, and the power of countries interacted to make English play a major role as a carrier of Western culture in economically backward Central Asia.

The success of Ayna was studied using liberal feminist theory and investment theory. The former emphasizes her belief in her abilities, whereas the latter focuses on ideology (motivation), identity (community sense of belonging), and capital (social network through which one acquires linguistic knowledge) in learning a second language. In Ayna's story, the role of the teacher/mentor who taught her English and encouraged her to pursue further education played a critical role. However, Orazova and Cohen did not further discuss the educational implications of this fact.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, globalization and its dominating ideology, neoliberalism, have a significant and unique impact on Asian women's education. Within Asian countries, a growing focus on human rights and economic growth has enabled more women to pursue secondary and higher education at home and abroad. However, as the previous study demonstrates, Asian women continue to face significant inequity and prejudice in both education and the workplace. In most regions of Asia, a woman's desire to complete her education is usually discouraged by the elder family members and the dominant social culture, and her college major is heavily influenced by stereotypes of "feminine" and "masculine" disciplines. She is marginalized in the global work market after graduation, and her transfer to leadership is limited. Still, it is worth emphasizing that each Asian country has its own history, religion, economic situation, and other social contexts, all of which have different influences on women's education progress.

Meanwhile, the international community, particularly powerful Western corporations and institutions, plays a

critical role in this scenario. In many circumstances, instead of investing in human rights, they invest in women's education in developing Asian countries to cultivate workers who require lower wages. Similarly, when government funding decreases and worldwide rankings become increasingly important, many Western universities admit more international students for profit without providing them with the respect and support they need. In conclusion, both domestic and international factors have hindered women's education and their pursuit of gender equity.

To overcome this gender inequity problem, both domestic and international initiatives are required. Curriculums must be revised to properly prepare female students for entry into the global workforce. Policies must be developed to increase the salary of female graduates in the workplace. When receiving international aid, local policymakers should insist on promoting education for the sake of human rights rather than succumbing to commercialism and neoliberalism. Furthermore, the traditional parochial social culture must become more accessible, appreciating women's contributions as self-sufficient citizens.

This paper included studies on Japan, India, China, the Republic of Korea, Pakistan, Vietnam, and Turkmenistan, but not on other places that are similarly important. Local government policy and funding are equally crucial in the growth of education and hence could serve as a research topic in the future. This paper concentrates on higher education and vocational education for women; however, compulsory and secondary education are as important in the advancement of women's rights and could be a focus for future research. Furthermore, like Ayna's English teacher did in Orazova and Cohen's [12] research, more research may include the perspective of teachers and school employees in building a supportive atmosphere for women and other oppressed groups of students.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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