Proceedings of the 4th International Conference on Educational Innovation and Philosophical Inquiries
DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/13/20230906

The Effect of Gender Ratio of Elementary School Teachers on Pupils' Gender Awareness

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Abstract: Currently, gender imbalance among elementary school teachers has become a global phenomenon in education, which is more prominent in urban elementary schools in China. It has been found that the gender awareness of elementary school students is below the average, and elementary school is the right time to shape the correct gender awareness of students. To ensure the scientific development of education, the rational use of teachers' resources, the continuous supply of quality talents, the psychological health of primary school students, and the sound development of elementary school students' gender consciousness, we must pay attention to the reality of the feminization of teachers' gender composition in elementary school education, analyze its root causes, search for countermeasures, and strive to build a balance between teachers' gender and elementary school students' gender consciousness. This thesis attempts to analyze the impact of gender imbalance on students' behavior and mind through a combination of documentary and quantitative research methods, and further analyze the impact of male and female teachers on students' gender consciousness at the elementary school level. Through the above process, the relationship between the gender imbalance of elementary school teachers and students' gender consciousness is presented. Finally, appropriate opinions are offered to address the problem of imbalance between male and female teachers.

Keywords: gender ratio, elementary school teacher, primary student, gender awareness

1. Introduction

The data show that there is a significant imbalance in the ratio of male to female teachers worldwide. Teachers of the opposite sex have different roles in students' minds, and, moreover, teachers of the opposite sex can have a different impact on elementary school students. For female students, male teachers can serve as a substitute for fathers or as a safe object of curiosity about the opposite sex [1]. As students get older, male teachers will increase their attention to girls, while female teachers will always pay more attention to boys, and teachers and specialists may also unconsciously include that who are aggressive and horny in nature in their teaching [2]. Essentially, there is a need for teachers in elementary education who can meet the emotional needs of both boys and girls and encourage all children to move beyond stereotypical expectations through the teachers' own patterns of behavior. Thus, not only do male teachers need to be required to take on counter-traditional roles to address

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DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/13/20230906

gender issues in elementary schools, but more female teachers are equally needed to remedy the barriers that men face in positioning female students in nurturing and supportive roles [3].

There is a severe imbalance in the gender ratio of elementary school teachers in China. The imbalance in the gender ratio of teachers has become a major problem in the construction of China's teaching force, which will adversely affect the development of the teaching community and to a certain extent, hinder the growth of gender awareness among elementary school students. Previous research on teacher gender in primary school students has been more biased toward the effects of gender-specific teachers on student achievement. For example, explore the impact of student gender, teacher gender, and their interaction on academic motivation and engagement [4], and teachers are more effective at teaching students of their own gender [5]. Few studies have been conducted to examine the impact of the imbalance between male and female teachers on students' gender awareness. As far as the current research field is concerned, there is a gap in the impact of teachers' gender imbalance on elementary school students' gender consciousness.

Taking the gender composition of elementary school teachers as the primary research object and conducting an in-depth discussion on the imbalance of the large gap between the number of male and female teachers, analyzing the causes of the inequality of the gender ratio of elementary and secondary school teachers and the effects of teachers of different genders on students' gender consciousness. First, scholars compiled and summarized data on the gender imbalance, followed by a review of relevant domestic and international research literature and a brief introduction to the current status of domestic and international research on the issue and its impact on students' gender awareness.

2. The Current Status of the Ratio of Elementary School Teachers in China

According to various surveys, Statistics show that the percentage of female teachers in the U.S. teaching force was 40 percent in the 1840s and jumped to 47 percent in 1850. By the 1870s, the percentage of female teachers in public schools was nearly 60 percent. By the late of the 19th century, the proportion of female teachers had reached 70% in the U.S. [6]. The number of male and female teachers was relatively even in the 1870s, increased dramatically to 60% in the 1880s, and by 1890, the proportion of female teachers in England was 67%. The number of female teachers in major Western countries reached an all-time high between the early 20th century and the 1930s. between 1900 and the mid-1920s, the proportion of female teachers in the United States increased by nearly 20% to an all-time high of 89%, while the proportion of female teachers in the United Kingdom also rose to 74% in the early 20th century, reaching a peak of 80% by 1930 [6]. The above data suggest that the gender imbalance among teachers in major Western countries was already prominent in the early 20th century. However, it's not just the West, the feminization of teachers is a problem for elementary school teachers worldwide. Most regions in China also face an imbalance in the gender structure of primary school teachers. This situation even shows an increasing trend year by year. Scholars have collected data from the following three areas to demonstrate the feminization of the teacher population at different levels, regions, and age stages.

