A STUDY OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF HOW GENDER ISSUES

MANIFEST THEMSELVES IN THE CLASSROOM

by

MIKAELA SCHOLINAKI

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THESIS APPROVAL

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APPROVALS: _____

Dr. Ersi Maria Koliris, Thesis Advisor

_____

Dr. Alessandra Sax, Committee Member

APPROVED BY:

_____

Dr. Areti Krepapa

Dean, School of Graduate and Professional Education

An Abstract of the Thesis of

Michaela Scholinaki for the degree of Master of Arts

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Approved: _____

Dr. Maria Ersi Koliris,
Thesis Advisor

The following thesis investigated teachers' perceptions of how gender issues manifest themselves in the classroom. Five high school teachers participated in interviews that discussed their ideas and experiences concerning gender disparities in an educational setting as a qualitative method of research. The aim of this study was to gain insight to teachers' perceptions, interpretations, and current practices in response to gender inequality in the classroom. Semi-structured interviews were carried out for participants to share their insights, beliefs, and attitudes towards gender inequality in their own classrooms. The interview data was then analyzed through Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) in order to find recurring themes or patterns amongst the teachers. The study also explored strategies currently employed by teachers to promote gender equality and challenges faced in an attempt to implement them. This phenomenon is important to study because the possibility of the presence of gender inequality in classrooms may have significant impacts on students' educational experiences and outcomes. The results highlighted the importance of needing teacher education and training for fostering inclusive classrooms that empower students of all genders. Participants also placed emphasis on the impact of gender inequalities on students' well-being based on personal recounts. The findings have implications for stakeholders such as educational policymakers, school administrators, and teacher training programs that seek to promote gender equality practices in schools.

Michaela Scholinakis

PERSONAL INFORMATION

All personal information is removed.
For more information please contact the John S. Bailey Library.

Date of Birth
Military Obligations
Citizenship(s)

FIELDS OF INTEREST

Special Education
Learning Difficulties
Assessment and Interventions

EDUCATION

01/2024	**DEREE – The American College of Greece** – Athens, Greece
	MA in Applied Child and Adolescent Psychology

Significant courses

Multicultural Perspectives
Psychoeducational Assessment
Child & Adolescent Psychopathology
Theories of Learning & Human Development

Significant projects

Understanding Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in Children and Adolescents:
A Literature Review
Skinner's Behaviorism and the Concept of Self – Presentation
Instructional Interventions and Consultation – Case Study

09/2017 – 06/2020 **Mediterranean College** – Athens, Greece
Bachelor of Arts
- Specialization in Early Childhood Education, GPA (3.5)

09/2012 – 06/2016 *International Baccalaureate Program (High School), Score: 32/40*

WORK EXPERIENCE

09/2017 – 06/2018 **Melina's Kindergarten** – Athens, Greece
Teacher's Assistant, Kindergarten
- Helping with activities
- Organizing student folders
- Helping children individually

10/2020 – 02/2021 **Geitonas School** – Athens, Greece
Teacher's Assistant, Kindergarten
- Helping with activities
- Helping children individually

04/2021 – 06/2021 **Peter Pan School** – Athens, Greece
Teacher's Assistant, Preschool
- Helping with in-class activities
- Helping children individually
- Recess supervision

09/2021 – 06/2022	**Multilingual Center** – Athens, Greece *Teaching English as a Second Language, ages 7-13*

- Devise weekly lesson plan
- Organize tests and homework
- Testing preparations for obtaining diploma

09/2022 – 05/2023	**Melina's Kindergarten** – Athens, Greece *Saturday English Language Program, Kindergarten*

- Teaching English as a second language
- Devise weekly lesson plan
- Application of various teaching methods for activities

01/2023 – 06/2023	**International School of Athens** – Athens, Greece *Learning Support Assistant, grades 7-10*

- Assisting students with learning difficulties on schoolwork
- Devising individual learning strategies
- Applying effective study methods for test/exam-taking

11/2023 – CURRENT	**American Community School** – Athens, Greece *Shadow Teacher, grade 6*

- Assisting specific student with learning difficulties in every class
- Providing academic support in areas of weakness
- Organizing assignments and deadlines
- Extra assistance at home to complete homework

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

- Skinner's Behaviorism and the Concept of Self – Oral Presentation
- The First Step Next Program and Teaching Social Skills to Children with Early Symptoms of ADHD – Oral Presentation
- Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement, 3rd ed. – Oral Presentation
- Multicultural Perspectives: My World View – Oral Presentation
- PTSD and Suppressed Childhood Trauma in *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* – Oral Presentation

SEMINARS

05/2023	*GDPR Compliance: Essential Training*, LinkedIn Learning
12/2020	*Histories of Childhood*, Mediterranean College
05/2019	*Children of the World*, Mediterranean College

SKILLS

Language	Greek (Native), English (Native), French (Proficient), Italian (Basic)
Technical	Ms Word, Excel, Powerpoint, Canva, Prezi, SPSS
Professional	Organized, communicative, team player, methodical, ambitious

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Review of the Literature

Gender inequality has been a long-standing issue in various aspects of life, and education is no exception. Studies have shown that gender inequality is prevalent in classrooms worldwide, with girls feeling inclined to pursue degrees in humanities and social sciences rather than sciences and engineering (OECD, 2015). One study carried out by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) using statistics from around the world, found discernable gender differences in bachelor's degrees across fields, which they believe accounts for a significant share of the gender gap involving earnings from employment. Specifically, in 2013, they found that 58% of women were awarded degrees in education, humanities, and social sciences, whereas only 31% received degrees in sciences and engineering (OECD, 2015). Teachers, as key players in the educational system, play a significant role in either perpetuating or combating gender inequality in the classroom, which can promote equal opportunities for all. Therefore, this literature review will examine the perspectives of teachers on the possible manifestation of gender issues the classroom, specifically in high school, focusing on their perceptions of how it occurs, the causes surrounding it, and the strategies that can be employed to address it.

Historical Background

Gender inequality has been an extensive issue that has been observed and discussed repeatedly across decades. Even though there is no accurate representation of when it truly started to manifest more frequently, it is believed that it became a topic of increased interest during the feminist movement and the broader social changes of the 1960s and 1970s. during this period, researchers became increasingly focused on studying the disparities between male and female students in educational

settings (Evans et al., 2021). Studies revealed that gender biases mainly occurred in areas such as academic performance, classroom participation, and career aspirations (Greenwald & Weintraub, 1961; Jacobs, 1996). It became evident that female students in particular were often underprivileged in various aspects of education, such as not having access to certain subjects, limited to no opportunities for leadership, and lowered expectations for academic success (Boske & Osanloo, 2015).

As these issues became harder to brush away, a notable milestone in addressing gender inequality was achieved in the United States in 1972. A law was passed known as Title IX, which bans sex-based discrimination in educational institutions that receive federal funding (US Department of Education, 2023). It promoted gender equality in ways never seen before during that time by providing equal opportunities for both male and female students. It further addressed disparities in sports programs and expanded access to advanced academic courses. Similar laws have been put into place also in Europe, which is known as the EU equal treatment legislation. It aims to promote equal treatment in employment and education based on religion, or belief, age, sex, sexual orientation, and disability (European Commission, 2023). It can be inferred, therefore, that a collective effort has in fact been made to combat any possible manifestations of gender inequalities in these areas.

Since then, the topic of gender biases specifically in education has been studied extensively across all levels, but mainly in higher education. Issues have been highlighted regarding inequality in grading, disparities in discipline practices, and the spread of gender stereotypes in curricula and teaching materials (Connor & Atkinson, 2022). The evolution of gender identity has been quite evident, as its definition has changed significantly over the course of several years. For example, an article published by doctor and researcher Harry Gershman (1968) refers to the

understanding of gender identity as two separate classes of human beings, male and female, and that they can solely be distinguished by one's biological genitalia. Back in the 60s, it is evident that gender was only defined as male and female, whereas looking at the current literature and most recent societal development, it has taken on numerous forms and definitions. However, more recent articles refer to gender identity as a multifactorial complex trait and include terms as "alternative gender" to address those who do not identify as male or female (Durwood et al., 2017; Polderman et al., 2018). These discussions have promoted a need to create and provide gender inclusive learning environments, while continuing to advocate equal educational opportunities for all genders (Boske & Osanloo, 2015; Connor & Atkinson, 2022). In addition, it also extends to recognizing the intersectionality of gender and other social identities and the promoting the cultivation of teachers' inclusive approaches to address all students' needs, regardless of gender (Herriot et al., 2017).

Manifestation of Gender Inequality in the Classroom

Several studies have documented the various ways in which gender inequality manifests in the classroom. A study by Sadker and Sadker (1994) found that male students received more teacher attention, especially in science and mathematics classes. Similarly, girls were more likely to be called on for irrelevant tasks, such as handing out papers or running errands, while boys were given more opportunities to engage in classroom discussions and answer questions related to the subject matter. Historically, this shows the presence of a gender disparity in terms of distribution of tasks, and teacher's attention in certain subjects. This finding was supported by a more recent study, which found that boys were more likely to be praised for their academic achievements, while girls' accomplishments were often attributed to their

effort or good behavior (Bigler and Liben, 2006; Gentrup et al., 2020). By comparing these two studies, it can be concluded that gender inequalities or biases still manifest in classrooms throughout the years.

Moreover, gender bias can manifest in the form of gender-stereotyped expectations, where teachers have lower expectations for girls' academic abilities than boys. For instance, a study by Jussim and Harber (2005) found that teachers rated girls lower than boys in math, even when their test scores were identical. Similarly, research by Good et al. (2012) found that teachers tended to underestimate the abilities of girls in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) subjects.

Furthermore, gender inequality can manifest in the form of disciplinary practices, where teachers tend to punish boys more harshly than girls for the same offenses. For example, a study by Gregory et al. (2017) found that boys were more likely to be suspended or expelled than girls for similar infractions. This finding was supported by another study by Morris (2005), which found that teachers were more likely to interpret boys' misbehavior as intentional and deserving of punishment, while girls' misbehavior was seen as accidental or due to external factors. Here, two separate phenomena can be taken into account. These studies indicate that girls' abilities are systematically undervalued, and misconduct is excused more easily, while boys' abilities are discriminated in terms of their behavior. Based on the literature so far, manifestations of gender inequalities can be in the form of unequal attention and distribution of opportunities in certain academic areas, unequal interpretation of behavioral misconduct, and a possible imbalance concerning praise on academic achievement.

Causes of Gender Inequality in the Classroom

Several factors contribute to gender inequality in the classroom, including cultural, societal, and institutional factors. One of the key factors is cultural beliefs and stereotypes about gender roles and abilities. For instance, the traditional societal belief that males are better suited for science and mathematics, while females are better suited for humanities and social sciences, can influence teachers' expectations and treatment of students (Jussim and Harber, 2005). Similarly, cultural stereotypes about girls' abilities in STEM subjects can discourage them from pursuing careers in those fields (Good et al., 2012).

Moreover, institutional factors such as curriculum design and teaching materials can perpetuate gender inequality in the classroom. For example, gender bias can be embedded in the content of textbooks and teaching materials, which can influence teachers' perceptions and expectations of students (Sadker and Sadker, 1994; Aydınoğlu, 2014). A more specific example is the depiction of gender roles in children's storybooks. Studies from the 90s up to recent years, discuss findings of male dominance in children's books, such as the main character mostly being male or powerful animals like bears being depicted as male, whereas smaller animals like mice are depicted as female (Kortenhaus & Demarest, 1993; Politis, 2022). Similarly, the lack of representation of women and minorities in STEM fields in textbooks and other teaching materials can contribute to the underrepresentation of these groups in those fields (Good et al., 2012). Concerning high school students, stereotypes of masculinity and femininity can be found in almost every textbook used in educational settings, which has been occurring for a long time (Rong et al., 2021). The reason attributed to this situation is that the majority of school textbooks have been edited by men, where Rong et al.'s study showed that male references outnumbered female

ones, and several sentences were structured in a way that emphasized women's weaknesses and normality (Rong et al., 2021).

Additionally, the attitudes and beliefs of teachers can contribute to gender inequality in the classroom. For instance, teachers who hold gender-stereotyped beliefs about students' abilities can inadvertently reinforce those beliefs through their expectations and treatment of students (Bigler and Liben, 2006). Similarly, teachers who lack awareness of their own biases and assumptions may unknowingly perpetuate gender inequality in the classroom through their actions and decisions.

