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Gender Issues in Education: Why Boys Do Poorly

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine the gender differences in terms of their learning and educational opportunities particularly on male students in Thailand. Researchers searched for the fundamental aspects of gender bias in educational opportunities from different points of view. Researchers gathered 54 related past studies to investigate the three major gender aspects namely factors that contributing to classroom learning, internal factors within the learners, and other surrounding factors. Content analysis and meta-analysis techniques were employed as systematic researching strategies. According to the results derived from past studies and in-depth interview with experts as well as focus group interviews with male students indicated that there were at least 12 variables that related to the male students' poor learning achievement. These 12 identified variables are ethical behavior, learning skills, attitude towards learning, learning behavior, aggressive behavior, learning hindrance, self-perception, nature or sex drive, social environment, attitude towards sexual relationships, learning ability, and expectation for furthering education. The findings demonstrated the constructive results to the public, educators, and policy makers with an understanding of the gender equality phenomenon in educational opportunities and could facilitate us to perceive the background of the phenomenon so that the solutions for solving traditional practices can be challenged.

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INTRODUCTION

The Second World Education Forum which was held in Dakar, Senegal in the year 2000 where nations from around the world renewed their commitment to ensuring all children and adults have the rights to an education through Sixth Dakar Education for All (EFA) Goals (The Dakar Framework for Action Report, 2000). Additionally, an EFA Mid-Decade Assessment (MDA) was carried out in 2005 revealed that there was still a highly unacceptable number of children and adults, primarily girls and women, who were denied their rights to an education in Thailand United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (United Nations Children's Emergency Fund [UNICEF], 2008). According to the EFA-MDA Gender Equality in Education Progress Note in the year 2008, an analysis revealed that school enrollment of boys was significantly lower than those of girls in Malaysia, Mongolia, Philippine, and Thailand (UNICEF, 2008). However, in some countries, the trends pointed in a different direction and gender disparities were at a disadvantage for boys.

Equality as an educational aim is largely a twentieth-century phenomenon. There are four main interpretations of the concept of equal opportunities emerged such as equal life chances, open competition for scarce opportunities, equal cultivation of different capacities, and independence of educational attainment from social origins (Wood, 1987). The concept of gender gap has been introduced in recent years as examination performance has become equated with school and pupil success. The gender gap indicates the ratio of girls and boys studying and passing examinations in particular subjects, where the size and the nature of the gender gap differ according to the subject. Gender policy is aimed at reducing gender gaps overall and gaps have thus narrowed in some subjects in some countries (William, 2000).

An Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) assessment on Thai students' learning achievement in reading, mathematics, and science in 2009 indicated that male students received an average assessment score lower than female students (PISA Thailand Project, 2010). It is clear that these disparities in the disadvantages for male students span across all education levels. The disadvantages for male students in secondary education have become slightly worsened not only in Thailand but also in Malaysia and Philippines. Although there was a significant progress was made in Mongolia during 1999 to 2005, male students' enrollment in secondary education still remains far lower than that of female students (UNICEF, 2008).

Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2006 results showed that among students in the fourth year of schooling girls had significantly higher reading achievement than boys in all except two countries, Spain and Luxemburg, where average achievement was equivalent between the sexes (Mullis et al., 2007). Girls' higher achievement in reading was

also observed in studies that assess older students. In the three PISA surveys of 15-year-old, significant differences in favor of females were reported for virtually all European countries.

However, because of the increased emphasis on examination achievement in the recent year and the narrowing of the gender gap in favor of female students, much interest in gender has reverted to concern about the perceived 'underachievement of males' (OECD, 2001). Thus in recent years and in many countries, gender issues in education have come to be equated with boys' relative underperformance in examinations, and a so-called crisis of masculinity.

LITERATURE REVIEWS

Maccoby and Jacklin (1974) reviewed 1400 research studies on sex differences. They concluded that female superiority in verbal skills and male superiority in mathematical skills. Gipps and Murphy (1994) showed that tests which indicated sex differences might not necessarily be accurate in predicting performance or future capacity to learn. The sex differences produced might be due to a particular test itself or the differential responses to it from males and females, for example, its gender bias. Hyde (2005) held that males and females were in fact quite similar to most, though not all, psychological variables.

Halldorsson and Olafsson's (2009) study of Iceland's performance suggested a basic stability in patterns of gender difference over the years but also proposed that girls' relative superiority was due mainly to psychological factors such as their greater affinity with a 'learning culture' while boys performance was more affected by issues to do with (poorer) discipline and behavior. A study comparing the gender outcomes of the PISA studies for Sweden and Switzerland suggested that while both countries performed at the upper end of the international spectrum, Sweden had an educational climate with a higher degree of gender equity (with the exception of reading) (Fredriksson et al., 2009).

