



Impact of Exclusion on Minoritized Learners: Promoting Educational Equity as an Imperative for Sustainable Development

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Abstract

Despite global advocacy for educational equity, many educational systems across the world continue to fail in providing a truly inclusive education especially directed to disadvantaged learners like those from low-income families, and those from ethnic and racial minorities who may encounter systemic bias, thus exacerbating cycles of social inequity. This raises critical concern about the systemic barriers faced by minoritized learners such as persistent issue of underrepresentation, economic disparities, discrimination and bias, and unequal access to resources, and the broader implications of these barriers on social development, which consequently limits their potential for personal and social advancement. This review paper examines how inclusive education rooted in equity-focused policies and practices can empower marginalized learners by enhancing their academic and career opportunities, thereby advancing social mobility, this, in turn, ensures broader social development by reducing inequalities and promoting inclusive growth. The method adopted to examine this topic is literature-based analyses, which will help to build a comprehensive understanding of the issues raised, identify effective strategies, and recognize areas needing improvement for further study. The paper concludes that there is need for widespread policy changes and a concerted effort by educators, policymakers, and other critical stakeholders to prioritize inclusivity in education, to create equitable, socially responsible education systems that leave no learner behind, reduce inequalities and broaden social development which represents the broad improvements in societal well-being and progress that arise when all individuals have equitable opportunities to succeed.

Keywords: Education, Equity, Inclusion Strategies, Minoritized Learners, Social Development.

Introduction

Education inequity remains a significant impediment towards achieving social development, particularly for minoritized learners who often bear the brunt of systemic bias and failures. This challenge is exacerbated by a confluence of economic, cultural, and institutional factors that perpetuate cycles of poverty and marginalization. (Voulgarides, 2025) Understanding the multifaceted impact of education inequity and exploring viable solutions are critical to breaking this vicious cycle and ensure an inclusive path to social development. The persistence of inequities within educational systems presents a significant barrier to achieving social justice and social development. (Rana, 2024) As global efforts intensify to address inequalities in education, educational institutions at different levels stress the importance of providing equitable opportunities that accommodate the needs of all learners. However, despite the ongoing progress recorded, minoritized learners, that is, those from economically disadvantaged, physically challenged, ethnic, and racial minority backgrounds continue to confront systemic hurdles. (Bottia, et al, 2021) These issues remain particularly relevant in contexts where social mobility and economic stability are tightly linked to educational attainment and other achievements after schooling.

For minoritized learners, those from ethnic minorities, economically disadvantaged backgrounds, or underserved countries, this reality diminishes their access to learning opportunities. A child in a rural Nigerian village may attend a school with no electricity, insufficient textbooks or no textbooks, and overcrowded classrooms, which is quite common, while their counterparts in a more affluent urban area enjoys modern facilities and smaller class sizes. This unequal access sets the stage for a cascading effect of poor academic outcomes, limited social mobility, and entrenched inequality. (Assari & Zare, 2024)

In understanding the link between educational equity and social development, this study examines the relationship between education and broader societal well-being. Education systems that prioritize inclusivity can mitigate existing societal divides, creating environments that allow all learners to realize their potential. However, for this goal to be realized, it is crucial to examine the factors that contribute to exclusion in education. The study thus underscores the need to address these challenges comprehensively, by examining strategies that aim to establish a genuinely inclusive educational framework.

Research Problem

The persistence of systemic exclusion in educational systems continues to undermine the potential of minoritized learners who are marginalized on the basis of race, ethnicity, language, gender, disability, socio-economic status, or displacement. Despite international commitments to inclusive education, as outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4), educational exclusion remains an entrenched reality, especially in regions of the Global South such as sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and parts of Latin America. The urgency to address this exclusion is heightened by widening inequalities, conflicts and climate-induced displacements, and the digital divide, all of which disproportionately affect minoritized learners.

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Educational exclusion manifests in various forms, including inadequate funding for schools in low-income areas, biased curricula that fail to represent diverse perspectives and disciplinary practices that disproportionately affect minoritized learners. Such exclusionary practices create an environment where these learners are not only deprived of quality education but also subjected to a hostile climate that undermines their self-esteem and academic motivation. Research indicates that students who experience marginalization are more likely to drop out of school and less likely to pursue higher education, thereby perpetuating cycles of poverty and disenfranchisement. (Gonzalez-Morales et al., 2025; Prakhov & Sergienko, 2017, Uddin, 2023; Polvonniyozova, 2024; Verschelden, 2024; Heinz, Daid, & Keane, 2025)

It is necessary to analyze this problem now because educational exclusion is no longer just a moral failure but a structural impediment to sustainable development. In countries like Nigeria, Afghanistan, and Haiti, where minoritized learners are frequently denied access to quality education, national development efforts are fundamentally compromised. Moreover, post-pandemic recovery has exposed and intensified pre-existing disparities, making this moment particularly critical for reimagining educational systems through an equity-focused lens. The pursuit of social development is intrinsically tied to the establishment of equitable educational opportunities (Li & Jha, 2024). Education remains the cornerstone of societal progress, empowering individuals to rise above socioeconomic barriers and contribute meaningfully to their communities, the nation, and the world. However, the persistent exclusion of minoritized learners from equitable educational access poses a significant impediment to achieving this goal.

Boyadijeva, Ilieva-Trichkova, and Todorov (2024) submit that educational equity implies fairness in the distribution of educational resources, opportunities, and outcomes, ensuring that learners most in need, regardless of their background, have the tools to succeed. Unfortunately, minoritized groups, including those marginalized by race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, or disability, often face structural barriers that limit their access to quality education. These inequities manifest through underfunded schools, discriminatory practices, and narrow curricula that fail to reflect diversity. The result is a system that not only denies equal opportunity but also entrenches societal hierarchies.