Parental Influence and Potential Impact

It is logical to assume that parents play a significant role when it comes to what values and attitudes are passed on to children. Seeing as parents and caregivers are the primary role models for children, upbringing and transferring predisposed ideals are common factors that can shape a child's way of thinking. The family is the proximal microsystem that influences children's physical and mental health, personality psychology, education acquisition, and other development indicators (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Several studies have shown that when parents have more traditional views regarding gender roles, children tend to think in a similar way (Epstein & Ward, 2011; Fulcher, 2010).

However, this doesn't necessarily mean that parents are directly telling their children what they're supposed to think about gender roles, but they can pass on the message indirectly as well. For example, there is a phenomenon known as Parental Child-rearing Gender-role Attitudes (PCGA), which is a gender-differentiated parenting style (Chen et al., 2023). The PCGA is a negative parenting style that discriminates disciplinary behaviors based on the child's gender (Chen et al., 2023). For example, two siblings, a boy and a girl, break the same rule in their house, but the

parents give a lesser punishment to either gender for whatever reason even though they broke the same rule. Similarly, parents with enlightened attitudes focus on developing their children's awareness of gender equality (Halpern & Perry-Jenkins, 2015). This can start from early childhood even, where studies have shown that the way parents play with their children or what toys they provide can indirectly influence the child's view of gender roles (Halpern & Perry-Jenkins, 2015; Chen et al., 2023).

It is important to note that there are currently very limited, close to none, studies surrounding parental involvement in how often gender issues are allowed to be discussed in school. Upon reading previous literature, studies only demonstrated the need for parents to educate themselves on gender identity and how to approach their child if they are currently struggling with this (Riley et al., 2013, Gregor et al., 2015; Davy & Cordoba, 2020). They did not include the aspect of what goes on in school in terms of how children are educated, and if parental reaction is considered a barrier to how much children are exposed to. Davy & Cordoba (2020) found that critical education is a basic and imperative element of progressive social change. Additionally, parents have raised concerns about the potential harm in the form of bullying or peer pressure these discussions could cause to children who are struggling with their identity (Davy & Gordoba, 2020). This has in turn, created a debate on who in fact can determine what gender is, and how this can become conflicting between parents and school staff. Overall, parental influence may therefore, be considered a key factor that integrates with children's way of thinking and potentially output behavior.

Strategies for Addressing Gender Inequality in the Classroom

There are various strategies that teachers can employ to address gender inequality in the classroom. Attempts are being made within classrooms with the aim to provide equal opportunities for all students, regardless of gender. This section provides information on what is currently being done to address issues of gender inequality in educational settings. Seeing as this topic is one of the main questions of the interviews, this literature is important to see past and current methods and if adequate steps are being taken. The analysis of participant responses was later on connected to the following literature in an attempt to evaluate current practices.

Dating back to 1979, the United Nations General Assembly established the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, placing particular emphasis on education (OHCR, 2024). Since the 1970s, several worldwide and national declarations, action plans, and programs have been conducted to raise awareness and educate about gender equality, with a focus on the social status of women and girls (OHCR, 2024).

One of the strategies proposed to attain this goal is the support for mixed and other types of education, namely the alteration of textbooks and curriculum and the adaption of teaching methods. Following numerous campaigns to put these ideas into practice, world leaders resolved to work for a more egalitarian society in 2015, signing the UN resolution establishing the Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2015). The fourth purpose is to achieve a high-quality education, and the fifth is to promote gender equality. The Goals are based on the concept that education may help to reduce inequality in general, and specifically increase gender equality. Similarly, the UN blueprint for sustainable development takes into account that the empowerment of girls and women is a significant factor to foster economic growth

and social development (United Nations, 2015). A distinct educational model currently being used globally and most frequently is the system of coeducational schools (Aragonés-González et al., 2020). Coeducational schools use a deliberate process of intervention by which the development of boys and girls is promoted on the basis of the reality of two separate sexes, aimed at personal development and a common social construction, and not in conflict (Aragonés-González et al., 2020). The aim is for students to possess a complete personality development without gender barriers, correcting cultural and ideological sexism and women's social inequality.

In simpler and more current terms, the focus now is on how equality can be maintained in all academic subjects irrespective of gender, and how classrooms can become more gender inclusive based on the current, updated terms of gender identity. For example, teachers can ensure that they call on both boys and girls to participate in classroom discussions, provide equal opportunities for boys and girls to excel in STEM subjects, and give both boys and girls equal attention and feedback in all academic areas (Jussim and Harber, 2005; Gråstén & Kokkonen, 2020). However, it is important to look at how this is implemented in the curricula, if at all. Inclusive curriculum design involves considering the course structure as a whole. This includes both content and delivery, which ensures that all students experience an equitable and supportive learning environment that enables them to succeed regardless of their background (University of Cambridge, 2023). Now, this extends to several other branches that a school has to consider in order to achieve this. It isn't only about being gender inclusive, but other areas such as disability and ethnicity are also included.

What is important to consider, is how the theoretical concept of being inclusive becomes actual practice. In high school, teens are exposed to various textbooks in each subject, where certain studies have shown that the narrative tends to

be male dominated (Sovič & Hus, 2015; Rong et al., 2021). Young minds can indirectly be influenced through the use of textbooks that subtly show gender discrimination. Rong et al.'s study discusses how in history books particularly, women's weaknesses are highlighted by also placing more focus men's strengths (Rong et al., 2021). In addition, they found that male leaders were described extensively, whereas women leaders didn't receive the same or similar amount of recognition. It is argued that reading these passages will reinforce the gender inequality concept in the learners' minds in a subtle way.

Another strategy is to address gender stereotypes and biases in the classroom by promoting positive gender-role models and challenging gender-stereotyped beliefs. For instance, teachers can encourage girls to pursue STEM subjects and showcase successful women in those fields as role models (Good et al., 2012). Similarly, teachers can challenge gender-stereotyped beliefs by highlighting the accomplishments of both male and female students and addressing any biases or stereotypes they observe. This also includes implementing strategies to minimize biases against boys' behavior, as effort can often be disregarded if boys' behavior is deemed intentional by the teacher as previously mentioned.

Moreover, teachers can create a classroom environment that is inclusive and supportive of all students, regardless of gender (Keay, 2007). This can be achieved by providing a safe and supportive space for students to express themselves, promoting teamwork and collaboration, and addressing any instances of bullying or discrimination (Gregory et al., 2017). Additionally, teachers can use teaching materials that represent a diverse range of genders and cultural backgrounds to create a more inclusive classroom environment (Sadker and Sadker, 1994).

Finally, it is essential for teachers to engage in ongoing professional development to increase their awareness of gender issues in the classroom and to develop strategies to address them. This can be achieved through attending workshops, participating in online training courses, or reading literature on gender issues in education (Rakshit & Sahoo, 2019). By continuously updating their knowledge and skills, teachers can become more effective in promoting gender equality in the classroom.

However, if schools are actively trying to become more inclusive and curriculums are promising inclusive material and teaching methods, the question remains of why instances of gender inequality still exist today in the education setting. One thing to consider is the textbooks being used in school, specifically in high school, that indirectly show gender biases as mentioned before. History cannot be rewritten, but it can be taught in a way that doesn't diminish important roles that both men and women had at the time (Sadker & Silber, 2007; Aydinoğlu, 2014). The issue, therefore, is that educators have not been doing this to an extent that minimizes the concept of gender inequality in the way that it's being taught in class (Sadker & Silber, 2007; Aydinoğlu, 2014). From the gender identity perspective, LGBTQ minorities are rarely mentioned in global period textbooks, especially in Asia (Rong et al., 2021). Therefore, the underlying issue is not only what the textbooks include in terms of material, but mostly the way it is being taught. The reasons for this ongoing issue may vary from a teacher's struggle to address their own biases, or simply not knowing how to manage it without receiving proper training around the topic. This adds to the current need for educators to update and improve their practices in order to create a more inclusive learning experience for their students.

Variations of Gender: Contemporary Equality Issue

Before delving into another present issue in educational settings concerning gender inequality, it is important to understand the difference between equality and equity. Equality is where all individuals are treated fairly and impartially, who have access to the same opportunities, resources, and support regardless of their background (Grant, 2022). For this research, the concept of equality applies to how teachers teach their subject in a way that provides equal opportunities to all students, irrespective of their gender. In addition, this also address the need for equal expectations by setting the same academic goals to promote equal academic performance, regardless of gender. This then connects to equal feedback and support, as studies mentioned previously in the literature have shown that feedback and support tends to be biased due to different perspectives of behavioral concerns between girls and boys.

Equity, however, goes beyond the concept of equality as it aims to provide individuals with what they need to succeed (Kumar, 2021). This requires identifying each students' needs and becoming aware of how gender biases can affect their learning experience. Equity also requires challenging stereotypes and supporting underrepresented groups (Kumar, 2021). Teachers can provide targeted support to all genders in the classroom in order to promote equitable participation. This may also involve having an inclusive curriculum, which is a current struggle in ensuring that all students see themselves represented. Sensitive discussions can also add to equity in the classroom, as it may give students the opportunity to openly discuss their viewpoints on gender biases. Both equality and equity are key concepts in addressing any possible gender biases and can help educators to actively promote inclusivity and fairness, if considered appropriately.

Throughout the years, people have come to know two categories of gender, male and female. But as society progresses, attitudes and beliefs change, and information broadens, gender has taken on new variations. Biases or struggles with inclusivity are not only seen in school textbooks or in the way academic opportunities are being distributed, but there is also the more recent and current issue of acknowledging gender as a spectrum.

Nowadays, the concept of gender has moved past traditions and societal norms, involving at least seven new identities (Broussard et al., 2018). Pennsylvania State University (2023) provides the main variations of gender currently present today. Apart from male and female, *non-binary* individuals do not identify as male or female, but rather a mix of genders or none at all. *Gender queer* individuals reject traditional gender identities and may identify outside these traditional categories, while *gender fluid* individuals have an identity that changes or fluctuates by experiencing different genders at different times. Next, *bigender* individuals identify as having two separate identities, which can often be confused with gender fluid. The only difference is that bigender involves only identities, whereas gender fluid consists of more than two. There is also a category known as *two-spirit*, which is a culturally specific term to represent certain Indigenous communities that embody both masculine and feminine spirits. Another category is *androgynous*, where these individuals have a combination of masculine and feminine characteristics or present themselves in a neutral way. Finally, there is *demigender*, which involves individuals who partly identify as a specific gender, while also identifying as another gender or possess a gender-neutral identity. It is important to note that this list of variations provided by Pennsylvania State University is not extensive and is merely a preface of other variations, as the list has been currently totaled at around 57 identities of gender.

The ones listed above are the main categories, but some also possess their own subcategories.

Along with being inclusive about existing gender identities, the issue of using applicable pronouns to every individual has also risen. The typical pronouns used to address a person are he/she, but with the ever-growing list of gender identities, more pronouns have been added to suit the way people identify themselves. They/them has come into play for those who don't identify rigidly as male or female (McGlashan & Fitzpatrick, 2018). Similarly, for honorifics and titles Mr. and Mrs. are typically used, while having another addition known as Mx. as a gender-neutral title.

Teenagers in high school are on the path of discovering who they are and how they want to identify as. It is therefore crucial that inclusivity occur in the classroom if multiple gender identities are present. Using gender-neutral pronouns or using the "correct" pronouns for each student promotes their gender identity and the feeling of being seen, heard, and respected (Allen-Biddell & Bond, 2022). It validates the experiences and beliefs of individuals outside of the typical gender norms, thus fostering a sense of belonging and safety in the classroom (Allen-Biddell & Bond, 2022). Learning to use appropriate pronouns also avoids assumptions being made involuntarily by educators.

Simply asking how the student wants to be addressed, avoids the assumption one could make by looking at appearance, name, or other characteristics. This practice further enhances a more open and accepting learning environment that takes into consideration the diversity of gender experiences (Tordoff et al., 2020). Furthermore, it models acceptance and respect if the educator is demonstrating inclusive behavior in front of other students in the classroom (Dunhill, 2016). Educators can show an understanding of gender diversity, which can be mirrored to their students and as a

result send a powerful message that every student's identity is valued and honored. It is also important to mention the acknowledgement of what gender-diverse students feel and experience. Being misgendered by using incorrect pronouns can be stressful and harmful, especially if a student is still struggling to fully accept themselves within (Cornu, 2016). By introducing gender-neutral pronouns in educational settings can educate students about diversity, inclusion, and the need to respect one another's identities. This in turn, promotes empathy and allyship for their gender-diverse peers and promotes a culture of acceptance within the classroom and also in other settings (Cornu, 2016; Dunhill, 2016).