The interaction of different social factors can produce quite complex gender outcomes. For example in Spain research on the incorporation and progression of Roma children in compulsory secondary schooling shows that girls face more obstacles than boys in their transition from primary to secondary schools and also gain lower grades than their male counterpart. However, fewer Roma girls than boys leave school early, at the end of schooling twice as many Roma girls as boys remain in the system. It is argued that these school-leaving patterns are related to Roma family discourses which display a narrowed conception of women's roles and therefore make girls' involvement in education difficult. However, girls' later continuance is more to do with their greater motivation for studies and learning (Vassiliou, 2010).

Even when teachers believe that they treat their students equally, they are more likely to chastise male students and pay them more attention, while at the same time creating greater dependency in their female

students (Magno & Silova, 2007). Hence a variety of studies from different countries have shown that both male and female teachers tend to encourage passivity and conformity in their female students while at the same time valuing independence and individuality in their male students (Golombok & Fivush, 1994).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main aim of this research was to conduct a preliminary study to examine the understanding of the phenomenon on gender-bias in educational opportunities in Thailand. Specifically, this study was aimed to achieve the following objectives:

- To synthesize research variables on male students' low learning achievement and educational opportunities in basic education in Thailand during the past decade.
- To study the fundamental aspects of gender-bias in educational opportunities from the viewpoints of educators and educational administrators at the policy-making level as disclosed by research findings.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In trying to achieve the objectives, this study seeks the answer for the following questions.

What are the research findings on the variables of low learning achievement and educational opportunities of male students in basic education in Thailand over the past decade?

What are the fundamental aspects of gender bias in educational opportunities from the viewpoints of educators and educational administrators at the policy-making level?

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

The research framework of this study can be drawn in accordance with the component-relation model and are elucidated in Figure 1 (Appendix A). Researchers have drawn a research framework as the foundation to study the phenomenon of gender bias in educational opportunities against Thai basic education students particularly the male students. In order to explain the phenomenon, the researchers begin by analyzing the data derived from those documents regarding gender and learning, learning behaviors, and educational opportunities to form a research framework for the synthesis of the research work qualitatively and quantitatively. The results from research synthesis will be focused on gender and learning behaviors, and educational opportunities.

At this initial stage of the study, researchers have set the hypothesis on the factors that affecting male students' learning behaviors and educational opportunities such as factors of social identity (Achawanijkul et al., 1996), sex characteristics from the viewpoint of science and behavioral science (Aiewsriwong, 2002; Department of Mental Health, 2010), national development policies through educational system (Fredriksson et al., 2009), social structure (Schoon et al., 2010), the geography or origin, economics, and the institutions of family (Achawanijkul et al., 1996).

Researchers further used the hypothesis created from the initial stage as the fundamental issue for in-depth interviews

with informants from the relevant fields of the study including educational administrators at the policy level. These participants were acquired to make conclusions and recommendations that covered promoting gender quality and educational opportunities matters.

METHODS

Researchers employed an exploratory design because our intention was merely to explore the research questions and did not intend to offer final and conclusive solutions. This type of research is suitable because the problem of the study has not been clearly defined yet in Thailand context. This study was conducted in two phases. The first phase was to explore the phenomenon of gender inequality and educational opportunities according to document analysis on 54 past research findings. The second phase of the study which involved in-depth interviews and focus group interviews was to affirm the findings from the first phase of this study.

Phase 1: Exploring the Phenomenon of Gender Inequality and Educational Opportunities

The method that used in Phase 1 are consisted of content analysis and research synthesis is based on the 54 past researches (refer to Appendix A, Figure 2). Phase 1 consisted of four stages as follows: (i) Analyzing the content contained in theoretical documents about gender and learning, learning behavior, and educational opportunities; (ii) developing a conceptual framework based on the content analysis results for the purpose of synthesizing the research works; (iii) gathering relevant facts or issues from the past researches concerning gender and learning variables, learning behavior variables, educational opportunity variables, and (iv) studying the effect size through a quantitative research approach using meta-analysis. Besides, those researches that cannot be synthesized by using meta-analysis will be synthesized by means of qualitative analysis. The instruments used in the first phase included a document recording form and a research characteristics recording form. The collected data were analyzed by means of content analysis and effect size calculation. By the end of the first phase, researchers have to create a conceptual framework focusing on gender and learning variables as well as educational opportunities based on the findings.

Phase 2: Affirming Findings from the Created Phenomenon

The second phase of this study was to affirm the findings from the first phase. The second phase involved in-depth interviews with the three experts thus triangulated with the findings from focus group interviews with four male students. Phase 2 was comprised of five stages as follows: (i) The created conceptual framework from the first phase was used to develop interview protocol for the in-depth interviews as well as focus group interviews; (ii) In-depth interviews with three experts who were selected after consulting with the education section, UNICEF Thailand. The selected participants are from the various related fields such as sociology, psychology,

curriculum and learning, and children rights group. They are also holding important positions in the government educational policy-making and politics; (iii) Focus group interviews are carried out with a group of male students in upper secondary schools from private sectors. This group of male students was selected according to their different achievement levels namely high, moderate, and low; (iv) arranging appointments for interviews and preparing interview scripts, and (v) Data collected from the second phase are analyzed by using the principles of similarities and differences thus relate them to created conceptual framework. Results from the comparative analysis between the two phases would be able to draw a conclusion and make policy recommendations for the purpose of promoting gender equality and educational opportunities. The instruments used for the second phase consisted of in-depth interview recording form, a group discussion recording form, and field notes. Both in-depth and focus group interviews are audiotape recording. The collected data are analyzed by means of content analysis.