Among the different levels of schools, in the order of elementary, middle, and high schools and secondary schools, as shown in Table 1 [7]. from 2008 to 2013, the proportion of female teachers of teachers showed an upward trend. From 2011 onwards, the proportion of female teachers teaching degrees in primary school and secondary school section is more than half. Among them, the degree of feminization of teachers at the primary level is the most serious, and its percentage has remained above fifty percent since 2008.

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Table 1: The proportion of female teachers in primary and secondary schools in China from 2008 to 2013.

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Primary school	56.36	57.11	57.95	58.68	59.58	60.11
Secondary school	48.17	48.81	49.46	50.13	50.92	51.70
Senior high school	46.08	46.87	47.66	48.36	49.05	49.84

The degree of feminization of teachers in cities, counties, and rural areas also showed differences. As shown in Table 2 [8], the proportion of female teachers in urban areas is more than 70%, the proportion of male and female teachers in counties is not as high as that in urban areas, but also accounts for more than half of the teachers, reaching 66.41%, while the proportion of female teachers teaching in rural areas is 51%, and the proportion of male and female teachers teaching is relatively even. Thus, it is easy to see that the proportion of feminized teachers decreases from urban, county, and rural in that order, i.e., urban > county > rural. However, overall, female teachers are still over half in proportion, both in urban and rural areas.

Table 2: National Female Full-Time Faculty Distribution Table, 2016.

	Elementary school	Secondly school	Senior high school
City	73.27%	64.42%	56%
country	66.41%	50.71%	48.3%
Rural area	51.33%	46.19%	49.4%

In addition, the sex proportion of teachers in various age groups presents a complicated phenomenon, which implies that the gender proportion of teachers in different age groups varies considerably, as shown in Table 3 taking the elementary school level as an example, the number of female teachers in elementary school is higher than male teachers in general, but the proportion of older male teachers is higher than older female teachers in general [9]. Thus, a conclusion can be drawn that younger teachers are feminized while older teachers are masculine.

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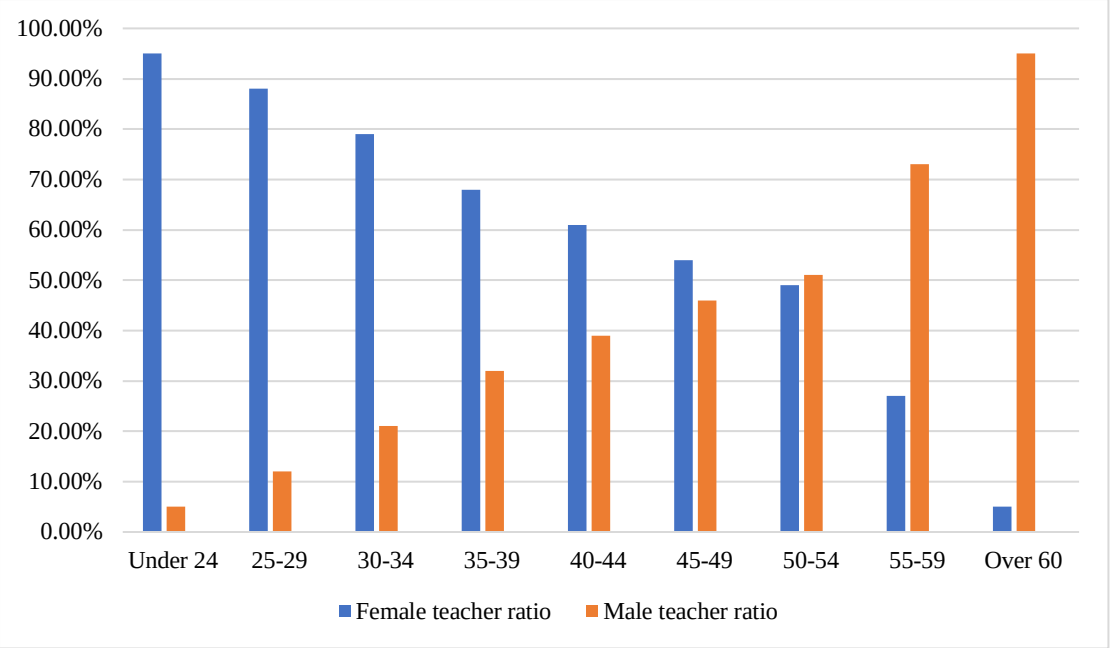
Table 3: Gender ratio of different age groups in Henan Province in 2017.



3. Analysis of the Current Situation of Female Teacher Overrepresentation in Elementary School

The causes of overrepresentation of female elementary school teachers have been investigated by domestic scholars. Domestic scholars have explored the social and political perceptions behind the feminization of elementary school teachers.