Gender inequality remains a significant challenge in education, with various manifestations in the classroom. Teachers play a crucial role in either sustaining or combating gender inequality in the classroom, and their perspectives on the issue are critical in addressing it. A wider variety of pronouns are now used to better accommodate and validate the identities of people as a result of the growing understanding and acceptance of gender variation in recent years. Pronoun usage may change further as language progresses in order to be more inclusive and respectful of everyone's gender identities. This literature review has examined the perspectives of teachers on gender inequality in the classroom, focusing on its manifestations, causes, strategies for addressing it, and how progression of time has influenced this issue. It is essential for teachers to promote equal opportunities for all students, challenge gender stereotypes and biases, create an inclusive classroom environment, and engage in ongoing professional development. By doing so, teachers can play a vital role in promoting gender equality in education and ensuring that all students have equal opportunities to succeed.

In accordance with the literature review, the issue of gender inequality in educational settings still remains at large, which is why it is deemed important to discuss and analyze teachers' perspectives and current practices on this topic. What is lacking in current literature is *why* these instances of inequality still exist today. The studies mentioned all indicate reasons for gender inequality in educational contexts, but more information is needed on why this hasn't changed much over the years, even though attempts are generally being made. By using qualitative research, we can gain insight into teachers' perspectives of this issue by also looking into their own teaching style. It is important to find out the *why* so that future research may try to provide more updated teacher training when it comes to creating the most inclusive learning environment possible. As various studies like Cornu (2016) discuss the importance of minimizing gender biases within the classroom and being more careful about gender pronouns, this study could emphasize the need for updated practices. It will also be important to see what has prevented these teachers from being more gender inclusive, if that is in fact the case for their classroom. Participants' responses may also give further insight on the underlying issues of how material is being taught in class in terms of inclusivity, as well as what strategies are currently being used to demonstrate gender awareness.

Specifically, high school teachers were chosen for this study due to gender becoming more complex in nature, especially for teenagers nowadays. Gender identity and gender identity expression are part of a broader developmental process that take place during adolescence (Steensma et al., 2013). Studies with participants that have gender dysphoria, show that the period of adolescence is the most crucial stage for the development of a non-normative gender identity (Steensma et al., 2013; Yarbrough, 2019; Gonick & Conrads, 2022). During the adolescence stage, emotions

run high and sensitivity is even more vulnerable, so being misgendered may cause further discomfort. As Cornu (2016) mentions, being misgendered can cause several issues to a teenager's wellbeing, which further emphasizes the need to promote inclusive practices as this study aims to do. The literature also discusses how important it is for educators to be mindful with gender differences in their own classroom. Allen-Biddell & Bond (2022) reiterate the value of a simple practice teachers can use of learning to use correct pronouns without assumptions. Apart from the issue of using correct pronouns, teenagers are also exposed to textbooks and literature that indirectly depict women as weaker individuals than men, particularly in history books as previously mentioned in the literature. It may be important to see how teachers view the learning material provided for their class in relation to this issue. If there is an overall consensus that textbooks do in fact display gender biases, it could indicate that learning material may also need to be updated, besides teaching methods and styles.

CHAPTER II: METHODOLOGY

Design

The design for this study is qualitative research design. The aim of qualitative research is to explore and understand phenomena in their natural settings (Gilgun, 2014). It focuses on subjective experiences and interpretations, which allows for an in-depth exploration of people's perspectives, beliefs, and behaviors towards a specific research topic (Levitt, 2019). The qualitative design aligns with the aim of the current study, which is to analyze teachers' perceptions on the manifestation of gender inequality in the classroom. By using qualitative tools like interviews, the researcher can observe complex aspects and views based on teachers' past and current experiences (Brinkmann, 2023). In addition, it provides a more holistic approach of the research topic, going beyond statistical generalizability, by exploring contextual factors and interpretations that shape educators' views on gender inequality.

There is a general focus on inclusivity in international and public schools, therefore, viewing perspectives from teachers that work in such schools would contribute to the understanding of why gender biases or inequalities continue to surface. There is also a gap in the literature concerning international schools and gender inequality in the forms of acknowledging gender identity and having equal representation and opportunities for all genders. More research is needed to gain a better understanding of these issues in schools that possess international backgrounds.

Furthermore, analyzing data from qualitative research allows for the pinpointing of common themes amongst responses (Levitt, 2019). These themes may show common strategies being used, common ideas of what gender inequality is according to the participants, and common issues they face as educators. There is also the possibility that commonalities may not arise or are very few. In order to analyze

the data appropriately, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) will be used for data analysis of responses obtained from each interview. This approach aims to identify and explore recurring patterns, themes, and categories within the interview data. It also aims to provide detailed examinations of personal lived experience (Smith & Osborn, 2015).

An IPA approach is most appropriate for this study because it enables a comprehensive exploration of the research question, captures the richness and depth of participants' responses, and provides a structured and systematic framework for organizing and interpreting data (Smith et al., 2012; Smith & Nizza, 2022). It is also participant-centered because it provides a platform for each participant's voice to be heard and understood in their own context. The flexibility and adaptability of this approach can capture a broad range of perspectives and also promotes the discovery of new insights (Smith, 2012). An IPA is flexible enough to allow exploration of teachers' views in order to find subtle variations or give insight on how views can vary depending on background. However, despite the IPA's flexibility, it maintains qualitative rigor through systematic coding, clustering, and theme development (Smith & Osborn, 2015). Understanding the complexities of teachers' perceptions concerning gender inequality can ultimately spark the need for further research to be carried out on this ongoing issue.

Using an IPA for this study is useful because perceptions and recollections of individuals can vary and be deeply personal. An IPA allows for a more in-depth exploration of these perceptions and recollections, which is required in order to meet the aim of the study and answer the research questions. In addition, gender inequality possesses a complexity that qualitative tools like an IPA can provide underlying meanings and contexts from participants' responses.

Participants

The target sample of this study consisted of five high school teachers in an international school, where four work in private schools and the remaining one works in a public school. The type of school, like an international school was chosen because it holds a wide variety of students from different backgrounds and cultures. This also applies to the teachers themselves, as different backgrounds can provide a variety in responses and views on the topic of gender inequality. Due to the diversity present in international schools, there is a significant pressure in ensuring that equality is promoted and maintained in every aspect (Hollins, 2022). The Council of International Schools, places emphasis on safeguarding staff and students when it comes to inclusivity (Hollins, 2022).

However, it is also important to see perspectives from teachers working in public schools. One out of the five participants had this background, apart from international schools. Recent studies have shown that the manifestation of gender inequality can be present in both public and private school institutions (Suban et al., 2022; Guerrero & Guerrero Puerta, 2023). Specifically, there have been several occurrences in physical education where curricula are still criticized about their lack of gender neutrality and expectations are not gender-balanced (Guerrero & Guerrero Puerta, 2023).

High school teachers were chosen because they play a vital role in the shaping of teenagers during those years, which influences students' learning environment and experiences. The sample size although small, is sufficient to gain a deep enough understanding of teachers' perceptions on this area of research. The focus is on generating rich qualitative data and exploring diverse perspectives rather than seeking

statistical generalizability. The following selection criteria were put into place in order to recruit the appropriate sample for this study.

Selection Criteria:

1. The participants are currently employed in an international or public school, specifically in the high school section. High school teachers are chosen because they have a direct impact to students in this crucial phase of their academic journey.

2. The sample includes teachers from diverse backgrounds, irrespective of gender in order to ensure a range of beliefs and perspectives. Factors such as gender, age, subject area, and years of teaching experience are taken into consideration. A diverse sample helps capture various views and experiences related to gender inequality in the classroom.

3. Finally, participants are selected according to their willingness of participation. Informed consent is obtained from all participants, which ensures their understanding of the research topic, procedures, and personal nature of involvement in the study.

In terms of a sampling method, purposive sampling was used to select participants that meet the above-mentioned criteria. The researcher collaborated with school administrators and faculty in the selected international school to identify potential candidates eligible for the study. The purpose and significance of the study were communicated and those who expressed interest and willingness to participate were selected in the final sample.

Materials

For qualitative data collection, a semi-structured interview was used for obtaining information from each participant. The semi-structured interview included twelve open-ended questions and prompts that addressed the research objectives and themes related to teachers' perceptions on gender inequality in the classroom (see Appendix A). The questions were designed to produce detailed and nuanced responses by the participants. In addition, recording devices such a digital voice recorder on a smartphone was used in order to accurately document each participant's response. The interviews were conducted via zoom call so as to facilitate participation and allow participants to engage in an environment of their choosing. Using a recording device ensured accurate and verbatim documentation of responses, which aided the process of comprehensive data analysis. Informed consent forms were provided to all participants, which outlined the voluntary nature of participation, ensure confidentiality, and protection of anonymity (see Appendix B). Note-taking materials such as a notebook and pen were used by the researcher in order to keep any additional notes or thoughts that occurred during the interviews. A cloud-based platform on the researcher's laptop stored the interview recordings and once data was transcribed thoroughly, all files were destroyed for participant protection purposes. The materials used in this study facilitated the collection, organization, and documentation of the data and aimed to follow ethical guidelines in order to achieve research objectives.

Although these materials elicited efficient data collection for the research, they possessed certain limitations that could have interfered with data analysis. The interview questions and note-taking were subject to researcher bias if the researcher's interpretation and framing of the questions or observations inadvertently influence the

data collected. Efforts were made to mitigate this limitation by structuring neutral questions that didn't steer responses in a desired direction. In addition, relying on verbal responses limited the exploration of non-verbal cues or body language, which could have provided further insight into how the participants responded. Interviews also give a limited scope of data collection as they emphasize subjective experiences and perspectives. It may not capture a broader context such as the involvement or influence of school policies, classroom observations, or student perspectives, which could have provided additional information about gender inequality in the classroom. One of the most important limitations was the potential that participants may show social desirability bias. This means that they may have chosen to respond in a way that they deemed adheres to current societal norms or tried to align their responses to societal expectations. Since there was no way to truly know this, it was important for the researcher to form a safe and non-judgmental environment to minimize this bias as much as possible. Lastly, the small sample size limited generalizability of findings and the experiences and perspectives may not have represented the population of high school teachers entirely. Therefore, although the data provided insight on perspectives of gender inequality in classrooms, it cannot be applied to other contexts without a larger sample size.

Procedure

The interviews were carried out online via zoom call to facilitate organization of appointments with each participant and to allow the flexibility of participants choosing where they will be during the call. Appointments were booked within the time span of a week in order to allow ample time for transcribing and analyzing the voice recordings. However, due to unforeseen obligations from the participants and the researcher, this process took a week longer than expected (see Appendix F).

The participants were informed that their recordings will be used with labels and not with their names (see Appendix D). The consent form was sent to each participants' personal email to be signed and sent back (see Appendix B). The participants were ensured that their participation is voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw at any point if they felt the need to. The consent form also outlined the confidentiality and anonymity ensuring that participants' identities were not to be revealed at any point of the research.

The participants were asked to engage in semi-structured interviews, consisting of twelve open-ended questions. They were encouraged to share their beliefs, attitudes, perspectives, and practices regarding gender inequality in their respective classrooms. The interview was carried out in an open-ended conversational manner, which allowed participants to freely express their thoughts and experiences, as well as share detailed examples to support their viewpoints. Follow-up questions were sometimes required to ask for any clarifications to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' responses.

Debriefing was suggested if participants were interested in hearing about how their responses were analyzed and what themes arose. Only one participant out of the five requested to be debriefed. They were also given the opportunity to ask any questions or clarifications of their own. The debriefing process involved a form that summarizes the main themes and insights that emerged from the interviews without disclosing personal information or identities (see Appendix C). Participants also had the ability to contact the researcher in case they required additional information about the research topic. Furthermore, as the questions may provoke sensitive issues or invoke certain emotions, participants were provided with information on counseling services, if they wished to seek them.

Plans for data analysis

The IPA seeks to uncover the deeper layers of meaning and subjective interpretations that individuals attach to their own experiences (Smith & Nizza, 2022). Applying the IPA as a qualitative research approach consists of a certain number of steps according to the IPA protocols. First, the researcher must become familiarized with the data they have present. This was done by transcribing the audio recordings, reviewing the transcripts, and listening to the audios a second time to ensure all details were included.

The researcher then used initial coding to systematically identify meaningful pieces of the data that relate to the research objectives. The codes represent different concepts, themes, or categories, which can be in the form of phrases and/or emotions. The coding process may be deductive, which means that pre-defined themes are being noted down, or it can be inductive where new themes are identified. After the segments were separated, they were examined and grouped together to form initial themes. This is where the researcher looked for patterns and relationships between the codes to identify deeper-level themes that emphasized the essence of the participants' perspectives on gender inequality in the classroom. Similarities and differences within responses were carefully considered during this stage. The themes were then reviewed and refined in relation to the coded data and the research objectives. Sub-themes were identified in order to have a more detailed understanding of each theme. The themes were then analyzed within the broader context of gender inequality within education. For example, participants' perceptions were looked at from how societal norms, educational policies, and classroom dynamics shaped them. Finally, the final themes underwent cross-case analysis, where any similarities and differences were identified, to support any commonalities or patterns.