Participants

Three experts who have involved in the in-depth interview was categorized as Expert A, Expert B, and Expert C were recommended by UNICEF. Our discussion was mainly based on the analysis of data collected from the three experts through their in-depth interviews which were carried out by 8th, 14th and 10th February 2011 respectively. The demographic information of these three experts is presented below: (i) Expert A is an expert in the field of psychology with a qualification of master degree. His job position is in the area of mass communication. Besides, he is a former advisor to the Deputy Minister of Education thus he has broad experiences in policy planning. He was awarded Diplomatic Protection of Child Rights Award 2009; (ii) Expert B is a sociologist. She is a former Head of Educational Development Program, former Dean of Graduate School, former Associate President on Academic Affairs of Srinakharinwirot University. She obtained a Ph.D. qualification in Sociology and her specialization is in the area of gender study and sexuality, and (iii) Expert C is a psychologist and has a qualification of Ph.D. degree and her specialization is in the area of educational psychology. She is holding a position of Assistant Professor in Department of Special Education, Srinakharinwirot University.

A total of four male students participated in focus group interview which was conducted by 14th February 2011. These male students were selected based on their teacher's discretion on their general academic performance. They were studying in the upper secondary school of Khon Kaen University Demonstration School (Mordindaeng) at the time of data collection. These four male students were selected from three categories namely one from high, two from moderate, and one from low academic achievement.

RESULTS

Results of this study are presented in

accordance with the research objectives that are indicated above. The initial finding is a synthesis of 54 types of research done in Thailand related to male students and their learning. This is followed by the explanation of reasons for gender unequal opportunity in learning. Finally, policy-based recommendations are made for the improvement of gender equality issues.

A Synthesis of 54 Types of Research in Thailand that Related to Male Students and Their Learning Behavior

A total of 54 research works were carried out in Thailand from the year 2004 until 2010. These 54 research works were investigated thoroughly and synthesized by means of a meta-analysis method. General characteristics derived from the 54 past types of research indicated that majority of the research works (90.70%) used the questionnaire to elicit responses from their target groups. On top of that, there was about 90.70 percent of them tested the reliability of their questionnaires by means of a Cronbach alpha coefficient while 96.30 percent of them tested the validity of the questionnaires by means of a content validity analysis. The statistic used for analyzing the data in 96.30 percent of the works was Pearson Product Moment Correlation. Another characteristic found is significant correlation between the studied variables and the male students' learning. In another word, correlation coefficient means classified according to variables which are connected with male students' learning.

The results are revealed into three categories namely factors contributing to classroom learning, internal factors within the learner himself, and surrounding factors. In addition, three groups or 12 variables relating to male students' learning found and each of the variables is presented as follows:

Factors that Contributing to Classroom Learning

Findings of first phase of the study indicated that there are five variables that contributing to classroom learning closely related to male students' learning as follows: (i) Learning ability refers to matters that a learner should take cognizance of and be able to do academically so that he can achieve learning objectives of each subject attempted. For example, the ability to use computer effectively, the ability to solve mathematical problems. (ii) Learning skills refers to a learner's expertise in various aspects such as communication skill, self-adaptation skill, and ready for new learning experience. (iii) Learning behavior refers to a learner' behavioral expression that encourages classroom learning such as the knowledge of how to spend time efficiently, love of reading, adjusting oneself to learning environment. (iv) Learning hindrance refers to factors that hinder learning such as poor schooling background, unwillingness to participate in group activity, lack of concentration for doing learning activities, and (v) attitude towards learning refers to a learner's like or dislike for or satisfaction with the subjects like mathematics, theatrical arts, etc.

Internal Factors within the Learner Himself

Results found that there are five variables

considered as internal factors within the learner himself closely related to male students' learning as follows: (i) Self-perception refers to the learner's self-knowledge of his learning ability as demonstrated in his pattern of learning, the invigoration of his learning, his self-conception, his self-esteem, his belief in his own self-control. (ii) Ethical behavior refers to the learner's action which is done in accordance with social expectations such as self-discipline, sense of responsibility, perseverance, ethical reasoning. (iii) Nature or sex drive refers to sex hormone and physical factors that affecting one's feeling, thought, and other conducts such as showing the desire to lead, to take risk, to use force. (iv) Attitude towards sexual relationships refers to a general attitude towards sexual relationships whether, as a student, one should or should not have sex with the opposite sex and (v) Aggressive behavior refers to violent behavior such as fighting, intimidation, violation of rules and orders.

