





## THE INFLUENCE OF PATRIARCHAL CULTURE ON WOMEN'S ACCESS TO EDUCATION

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#### **Abstract**

This research explores the influence of patriarchal culture on women's access to education and the role of education in changing gender stereotypes. Using a qualitative approach, data was collected through interviews, observations, and case studies at SMA Unggulan Al-Azhar Medan. The results show that gender stereotypes still limit women's access to education, but gender equality-based education plays an important role in changing these perceptions. Challenges in implementing equal education include cultural resistance and lack of gender-related teacher training.

Keywords: patriarchy, gender stereotypes, gender equality, education.

#### I. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background

Patriarchal culture is still a big challenge in creating equal access between men and women, especially in education. Patriarchy, in general, refers to a social system where men have greater dominance in almost every aspect of social life, including in the realm of education. In patriarchal societies, women are often limited by gender stereotypes that shape traditional views of their roles. These stereotypes consider women more suited to domestic roles, such as caring for the family and taking care of the household, while public roles, such as formal employment and leadership, are more identified with men. As a result, women's access to education is often hindered as their roles are deemed irrelevant outside of the domestic sphere (Mills 2019).

The patriarchal system effectively reinforces these gender stereotypes by discouraging women from participating in higher education or fields that are considered to be the domain of men. In patriarchal societies, education is often prioritised for boys as they are seen as the successors of the family and the main breadwinners. Women, on the other hand, are expected to marry and perform domestic duties, hence their need to attend school is considered less pressing. Even in the modern era, many women in different parts of the world still face structural barriers to accessing education, which in turn reduces their opportunities to improve their economic and social status (Schippers 2021).

However, education has a very important role in empowering women and creating social change. Equal access to education for women not only helps them develop skills and knowledge, but also enables them to challenge restrictive social norms. Research shows that education is a key tool for dismantling patriarchal structures, as through education, women can raise their critical awareness of gender inequality and participate in social transformation. Education has also been shown to improve women's economic well-being, which in turn has a

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positive impact on the family and society as a whole (Johnson 2020). Thus, education is not only a basic right that every individual should have, but also an important catalyst in the effort to create a more just and equal society.

#### 1.2 Problem Formulation

In the study of the influence of patriarchal culture on women's access to education, there are several fundamental issues that need to be further analysed. Although education is recognised as an important tool for social change, women in many societies still face barriers caused by gender stereotypes and patriarchal norms. Therefore, two main questions arise in trying to understand the role of education in creating such change.

- 1. How can education break down gender stereotypes?
- 2. What is the role of education in changing the perception of patriarchal culture?

#### 1.3 Research Objectives

This research aims to provide a deeper understanding of the role of education in creating social change, especially in relation to issues of gender and patriarchy. There are two main objectives to be achieved in this research.

- 1. Explain the relationship between education and gender stereotypes.
- 2. Identifying educational strategies to overcome patriarchy

#### **II. Literature Review**

#### 2.1 Concept of Gender Stereotypes

Gender stereotypes refer to views that limit individuals in roles and behaviours based on their gender. In this context, men are often associated with traits such as strength and leadership, while women are associated with gentleness and domestic roles. This view, Gender stereotypes, according to Eagly and Wood (2012), are social representations that direct society's expectations of "appropriate" roles for men and women, and reinforce the division of labour by gender.

Gender stereotypes have rigid characteristics and are difficult to change. From an early age, individuals are taught through family, media and education to conform to these norms, which often limits their opportunities, especially in fields that are considered male domains, such as STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths). Research also shows that gender stereotypes play an important role in shaping social perceptions and can hinder women's progress in education and careers (Petersen & Hyde 2017).

The negative impact of gender stereotypes is evident in various sectors of life, including education. When women are deemed unsuitable for careers in certain fields, such as technology or science, it reinforces existing inequalities and hinders the achievement of gender equality in society (Bian et al. 2017).

#### 2.2 Patriarchal Culture

Patriarchy is a social system that places men as the dominant authority in family and community structures. In this system, men are given more decision-making power in both the private and public spheres, while women are often placed in subordinate positions. Patriarchy functions as a system that organises gender inequality, with men holding control over economic, political and social resources (Hirschmann, 2020). The history of patriarchy stems from social shifts that occurred in prehistoric times, when societies shifted from a matrilineal system (maternal descent) to a patrilineal system (paternal descent). This shift cemented social norms that reinforced male dominance in various aspects of life.