After finalizing the themes, interpretations of the findings occurred in relation to the existing literature and theoretical frameworks. The researcher identified connections between themes and provided explanations about the observed data. Alternative explanations were considered, and appropriate conclusions were drawn, which contributed to the understanding of teachers' perspectives of gender inequality within present-day educational settings.

An IPA approach was most appropriate for this study because it enabled a comprehensive exploration of the research question, captured the richness and depth of participants' responses, and provided a structured and systematic framework for organizing and interpreting data (Smith et al., 2012; Smith & Nizza, 2022). It was also participant-centered because it provided a platform for each participant's voice to be heard and understood in their own context. The flexibility and adaptability of this approach captured a broad range of perspectives and also allowed the discovery of new insights (Smith, 2012). Understanding the complexities of teachers' perceptions concerning gender inequality can ultimately spark the need for further research to be carried out on this ongoing issue.

Ethical Considerations and Researcher Reflexivity

Issues and discussions surrounding gender inequality may possess certain ethical concerns. For example, recalling upon personal experiences may cause emotional distress to some participants, therefore it was crucial that questions are formed and asked in a tentative way. No such issue arose in all five interviews, but if it did, the researcher would have prompted the participant to take a break or withdraw entirely if they felt they couldn't continue. In addition, due to the sensitivity of this topic, the researcher tried to ensure that their approach was mindful and didn't cause any harm or offense to the participants. This is where researcher reflexivity was

important, as one's own personal beliefs and biases must be kept neutral throughout the entire process of the interviews (Chenail, 2016). Not only would this minimize negative interactions between researcher and participant, but it would also allow for obtaining data in an objective manner solely through the participants' responses.

For example, I have certain views and perceptions of gender inequality and what I feel should be happening in schools to promote inclusivity. In order to maintain neutrality and ensure that data analysis remains unbiased, it was crucial that my views were kept to myself and not discussed during the interview process. There may have been instances where I agree or disagree with a participant, but this will not be made known vocally or through body language. Apart from this, my own education has been formed by being in international schools, therefore this may have played as an advantage to keeping an open mind to all responses and maintaining a safe environment where participants didn't feel judged at any point throughout the interviews.

Participants may have also ended up self-reflecting after the interviews, which could've potentially influenced their attitudes or behaviors around gender inequality in a positive or negative way. This is another reason why they were encouraged to reach out for any further questions or discussions in the debriefing form. One of the most important issues that was considered, if not the most important, was cultural sensitivity. Although the diversity present in international schools gave varying perceptions and views, it also meant that the participants may have a cultural background where gender norms had to be considered carefully (Ahmad et al., 2023). This is why the researcher's own tentativeness and neutrality was important, to ensure that all participants could speak about their views openly and without judgment. Finally, the interpretation of results aligned with the participants' intentions, meaning

that the researcher's potential biases didn't interfere or distort the analysis. Addressing these ethical issues involved careful planning and transparent communication with participants, and commitment to maintaining participants' rights, dignity, and well-being throughout the whole process.

In terms of researcher reflexivity, it is essential that the researcher is aware of their own biases and can maintain transparency with all participants. Transparency can be maintained by providing detailed explanations about research methods and tools used to the participants. This includes data analysis processes, data interpretation methods and coding procedures. In order to achieve data triangulation, sources were used from the literature review provided to support this study and its results. Data triangulation ensures rigor and trustworthiness, as evidence from various sources can strengthen the representation of results and phenomena under investigation (Palaganas et al., 2017).

Furthermore, the study aimed to enhance transferability by providing detailed descriptions of the research context, participants, and data collection procedures. This allowed for other readers or researcher to apply the findings across other settings and populations. The researcher also documented their own perspectives and biases during data collection and analysis in order to maintain confirmability and be able to have an open mind and reflective attitude throughout the entire study. By implementing these steps, the aim was to minimize researcher biases as much as possible, if any were to present themselves.

CHAPTER III: RESULTS

Before discussing the interpretative phenomenological analysis of the interview transcripts, results are discussed in a short synopsis. Overall, participants commonly agreed with the fact that gender inequality has been a rising and evident issue in school settings. Upon discussing experiences, all participants were able to identify at least one incident they have experienced or witnessed in class, or generally in school. This does support the fact that gender inequalities are present in different school settings, whether they are international, private, or public.

In addition, participants stated that the most common barriers they find that influences progress are parental involvement and schools' unwillingness to stir the water. None of the participants expressed opposition in using gender neutral pronouns in class, but rather some stated that they required additional resources to learn more about how to help students who struggle with this. There was also a mutual agreement in the idea that certain career paths are promoted to certain gender, whether intentionally or unintentionally. Furthermore, when participants were asked to imagine themselves as a director or school administrator and provide ideas of how to approach this, the most commonly mentioned ideas were organizing workshops for parents and students, as well as teacher training. The IPA goes into depth and discusses these common themes in detail, which allows for a deeper understanding of teachers' perceptions on gender inequality in the classroom.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

As previously mentioned, an interpretative phenomenological analysis was used for the analysis of participant responses to uncover the deeper layers of meaning and subjective interpretations that individuals attach to their own experiences. Before identifying common themes across all participant responses, each transcript was

analyzed individually, coded, and initial emerging themes were noted in five separate

tables along with supporting quotes (see Appendix E). After thoroughly reviewing

each table and the themes assigned to each transcript, the initial themes were clustered

into eleven subthemes, then this first cluster was grouped into six broader subthemes,

and then clustered one more time into three final superordinate themes as seen below:

Table 2. Clustering of initial emerging themes to final themes

First Cluster	Second Cluster	Final Cluster
Gender Identity Expression and Discrimination	Gender Identity and Discrimination	Gender Dynamics and Expression
Perception of Gender as a Spectrum	Perception of Gender	
Manifestation of Gender Inequalities in Classroom Dynamics	Classroom Dynamics and Inequality	Educational Inequalities
Factors Influencing Gender Inequality in Classrooms	Career Paths and Gender Promotion	
	Addressing Gender Inequality	Challenges and Progress
Impact of Gender Inequality on Academic Performance and Well-being	Challenges and Barriers	
Differences in Treatment Based on Gender		
Use of Gender-Appropriate Pronouns		
Promotion of Certain Career Paths Based on Gender		
Experiences of Gender Inequality or Discrimination in Educational Settings		
Steps Taken to Address Gender Inequality in Education		
Challenges and Barriers in Addressing Gender Inequality		

The clusters were discussed in detail in terms of how these themes emerged based on responses from the interview transcripts. For example, the subtheme of *Gender Identity Expression and Discrimination* surfaced prominently, as participants expressed mutual concern about the exposure to societal norms and what impact this could have on students' behavior. This can be analyzed in the following way:

1. Higher Order Theme: *Gender Dynamics and Expression*

a) Subtheme: *Gender Identity Expression and Discrimination*

Participant 1: "...he had no valid reason to be calling John gay just based off of his appearance."

Participant 3: "Gender identity has shifted from something black and white, and it has now turned into a rainbow wheel where the variations seem endless."

Participants recalled upon incidents of discrimination they had witnessed or how they perceive gender identity as a concept. As Participants 1 and 3 discuss, gender identity has changed throughout the years, but instances of discrimination are still very much present. Additionally, themes such as *Perception of Gender as a Spectrum* and *Use of Gender-Appropriate Pronouns* sparked the discussion of the need for inclusivity and fostering a safe environment for students in school settings. This can also connect to the subthemes of *Factors Influencing Gender Inequality in Classrooms* and *Impact of Gender Inequality on Academic Performance and Well-being* found in the higher order theme of *Educational Inequalities.*

The subordinate themes from *Gender Dynamics and Expression* branch out as follows:

b) Subtheme: *Perception of Gender as a Spectrum*

Participant 2: "I see gender as a spectrum with varying interpretations. Much like a math equation that can possess more than one answer at a time. People can place themselves anywhere on this spectrum, which is why being open-minded is key."

Participant 3: "Gender is multi-faceted for sure. Ideas, concepts, norms, social constructs. All of that has evolved over time, even though there are plenty of people still resisting change."

Participant 5: "Yes, gender is a spectrum and we come across it every day in subtle and in obvious ways. People need to have the ability to express themselves, since everyone in the world has been exposed to this two-ended pole of male and female."

This demonstrated that participants consistently expressed the view of gender as a spectrum and acknowledged the need for a more inclusive perspective. This viewpoint was articulated in more detail by Participant 2, 3, and 5, who emphasized the value of letting people express themselves freely. This theme draws attention to a larger movement in society that supports acceptance of a range of gender identities.

c) Subtheme: *Use of Gender-Appropriate Pronouns*

Participant 4: "The most important thing, apart from teaching kids things, is to create an inclusive environment. Wording and phrasing should therefore mirror the variety that exists within gender identity."

Participant 5: "Our goal is to make students feel safe and comfortable in order to aid their learning process. And this is just a small step into doing that. Small for us, but big for them. Also, it's important to note that we all go through this at one point. The need to explore our identities and figure out who we are and what we're comfortable with to show the world. Self-exploration is an ongoing process."

More specifically, addressing students by their preferred names and employing gender-appropriate pronouns was a recurring practice mentioned by participants. This reflected a conscious effort by educators, as described by Participant 4 and 5, to create a classroom environment that respects individual identities, aligning with the evolving linguistic landscape that acknowledges gender diversity.

Looking at the second superordinate theme of *Educational Inequalities,* five subordinate themes were linked. More specifically, participants found that

manifestations can also occur through the curriculum being taught or even the teaching style. This demonstrated that inequalities may arise indirectly or unintentionally and this is shown accordingly:

2. Higher Order Theme: *Educational Inequalities*

a) Subtheme: *Manifestation of Gender Inequalities in Classroom Dynamics*

Participant 2: "Ways that even teachers don't notice, intentionally or unintentionally. Like for example, assigning specific roles according to gender or biased perspectives. Then there's insufficient representation of course. Whether that could mean promoting this in school or even teaching material and style."

Participant 3: "The material being taught, even if taught in an inclusive manner, is ultimately promoting male historical figures. The mention or emphasis of female historical figures isn't nearly as present as their male counterparts."

Participant 4: "Academically, if literature is not really gender-inclusive or characters are not treated equally, this could create an imbalance in the comprehension of themes. Understanding something in a biased way can yield biased responses."

b) Subtheme: *Differences in Treatment Based on Gender*

Participant 2: "For example, if you have a teacher that expects more from boys in science than girls, this may affect how the teacher interacts with the students. This can be in frequency of getting picked on to answer a question, evaluating schoolwork and so on."

Participant 3: "I do know that a staff member pays closer attention to the boys during recess as they expect that troublesome behavior is more probable from them than girls."

Participant 2 and 3 reported seeing prejudices based on gender that have an impact on student performance and participation. Whether overt or covert, these disparities affect students' general well-being and engagement and foster a demanding learning environment. Additionally, participants consistently pointed out the differential treatment of male and female students, both by peers and educators. Instances of

biased expectations and stereotyping were highlighted, emphasizing the need for a more equitable approach in fostering a conducive and inclusive learning environment.

c) Subtheme: *Factors Influencing Gender Inequality in Classrooms*

Participant 2: "Like for example, assigning specific roles according to gender or biased perspectives. Then there's insufficient representation of course. Whether that could mean promoting this in school or even teaching material and style. The possibilities are endless in my opinion."

Participant 3: "Female roles are either left out or undermined, while male roles usually stand out more. Some argue that this is due to history books being written by men or that the imbalance of genders in older society was also implemented in history books to maintain this notion for the next generations that would read them."

Participants identified factors they believe influence gender inequalities in their respective classrooms. Specifically, Participant 2 voiced concerns over teaching style and material that could potentially assign gender to specific roles resulting in biased perspectives. Participant 3 added to this idea by emphasizing the fact that history textbooks taught in the curriculum tend to undermine female roles possibly due to the writers being predominantly male. Consequently, this concept also holds connections to the following subtheme:

d) Subtheme: *Promotion of Certain Career Paths Based on Gender*

Participants expressed the idea that the way STEM professions are promoted in school and in general are usually gender oriented. This concept is backed up by the following quotes:

Participant 2: "If we look at this historically, careers in STEM fields have been traditionally associated with boys and education and nursing have been associated with girls. Male stereotypes are also found in military jobs, law enforcement, and even sports. Girls I feel—are not

encouraged as much to follow career paths in STEM even though more efforts are being made to promote it for all genders."