Surrounding Factors

The results showed that there are only two surrounding factors which closely related to male students' learning as follows: (i) Expectation for further education refers to social pressure on male students to continue to higher education such as family expectation. (ii) Social environment refers to physical environment as well as social psychology that interact with the male students' behavior and characteristics.

After identifying the 12 variables relating to male students' learning, researchers would like to use meta-analysis to derive a pooled estimate closest to the unknown common truth based on how this error is perceived. A key benefit of this meta-analysis approach is the aggregation of information leading to a higher statistical power and more robust point estimate than is possible from the measure derived from any individual study. In performing a meta-analysis, researchers have made choices many of which can affect its results, including deciding how to search for studies, selecting studies based on a set of objective criteria, dealing with incomplete data, analyzing data, and accounting for or choosing not to account for publication bias.

Meta-analysis can be thought of as 'conducting research about previous researches' because meta-analysis can only proceed after identifying a common statistical measure that is shared among the studies referred, called the effect size, which has a standard error so that researchers can proceed with computing a weighted average of that common measure. Such weighting takes into consideration the sample sizes of the individual studies.

Results of the meta-analysis on the 12 identified variables by means of Pearson Product Moment showed that ethical behavior variable obtained the highest correlation coefficient mean of 0.65 while expectation for furthering education variable

Table 1

Corrections coefficient means of factors relating to male students' learning

Factors relating to male students' learning	Correlation coefficient means (S_r^2)
Ethical behavior ($\bar{r}_{c8}$)	0.65
Learning skill ($\bar{r}_{c2}$)	0.62
Attitude towards learning ($\bar{r}_{c7}$)	0.61
Learning behavior ($\bar{r}_{c5}$)	0.59
Aggressive behavior ($\bar{r}_{c12}$)	0.59
Learning hindrance ($\bar{r}_{c4}$)	0.56
Self-perception ($\bar{r}_{c6}$)	0.54
Nature or sex drive ($\bar{r}_{c10}$)	0.53
Social environment ($\bar{r}_{c9}$)	0.51
Attitude towards sexual relationships ($\bar{r}_{c11}$)	0.46
Learning ability ($\bar{r}_{c1}$)	0.35
Expectation for furthering education ($\bar{r}_{c3}$)	0.22
The overall correlation coefficient mean ($\bar{r}$) = 0.44	
Correlation coefficient variance (S_r^2) = 0.07	
Sampling standard error (S_e^2) = 0.002	
Reliability = 0.41	
Effect size = 0.53	
χ^2 = 1.067	
df = 53	
p = 0.001	

showed the lowest mean of 0.22. Table 1 shows the details of the 12 variable means.

Results from the meta-analysis showed the overall mean of correlation coefficient, correlation coefficient variance, sampling standard error, reliability, the effect size, and the χ^2– test which showed a zero variance all pointed to the fact that the effect size deriving from the synthesis of research works is reliable. Therefore, researchers concluded that the relationship between male gender and learning with a correlation coefficient mean of 0.44, a covariance of 19.36 percent (0.442 x 100), a low sampling standard effort of 0.002 and a reliability of the correlation coefficient mean of 0.41 together with the effect size of 0.53 male is related to learning at the 0.53 unit.

Fundamental Aspects of Gender Bias in Educational Opportunities for Male Students

Although the 12 identified variables from the synthesis which are related to male students' learning, it is possible to infer that the factors caused the unequal opportunity for learning are still insufficient to provide a causal explanation as to what role the variables play in the male students' learning and their opportunities for learning. Therefore researchers decided to affirm the reliability of the 12 variables by providing explanations collected from in-depth interviews with experts. These three experts representing various offices and organizations such as communication organizations, private organizations concerning with children's rights promotion, psychologists, sociologists, and educationists. On top of that, researchers also organized a discussion session with a group of secondary students. The collected data from both in-depth and focus group interviews can be used to explain the main reasons for unequal opportunities of male students' learning as follows:

Affirming the Variables that Related to Male Students' Learning

Findings from in-depth interviews found that most of the variables cited are related to male students' learning. Those variables are the factors which can be explained scientifically, psychologically and sociologically, and are interwoven in every part as clearly attested by repeating social occurrences. Scientifically, it is affirmed in accordance with biological principle that males have different type of sex hormone from females'. The hormone activates male students to act in the way that shows their maleness such as love by using force, risk-taking, and strong emotion. Such behaviors which are exclusive to boys are determined by sex hormone and lead further to another psychological explanation which states that male's emotional state is in accordance with physical growth and social experiences one gain at each stage of growth.