Over time, patriarchy developed into an accepted norm in social, political and economic structures, affecting almost every aspect of human life, from households to governments (Ruddick, 2020). The impact of patriarchy on gender and society is vast. In the context of gender, patriarchy reinforces inequality by placing women in an inferior position to men, both







within the family and at work. Patriarchy creates patterns of structural inequality that affect almost every aspect of women's lives, including access to education, health and employment opportunities (Fletcher, 2022). At the social level, patriarchy not only restricts women but also reinforces men's role as rulers, which in turn exacerbates the gender gap (Hirschmann, 2020). As such, patriarchal systems have a major impact on women's social and economic lives, reinforcing restrictions on their roles and opportunities. Although societies have evolved, many social and cultural structures still maintain patriarchal principles, hindering progress towards gender equality (Ruddick, 2020).

#### 2.3 Education as a tool

Education can be a very important instrument in creating social change, including in the pursuit of gender equality. One theory that is often used to explain the role of education in social change is critical education theory, developed by Paulo Freire. According to Freire (2021), education not only serves to transfer knowledge, but also as a tool of liberation that allows individuals to rethink and change unjust social conditions, including gender inequality. In this approach, learning processes based on dialogue and critical reflection are considered vital to empower students to see and correct the injustices around them.

Gender equality-based education can play a central role in challenging and changing social norms that reinforce gender stereotypes. Fischer and Nair (2022) point out that inclusive education gives women the opportunity to develop their full potential, which in turn can improve their social and economic position in society. This is particularly important because, despite shifts in access to education, gender inequalities still persist, both within the educational environment and outside of it. However, the biggest challenge remains in the context of the patriarchal culture that still exists in many societies. An education system that does not accommodate gender equality issues can actually reinforce these inequalities. Therefore, it is important for the education system to integrate gender equality perspectives in the curriculum and daily educational practices. Keddie (2020) argues that education that promotes gender awareness can create more inclusive social change and reduce inequality between men and women.

#### III. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Research Approach

This research uses a qualitative approach to explore in depth the influence of patriarchal culture on women's access to education. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore complex and nuanced issues, such as gender stereotypes and patriarchy, which are difficult to measure with quantitative methods. The holistic and descriptive nature of qualitative research is highly relevant to the focus of this study, which seeks to understand women's perceptions and experiences in dealing with gender inequality in education. The qualitative approach allows researchers to explore the deeper meanings of the lived experiences of individuals and groups, and how they interpret social issues such as patriarchy that are deep in cultural structures. Saldaña (2021) states that this approach is very effective for uncovering patterns of behaviour.

This method allows the researcher to gain a more comprehensive insight into how patriarchal culture shapes women's access to education and the meanings that lie behind social interactions, as well as providing a broader explanation of the social and cultural contexts that influence gender inequality. Therefore, this method allows researchers to gain a more comprehensive insight into how patriarchal culture shapes women's access to education. The choice of a qualitative approach in this study is based on the need to understand individuals' subjective perceptions and experiences related to very deep and contextual issues, namely

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patriarchal culture and gender equality in education. These issues involve social and cultural factors that cannot always be measured quantitatively. Marshall and Rossman (2016) argue that qualitative research gives researchers the freedom to explore participants' personal experiences and understanding of social issues that occur around them. In this case, the research aims to reveal how women interpret and deal with barriers that arise due to patriarchal culture in their educational context. This approach also allows researchers to use various data collection methods, such as in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, which are highly relevant to exploring personal narratives of women's experiences in accessing education. As suggested by Flick (2020), qualitative research allows researchers to explore a deeper range of perspectives and relate them to the broader social context, including the influence of patriarchal norms that exist in society. This allows the research to create a more holistic understanding of how patriarchal culture affects women's access to education and how education can be a tool for social change.

#### 3.2 Data collection techniques

In-depth interviews were used to explore the views and experiences of individuals directly related to patriarchal culture and gender equality in education. This technique allows researchers to obtain more detailed and in-depth information about women's perceptions, challenges and expectations of the education system. Creswell (2018) emphasises that in-depth interviews are a very useful method in qualitative research because they allow researchers to uncover the meaning contained in individual experiences through an open and flexible question and answer process. In the context of this study, in-depth interviews aim to explore women's experiences of gender stereotypes and patriarchal social structures that affect their access to education.