Participant 5: "I think the most obvious example is the STEM professions… Boys are expected to be interested in and do well in areas such as math and sciences, whereas the same is expected from girls but in areas like social studies and sciences that are more theoretical rather than practical."

    e) Subtheme: *Impact of Gender Inequality on Academic Performance and Well-being*

Participant 2: "The sense of unfairness or injustice that can occur through gender inequalities can certainly impact a student's well-being whether it be emotionally or physically."

Participant 3: "Gender inequalities can for sure impact a student's well-being in more than one aspect… it could lower self-esteem for students who perceive their gender as lesser than."

Participant 5: "Children don't generally accept much and don't express themselves enough. They experience this in silence, with a different way, and this affects performance as well, in terms of assignment completion but mostly participation in class."

Concerns over the potential effects of gender inequality on pupils' academic performance and general well-being were frequently voiced by participants. According to participants' personal experiences, gender biases were directly linked to incidents of students being marginalized, discriminated against, and experiencing a decline in confidence. The themes emphasized how important it is for educators to understand the profound impacts of gender disparity on students' mental health and self-esteem in addition to their academic performance. Participants, particularly Participant 5, highlighted the negative consequences on students' self-esteem, motivation, and overall mental health. This underlines the need of overcoming gender inequities for students' entire development. Furthermore, instances of gender inequality and discrimination were recounted across transcripts, reflecting the harsh reality students face. From biased expectations to overt discriminatory incidents, these

experiences shape students' perceptions and interactions within the educational system.

The importance of parenting and societal norms in forming pupils' gender conceptions became clear. Participant 5 spoke about how persistent stereotypes influence pupils, emphasizing the difficulties in altering long-held attitudes. This issue highlights the complicated interaction of external factors that contribute to gender inequality in educational environments. In addition, participants indicated how societal expectations steer students towards specific careers based on their gender, perpetuating conventional beliefs. This theme therefore also, emphasized the importance of eliminating gender biases in educational and career guidance. Finally, participants provided a unanimous response concerning what they believed were the main barriers towards promoting gender equality in schools, which falls under the third higher order theme:

3. Higher Order Theme: *Challenges and Progress*

a) Subtheme: *Challenges and Barriers in Addressing Gender Inequality*

Participant 1: "And as for prohibiting factors, I would mainly say the universal fear of parental dissatisfaction that schools have."

Participant 2: "Other than that, parents remain a prohibiting factor because as many supportive parents as there are, there are just as many opposed parents."

Participant 3: "So, I think that if there were any other possibilities to address it, they have been put on hold and parents are the inhibitors in this case."

Participant 4: "I think our biggest or maybe – toughest prohibiting factor is parents' reaction."

Participant 5: "And as far as prohibiting factors, I would say parents can be part of it…"

Participants noted that progress in tackling gender disparity in education has been slow. Barriers to effective change were identified as cultural standards and parental expectations, as well as the emphasis schools place on parental satisfaction. This

higher order theme represents the many challenges that educators encounter while putting meaningful interventions in place.

Finally, participants recurringly acknowledged the limited attempts to reduce gender disparity but voiced a wish for more comprehensive measures. This was composed of what participants would do if they had the opportunity to offer interventions for gender inequality in their school as a whole.

b) Subtheme: *Addressing Inequality*

Participant 1: "Honestly, I'm a big believer on workshops. Educate people. Don't force them of course but educate those that want to be educated. I would definitely implement workshops that address gender issues in schools."

Participant 2: "After school workshops or seminars to attend, which will educate staff on how to handle these issues if they are presented to them."

Participant 4: "Sometimes the intention of helping is there, but we lack the knowledge on what to do. I think I would try and offer workshops or brief training programs to discuss strategies on how to handle gender discrimination or bias that could show up in different forms."

All participants emphasized the idea that staff training in the form of workshops or seminars is currently lacking but is deemed highly important to help educators possess the necessary information when they are called to address the potential manifestation of gender inequalities in their classroom. Workshops, seminars, and teacher training programs were suggested as ways to improve awareness among both staff and parents. This emphasizes continuing efforts and the importance of long-term strategies to combat gender imbalance in educational settings. It is also implied that it is essential for teachers to engage in ongoing professional development to increase their awareness of gender issues in the classroom and to develop strategies to address them.

Overall, the results displayed detailed accounts of teachers' perspectives on the manifestation of gender inequalities in educational settings. Insights were gained

on how these manifestations can vary depending on school subject, teaching style, curriculum material, and parental influence. These factors were acknowledged by all participants, which in turn demonstrated that there is a general awareness that additional and more effective steps and interventions are required in order to promote change. It is also important to note, that participants who worked in public schools did not identify differences in the presence of manifestations compared to private schools. The only potential factor that was mentioned was the possibility that public schools may not have the same abundance of resources as private international schools. According to participants personal views and experiences, this change could potentially influence academic progress and student well-being and pave the way for implementing various ways to foster an inclusive school environment.

CHAPTER IV: DISCUSSION

Applying Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory to Results

Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory outlines the idea that individuals learn through observation, imitation, and modeling (Bandura, 1999). This theory can be applied to the research question of how gender inequalities manifest in educational settings. Bandura's theory emphasizes the role of observational learning, where individuals learn by observing others. In the context of this research, participants shared their own observations of gender dynamics, discrimination, and inequalities within educational settings. Their narratives provided insights into how students, teachers, and educational systems shape and are shaped by gender-related behaviors.

Furthermore, a recurring belief amongst all participants were that teachers and educators act as equally significant role models in school, as parents do at home. Bandura emphasizes the importance of modelling, particularly educators, serve as role models for students (Bandura, 1999). When educators question gender stereotypes, promote diversity, and confront discrimination, they serve as positive role models for their students, impacting their attitudes and behaviors. This is consistent with Bandura's theory that people learn not only via direct experiences but also by modelling others. Bandura also proposes the concept of self-efficacy, which refers to the belief in one's ability to succeed in given conditions. Participants in this research examine the impact of educators on students' self-efficacy, emphasizing the importance of instructors in creating an environment in which students feel safe to express their gender identity. Educators contribute to students' self-efficacy in managing a varied and tolerant environment by confronting biases and fostering inclusivity, which could in turn impact academic achievement and well-being.

Finally, Bandura's theory also discusses vicarious reinforcement, where individuals are motivated by seeing others being punished or rewarded (Bandura, 1999). Educators who, therefore, employ inclusive practices and address gender inequities serve as a source of vicarious reinforcement, where students see how educators behave in situations involving gender issues. When positive behaviors are rewarded and discriminatory practices are challenged, it underlines the significance of creating a diverse educational environment. In summary, Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory provides a framework for understanding how individuals learn and respond to gender dynamics in educational settings. The participants, particularly educators, play a vital role as models, influencing the learning experiences and self-efficacy of students in addressing gender inequalities.

Connection to Literature

After closely analyzing participant responses and devising emerging themes, whether common or different, it is important to also look at how these responses and themes connect to the existing literature. The literature review, notably the research by Sadker and Sadker (1994) and Bigler and Liben (2006), sheds light on how gender disparity manifests itself in the classroom. Sadker and Sadker's findings on unequal allocation of teacher attention and biased praise for academic accomplishment are consistent with Participant 5's observations that certain pupils receive greater attention due to gender biases. In the classroom, boys may receive more positive reinforcement for their academic successes, contributing to an environment in which girls' accomplishments are discounted. Similarly, Bigler and Liben's study, which found lower expectations for females' talents, corresponds to Participant 5's statement of pupils encountering discrimination and lowered confidence due to gender stereotypes. This implies that preexisting assumptions about gender roles influence students'

experiences and chances in the educational setting, reflecting the real-world examples provided by Participant 5.

Additionally, the literature review also draws attention to cultural beliefs and stereotypes influencing gender roles, as evidenced in the studies by Jussim and Harber (2005) and Good et al. (2012). Participant 5's remark of the impact of upbringing and societal norms is consistent with the findings of these studies, emphasizing the ongoing influence of cultural ideas on teacher expectations. Teachers' evaluations of students' talents, as stated in Jussim and Harber's study, might unintentionally promote gender stereotypes, resulting in biased treatment in the classroom. Participant 3's perspective offers another take on the underlying causes of gender disparity. They discussed how parental influence and society standards shape students' perspectives, which is consistent with the literature's focus on cultural ideas and stereotypes (Sadker and Sadker, 1994).

The participant's views illustrate the ingrained nature of these biases, which arise from cultural expectations and upbringing. This is consistent with the literature's focus on the influence of cultural ideas on instructors' expectations and treatment of pupils, emphasizing the need for interventions at several levels. Furthermore, the literature on institutional determinants and biased teaching materials as seen in Sadker and Sadker (1994) supports Participant 5's views that curriculum design perpetuates gender prejudices. The absence of representation of women in STEM-related fields in textbooks, as highlighted in the literature, is consistent with Participant 5's comments on the encouragement of specific career routes based on gender, emphasizing the broader societal impact on educational practices.

Furthermore, into the literature, Gregory et al. (2017) and Morris (2005) investigated the impact of disciplinary procedures on boys and girls. These findings

are consistent with Participant 5's narratives of students losing confidence, losing faith in their talents, and experiencing negative impacts on academic performance. The connection highlights the larger impact of gender inequality on students' well-being and academic achievement. When teachers use harsher disciplinary actions against boys, it not only reinforces biased attitudes but also has a severe impact on pupils' mental health and self-esteem. Participant 5's views provide a real-world example of how such disciplinary methods can contribute to a hostile learning environment, underscoring the need for measures that promote inclusivity and equal treatment. In Participant 4's account, there was a notable emphasis on the impact of gender inequality on students' mental well-being and academic performance. They discussed instances where students faced discrimination and struggled with self-expression, resonating with the literature's findings on disciplinary practices affecting boys and girls differently (Gregory et al., 2017). Participant 4's experience provides an additional example of how gender inequality can manifest as a barrier to students' holistic development, highlighting the need for interventions that consider the broader well-being of students.

Looking at gender identity expression and pronoun usage, the awareness and acceptance of diverse gender identities have led to an expansion of pronoun usage beyond traditional he/she. Studies by McGlashan & Fitzpatrick (2018), Allen-Biddell & Bond (2022), Tordoff et al. (2020), Dunhill (2016), and Cornu (2016) highlight the significance of using gender-neutral pronouns and the correct pronouns for each student. The researchers emphasize the need to promote empathy and allyship for gender-diverse peers and promote a culture of acceptance within the classroom and also in other settings. These studies relate to Participant 5's account of the added pronoun in French grammar, whose role is to be gender neutral. Teenagers in high

school, a pivotal time in the development of non-normative gender identity, frequently face challenges such as misgendering, which have an impact on their well-being (Steensma et al., 2013). Teachers, according to participant answers, play an important role in building an inclusive environment by using gender-inclusive terminology, developing a sense of belonging, and supporting the many experiences and views linked to gender identity.

Concerning steps taken to address these manifestations, the literature was found to be relevant with more than one participant's response. For example, Participant 1's statements offer light on their attempts to overcome gender imbalance in their teaching practice. They stated fostering an inclusive classroom climate, which is consistent with the literature's focus on teacher attitudes and beliefs that influence gender inequality (Bigler and Liben, 2006). Participant 1's proactive approach demonstrates how individual educators can help address gender imbalance by creating inclusive learning environments. This example contributes to the larger concept by demonstrating that, while institutional reforms are necessary, individual initiatives in classrooms can also play an important role in advancing gender equality.

In addition, Participant 1's perspective sheds more light on the difficulty of designing an inclusive curriculum. Their emphasis on teamwork, collaboration, and eliminating discrimination is consistent with the broader literature on developing supportive learning environments (Gregory et al., 2017). The participant's statement of a lack of representation in textbooks supports the literature's results on minor gender biases in educational materials (Sovič & Hus, 2015; Rong et al., 2021). Participant 1's narrative gives a nuanced insight of the intricacies involved in implementing inclusive curriculum approaches, as well as a firsthand account of the impact of these challenges. This can also be seen through Participant 3's response as it

delves into the broader sociocultural influences on classroom dynamics. Their discussion of societal norms and family expectations is consistent with the literature's emphasis on building a supportive school atmosphere for every student, regardless of gender (Keay, 2007). Participant 3's observations give a contextual aspect to the issue of inclusion, demonstrating the interconnectedness of social and classroom effects. The participant's perspective reinforces the importance of educators navigating external elements that contribute to gender dynamics in the educational setting.