However, sociological point of view tends to look at male behavior as a result of family bringing up and training. Families tend to be strict with daughters more than sons in their raising of children. As a result, female students are apt to follow rules and regulations, show higher working discipline, and have a higher learning achievement than male students. This finding also found to be true in a formal schooling environment where strict discipline observation is required and which encourages growth of learning behavior in female and male students.

A Causal Explanation for the Sources of Variables that are Related to Male Students' Learning

According to results from in-depth interviews with the experts and focus group interviews with male students indicated that there are various factors that cause the 12 identified variables to develop and are related to male students' learning. The variables are so related and inter-affected one another that eventually lead to the phenomenon of unequal opportunities for male students' learning. Figure 2 demonstrates the sources

of the variables and their inter-connection, direct as well as indirect (refer Appendix A).

In order to provide a clearer view of the factors, it is necessary to present the results from both qualitative findings derived from in-depth interviews as well as focus group interviews. Researchers have classified the findings into four sources namely social factor, family factor, formal schooling factor, and religious factor.

a) Social Factor

Social factor is the major factor that directly affecting the family and education factors. This social factor was explicitly pointed out by Expert A and Expert C.

> "*A society is a field of discourse in which capitalists utilize all forms of media to reproduce poor male models for youths. They do that with a blatant disregard for social interest and moral-ethical values*" (Expert A).

> "*The display of violent behavior in various forms through male players, not excluding the leading male actors who often act aggressively towards other players, so seeps into the minds of the audiences that they gradually accept the display as normal and that it is right for a male to act in such a violent manner*" (Expert C).

The social factor also includes factors of culture, beliefs, and values for maleness which are increasingly presented in the media as mentioned by Expert A.

> *"...like the picture of law violators who are mostly males through TV/radio news programs, and the pictures that show adventures risk-taking, the willingness to take risk, the fond of employing force through soap operas, news programs, advertisements, feature stories, all lead the audiences to accept as male identity."*

Thus, social view of male behavior has directly affected the way families bring up their children.

b) Family Factor

It is a direct effect of social factor that causes the illusion among the family to bring up their children without paying due consideration to the nature of a boy. This family factor has been highlighted by Expert B.

> *"Most of the parents look after their daughters very closely while they tend to think that they have to raise their sons to be strong and independent so that they will be able to make a living when they grow up."*

c) Formal Schooling Factor

Schools are regarded as human-resource producing agency whose apparent aim is to supply the industrial system with its graduates. Most of the governments around the world tend to regard this industry as an essential tool for national development and

for competing with the so-called developed countries. This issue has been expressed by Expert B.

> *"The production of capable, hardworking and patient workers who are able to endure under the pressures of strict rules and orders, and yet not daring enough to leave the confinement prescribed for them, is ideal for the industrial system, hence the process of inculcation of such values into the students' mind by the schools which, under directions from the government, set to produce human resource that go in line with national line of industry-based development. This situation does not facilitate the growth of male students' learning behavior."*

In addition, teachers' inadequate comprehension of the natural temperament of male students is also responsible for the way they organize educational activities that do not facilitate learning, while the family and formal education factors interact with one another in the dependent fashion because the family is influenced by the capitalism-based social process. Expert A explained,

> *"The honoring of smart students by way of dismissing the losers and by giving emphasis to money and profit making has greatly affected the parents' way of thinking. It is conceivable that the parents, wanting their children to be able to stand on their own feet in the society, now and then, encourage the schools to organize the education for excellence for their children. However, the organization of education for the sake of academic excellence just does not facilitate learning for male students."*

d) Religious Factor

Religious factor that related to male students' learning has been mentioned by Expert A.

> *"Although Thailand is essentially a Buddhist country in which the teachings of Buddhism have trained well the minds of believers, especially the students, to be peace and to be conscious in the conduct of their lives and learning. However, the monks, as the input factor, have never been fully accepted by the schools due mostly to their lack of qualifications and misconduct in some cases. To make matters worse, news of immoral monks' misconduct are publicized every now and then only helps increase the rate of reproduction of a bad model. Beginning from the media it spreads out in the society, to the families and the formal education system as well."*

To recapitulate, the main causes of variables relating to male students' learning including the four factors namely social, family, formal education, and religious

factors have created a common attitude towards boys. This is evident in the more flexible way the families raise their sons but a stricter way for their daughter. On the other hand, the schools reflect the attitude well through their organization of learning activities that disregard male students' nature, for example learning activities that do not seem to be challenging enough to rouse their curiosity, the strict rules and the passive role they have to play when sitting in class. All of these matters are just incompatible with boys' nature whereas girls seem to possess greater patience and learn much better under the same circumstances.

Furthermore, the formal education system is arranged in the way that only the academically excellent students (mostly girls) are honored, does not really leave enough room for the allegedly lazy male students. Instead, they become recognized as raised from the focus group interviews,

> *"…the group of students in the back of the room that the teachers often ignore and don't show much interest in their learning, in contrast to the more attentive girl students in the front rows who normally get greater attention from the teachers."*

It seems that the school guidance office normally should act as an important refuge for the students who need help or as an intermediary between the teachers and male students to help the former comprehend the latter's nature, has failed to perform its task properly. This issue has been informed by Expert C.