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In this research context, in-depth interviews aim to explore women's experiences in dealing with gender stereotypes and patriarchal social structures that affect their access to education. Participatory observation was conducted to obtain a direct picture of the social dynamics in the educational context. By becoming part of the educational environment, researchers can observe the interaction between students and educators, as well as how patriarchal norms can emerge in daily practice. This observation provides a clearer insight into how patriarchal culture influences behaviour and interactions within educational spaces. As explained by Bloor and Wood (2020), participatory observation allows the researcher to experience from the inside and gain a more holistic understanding of the social phenomenon under study.

Case studies are used to analyse in depth one or more educational situations faced with a patriarchal culture. We chose a case study because it allows us to explore the phenomenon in its more specific and focused context. By using this approach, researchers can see how patriarchal issues are applied in certain settings, as well as their impact on women in education. Yin (2018) states that case studies are an effective method in qualitative research because they provide a thorough and detailed description of a phenomenon in a particular context, which in this case is the influence of patriarchy in education

#### 3.3 Data analysis

In this study, data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis techniques. This technique was used to identify, analyse and report patterns or themes that emerged from the







data collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation and case studies. Thematic analysis allows researchers to explore issues related to patriarchy, gender stereotypes and women's access to education in a more in-depth and structured manner. Thematic analysis was used to examine the qualitative data obtained from interviews, observations and case studies in this study. The data obtained from these various sources will be analysed by identifying the main themes that emerge in the conversations and narratives of the respondents. Braun and Clarke (2021) explain that thematic analysis allows researchers to organise data into more structured themes, which can provide deep insights into the patterns present in the data. In this study, thematic analysis aims to identify how patriarchal culture affects women's access to education and how gender stereotypes are constructed and maintained in the education system. To maintain data quality and credibility, this research applies the principles of validity and reliability in the process of data collection and analysis. Validity in qualitative research refers to the extent to which research findings reflect the reality in the field, or how well the data describes the phenomenon being studied.

Creswell (2018) emphasises the importance of triangulation in qualitative research to ensure data validity, which means using various data collection techniques (such as interviews, observations, and case studies) to obtain a more holistic view and minimise bias. Reliability in qualitative research, on the other hand, refers to the consistency in research results, even if it is conducted by different researchers at different times. Patton (2015) suggests maintaining reliability by recording in detail the research process and decision-making in each stage, from data collection to analysis. In this study, to ensure reliability, the researcher will conduct member checking, which is returning the interview results to the respondents to verify the truth and accuracy of the information obtained.

#### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 Research Findings

This study revealed that students' perceptions of gender stereotypes tend to be influenced by deeply rooted social norms in society. Most students, especially females, revealed that they experience barriers in accessing education that is equal to men. Deep-seated gender stereotypes place women in domestic roles and consider higher education more relevant for men. One female student explained:

"In our neighbourhood, education for women is often not considered important. My parents used to prioritise my younger brother's education because they thought women should stay at home and help with household chores" (Sahisha Thursina, Interview, 2024).

On the other hand, male students, although not always explicitly aware of this, tended to exhibit beliefs that still maintain male dominance in education. For example, one male student added, "Sometimes I feel that men are more deserving of better educational opportunities, because they will lead the family in the future" (Dimas Nugraha, Interview, 2024).

#### 4.2 Discussion

Education plays a crucial role in the formation of students' gender identity. As is known, gender identity is formed through interactions with the surrounding environment, including family, friends, and educational institutions. In this context, schools are one of the main places that shape students' mindsets regarding gender roles in society. Based on the research findings, most students realise that the values instilled through formal education can influence the way they view gender roles in everyday life. Education based on gender equality can change stereotypical views on the roles of men and women. For example, female students in this study revealed that they felt more motivated to pursue higher education and careers after gaining an understanding of the importance of equal access to education. This is in line with previous findings showing that education that introduces gender equality can help

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students form a more egalitarian identity (Damar, 2020). However, while education has the potential to shape more equal gender identities, there are still major challenges in implementing equality education. For example, although the curriculum has integrated gender equality issues, some students and teachers still carry traditional views of gender roles, which ultimately affect classroom interactions.