Expanding on the theme of creating an inclusive classroom environment, Participant 3's insights offer a valuable exploration into the complexities of societal influences on classroom dynamics. Their acknowledgment of societal norms and parental expectations aligns with Keay's (2007) assertion that broader societal factors significantly impact the educational environment. Participant 3's narrative adds depth by highlighting the intricate relationship between external societal influences and the internal dynamics of the classroom. Furthermore, Participant 3's perspective highlights the difficulties educators encounter while managing external elements that contribute to gender interactions in the educational setting. The inclusion of parental expectations adds another depth to the issue, highlighting the fact that instructors frequently face not only society norms but also specific family expectations. This is consistent with the literature's awareness of the multidimensional character of gender dynamics in educational contexts, which emphasizes the importance of educators addressing a number of external influences (Keay, 2007). However, it should be noted, that Participant 2 did not place an equal amount of emphasis on parental influence, stating that culture and values are factors that impact parents' behaviors as well, implying a more complex explanation.

Moving on to the matter of professional development, Participant 2's detailed report offers critical insights into the changing landscape of teacher education. Their emphasis on continual learning and the actual obstacles that educators encounter aligns with Rakshit and Sahoo's (2019) call for continued professional development to address gender concerns in education. This study states that inclusive practices can be achieved through attending workshops, participating in online training courses, or reading literature on gender issues in education. Participant 2's experience highlights the changing nature of teacher education, underlining the importance of accessible and relevant options. Furthermore, Participant 2's firsthand experience with the obstacles of staying informed and proactive in teacher training provides richness to the knowledge of the practical components of professional development.

The participant's story highlights the real-world challenges educators have in keeping up with changing concepts and practices in gender-inclusive education. This aligns with the literature's emphasis on the importance of teachers being well-equipped with the knowledge and skills to promote gender equality in the classroom (Rakshit & Sahoo, 2019). It also reflects back to the Cornu (2016) study, regarding the need for updated practices. The participants' firsthand perspectives emphasizes the dynamic nature of teacher training and the importance of accessible and relevant opportunities, aligning with the literature's call for teachers to be well-equipped with the knowledge and skills to promote gender equality in the classroom. Overall, participant responses demonstrated that there is a lack of implemented strategies in their schools, compared to the current practices currently being employed in a broader context.

An important part of the discussion of this research is finding connections in the literature within the specific higher order themes that emerged from participant

responses. Beginning with *Gender Dynamics and Expression,* the literature review aligns with the transcripts by highlighting how societal beliefs and stereotypes influence gender expectations. Going back to Sadker and Sadker's (1994) study on teacher attention disparities, Participant 5's echoes personal observations of girls facing judgment for non-conformity. The literature emphasizes the need for educators to recognize and challenge these stereotypes to create a supportive environment for diverse gender expressions. Furthermore, Gentrup et al. (2020) supports these findings, by suggesting that girls' achievements are frequently attributed to effort rather than intrinsic ability. This emphasizes the need for educators to overcome established biases and create an environment in which varied gender expressions are valued.

Additionally, the literature's discussion of gender as a spectrum is consistent with Jussim and Harber's (2005) study, which found that teachers ranked girls lower in math, revealing biased perceptions. Participant 3's experiences are consistent with this, highlighting the need for educators to broaden their understanding of gender. Furthermore, Broussard et al.'s (2018) classification of diverse gender identities reinforces the significance of educators accepting a broader range. This subject emphasizes the changing nature of gender perspectives and the need for educators to change their teaching methods to accommodate this evolution.

Continuing to expand on this theme, McGlashan and Fitzpatrick's (2018) study of extended pronoun usage is consistent with the transcripts' emphasis on educators adopting gender-appropriate pronouns. The literature supports the idea that language changes to become more inclusive, pointing out the continuous character of this linguistic transition. This aligns with Participant 5's account of how the French language has adapted to this transition through the official addition of a gender-

neutral pronoun in French grammar. Allen-Biddell and Bond's (2022) emphasis on the importance of using appropriate pronouns in developing a sense of belonging is consistent with Participant 2's perspective, stressing the role educators play in validating students' identities. This connection illustrates the dynamic nature of language in reflecting and shaping inclusivity.

On a more academic aspect from the higher order theme *Educational Inequalities*, and connecting again to Sadker & Sadker's study dating back to 1994, there is an indication of pervasive influence on educational trajectories. According to a unanimous belief from participants that career paths are often gender-steered, the narrative resonates with the need for educators to challenge traditional norms and guide students based on their interests rather than conforming to gender stereotypes. Additionally, Good et al.'s (2012) findings about underestimating girls' abilities in STEM subjects underscore the implications of such biases on career choices. This theme emphasizes the crucial role of educators in reshaping perceptions and promoting diverse career paths. Taking into account the dates of the literature mentioned, it can be inferred that the issue of promoting career paths based on gender still persists today and has not been effectively addressed.

In response to the challenges posed by gender inequality, teachers are pivotal in implementing strategies that promote equality and inclusivity. The higher order theme of *Challenges and Progress* connects to the studies by Jussim and Harber (2005), Gråstén & Kokkonen (2020), and Rakshit & Sahoo (2019) who emphasize the importance of promoting equal opportunities, challenging stereotypes, creating inclusive classroom environments, and engaging in ongoing professional development. Specifically, the study by Rakshit & Sahoo (2019) stresses the value of

teachers attending workshops, participating in online training courses, or reading literature on gender issues in education.

The literature review's exploration of challenges in addressing gender inequality aligns with the transcripts' acknowledgment of persistent barriers. The barrier that all five participants found to be common, was parental reaction or intervention. The literature review stresses the importance of parents in moulding children's views on gender roles and identities. Epstein and Ward (2011) and Fulcher (2010) found a link between parents' traditional views on gender roles and their children's adoption of similar attitudes. This coincides with Participant 2's and Participant 3's comment of how factors like religion, culture, values, and customs can influence gender views coming from parents. Chen et al. (2023) identified the Parental Child-rearing Gender-role Attitudes (PCGA) phenomenon as a means of indirectly transmitting these ideas. This gender-differentiated parenting technique creates biases in disciplinary actions based on a child's gender, reinforcing established gender stereotypes.

However, the literature suggests that parents may also present a barrier to discussions about gender issues in schools. While previous research emphasizes the need for parents educating themselves about gender identity and supporting their children, there is still a huge vacuum in knowing how parental emotions can impede talks in educational settings. Davy and Cordoba (2020) highlight this gap, pointing out a lack of research on parental engagement in determining the frequency of gender-related discussions in schools. The concerns expressed by parents are usually about potential harm, like bullying or peer pressure, as a result of these discussions (Davy & Gordoba, 2020). Participants 1, 4 and 5 also address how parental reaction can be a barrier towards schools' willingness to hold discussions about gender. This concern

sparks a debate about who has the power to determine gender, potentially resulting in confrontations between parents and school staff. Thus, parental influence, while accepted as an important role in influencing children's viewpoints, also serves as a potential barrier to open talks about gender-related matters in the school setting.

Overall, participants mainly expressed that the manifestation of gender inequalities pose certain disadvantages towards students and teacher-student interactions. Whether it is potential hinderance from learning or emotional distress, the discussion provided insights on the prevalence of these inequalities. The literature in connection to demonstrated how gender inequalities arise differently and that incidents can occur more frequently than one might think. Finally, the responses also show a gap in steps being taken to address these inequalities, which clashes with the existing literature of current suggested strategies. In other words, there are policies that can be implemented, but they're not being implemented to the extent that they should be according to the participants' educational settings.

Limitations

While investigating teachers' perceptions of gender disparity in the classroom provides vital insights, it is important to recognize some of the study's drawbacks. First, the study employs a qualitative approach, specifically semi-structured interviews with a small number of participants (five high school teachers). The limited sample size may limit the findings' generalizability to a larger population of educators, as individual experiences and viewpoints may differ substantially. Furthermore, the study's geographic concentration on a single region or school district may limit the results' applicability to other educational contexts with varied sociocultural dynamics. Furthermore, the interviews are retrospective in nature, relying on participants' memories of past events, which may be prone to recall bias.

The qualitative nature of the study also means that the findings may not provide a comprehensive quantitative overview of the prevalence and frequency of gender-related incidents in the classroom.

Furthermore, focusing on a specific location or school district may limit the applicability of findings to other educational environments with distinct sociocultural dynamics. The retrospective nature of the interviews, which rely on participants' recollections of previous experiences, raises the likelihood of recall bias. Due to the qualitative design, the data may not provide a thorough quantitative summary of the prevalence and frequency of gender-related occurrences in the classroom. The self-reporting nature of the interviews increases the possibility of social desirability bias, as participants may be more likely to depict their activities positively. Furthermore, the study prioritizes teachers' opinions, potentially overlooking students' perspectives, which are critical for a comprehensive knowledge of gender dynamics in the classroom. The research's precise time span may influence the relevance of findings taking into account changing societal attitudes towards gender. Finally, the lack of an intersectional perspective for investigating how elements such as race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status intersect with gender is a significant drawback, as these intersections contribute to a more complex understanding of inequality. Despite these limitations, the study lays the groundwork for future research that will address these constraints and provide a more thorough knowledge of gender inequality in educational settings.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study explores the varied nature of gender dynamics and expressions in educational contexts, establishing links between participant responses and current literature. Gender inequalities are revealed by the analysis, which includes biased instructor attention, stereotyped expectations, disciplinary methods, and biased teaching material. These biases, which stem from societal ideas and cultural conventions, have an impact on both students' well-being and academic achievement. The participants' stories highlight the need for interventions at all levels, from inclusive curriculum design to teacher professional development.

Furthermore, the study of gender identity expression and pronoun usage underlines the changing nature of language and the role of educators in creating inclusive environments. The findings emphasize the difficulties that students encounter when misgendering occurs and the critical role that teachers play in creating a supportive environment through gender-inclusive language.

Addressing educational inequities, the study highlights continuing biases in directing students to select job options depending on gender. The study is consistent with previous research findings that emphasize the necessity of confronting preconceptions, supporting equitable opportunities, and engaging in ongoing professional development in order to transform perceptions and encourage diverse career choices.

In summary, the study provides insight on the intricacies of gender inequality in education, linking participant experiences to past and current literature. It advocates for a comprehensive approach that addresses prejudices at all levels, promotes inclusive environments, and requires continuous professional growth. The participants' accounts also reveal a disconnect between suggested techniques in the

research and their implementation in educational settings, highlighting the need for

improved awareness and action to achieve gender equality.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A – Interview Questionnaire

1. There is a dialogue lately regarding a wider scope defining gender identities other than male/female; have you witnessed this phenomenon where you teach and in which ways? What are your thoughts about it?

2. How do you perceive the concept of gender as a spectrum?

3. In what ways do you believe gender inequalities manifest in the classroom, if any?

4. What do you think causes the possible manifestation of gender inequality in classrooms?

5. Do you think gender inequalities can impact students' academic performance and well-being? If yes, in what ways?

6. Have you observed any differences in the way male and female students are treated by teachers and peers?

7. What is your view on using gender appropriate pronouns in the classroom apart from the conventional ones (he/she)?

8. Have you noticed any differences in the ways that certain career paths or academic opportunities are promoted to males and females?

9. How do you think teachers' own gender biases might impact their interactions with students?

10. Have you ever experienced or witnessed any incidents of gender inequality or gender discrimination throughout your years of teaching? Please provide an example, if possible.

11. If inequality exists, do you think that adequate steps are being taken to address it? If yes, what steps do you consider the most effective? if not, what are the factors in your opinion prohibiting action from being taken?

12. If you were a school director, in an "ideal" school environment, would you do anything differently? Would you have any personal ideas/needs that you would like to address?

Appendix B – Informed Consent

Participant 1:

Master of Arts (MA) in Applied Child and Adolescent Psychology

Student Name and ID: Michaela Scholinakis, 199147

Thesis Topic: A Study of Teachers' Perceptions of How Gender Issues Manifest Themselves in the Classroom

Purpose of the Research: The purpose of this study is to gain insights into your experiences, beliefs, attitudes, and practices related to gender inequality in educational contexts. This informed consent will provide you with all necessary information.

What you will do in this research: If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to partake in a semi-structured interview involving 12 open-ended questions. The interview will discuss your past and current experiences, and perspectives concerning gender inequality in the classroom. This process will be audio-recorded to ensure accuracy and for documentation purposes. The interview will last approximately 1-2 hours, depending on the length of responses and discussion.

Risks: A possible risk associated with this study is that responding to questions involving personal experiences may provide emotional discomfort depending on the situation. If you experience any such discomfort during the interview, you may pause or withdraw entirely at any time.

