



Breaking the Hurdles of Women-Centric Oppression of Education as Expressed in “I am Malala”

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Abstract

This article explores the audacious journey of Malala Yousafzai’s women’s rights and “I Am Malala”. It probes into the themes of the book and highlights the struggles and triumphs of Malala’s life and her strong advocacy for girls’ education. It discusses the international impact of Malala’s story and the changes in education policies worldwide. “I Am Malala” emphasizes the transformative power of education. Malala argues that education is a way to acquire knowledge and to empower individuals to challenge the stereotypical social norms, poverty and pessimism in society. She evince a rallying cry for gender equality and illustrates the potential of every person in shaping the world. “I Am Malala” is a testament to the power of education in the face of hardship. Her autobiography is a powerful reminder for every child to access quality education. Her advocacy continues to echo globally creating a positive social change among countless individuals to support the rights of girls’ education and freedom in action. Hence, the article decodes the moral power and vision of Malala as expressed in “I Am Malala”.

Keywords: Malala Yousafzai, *I Am Malala*, Women's Rights, Education, Freedom.

Introduction

Malala Yousafzai was born in Pakistan in the year 1997. She defied the stereotypical societal norms and the atrocities of a brutal terrorist group to get the rights for girls’ education. By her father’s motivation, in the age of 11, she started to blog for the BBC. She shared her experiences in her valley under the pseudonym Gul Makai. Her writings open light on the Taliban’s tyrannical regime in the Swat Valley. She continued to advocate for girls’ education despite death threats and pressure. In her autobiography, “I Am Malala”, Malala recounts her story of spirit, willpower and the power of education. It reveals the challenges she faced in a patriarchal society that destabilized the rights of girls for many centuries. The autobiography unveils the important moment in Malala’s life at the age of 15 when she was targeted by the Taliban and was shot in the head while travelling to home from school. This horrific event never diluted her rather than Malala propelled to rally for education activism. “I Am Malala” stands as a testament to the spirit of Malala’s fight against women-centric oppression in education and social life. She states, “My father only gave me the name Malala. He didn’t make me Malala. I chose this life and now I must continue it” (Yousafzai & Lamb, 2013, p. 25). This statement highlights her foresight, autonomy and strength in pursuing her ambition to liberate women from the stereotypical clutches of patriarchy. The book portrays the traumatic experiences and obstinate determination of Malala and opens an alarm on gender-based oppression and subjugation and the need for sustainable change.

Review of Literature

“I Am Malala” (2013) recounts Malala’s experiences to her readers. She’s a strong



advocate for girls' education and freedom. Malala illuminates the stereotypic norms of the Taliban, who stopped girls' education opportunities in SWAT Valley.

Akhtar, S. (2019), "Education and Development: From Conventional Pedagogies to the Transcending Consciousness" investigated Malala's struggles to justify the role of education as an influential mode for ultimate social change. Akhtar registers Malala's ideas that emphasize the need for girls' education in Pakistan to attain empowerment and liberation.

Iqbal, S. Z. (2018), "Biography of Malala Yousafzai and its Impact on the Restoration of Women's Rights," studied the importance of Malala's story as an epithet of the global struggle for women's rights and gender equality in education.

Kalemi, M. (2018), "Breaking the Silence: Stories of Muslim Women on Societal Issues," portrays Malala's strong opposition to women-centric oppression in education in Pakistan under Taliban influence. It also addresses the obstacles that prevent girls from studying.

Aziz, F., & Thapar-Björkert, S. (2017). "Gender equality through education: Integrating theory, research, and literature review" highlights the intersecting forms of oppression faced by women and girls in patriarchal societies, specifically targeting education as a tool for their empowerment

(Mehra, P., 2017). "Gender equality and women's empowerment in India—status and challenges." studied the cultural and historical context surrounding Malala's memoir, offering insights into the patriarchal structures, oppressive norms, and societal expectations that perpetuate women-centric oppression in education.

El-Nady, G. (2016), in the paper entitled "I am Malala: Storytelling, Activism, and the Fight for Girls' Education" speaks Malala's story as a powerful narrative that opens up conversations about the gendered oppression that girls face in the pursuit of education, emphasizing the need for inclusive and equitable educational systems.

