



## SEARCH FOR EQUITY IN EDUCATION

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**Abstracts:** *Studies on educational issues in India have been in different and diverse directions and varied in nature, kinds, qualities and approaches. However there seems to be little attempt to focus on the overall 'outputs' of educational rewards as perceived by the students, as to how do they feel & perceive about it, with reference to their access to opportunities & rewards in the practical fields of society at large, when they come to the job-markets, or society for a reward of the 'outcomes'. Do they feel it is rewarding at par with anyone else? Or have differential perceptions of distributive justice & equity? Is education perceived differently? -- by different sects and sections in society placed under a given social condition ? Do the academic involvements, performance or the 'drop outs' have to do something with the kind of perceptions students have about it the overall (educational) outcomes? Has the gap in educational participations between rich and poor, between the males and females, got do something with it (the differential perceptions)? Does student's satisfaction relate to the perceived justice? If yes, what consequence(s) it has got to do with (their) academic performance or future plans? There seems to be little attempt of studies in this direction. The issues seem to be directly & indirectly linked with the rationales & logics of equity theory. Present paper attempts to hint at it and focus similar issues in light of some empirical studies carried out against the theoretical framework of equity theory & justice against the concepts of distributive-justice, fair deal, perceptual & social comparisons, input/output- ratios in academics, and rewards. Study seems to provide a new direction & insight into the problems of educational investigations. Apparently it appears to be a desired direction of educational studies & investigations particularly in a country like ours—India.*

**Key words:** *Equity, distributive-justice, fair deal, social comparison, comparing 'input/output-ratios' in academics & the equity assumptions.*

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## **INTRODUCTION AND THE THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE:**

Theory of equity and justice has been discussed in diverse walks of lives e.g. Boulding(1962)in social justice, Adams(1965)in social exchange, Daniels(1972) in health care system, access to health care opportunities Daniels (1982-e);in intimate and extra marital sex Hatfield, Traupman & Walster(1979), Daniel(1982)inequity of access to health care. Robin(1975)in believes in just world, and Walster et.al. in pre marital sex. In fact these studies reflect that wherever the issues of distributive justice, access to opportunities, or social reward ether it is in the personal or social lives; the theory of equity and justice has got immense relevance in all of such social & personnel issues of society. It is simply because adherence to the norms of equity and justice is imperative for a sustainable system or society. Wherever the question of social or personal deprivations or inequity are involved the theory has got enough potential to analyze such issues of an inequitable social condition, especially with the issues of distributive justice, social unrests, or conflicts in personal as well as social life conditions. It is equally pertinent with regard to the issues between (&amongst) the groups/sub-groups, castes, sub- castes, regions & religions or any other social categorization wherein questions of reward distribution is involved. Adams (1965) holds that perception of 'Inequity' of any kind generates and leads to 'tensions' which may in turn lead even to 'aggressions' or at times, to retaliatory behaviors. The point therefore is, as to whether we can analyze certain socio-cultural conflicts on the basis of these assumptions? viz: the conflicts of castes and sub-castes?—of the rich and poor?, between gender;--men & women?--conflicts of the Naxals& non- Naxals?--in the North Eastern regions& elsewhere? Or the educational issues such as the disparities in participations & dropouts? or for differential achievements in it? The points may be relevant against the theoretical framework and propositions of Equity theory.

The problem of a fair deal or distributive justice in access to opportunities & rewards in fact, is more pertinent to India in particular and to the third world countries in general, wherein despite the commitment to the democratic ideals and the universal opportunities; inequalities and social deprivations of different kinds continue to exist in the system & sub-systems— either along gender, quality-education, castes, social-identity, region, religion or by other socio-psychological dimensions, privileges, jobs, or other opportunities in society.



In a social order & society like India, wherein people live also with some special sub-group identities along different socio-cultural taboos, rituals, or even ill practices such as child marriage, preferences for the male-child, dowry-marriages etc.etc. apart from affiliation to a single nationality. The gender & caste based abuses and crimes; sectarian approaches by regions & religions etc.---are some other stories of the Indian social order.

All this happens in a broader & a holistic social group of 'modern-India'; and interestingly, India being the second country in the World having the maximum number of people on its land. It appears as such that social scientists need to address such issues by people's perceptions of equity & justice for these—as they (the people) perceive it be, with regard to their concepts of distributive justice & access to opportunities in educational outputs along input/output dimensions & rewards in systems of society.

According to the equity theorists, the situations of apparent injustice (or unfairness) occurs when the party to the business or involvement for a return believes, that he or she is receiving a return (an outcome) disproportionate to the relative reward/investment (or input) ratio of others involved in the same trade or business . And that, a manifest dissatisfaction or their (his/her) other behaviour(s) are in fact responses to actually 'felt' injustice, rather than directly or relative deprivation. The theory has been found useful in understanding stable, intimate as well as non intimate (social/personal) relationships in particular (Berscheid et. al. 1973, Walster et. al 1978, Adey and Andersen 1980, Daniels 1982, & Radford and Larwood, 1982).