Confidentiality: Your responses will be kept anonymous. Your data and identity will be accessible only to the principal investigator and the co-investigators of the present study. Records and data will be kept confidential by coded responses and stored in a password-protected device until data analysis has been completed. When research results are reported, responses will be aggregated (added together) and described in summary.

Participation and withdrawal: Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may quit at any time without penalty. You may also skip any question but continue to complete the rest of the questionnaire. If you decide to withdraw from the study, any data collected from you will be destroyed, and it will not be included in the final analysis.

To Contact the Researcher: If you have questions or concerns about this research at any time, please contact: [Michaela Scholinakis] Phone: [6934681336], Email: [m.scholinaki@acg.edu]. This research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board of The American College of Greece.

Name and signature of main investigator(s): Michaela Scholinakis _____

I have read and understood the information provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Signature _____

Date __18/11/2023_____

Participant 2:

Deree

Master of Arts (MA) in Applied Child and Adolescent Psychology

Student Name and ID: Michaela Scholinakis, 199147

Thesis Topic: A Study of Teachers' Perceptions of How Gender Issues Manifest Themselves in the Classroom

Purpose of the Research: The purpose of this study is to gain insights into your experiences, beliefs, attitudes, and practices related to gender inequality in educational contexts. This informed consent will provide you with all necessary information.

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Risks: A possible risk associated with this study is that responding to questions involving personal experiences may provide emotional discomfort depending on the situation. If you experience any such discomfort during the interview, you may pause or withdraw entirely at any time.

Confidentiality: Your responses will be kept anonymous. Your data and identity will be accessible only to the principal investigator and the co-investigators of the present study. Records and data will be kept confidential by coded responses and stored in a password-protected device until data analysis has been completed. When research results are reported, responses will be aggregated (added together) and described in summary.

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To Contact the Researcher: If you have questions or concerns about this research at any time, please contact: [Michaela Scholinakis] Phone: [6934681336], Email: [m.scholinaki@acg.edu]. This research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board of The American College of Greece.

Name and signature of main investigator(s): Michaela Scholinakis _____

I have read and understood the information provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Signature _____

Date __19/11/2023_____

Participant 3

Master of Arts (MA) in Applied Child and Adolescent Psychology

Student Name and ID: Michaela Scholinakis, 199147

Thesis Topic: A Study of Teachers' Perceptions of How Gender Issues Manifest Themselves in the Classroom

Purpose of the Research: The purpose of this study is to gain insights into your experiences, beliefs, attitudes, and practices related to gender inequality in educational contexts. This informed consent will provide you with all necessary information.

What you will do in this research: If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to partake in a semi-structured interview involving 12 open-ended questions. The interview will discuss your past and current experiences, and perspectives concerning gender inequality in the classroom. This process will be audio-recorded to ensure accuracy and for documentation purposes. The interview will last approximately 1-2 hours, depending on the length of responses and discussion.

Risks: A possible risk associated with this study is that responding to questions involving personal experiences may provide emotional discomfort depending on the situation. If you experience any such discomfort during the interview, you may pause or withdraw entirely at any time.

Confidentiality: Your responses will be kept anonymous. Your data and identity will be accessible only to the principal investigator and the co-investigators of the present study. Records and data will be kept confidential by coded responses and stored in a password-protected device until data analysis has been completed. When research results are reported, responses will be aggregated (added together) and described in summary.

Participation and withdrawal: Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may quit at any time without penalty. You may also skip any question but continue to complete the rest of the questionnaire. If you decide to withdraw from the study, any data collected from you will be destroyed, and it will not be included in the final analysis.

To Contact the Researcher: If you have questions or concerns about this research at any time, please contact: [Michaela Scholinakis] Phone: [6934681336], Email: [m.scholinaki@acg.edu]. This research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board of The American College of Greece.

Name and signature of main investigator(s): Michaela Scholinakis _____

I have read and understood the information provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Signature _____

Date __22/11/2023_____

Participant 4

Master of Arts (MA) in Applied Child and Adolescent Psychology

Student Name and ID: Michaela Scholinakis, 199147

Thesis Topic: A Study of Teachers' Perceptions of How Gender Issues Manifest Themselves in the Classroom

Purpose of the Research: The purpose of this study is to gain insights into your experiences, beliefs, attitudes, and practices related to gender inequality in educational contexts. This informed consent will provide you with all necessary information.

What you will do in this research: If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to partake in a semi-structured interview involving 12 open-ended questions. The interview will discuss your past and current experiences, and perspectives concerning gender inequality in the classroom. This process will be audio-recorded to ensure accuracy and for documentation purposes. The interview will last approximately 1-2 hours, depending on the length of responses and discussion.

Risks: A possible risk associated with this study is that responding to questions involving personal experiences may provide emotional discomfort depending on the situation. If you experience any such discomfort during the interview, you may pause or withdraw entirely at any time.

Confidentiality: Your responses will be kept anonymous. Your data and identity will be accessible only to the principal investigator and the co-investigators of the present study. Records and data will be kept confidential by coded responses and stored in a password-protected device until data analysis has been completed. When research results are reported, responses will be aggregated (added together) and described in summary.

Participation and withdrawal: Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may quit at any time without penalty. You may also skip any question but continue to complete the rest of the questionnaire. If you decide to withdraw from the study, any data collected from you will be destroyed, and it will not be included in the final analysis.

To Contact the Researcher: If you have questions or concerns about this research at any time, please contact: [Michaela Scholinakis] Phone: [6934681336], Email: [m.scholinaki@acg.edu]. This research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board of The American College of Greece.

Name and signature of main investigator(s): Michaela Scholinakis _____

I have read and understood the information provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Signature _____

Date __03/12/2023_____

Participant 5

Master of Arts (MA) in Applied Child and Adolescent Psychology

Student Name and ID: Michaela Scholinakis, 199147

Thesis Topic: A Study of Teachers' Perceptions of How Gender Issues Manifest Themselves in the Classroom

Purpose of the Research: The purpose of this study is to gain insights into your experiences, beliefs, attitudes, and practices related to gender inequality in educational contexts. This informed consent will provide you with all necessary information.

What you will do in this research: If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to partake in a semi-structured interview involving 12 open-ended questions. The interview will discuss your past and current experiences, and perspectives concerning gender inequality in the classroom. This process will be audio-recorded to ensure accuracy and for documentation purposes. The interview will last approximately 1-2 hours, depending on the length of responses and discussion.

Risks: A possible risk associated with this study is that responding to questions involving personal experiences may provide emotional discomfort depending on the situation. If you experience any such discomfort during the interview, you may pause or withdraw entirely at any time.

Confidentiality: Your responses will be kept anonymous. Your data and identity will be accessible only to the principal investigator and the co-investigators of the present study. Records and data will be kept confidential by coded responses and stored in a password-protected device until data analysis has been completed. When research results are reported, responses will be aggregated (added together) and described in summary.

Participation and withdrawal: Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may quit at any time without penalty. You may also skip any question but continue to complete the rest of the questionnaire. If you decide to withdraw from the study, any data collected from you will be destroyed, and it will not be included in the final analysis.

To Contact the Researcher: If you have questions or concerns about this research at any time, please contact: [Michaela Scholinakis] Phone: [6934681336], Email: [m.scholinaki@acg.edu]. This research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board of The American College of Greece.

Name and signature of main investigator(s): Michaela Scholinakis _____

I have read and understood the information provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Signature ___

Date ___05/12/2023_____

Appendix C – Debriefing Statement

This study is concerned with teachers' perceptions on gender inequality in educational settings, specifically the classroom. Previous studies have shown that this issue has been manifesting in classrooms for decades, and the ever-changing definition of gender identities has triggered the need for more inclusive learning environments. Therefore, teachers and educators who come into contact with gender diverse children are being encouraged even more to update their practices and educate themselves on how they can create a more gender-inclusive classroom environment.

How was this tested?

In this study, a qualitative method of semi-structured interviews was used to explore teachers' perceptions on gender inequality in the classroom. The interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accurate documentation of your responses. Thematic analysis was used to analyze each response and identify recurring patterns, themes, and categories.

Main questions:

The aim of this study was to investigate teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and practices towards gender inequality in their respective classrooms. It aimed to explore factors that influence gender inequality and what practices are currently being used to address these disparities. It analyzed two present gender inequality issues such as equal representation and equal access to opportunities for all genders and learning to

acknowledge the spectrum of gender in order to create a more inclusive learning environment.

Why is this important to study?

The occurrence or presence of gender inequality in classrooms can have significant impacts on students' educational experiences and outcomes. By examining teachers' perspectives, the study provides insight to challenges and opportunities involved in promoting gender equality in educational settings. The findings can be helpful for educational policies, teacher training programs, and classroom practices, which could lead to more inclusive school environments.

What if I want to know more?

If you would like to know more about this study, you may consult related research articles such as:

Gregory, A., Skiba, R. J., & Mediratta, K. (2017). Eliminating disparities in school discipline: A framework for intervention. *Review of Research in Education*, *41*(1), 253–278. https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732x17690499

Rakshit, S., & Sahoo, S. (2019). Biased teachers and gender gap in learning outcomes: Evidence from India. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3496237

Several resources are also available in online websites:

https://genderspectrum.org/articles/easy-steps-to-a-gender-inclusive-classroom

If you wish to seek counseling services at any point, please feel free to contact the research and advisor using the information below. They will be able to assist you and provide additional support in finding the appropriate counseling services for you.

To contact the researcher:
If you would like to receive a report of this research when it is completed (or a summary of the findings), please contact Michaela Scholinakis at 6934681336, m.scholinaki@acg.edu or Dr. Koliris, mkoliris@acg.edu

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Whom to contact about your rights in this research or for questions, concerns,

suggestions, complaints that are not being addressed by the research team, or in case of research-related harm: Institutional Review Board at the American College of Greece. E-mail: irb@acg.edu

Please do not disclose research procedures and hypotheses to anyone who might participate in this study between now and the end of the data collection (10/2023) as this could affect the results of the study. Thank you for your participation!

Appendix D – Audio Release Form

Participant 1:

I voluntarily agree to be audio-recorded during the experiment being conducted by __Michaela Scholinakis_____. I understand that the tapes will be used only for _data analysis purposes with only myself having access to recordings._ These tapes will be identified by _participant numbers._ The tapes will be kept for approximately two months. After data is collected the tapes will be _erased._

_____

_____

Signature of the Participant   Date 18/11/2023

____Michaela Scholinakis_____

Signature of Investigator   Date 18/11/2023

Participant 2:

I voluntarily agree to be audio-recorded during the experiment being conducted by __Michaela Scholinakis_____. I understand that the tapes will be used only for _data analysis purposes with only myself having access to recordings._ These tapes will be identified by participant numbers. The tapes will be kept for approximately two months. After data is collected the tapes will be erased.

_____

_____
Signature of the Participant   Date 19/11/2023

___Michaela Scholinakis_____
Signature of Investigator   Date 19/11/2023

Participant 3:

I voluntarily agree to be audio-recorded during the experiment being conducted by __Michaela Scholinakis_____. I understand that the tapes will be used only for _data analysis purposes with only myself having access to recordings._ These tapes will be identified by participant numbers. The tapes will be kept for approximately two months. After data is collected the tapes will be erased.

_____

_____
Signature of the Participant   Date 22/11/2023

___Michaela Scholinakis_____
Signature of Investigator   Date 22/11/2023

Participant 4:

I voluntarily agree to be audio-recorded during the experiment being conducted by __Michaela Scholinakis_____. I understand that the tapes will be used only for data analysis purposes with only myself having access to recordings. These tapes will be identified by participant numbers. The tapes will be kept for approximately two months. After data is collected the tapes will be erased.

_____

_____
Signature of the Participant   Date 03/12/2023

___Michaela Scholinakis_____
Signature of Investigator   Date 03/12/2023

Participant 5:

I voluntarily agree to be audio-recorded during the experiment being conducted by __Michaela Scholinakis_____. I understand that the tapes will be used only for data analysis purposes with only myself having access to recordings. These tapes will be identified by participant numbers. The tapes will be kept for approximately two months. After data is collected the tapes will be erased.