> *"Boys who are in trouble are usually referred to guidance teachers only after they have been labeled as 'problem boys' in the eyes of everyone"*

The attitudes of parents, school system, and their treatment to boys have inevitably led them to form a negative concept of themselves. This is because of the pressure from their families and people around them do not allow them to gain their opportunities to display proper learning behavior in their own way. This will cause them to look elsewhere for ways of living a manly life which they cannot find it in the classroom setting as arranged by their teachers. As a result, they go in search for challenging activities that would gain them group recognition such as risk-taking, the use of force and technological utilization, all of which are in line with a male's nature. However, these extramural activities sometimes are unacceptable in the eyes of the adults and often done in vicious places in the surrounding areas.

The lack of a proper male model in the school and society eventually causes a feeling of sex bias in the adults as well as the boys themselves. The adults tend to feel that boys are difficult to train and when they try to admonish them they usually like to cite mischievous behaviors of some other persons. As for the male students themselves, believing that education is not the only avenue to success and the fact that they are males, they feel that there are still many opportunities for them to show off their success and thereby gaining

recognition from others. According to results from focus group discussion showed the way teachers organize learning activities and the way families bring up their sons clearly reflect the feeling of sex-bias against male students.

The close inter-relationship between the factors thus far has proved to be significant sources of the variables concerning male students' learning, therefore, their reactions toward the factors that are related to their learning therefore become more intense in accordance the significance of the factors that affect their learning. Hence, findings indicated that the more intense reaction becomes the greater effect it has on the boys' learning and their being dismissed from the educational system.

Suggestions for Creation of Gender Equality in Educational Opportunities

According to findings from both in-depth and focus group interviews indicated the fact that if the situation gender inequality is to remedied, one needs to provide suggestions to the following causal factors which included related individuals, groups of people, authorities, and agencies as follows:

a) For families

Family is the smallest unit of the child growing since the child was born, they will need to erase their illusions about the upbringing of their children and to rethink about nature and physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development of their children instead and then treat them accordingly.

b) For authorities or agencies relating to family planning

These units will need to organize a continuous campaign to educate young couples who are getting married about the proper way of upbringing their children. The government itself can help by issuing policies or measures for lovers to be trained in parenthood before they are allowed to register their marriage.

c) For formal education system in schools

Teachers who are responsible for organizing learning activities should genuinely understand the nature and learning behavior of both male and female students. Having done that, they should not try to abate their strong bias against male gender and look for learning activities that meet the needs of both male and female students equally. The softening of male rough behavior and the reinforcement of girls' industriousness should be integrated into normal classroom learning activities. This integration would indiscipline male students and makes it easier for them to learn while at the same time encouraging female students to lead and to make better decisions.

The other possible tactic is to create un-bias curriculum without a clear dividing line separating male from female students such as student club activities which open to all students who are interested in the same subjects. The other way to help male students feel that they are not victims of sex bias is to employ communication technology which boys are usually very much interested in as part of learning activities where students

of both sexes have an opportunity to learn together. Teaching how to do housework or handicrafts, traditionally regarded as female's jobs, is another good opportunity for male students to learn along with female students. On the other hand, the female students should be encouraged to engage in sports or do adventurous activities like boys do. All the schools need to keep in mind is that as long as they base school activities on 'having fun' the students will be ready to participate and learn together.

d) For faculties of education

If the faculties can incorporate sexology into their teacher training curriculum they would be able to produce new generations of teachers who know how to organize learning experience that takes into account the equality for students of both sexes.

e) For society

The society represents a wide and complex place where crowds congregate for different purposes. It needs cooperative groups to work together to win a greater space for sexual equality in the society. They might have to scramble for wider space in the media to display pictures of sexual inequality in the society. The academics will have to be bold enough to discuss the inequality in the public. The national, as well as, international organizations or authorities will have to make it known in a concrete form as to where do they stand regarding sexual equality. Although the results of the analysis of the 12 variables clearly demonstrate that they are all closely related to male students' learning and the sources of the variables have been revealed, it does not necessarily mean that solving the problem of unequal opportunities for learning for males is to force.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The overall results of this study demonstrated a constructive phenomenon of gender inequality in educational opportunities which are in line with the previous studies (Halldorsson & Olafsson, 2009; Vassiliou, 2010). Moreover, the results are in accordance with Prasartpornsirichoke and Takahashi's (2013) study. Prasartpornsirichoke and Takahashi found that the northern part of Thailand had severe inequality in education. The results also supported by some theorists' argument that boys are more aggressive than girls that put them at a dominant position thereby creating inequality between the both sexes (Acker, 2006). However, results are contradicted with Mullis et al.'s (2007) study. Mullis et al. found that there was equivalent between the sexes in Spain and Luxemburg.