First, research on policy. Women's access to education has increased substantially since the founding of New China. With the implementation of compulsory education, more women have equal access to education that they previously did not have the opportunity to receive and upgrade their education. This has led to an increasing number of educated and even professional higher education women entering the teaching profession; secondly, the improvement of teacher admission standards, the written test and interviews in the teaching credential have eliminated some of those who do not meet the professional ethics of the teaching profession. Related surveys show that boys do not play and perform as well as girls in teacher certification interviews compared to females. When the passing rate of female students in the teaching credential is generally higher than that of male students, this is also one of the reasons.

With regard to social perceptions, traditional gender culture and the concept of marriage position women as "mothers" and "wives" who take care of children and the family. The need for women to work and take care of children and families simultaneously means that women need a better balance between family and work [10]. Therefore, compared to other jobs, teaching is one of the jobs that most women choose because of its long vacations and stable income, which provides women with enough time and money to care for their families. However, under the influence of traditional gender stereotypes and social values, male teachers face negative public pressure and public skepticism about men's lack of experience in caring for young children, which means male teachers are often not socially recognized and the social value of their profession appears low. As a result, many male teachers choose other careers and give up teaching [11].

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4. The Impact of Gender-specific Teachers on Different Students

In primary education, both male and female teachers play an essential role in the growth and personality development of students. Because of the gender differences between males and females, excessive feminization of teachers can have a significant impact on elementary school students behaviorally and psychologically.

4.1. Excessive Feminization of Elementary School Teachers Can Impact Students' Behavior

Students have different perceptions of teachers based on their gender. The teacher role model effect refers to the fact that pupils feel more comfortable and have more concentration in the class, and more creative and energetic in their knowledge, when a teacher of the same gender is engaged in classroom teaching activities [12]. It is true that female students communicate with and learn from female teachers, and the attentiveness, enthusiasm, and concern for students that characterize female behavior will implicitly influence the girls' behavior and will allow the girls to pass on the good qualities of female teachers in their lives. However, dealing with only female teachers for a long time and having little contact with male teachers can leave female students unsure how to communicate well with boys later in their adolescence. Also, she will be afraid of encountering communication situations with male teachers in the future, or even not knowing how to get along with them. Secondly, female teachers overemphasize good behavior and obedience to girls because of their gender stereotypes, which can lead to female students' lack of autonomy and increase their dependence on others [13]. For male students, the lack of time spent with male teachers can impact their behavior, and the lack of guidance on male behavior can make boys less masculine in some situations. According to the survey, male teachers can be effective in educating boys who are naughty and make mistakes through private communication, while female teachers will adopt "rulemaking" or "punishment" for active boys, and over time, in order to avoid criticism in a long time, male students will learn from the quiet girls in the class, and their personalities will become silent. Sometimes female teachers overemphasize male masculinity and responsibility for male students, leading to a lack of warmth and care in male students' behavior.

4.2. The Psychological Impact of Highly Feminized Elementary School Teachers on Students

Teachers play a crucial role in ensuring the psychological well-being of students. However, teachers of different genders, because of their own gender stereotypes, can unconsciously influence students' psychological health. Female teachers' stereotypes of male students' personalities, such as naughty and active, can affect their own judgment in some cases, and wrong judgment can lead to a psychological barrier in students' minds. Moreover, men and women have different personalities, boys are more conducive to developing physical and mental health than girls, and the careful care of female teachers can sometimes be a burden for male students.

5. The Impact of Teacher Gender Ratio on Students' Gender Awareness

5.1. Gender Consciousness of Elementary School Students

Gender consciousness means having an active self-awareness that is influenced by political and economic culture to construct which gender they should belong to, and a self-awareness that is expressed through gender analysis and gender planning that they identify with [14]. The development of gender consciousness is mainly influenced by environmental factors, so the development of male and female gender should start early to minimize the impact on people's stereotypes. To observe the status of gender consciousness of elementary school students, 38 elementary school students in each

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section were counted as shown in Table 4 [9]. The scale for this study was calculated using a 5-point scale with an intermediate critical value of 3 points. From the data in the table, it can be seen that the below-average gender consciousness of primary school students is 2.77, which shows that the awareness of primary school students is low in terms of gender consciousness. Therefore, it is very important for elementary school students to develop correct gender awareness at the elementary school level. Moreover, elementary school is an important period for gender role perception and gender role construction, and primary school students will regulate their behavior by observation and imitation. Therefore, with such a high percentage of feminized elementary school teachers, it will have a different impact on students' gender consciousness to some extent.