Teachers and curriculum have a very significant role in breaking down gender stereotypes. As agents of change, teachers not only function as conveyors of knowledge, but also as role models in modelling attitudes of gender equality. Based on interviews with several teachers in this study, most recognised the importance of integrating gender equality values in the learning process. One teacher stated:

"As educators, we have to be role models for students. If we talk about gender equality, we have to make sure that it is reflected in every aspect of the education we provide, both in the teaching materials and the way we interact with students" (Bura Khaira, Interview, 2024). A curriculum that supports gender equality serves to formally introduce the concept to students. A curriculum based on gender equality can help eliminate stereotypes that place women in an inferior position compared to men. However, in reality, the implementation of a gender equality curriculum often encounters obstacles. For example, some schools still do not fully implement a curriculum that accommodates gender equality, while others consider it a less important topic. According to research by Adiwijaya (2022), although the gender equality curriculum is increasingly being integrated in education, the implementation gap in the field remains a major challenge that hinders the achievement of gender equality goals in education.

The implementation of gender equality education still faces various structural and cultural challenges. One of the biggest challenges is the resistance from communities and families who view women's education as less important. Most parents and community members are still bound by traditional norms that women should stay at home and take care of the family rather than pursue higher education or a career. In addition, unequal access to education between women and men in some areas remains a barrier. Although formal education has been introduced, not all girls have equal opportunities to access quality education. access to quality education. This is often due to economic factors, where girls are seen as a source of labour at home or in more "practical" jobs, such as taking care of the household or helping on the farm, rather than being sent to school. Another challenge is the lack of training for teachers on how to integrate gender equality issues in learning. Most teachers have not received adequate training in gender equality-based education and are therefore less effective in teaching and practising the value of equality in everyday life in the classroom. In this case, education for teachers is crucial in order to create a more inclusive and equal space for all students, regardless of their gender.

#### V. CASE STUDY

#### 5.1 Successful education programmes

### A. School Against Bullying (SMA UNGGULAN AL- AZHAR Medan) Background

SMA Unggulan Al-Azhar Medan is known for its commitment in creating an educational environment that is free from bullying and supports diversity. One of the social issues that needs to be addressed is patriarchy, which affects many aspects of students' lives, including bullying behaviour. Gender-based bullying is often rooted in patriarchal norms that require men and women to act according to certain social expectations. Therefore, SMA Unggulan Al-Azhar Medan launched the "School Against Bullying in the Context of Patriarchy" programme, which aims to reduce bullying rooted in patriarchal views, as well as promote gender equality in the school environment.

#### **Programme Objective**

1. Reduce Patriarchal and Gender Based Bullying: The programme aims to reduce bullying arising from patriarchal norms, such as bullying of female students who are perceived as







not conforming to traditional gender roles or bullying of males who are perceived as not masculine enough.

- 2. Raising Awareness on the Negative Effects of Patriarchy: This programme aims to educate students on the negative effects of patriarchal views on bullying and how this can undermine equality and social relations between genders.
- 3. Establish an Equal Environment Free from Gender Discrimination: This programme aims to create a school that is free from bullying and gender discrimination, and change the mindset of students to appreciate the different gender roles in society.

#### **Programme Implementation:**

- 1. Discussion and Workshop on Patriarchy and Gender Stereotypes: The school organises open discussions and workshops that discuss patriarchy, how it plays a role in shaping social expectations of gender, and how these views can trigger bullying in schools. These workshops provide a space for students to talk about their experiences with bullying rooted in patriarchal values, such as bullying of women who are perceived as weak or men who are perceived as not "masculine" enough.
- 2. Mentoring and Counselling for Cases of Patriarchal Bullying: School counselling services provide special support for students who are victims of gender-based and patriarchal bullying. School counsellors play a role in assisting students to overcome the psychological impact of bullying rooted in patriarchal norms. In addition, counsellors also work with parents and teachers to resolve cases of bullying that arise due to patriarchal influences, with an educational and understanding-based approach

# B. Case Study of the "Anti-Bullying and Gender Equality Campus" Programme at the University of North Sumatra (USU) Background

Universitas Sumatera Utara (USU) is a university committed to creating an inclusive and equal environment, free from violence, including gender-based bullying. In an effort to address the issue of bullying and champion gender equality, USU launched the Anti-Bullying and Gender Equality Campus programme, which focuses on creating safe spaces and educating students to avoid bullying behaviour associated with patriarchal views.