The phenomenon of inequality in education in which male students get lesser opportunities than the female counterparts in learning as reflected in their poor learning achievement and alarming rate of dropout has not been fully appreciated by the public in general. Nevertheless, it is necessary for the families, schools, and society as a whole at this point to begin to study it carefully and then keep a watchful eye on the change. The present study has attempted to demonstrate the origin of the phenomenon in the hope

that equal opportunities in learning would eventually open to all disregarding their gender. Findings from this study revealed that Thailand is an outstanding case demonstrating a trend which male students have less advantage than female students do. As a result, the recommendation above should be taken into consideration in order to close the gap of gender inequality in education.

The results of this study imply that gender inequality will cause a huge loss of human potential in Thailand if immediate actions are not taken. Gender equality is therefore integral to democracy, development and a human rights system to which all students are entitled. For educational practitioners, the results of this study can be valuable and essential to solve the gender inequality problems, build on good practices and manage human resources to make sure all students can make long-term gains in learning opportunities. Monitoring can assist Thailand education systems focus on equity by identifying those students being left behind and addressing the challenges they face as well as measuring the quality of schooling, and whether the educational system is working efficiently or not.

Ministry of Education, Thailand can make more related research data available to strengthen the national systems. The ministry should also support the schools in using this data to inform policies and more effectively put them into practice. In addition, Ministry of Education should work closely with schools, parents, local community to make national education accountable to ensure an equal and quality education for all students despite their gender. Ministry of Education can help to strengthen local planning and ultimately develop school improvement plans in terms of educational opportunities.

A prominent part of future studies should promote an approach that puts power at the heart of gender and development analysis. Therefore, future researchers should turn a feminist lens on attempts to institutionalize gender through 'mainstreaming' and brought new perspectives to debates on gender in relation to labor, health, environment and participatory development. Educational programs will have to be designed in a way that they can provide accessible and diverse information to bridge the gaps between theory, policy and practice.

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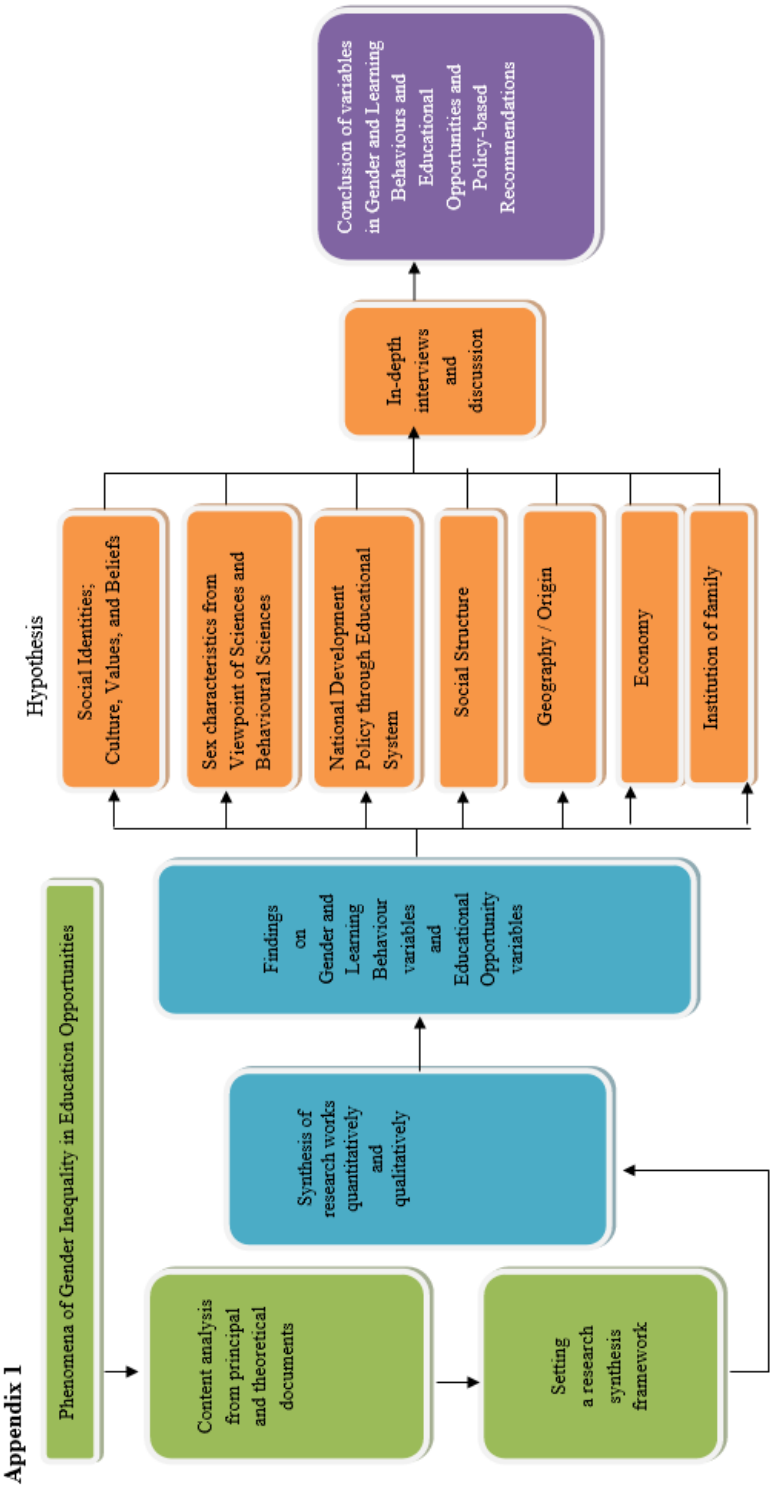