Table 4: Mean and standard deviation statistics of elementary school students' gender awareness.

	Gender awareness	Gender identity	Gender Ideal	Gender traits	Gender roles	Gender Equity
M	2.77	2.65	2.54	2.53	2.96	3.14
SD	0.68	0.96	0.79	0.76	0.80	0.73

5.2. Impact of Teachers' Gender Feminization on Students' Gender Awareness

The relatively low gender awareness of elementary school students, as found in the survey results above, presents both an opportunity and a challenge for gender awareness education for students. Based on a gender-controlled experiment, Bigler divided the children into gender and non-gender groups in different classrooms. The gender group was referred to as the male and female gender, while the non-gender group was referred to by the students' first names. After four weeks, children aged 6-10 in the "gender room" group identified more with gender stereotypes than the control group, and they had more positive perceptions of same-gender groups and more negative perceptions of different-gender groups. Thus, it can be concluded that spending too much time with the same sex can lead to gender stereotypes [15]. Therefore, it is important to train elementary school students to recognize the differences between men and women, but also to downplay gender stereotypes, to have the strength of boys while also having the attentiveness and consideration of boys [9]. However, as far as the current data survey shows, elementary school teachers are overly feminized and there are fewer male teachers. In this situation where there are more female teachers and fewer male teachers, it is difficult to raise students to be a combination of both male and female gender strengths. The reality of a highly feminized elementary school teacher is not good for male students' sense of gender. When male elementary school students spend time with male teachers, the tough, creative, and competitive nature of the teacher will be conducive to the male students' rigid sense of manhood. The fact that boys in elementary school are in a highly feminized environment for a long time, without good older males to serve as role models for elementary school students, is not conducive to forming male elementary school students' gender consciousness. The fact that boys in elementary school are in a highly feminized environment for a long time, without good older males to serve as role models for elementary school students, is not conducive to forming male elementary school students' gender consciousness [16]. At the same time, without the proper guidance of good male role models, discrimination, ridicule, and disrespect for the opposite sex may occur because of gender consciousness. In today's society, most families have fathers who work outside the home and mothers

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who take care of their children's lives and studies at home, and female teachers who teach academically and mentally at school. This prolonged female companionship and lack of good male learning objects can create gender awareness barriers for elementary school students who are at a low level of gender awareness. For girls, during the time they spend with male teachers, girls will learn how to communicate with men and also satisfy their curiosity about the opposite sex, which facilitates the formation and development of their female role awareness.

As a conclusion, the educational approach of school teachers of different gender and the cultivation of students' correct gender awareness help promote the development of elementary school students' ability to interact with the opposite sex, and also help children to better pass through the stage of gender solidification and become more tolerant of gender role characteristics [17].

6. Suggestions for Optimizing the Structure of Elementary School Teachers

6.1. Focus on Public Opinion Guidance and Identity of Elementary School Teachers

With the adjustment of policies and benefits, the treatment of elementary school teachers has been improving, however, elementary school teachers are still in a low status in society. Many people in society have maintained the view that elementary school teachers are underpaid, tired, and similar to school mothers of elementary school students. Therefore, the relevant departments should increase publicity and guide the correct public opinion so that people will change their views on the low social status and low pay of elementary school teachers. It is also necessary to promulgate relevant policies to improve the salary and social status of elementary school teachers, so that the position becomes attractive, which can attract a large number of talents to join the team.

6.2. Transforming the Source of Teachers

Currently, in-service teachers in elementary school in China come from teacher training colleges, but the number of teacher training colleges is limited, as well as many men majoring in teacher training give up entering elementary school for teaching because of the low social status and salary of elementary school teachers. The education department can consider recruiting male teachers with "teaching credentials" who are not teacher-training majors but who are passionate about education during the teacher examinations to reduce the imbalance between male and female teachers.

6.3. Increase Training for In-service Male Teachers and Give Them an Active Role

Unable to solve the problem of over-feminization of elementary school teachers in the short term, schools can use their limited resources to create quality conditions. Rationalize the distribution of in-service male teachers to each grade level so that students are exposed to as many teachers of different genders as possible at the elementary school level, where gender awareness is not yet fully developed, and to dilute students' gender stereotypes.

7. Conclusions

This paper focuses on the impact of the disparity in gender ratio of elementary school teachers on the gender consciousness of elementary school students of both genders. The scholars separately examine the effects of male and female teachers' personalities and teaching styles on students, further conclude their effects on elementary school students' gender consciousness, and propose corresponding solutions to the problem of a extreme imbalance in the ratio of elementary school teachers.

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