Torretti, V. (2016), in the paper "Wrestling with Malala: Debating Gender, Education, and Islam in Global Contexts" explores the various forms of women-centric oppression in education, exemplified through the portrayal of Malala's struggle against the Taliban's ban on girls' education in Pakistan.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework aims to analyze the moral right that Malala done against women-centric oppression of education as portrayed in her autobiography "I Am Malala". This theoretical framework will provide a clear idea of Malala's stand point with references to the sociological and feminist theories. They are used to examine the women-centric oppression in education employed on the girl children in Taliban dominated places and the effects on individuals and society that stop the empowerment of girl children. This framework will lead the analysis to imbibe the complexities of patriarchy and social problems with the context of education and gender impartiality. The patriarchy theory enables to understand the structural and cultural power that creates oppression of women. Patriarchal injustices enforce gender roles and stereotypic values that curtail girl children and women's access to education. This type of analysis will explore the patriarchal systems that form gender inequality and perpetuate oppressive practices. Then, the concepts of social oppression of women, unethical gender norms, and gender-based domestic violence will help to understand that how patriarchy manifests within the education system and the challenges faced by women. (Kandiyoti, 1988) Social reproduction theory is a modern theory that highlights how social structures like education perpetuate social inequalities



under social injustice. The sort of analysis will help examine the unequal gender norms in education spaces that motivates women-centric oppression. It explores the unequal distribution of societal expectations and patriarchal norms are passed down to many generations perpetuating women gender-based inequalities in education. Feminist theories provide a framework of conflict and empowerment to comprehend the oppressive structures within education that women normally face in a society. The analysis helps to find Malala's tragic and audacious story of individual resistance against gender oppression. The feminist concept will be used to explore Malala and other marginalized women without any restrictions of age suffered patriarchal domination and negligence of education. This will also highlight the importance of international solidarity, and gender based policy interventions to ensure equal educational opportunities for women. By understanding these theoretical concepts may contribute to broader discussions on the abolition of girl gender-based oppression and promotion of gender equality in educational systems in a society.

Women-Centric Oppression

Education is a basic human right that should be easily reached regardless of race, class and gender. Still, many oppressive modes have emerged to curtail women's education as a means of maintaining patriarchal control. In “I Am Malala” Malala Yousafzai shares her resistance against the Talibans denying girls right to education in Pakistan. She explores the barriers faced by young girls in pursuit of education and Malala's fight for a transformative movement to challenge gender-based oppression. For many centuries the people of the Swat valley have been under gender-based discrimination that leads to the marginalization of women in all walks of life. The petty cultural norms and patriarchal structures have mired women's access to educational opportunities and think of them as slaves to men. Frequently, such barriers are followed through cultural or religious practices. They include prohibition of basic rights, oppression, subjugation, early marriages and restricted of education among female gender. Malala opens up the oppressive state of male chauvinism against women in the Swat Valley. Under Taliban domination, the girls' schools were attacked and they were forbidden from receive education. Her experiences gives light on the patriarchal totalitarianism taken to suppress the voices of women. The Talibans even attempted assassination aimed at silencing her advocacy for girls' education in Swat valley and tried to put an end.

The Power of Education and Malala's Activism

Education acts as a powerful remedy to oppression in any form and it empowers the individuals to question the unequal social norms and search for a radical change. Malala argues that education and knowledge is the key to break the oppression faced by women in Swat. Education creates thinking skills, self-assurance and awareness of basic rights and enables them to challenge unjust norms of gender equality. Malala's activism has sparked such a global conversation on women's rights and the importance of education in Swat and all over the world where hegemonic norms suppress women right to education. Her determination and spirit inspired millions of female children, girls and women worldwide to resist the male domination through religion or culture where it acts as an oppressive system to curtail the right to education of women.