_____

_____
Signature of the Participant   Date 05/12/2023

___Michaela Scholinakis_____
Signature of Investigator   Date 05/12/2023

Appendix E – Data Tables

Table 1.1 Findings from the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) of

Participant 1 – Male, Physical Education Teacher

Code	Interview Quote	Emerging Theme
Evolving gender identities	"I have definitely heard about this issue from other colleagues." "The only thing I can think of is when I once referred to a student as 'she'... they go by 'they' and 'them'."	Awareness of Evolving Gender Identities
Gender as spectrum	"I don't know much... that experience... was maybe the first time I was really given food for thought." "I guess gender is being defined differently by the current generation..."	Perceptions of Gender as a Spectrum
Gender inequalities in sports	"Gender inequalities are embedded in sports... kids end up being conditioned to associate a gender with a sport involuntarily."	Gender Inequalities in Sports Education

External influences on inequalities	"External influences like one's household or stimuli they are exposed to will affect the manifestation of gender inequalities."	External Influences on Gender Inequalities
Impact on academics	"Anything that gives a student a bad experience can affect them... Lack of focus or motivation maybe?"	Impact of Gender Inequalities on Academic Performance
Treatment differences	"There have been some instances of bullying... Some kids tend to exhibit their gender identity more profoundly than others."	Differences in Treatment of Male and Female Students
Gender appropriate pronouns	"I won't lie and say that I know exactly what to say... I feel like I don't have all the information."	Use of Gender-Appropriate Pronouns
Gender biases impact	"Maybe this can happen by how boys and girls are treated in certain things... Or maybe classroom participation not being evenly distributed?"	Gender Biases Impacting Interactions
Witnessed gender discrimination	"I can only recall one incident... 'You just look gay.' And without hesitation, I said 'And what does gay look like?'"	Incident of Gender Discrimination Witnessed
Efforts to address inequality	"I think this year we had one talk in assembly about LGBTQ inclusion... But in terms of practicality, it's still lacking."	Efforts to Address Gender Inequality
Barriers	"The universal fear of parental dissatisfaction that schools have... Controversial topics don't sit well with a lot of parents."	Barriers to Addressing Gender Issues
Educational workshops	"Honestly, I'm a big believer in workshops... I would definitely implement workshops that address gender issues in schools."	Educational Workshops as a Solution

Table 1.2 Findings from the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) of

Participant 2 – Male, Math Teacher

Code	Interview Quote	Emerging Theme
Evolving gender identities	"I've observed in recent times a general discussion surrounding gender that deviates from what used to be solely male and female."	Awareness of Evolving Gender Identities
Gender as spectrum	"I see gender as a spectrum with varying interpretations... People can place themselves anywhere on this spectrum."	Perceptions of Gender as a Spectrum
Manifestations in classroom	"Assigning specific roles according to gender or biased perspectives... insufficient representation... promoting this in school or even teaching material and style."	Manifestations of Gender Inequality in the Classroom
Biases influence on inequality	"I think the manifestation can be influenced mostly by one's own biases and perspectives on the matter."	Influence of Biases on Gender Inequality

Role assignment teacher bias	"By specific roles, I mean how sometimes boys may be expected to do one thing and girls another... it's difficult to avoid thinking that way when circumstances are like that."	Role Assignment and Teacher Bias
Treatment differences	"Teachers may tend to show favoritism in a general sense... but again there are always exceptions."	Teacher-Student Treatment Differences
Gender appropriate pronouns	"I support using the appropriate nouns... using the correct pronouns can actually mean something really big for that student."	Use of Gender-Appropriate Pronouns
Impact on well-being	"Feeling singled out or misrepresented cannot possibly hold anything beneficial for the person affected... can certainly impact a student's well-being."	Impact of Gender Inequality on Well-being
Gender stereotypes career	"Careers in STEM fields have been traditionally associated with boys and education and nursing have been associated with girls."	Gender Stereotypes in Career Promotion
Witnessed gender discrimination	"I think that I can recall upon a time where more funding went into the boys' athletic teams compared to the girls."	Incident of Gender Discrimination Witnessed
Teacher biases interactions	"If you have a teacher that expects more from boys in science than girls, this may affect how the teacher interacts with the students."	Impact of Teacher Gender Biases on Interactions
Efforts to address inequality	"The most that is being done is just that it's being talked about... being open-minded is the most important thing in addressing these issues if they arise."	Efforts to Address Gender Inequality

Barriers	"Other than that, parents remain a prohibiting factor because as many supportive parents as there are, there are just as many opposed parents."	Barriers to Addressing Gender Issues
Educational workshops	"I would first start from the inside of the school... tackle teacher training first... workshops for parents... hold talks in an assembly session for those who wish to participate."	Educational Workshops as a Solution

Table 1.3 Findings from the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) of

Participant 3 – Female, History Teacher

Code	Interview Quote	Emerging Theme
Evolving gender discourse	"Yes, I have noticed a dialogue taking place generally across private schools, but not as much in public schools."	Awareness of Evolving Gender Discourse
Gender as spectrum	"Gender is multi-faceted for sure. Ideas, concepts, norms, social constructs. All of that has evolved over time."	Perceptions of Gender as a Spectrum
Inequalities in history material	"In my class specifically, inequalities manifest through history itself... promoting male historical figures."	Manifestations of Gender Inequality in the Classroom - History Material
Textbooks and inequality	"Because when you have let's say 5 pages on Napoleon, and maybe half of that on Queen Victoria on another chapter..."	Impact of History Textbooks on Gender Inequality

Causes of inequality	"Well, I think it's definitely the type of stimuli kids are exposed to. Like being exposed to a higher number of male historical leaders..."	Factors Causing Manifestation of Gender Inequality
Impact on academics and well-being	"Gender inequalities can for sure impact a student's well-being in more than one aspect."	Impact of Gender Inequality on Academic Performance and Well-being
Treatment differences	"Differences can be seen in terms of what expectations are held for both genders."	Differences in Treatment of Male and Female Students
Gender biases impact	"I have assigned multiple group projects in the past... there have been cases where boys felt that having a girl partner would minimize their chances at getting a high grade."	Gender Biases Impacting Interactions
Support for pronouns	"See, now look. I know it's become much more important and contemporary than older times. So, I think that using gender appropriate pronouns should be a given in every classroom and school setting."	Support for Gender-Appropriate Pronouns
Gender disparities career	"If we look at this historically, women were never expected to have careers in medicine, engineering, technology, or even business."	Gender Disparities in Career Paths
Teacher - student interactions bias	"So, it would be naïve to believe that teacher-student interactions don't impact a student's experience in school and in life generally."	Impact of Teacher Gender Biases on Interactions

Assembly to address inequality	"I recall about two years ago; the school held an assembly where an LGBTQ+ activist was invited to talk about current issues and raise awareness."	Efforts to Address Gender Inequality: School Assembly
Parental opposition to action	"This was a step to address the issue, but it ultimately failed. So, I think that if there were any other possibilities to address it, they have been put on hold and parents are the inhibitors in this case."	Parental Opposition as a Barrier to Addressing Gender Inequality

Table 1.4 Findings from the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) of

Participant 4 – Female, English Teacher

Code	Interview Quote	Emerging Theme
Student-led discussions	"Lately, I have noticed that my students have become more open to discussing the scope of gender identity..."	Student-Led Open Discussions on Gender Identity
Gender as spectrum	"Gender is no longer clear-cut. We can even see through contemporary literature that gender fluid characters are being created in stories."	Perceptions of Gender as a Spectrum
Inadequacy school material	"No, it's not to be honest. And I don't think it will be any time soon... school teaching material is not quite there yet in my opinion."	Inadequacy of Gender Representation in School Material

Inequalities in stereotypes	"In the course that I teach, inequalities can be manifested through stereotypes. When we do character analysis or theme discussion, certain pre-conceived notions or stereotypes are often highlighted between men and women."	Gender Inequalities Manifesting Through Stereotypes in Literature
Student perceptions as cause	"Aside from how material in class is analyzed, possible manifestation can also occur from students' own perceptions."	Student Perceptions as a Cause of Gender Inequality
Impact on academic performance	"Academically, if literature is not really gender-inclusive or characters are not treated equally, this could create an imbalance in the comprehension of themes."	Impact of Gender Inequality on Academic Performance
Teacher-student interactions bias	"Like maybe when I teach a romantic novel in class, I usually engage more with my female students in class discussions."	Impact of Teacher Gender Biases on Interactions
Impact on well-being	"Feeling singled out or misrepresented cannot possibly hold anything beneficial for the person affected... can certainly impact a student's well-being."	Impact of Gender Inequality on Well-being
Advocacy for gender-neutral language	"Gender neutral language I think should be a given... Wording and phrasing should therefore mirror the variety that exists within gender identity."	Advocacy for Gender-Neutral Language in the Classroom
Literature influencing careers	"For example, if one of my students has perceived through books that we've read, that women are not generally portrayed as scientists or engineers, then this student may go in already thinking that their career test will not yield results in those sectors."	Gender Roles in Literature Influencing Career Choices
Teacher biases interactions	"A simple example could be how teachers react to student responses, papers, or views even."	Impact of Teacher Gender Biases on Interactions

Intervention on discrimination	"I noticed immediately, and I nipped it in the bud. I spent the first full period holding a discussion in class about respect, inclusion, accountability..."	Incident of Gender Discrimination Intervention
School efforts address inequality	"After lengthy discussions and meetings held with the school board and the English department, we were finally able to add certain books in the library from queer authors..."	School Efforts to Address Gender Inequality
Parental opposition to action	"I think our biggest or maybe – toughest prohibiting factor is parents' reaction."	Parental Opposition as a Challenge in Addressing Inequality
Ideal school staff training	"I think I would try and offer workshops or brief training programs to discuss strategies on how to handle gender discrimination or bias that could show up in different forms."	Ideal School Environment - Focus on Staff Training

Table 1.5 Findings from the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) of

Participant 5 – Female, French Teacher

Code	Interview Quote	Emerging Theme
Gender identity	"There is a girl, for example, who is very athletic and has short hair, and often peers comment on her appearance that she looks like a boy – she doesn't seem to mind and says this is who I am, I don't identify with anything. However, she does feel a certain discrimination..."	Gender Identity Expression and Discrimination
Gender as spectrum	"Yes, gender is a spectrum and we come across it every day in subtle and in obvious ways. People need to have the ability to express themselves, since everyone in the world has been exposed to this two-ended pole of male and female."	Perceptions of Gender as a Spectrum

Gender inequalities in school	"Boys playing basketball, for example, generally don't expect girls to play with them and if girls do show up, they find it odd. And if a girl gets hurt, you'll hear things like well what was she expecting playing with boys."	Manifestation of Gender Inequalities in School Dynamics
External factors influence	"I believe it's the upbringing because kids come into school with ideas that have already been implanted from home and you can't easily change that once it's been molded..."	External Factors Influencing Gender Inequality in Classrooms
Impact on academics and well-being	"It affects them a lot. The child is scolded, confidence is diminished, and so is the belief that they can achieve things."	Impact of Gender Inequality on Academic Performance and Well-being
Treatment differences	"One time a boy dislocated his shoulder and I said – ahh he'll be fine he's a boy. But then I stopped myself and I tried to figure out why I had associated his gender with his ability to recover quickly from an injury."	Differences in Treatment Based on Gender
Use of pronouns	"Already in French there has been an added pronoun in grammar apart from the he/she and it's known as iel. It combines the il and elle we know in French."	Gender-Appropriate Pronouns in the Classroom
Impact on well-being	"Feeling singled out or misrepresented cannot possibly hold anything beneficial for the person affected... can certainly impact a student's well-being."	Impact of Gender Inequality on Well-being
Career path promotion	"Yes, of course. I think the most obvious example is the STEM professions. Public schools sometimes don't have as many resources as private ones, so the promotion can look very different."	Promotion of Career Paths and Academic Opportunities Based on Gender
Gender inequality incident	"I can recall one time in class, we had a discussion about the gender-neutral pronoun I mentioned before that was recently added in French grammar. I had a male student who raised his hand to give his opinion. He	Incidents of Gender Inequality or Discrimination Witnessed

	was against the whole idea and claimed that gender neutrality is a myth, and we are just male and female as it should be."	
School efforts address inequality	"There are very few steps. Very few. I think the only thing we have managed to do is just talk about it more. Yes, there is generally a higher awareness compared to older generations, but Greece especially still has a lot of work to do."	School Efforts to Address Gender Inequality
Parental opposition to action	"And as far as prohibiting factors, I would say parents can be part of it, but also the musts, shoulds, do's and don'ts of society as a whole pose as a problem."	Parental Opposition as a Challenge in Addressing Inequality
Ideal school staff training	"Oh, that's tricky. Um – I think what I would focus on most is holding various seminars. I wouldn't focus on the students just yet because I think the most effective thing to start with is talking to staff and parents. Workshops? An electronic handbook maybe that outlines what gender inequality is and how it can affect students?"	Ideal School Environment - Focus on Staff Training

Appendix F

Interview Schedule

Participant	Date	Time
1	18/11/2023	11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
2	19/11/2023	12:30 p.m. – 13:00 p.m.
3	22/11/2023	18:30 p.m. – 19:30 p.m.
4	03/12/2023	11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
5	05/11/2023	19:00 p.m. – 20:00 p.m.