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

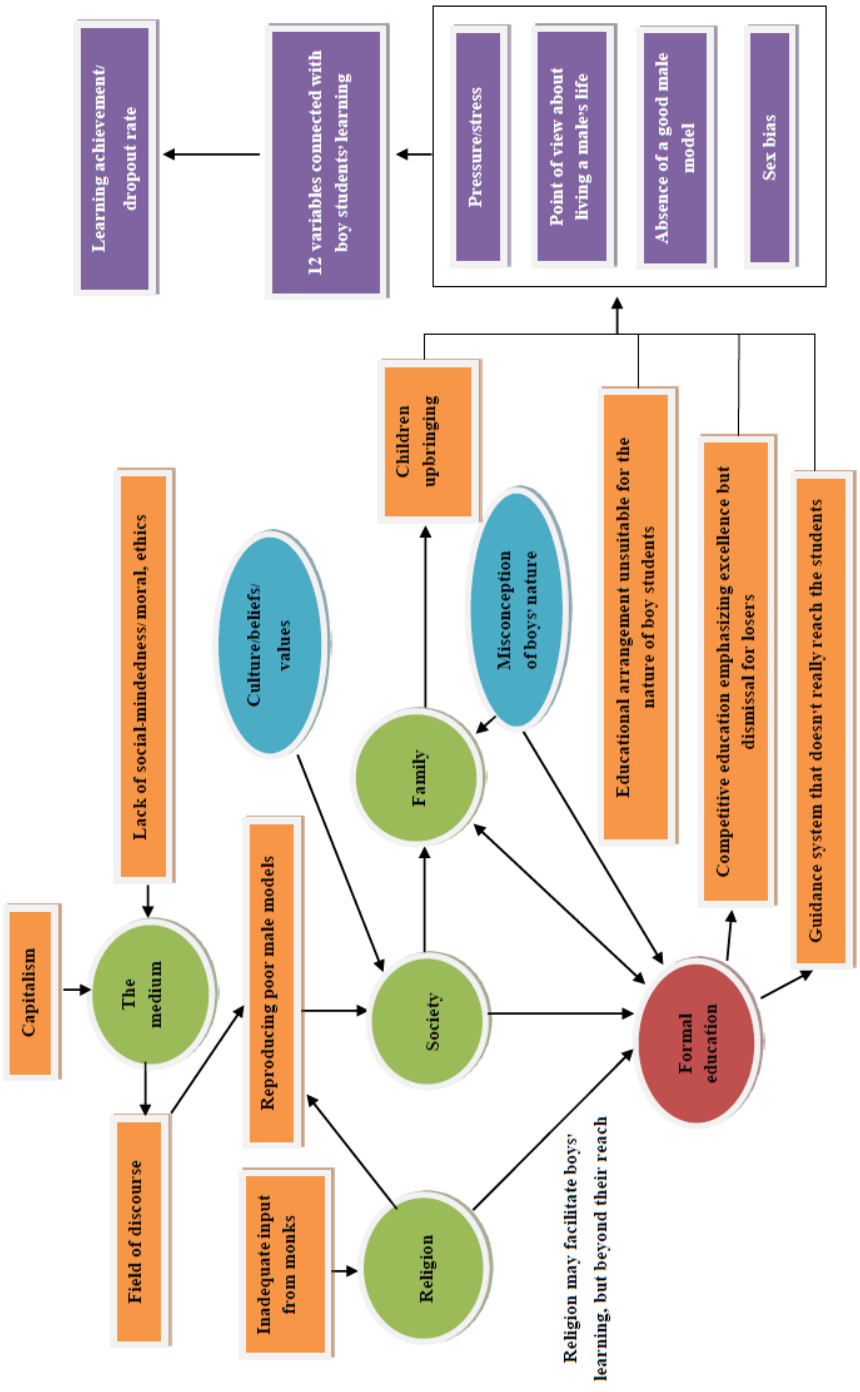

Figure 2. Connection between variables