Rise of the Taliban - Malala's Attack and Recovery

Malala points out the Taliban's increasing influence in the Swat Valley, imposing strict Sharia laws and the stopping fundamental rights for women. The Talibans banned the education of girls and force the schools to shut down but Malala and her father remained confident and uncompromised. They advocated education through any means possible to get



the liberty of education. However, the Taliban did a harrowing attack on Malala. In 2012, a Taliban gunman shot in Malala's head when she comes by a school bus. She miraculously survived the attack and became a symbol of hope to speak boldly on getting the liberty to learn. This incident took her to the global stage as a strong advocate for the right to education where women's education is curtailed by the Talibans. Her description of the event along with her the recovery process provides a hint on her determination and courage. She narrates, "My body was weak, but I felt a strength inside me that I may not have had before" (Yousafzai & Lamb, 2013, p. 213). Malala's observation illustrates her determination to continue the fight against oppression. Malala's speech at the United Nations in 2013, on her 16th birthday is the death bell of all patriarchal domination. Her persuasive speech in the UN echoed her unwavering voice: "One child, one teacher, one book, and one pen can change the world." (Malala Addresses Youth Delegates in UN) In her speech, she highlighted the significance of education to overcome oppression and gender-based barriers.

Malala Fund and Global Impact

Malala worked keen for the formation of the Malala Fund, a non-profit organization dedicated to ensure 12 years of free education for deserving girls around the world. Her every step emphasizes the power of education can transform the gender based stereotypic societies that dismantle the natural order. Her global support for education and gender equality is an essential aspect of her ambition. Her speech, in the United Nations reveals her steady commitment in the task of getting education to all girls. She points out, "I speak not for myself, but so those without a voice can be heard" (Yousafzai & Lamb, 2013, p. 324). Her voice reflects her selflessness nature and her dedication to uplifting others in life and knowledge. The founding of the 'Malala Fund' is a significant decision that shows Malala's commitment to create an everlasting change in the life of many female children. She works hard to provide quality education to the marginalized girls worldwide. She emphasizes, "We felt it was time to open a new front in the war for education" (Yousafzai & Lamb, 2013, p. 355). Her words demonstrate a positive approach and belief in the power of education. Her courage and sincerity have encouraged many governments and international organizations to give prominence to girls' education. It increased awareness, policy reforms and funding for the education of female gender all over the world.

Inspiration and Impact on Identity

Malala's story is a live source of inspiration and a lesson for individuals, societies, and policymakers to create many success stories in the success of women. Her courage highlights the necessity of addressing women-centric oppression that girls should have the opportunity to learn, grow, and as empowered individuals who bring change to the society. The life reminds us that gender-based education oppression is going on and there is a need to have collective efforts of societies, communities, governments and global organizations to abolish them in any form at any cost. Her autobiography provides a clear insight into her identity as a selfless individual and an activist for women's rights. She acknowledges, "I am Malala, but I am also those 66 million girls who are deprived of education" (Yousafzai & Lamb, 2013, p. 333). These words of personal and collective identity accentuate her dedication to a larger cause to liberate women from oppression, suppression and all sorts of vile deeds to control them. Malala Yousafzai's struggle stands as a testament to the power of education in challenging evil social norms. Her spirit of freedom and the quest for learning shed light on the barriers faced by women and ignited a global movement for gender equality and girls' education. By breaking the barriers, Malala has become an iconic individual who inspires millions of individuals of both genders worldwide to fight for their basic right to education to



overcome the oppressive hands based on gender discrimination. It is the responsibility of everyone to put hands together upon her advocacy and ensure that every girl gets education regardless of any circumstances and has quick access to quality education to shape up her future.

Conclusion

Malala Yousafzai's life is a remarkable journey of a young girl in the Swat Valley to a global arena who advocates education and gender equality of women. Her autobiographical sketches give us a deep understanding of her ideas, motivations, challenges and triumphs. Through Malala inspires her readers to embrace positive spirit, radical need for change, and a strong stand against oppression in any form. Her story is a testament to the moral power of individual spirit and determination to acquire the freedom of education from the patriarchs. Malala has brought international attention to the dreadful effects of denying girls right to educate. Her journey for the freedom of education against the bullying Talibans serves as a role model for all women who aspire to get education. Her life has become a clarion call for positive change, motivating individuals and societies to work together to abolish women gender-based atrocities and to ensure bright future for all women over the world.

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