### **OVERVIEW:**

Since there exist some financial, geographical, or socio-cultural barriers in almost every system /society preventing people from utilizing certain services or opportunities (the outcome/output),---the question of 'protections' or 'positive-discriminations' or reservations therefore come up---in order to meet the demands of Social Justice in the "outcome-distributions". Relevant to this context, Daniels(1981 e) reports that people in sub-group identities are differently at risk, to possess resentment for their inequitable "perceptions" of living conditions. And that, in such a situation the 'opportunity' requires both equity of access and also equity in distribution/ mechanisms. Daniels (1980 e) conforming to Walster et.al.(1978) holds that the people perceiving themselves "under-benefited " are resentful and the equitable treatment / deal or relationship is the most &



the only viable relationship in the society or system for its coexistence & stability. In another study Daniels (1982) asserts that whatever we need or want, we need a normal functioning---and it is a necessary condition for happiness and sustainability in Life & society.

The differential perceptions of distribution of rewards or outcomes (whether it is just a perceptual or a real one) lead to different types of behaviour and psychology amongst the participants, (Walster et. al. 1978, and Hatfield et. al 1979). Assumptions of the equity theory hold & assert that when individuals are involved in certain business there are three possibilities of reward distribution of outcomes (out of that involvement):

a: one may get more benefits in ratio to his/her (or their) input in the deal.

b: One may get far less than he/she (they) may have invested in .

c: The one(s) who get equitable , fair, or just rewards in proportion to his/her, their investment made to the involvement

With the given assumptions of the equity theorists that these differential perceptions of distribution of rewards or benefits (whether it is just a perceptual or a real one) lead to different types of people's behaviour and psychology, particularly amongst the participants. (Walster et. al. 1978, and Hatfield et. al 1979); that is, the one(s) who get more than they actually deserve feel uneasy, guilt and be less contented and happy compared to others (Hatfield et.al. 1979) ; and the people who get far less than they actually deserve in ratio to their in-puts in the process/exchange , social-exchange or dealings will feel depressed , resentful and be relatively less contented and happy (Walster et. al.1978). Relevant to the context , the socio- economic or gender wise, a general deprivation or of some social group(s)' educational deprivation in India , like that of in high-caste, low-caste, or in the minorities, as pointed out by the Sachar-Committee-reports,2006(Govt. of India) ; may be mentioned as for examples, for highlighting the present & perpetual socio- economic deprivations of these people against their respective participations/ or 'inputs', to society may be, either in terms of the freedom-struggles, or in nation- building or the national work-force; or in general fabrics of the nation, it may be relevant therefore, to address such issues by the assumptions of the equity theorists. Addressing these against the framework and propositions of equity theory may provide a specific and a clear picture of the Indian socio-political psychology and of the youths' Psyche at large, ---which is likely to be different, for the different social sub-groups of India (e.g. high-caste/low-caste,



men/women, minority/majority; St/Scs, OBCs, or Gujars/Meenas etc. etc.) for their differential socio-demographic & economic profiles and perceptions--for their continued deprivations and social disadvantages.

If the rationales of equity theorists are taken to be pertinent to the Indian context specially for these socially under privileged ones like ST/SCs; women or other socially disadvantaged or minorities groups (in the system); it may explain their differential academic or group-behaviours participations, or even demands/special demand,/ movements, or also the protests they show on the various issue(s), like: in education; job-reservations, or for any other protective policy/ies at large. An approach of investigation against these framework of study may provide a new insight into some of their critical problems of behaviors such as protest, unrests, demand(s), or even for some other socio-political behaviours like insurgencies, by such groups (often at loggerheads), & most often only for the distributive justice & a fair deal in the system or sub-systems of the social mechanisms or society. 'Michigan institute for Medical and Social Research' perhaps has rightly observed and commented (in relation to psyche of the stronger ones over a weaker section) that women (the weaker) is more tolerant than men (the stronger) even in the adverse conditions of life. Men relatively lose their temper faster and become angry earlier than women; & even the adolescents in the Western countries protest and clash/or blame more to their mothers than their fathers. The report further adds that this happens most often, even on the trivial and simple domestic-issues; and that, it is done only to establish men's (i.e. of the stronger ones) power & ego-satisfaction (over women)\*. Thus this speaks volumes on a social condition & 'psychology' of the stronger, over the weaker ones in society; which may in turn, lead one to a sense of 'inequity', 'injustice or even to an 'unfair-deal' in the system.