#### **Programme Objectives**

- 1. Reducing Patriarchal-Based Bullying on Campus: The programme aims to reduce bullying behaviours rooted in patriarchal structures, such as bullying of female students who are perceived as not conforming to norms of masculinity or bullying of male students who do not meet patriarchal expectations.
- 2. Raising Awareness of Gender Equality: This programme focuses on raising student awareness about the importance of gender equality on campus and the negative impact of patriarchal systems that encourage gender-based bullying.
- 3. Creating a Safe and Fair Campus for All Genders: This programme seeks to create a campus free from gender discrimination, so that all students feel safe to express themselves without fear of judgement or discrimination.

#### **Programme Implementation:**

1. Gender Equality and Patriarchy Recognition Training to Students and Lecturers: Training and seminars were held for students and lecturers on gender equality and the negative impact of a patriarchal system that reinforces gender stereotypes and bullying behaviour. This activity not only explains the basic concepts of patriarchy and gender equality, but also provides insight into how patriarchal mindsets affect inter-gender interactions on campus.

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- 2. Gender Equality and Patriarchal Anti-Bullying Campaign: The campus organised a campaign that educated students about gender-based bullying and the importance of equality. The campaign utilised a variety of media, including posters, infographics, and videos that conveyed messages about the impact of patriarchal bullying and how students can combat it. The campaign content focused on raising awareness that bullying not only harms the victim, but also reinforces injustices that arise from patriarchal stereotypes.
- 3. Establishment of an "Anti-Bullying and Gender Equality" Student Group: Under the supervision of the faculty, a student group was formed to educate and support fellow students in dealing with cases of gender-based bullying. The group is active in organising activities such as discussions, seminars, and forums to discuss issues of patriarchy and bullying on campus. They also liaise with campus institutions and outside parties in addressing issues of bullying and gender equality.
- 4. Assistance and Counselling Services for Patriarchy-Based Bullying Cases: The university provides counselling services that specifically deal with cases of gender-based bullying that may occur among students. Campus counsellors are given special training to handle cases related to patriarchy and gender equality. Students who feel they are victims of patriarchal bullying can access this service for help and support.
- 5. Collaboration with External Organisations: USU collaborates with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and government agencies working on gender equality to develop related programmes and policies. This collaboration aims to expand the impact of campus programmes by involving outside perspectives.

#### 5.2 Programme impact analysis

#### A. Programme impact at SMA Unggulan Al-Azhar Medan:

#### **Changes in Students' Attitudes**

- 1. Increased Student Awareness of Gender Equality: The Anti-Bullying School Programme at SMA Unggulan Al-Azhar Medan, theintegrated with efforts to combat patriarchal bullying behaviour, encourages students to become more aware of the importance of gender equality. Students who previously may not have been sensitive to gender-based bullying or understood the role of patriarchy in reinforcing bullying, are now starting to show a more sensitive and caring attitude towards this issue.
- 2. Increased Empathy and Social Responsibility: With education on gender equality and the impact of the patriarchal system, these high school students developed a greater sense of empathy towards others, especially those who are victims of gender-based bullying. This influences their attitude to be more responsive and proactive in responding to bullying behaviour in their environment.
- 3. Reduction in Bullying Behaviour: One of the most significant impacts of this programme is the decrease in bullying among students. Students who previously engaged in bullying behaviours, both verbal and physical, began to reduce these attitudes as they understood the impact on victims and recognised that bullying is a form of violence that should not be condoned.

#### **Impact on Campus Community:**

- 1. A More Inclusive and Friendly Campus Environment: The most visible impact is the creation of a more inclusive and welcoming campus environment for all students, regardless of gender. The programme creates an atmosphere where students feel freer to interact and develop their potential without fear of discrimination or bullying.
- 2. Increased Engagement in Equality Activism: Many students who were not previously active in gender equality-related organisations or discussions became more involved in this activism after the programme. They formed student groups advocating for gender equality and against patriarchal bullying, strengthening solidarity networks on campus.



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3. Involvement of Lecturers and Staff in Promoting an Equal Campus Culture: The programme not only focuses on students, but also encourages lecturers and staff to be more active in promoting equality values. They are involved in trainings and seminars that discuss gender equality and anti-bullying, which makes them more sensitive and able to provide support to students in need.

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