### **THE EDUCATIONAL ISSUES AND CONCERNS:**

In light of the above one would find that the focal point in different social conditions are in fact the issues of equity & distributive justice or perceived justice. The social scientists have discussed these issues---(whether it is a real or just a Psychological) as problems and issues of perceived justice in different social set ups . It holds that, individuals in inequitable relations differ in interests, kind of relationships, and also along contentment, happiness, guilt or resentments. Which are often manifested in their different kinds of individual as well as social behaviours. It is thus evident that the equity assumptions have been relevant



in social relations,---as it helps in understanding people's individual/social or group-behaviour in a given social context. Given this, a study was conducted to focus students' levels of perceived justice and satisfaction (of boys & girls of colleges) in a given educational condition. Is education perceived rewarding differently by them?-- placed in a given educational system ? ---particularly in relations to the factors like: gender, levels of formal education, and the kind of discipline (or the subjects) they chose to study? Educational policies in India confront a series of questions viz: --does it meet the social needs and 'expectations' of the Indian youths? Why is the gap so wide in participation between rich and poor?---between males and females? It is theoretically relevant to review& verify, whether it is because of the variations in perceived-justice (differential perceptions?)—leading them to differential performance, satisfaction, participations or even drop outs in education? The questions seem to be pertinent today to the students in the Indian social context in particular. Though it is logical to expect that the variations in perceived-justice are likely to breed variations in students' satisfaction, academic participation & performance or even for dropouts; there has been little studies & reviews of researches addressing these issues from an equity angle from the students' point of view,---as they perceive it to be.

It may provide with a broader spectrum to understand an overall students' academic behavior, or even satisfaction, performance or academic participation at large, in a country like ours --divided by innumerable socio-demographic profiles, beliefs and practices. In the practical utility too, investigations & an appraisal of this kind may provide with some broader and a new insight into the educational issues as well as into other students' issues for their continued and further learning.

The studies and an appraisal with this kind of approaches probably may provide a better answer in the fields of employments or in the job markets too, for the differential 'representations' of the several sections or sub-groups of our society.

Based on the similar assumptions, some empirical studies were conducted on college students to ascertain if perceived justice was significant or relevant for students' performance and satisfaction? How do the students feel about it? (the distributive-justice in the social systems & society), or at educational institutions. Does the gender difference matter to it? Do the student-groups perceive themselves as: 'under-benefited', 'equitably-rewarded', or 'over-benefited' along the dimensions of equity in present social order of



academic rewards and distributive-justice? ---if yes, it is likely to lead them; (according to the equity theory assumptions,) to differentially resentfulness, satisfaction and happiness (Walster et. al 1978). Along a similar line of studies, it was observed (Khan2012), a significant level of difference in academic-satisfaction between the groups of students feeling 'over-benefitted' and 'under-benefitted' by a few input/output comparisons in a few academic rewards. This may mean that perhaps, students differ significantly in their levels of 'happiness' too?—for their differential perceived justice? However, it is yet not known). And if yes,—it is a matter of concern for educationists, pedagogues, social scientists, or even for the NGOs, involved with the educational policies and plans. Investigations along these approaches & direction with similar other socio-economic parameters & rewards, with regard to differential academic involvements or dropouts of students by some 'specific', socio-demographic or 'economic' groups of society probably may provide a new insight into the area. A new approach to the educational studies with afresh& further review of the present literature in the area as such, seems& needs to be strongly desired, directed and warranted,---into the problems of educational psychology and studies.

### **EMPIRICAL STUDIES & THE CONCLUDING REMARKS:**

Empirical studies have shown (Khan 2012) for example, that students with perceptions of 'over benefited' and 'equitably- rewarded' have a significant difference in academic satisfaction, and that the students who perceive themselves as 'under benefited' show a significantly lesser amount of satisfaction in academics as compared to the 'over benefited' perceivers in the groups---for their educational inputs/outputs and academic satisfaction. Thus the rationales& assumptions of equity theory appear to get relevance& significance in the educational fields of studies too. And that the study seems to have empirical supports with some practical as well as theoretical implications as well for the socio-political and educational managers & investigators in particular, apart from its implications& applications for the pedagogues, social workers, NGOs, or academicians involved in educational policies and planning.

In a similar kind of educational study it was noted, that the collage-students in the final year (Arts-groups) are highest in percentage (distribution) with a sense and feeling of being 'under benefited' with their relative input/output-ratio-comparisons at the undergraduate collages and educational institutions, for the rewards as they perceive to be with them or



are likely to get, by academic endeavors in the practical fields of society at large (Khan 1989). Similar trend of feelings (of students) of being 'under benefited' (next to the feelings of final year Arts-boys), was recorded in the study also in the girls' group (of the final year Arts-section,) for an overall access to opportunities and distributive-justice---in terms of their academic 'output factors' such as: for job chances, equity in opportunities, image buildings, recognitions, prestige & their future prospects ahead.

Whereas boys at the same level of formal education indicated a little more uneasiness, stress, concerns and unhappiness with the issues of distributive justice and opportunities to their future prospects, job chances and social status, recognition or image building etc.---as their academic 'output' factors.

It is thus evident that perhaps, a new direction & approach in educational studies are probably strongly desired apart from others, also by the equity model assumptions and approaches of investigation in the area. Rationales &logics of equity theory and justice perhaps have got strong potentials and possibilities of explanations to analyze into the issues of educational psychology &studies---based along its theoretical framework & arguments.

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