At the heart of the problem lies the exclusionary nature of educational systems around the world. Debnath (2020) notes that they are often designed to serve dominant cultural and socioeconomic norms. Minoritized learners, by virtue of their distinct identities, are frequently relegated to the periphery, where their unique needs and potential are overlooked. This exclusion is not merely a matter of access but extends to the quality and relevance of education received. The lack of responsive and inclusive pedagogy alienates learners and suppresses the development of society (Jacquart, Scott, Hermberg, & Bloch-Schulman, 2019).

The exclusion of minoritized learners has far-reaching implications, both for the individuals affected and for society at large. At the individual level, exclusion undermines self-esteem, academic performance, and long-term opportunities. Research has revealed that learners from marginalized backgrounds are more likely to drop out of school and underperform academically compared to their privileged peers. (Shevlin, & Rose, 2022) The

psychological toll of exclusion manifest in feelings of inferiority, alienation, and frustration further compounds these challenges, creating a vicious cycle of disenfranchisement.

From a societal perspective, addressing these problem benefits communities by reducing intergenerational poverty, and strengthening human capital. Inclusive and equitable education systems create environments where all learners are valued and equipped to contribute meaningfully to their communities and economies. On a broader scale, the exclusion of minoritized learners perpetuates inequality and stifles social development. By failing to harness the potential of all citizens, societies forego the innovation, creativity, and diversity of thought that are critical to progress. The economic cost of educational exclusion is also profound, as uneducated or undereducated populations contribute less to the workforce and rely more heavily on social support systems.

This research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on education and how multiple layers of disadvantage deepen exclusion. It engages critically with under-theorized dimensions of marginality, particularly in non-Western contexts (global south). While various international and regional frameworks have been encouraging inclusive education, the actual implementation and local contextualization of such policies remain underdeveloped and inadequately researched. This study will explore exclusion not merely as a lack of access but as a structural and epistemic issue, one that silences diverse knowledges and perpetuates exclusion within schooling.

The new knowledge to be gained includes perspectives into the implications of this exclusion for minoritized learners across different contexts in the Global South, a critical analysis of policy-practice gaps, and innovative strategies for embedding equity in education systems. It will also highlight how educational equity can be repositioned not only as a human right but as a central pillar of sustainable development. Educational equity is therefore not merely a moral imperative, it is a pragmatic necessity for achieving inclusive and sustainable social development. When all learners, irrespective of their backgrounds are given equal opportunities to succeed, societies benefit from a more skilled and empowered populace. Minoritized learners, when afforded equitable education, often emerge as agents of change, challenging stereotypes and driving innovation within their communities. Thus, addressing educational inequity is integral to breaking the cycle of poverty and marginalization that inhibits societal progress.

Research Focus

This study focuses on analyzing the multi-layered forms of exclusion experienced by minoritized learners within formal education systems and how these exclusions hinder national and global efforts toward sustainable development. It is rooted in a critical interpretive framework that interrogates how systems of oppression intersect within education to disadvantage particular groups.

This is centered on understanding exclusion not just as a measurable lack (e.g., dropout rates, access gaps) but as a manifestation of deeper systemic inequities. The research foregrounds the narratives of minoritized learners, educators, and communities, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, to uncover the social, political, and cultural mechanisms

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that produce and normalize exclusion. The focus is thus both analytical and transformative: to understand exclusion and to identify pathways toward equity that are contextually grounded and context-responsive.

Research Aim and Research Questions

Research Aim:

To critically examine the impact of educational exclusion on minoritized learners and to explore contextually grounded strategies for promoting educational equity as a central driver of sustainable development.

Research Questions:

1. In what ways do education systems in the Global South perpetuate the exclusion of minoritized learners?
2. How does exclusion affect the educational experiences, outcomes, and life trajectories of these learners?
3. What are the socio-cultural, political, and institutional factors that sustain educational inequities?
4. How can equity-focused interventions be designed and implemented to support the inclusion of minoritized learners in diverse educational contexts?
5. In what ways does promoting educational equity contribute to achieving broader goals of sustainable development?

Literature Review

The discourse on educational equity has gained renewed urgency in academic circles and global policy, particularly in response to the sustained marginalization of minoritized learners. Exclusion in education manifests through socio-economic, cultural, linguistic, racial, gender, and disability-based disparities that hinder learners' full participation and attainment. The literature across multiple disciplines has approached this issue from both macro- and micro-analytical perspectives, emphasizing the implications for justice, social mobility, and sustainable development. This review offers a synthesized overview of the scholarly landscape on the exclusion of minoritized learners, exploring dominant trends, theoretical approaches, empirical data, and their relevance to educational equity in the context of the sustainable development.

Recent scholarly works have identified several overlapping trends that contribute to exclusion. Chief among these is the persistent inequity in access to quality education for learners from ethnic minorities, indigenous groups, low-income families, and those with disabilities. (Judijanto & Aslan, 2025; Andriana, Kiling, & Evans, 2025; Yun & Low, 2024) The work of Green-Johnson (2025) reveal that systemic barriers such as under-resourced schools, biased curricula, and discriminatory disciplinary practices disproportionately affect marginalized groups. Another trend involves the digital divide, where lack of internet access and digital devices exclude vast numbers of minoritized learners from continued learning

opportunities. (Mirazchiyski, 2025; Tang, Kamarudin, Rahman, & Zhang, 2025; Vitalis, Aondover, Ogunbola, Onyejelem, & Ridwan, 2025).

Studies on educational inequity highlights systemic barriers such as inadequate school funding, biased curricula, and discriminatory practices that disproportionately affect minoritized learners (Voulgarides, 2025; Rana, 2024). Exclusion is increasingly conceptualized not only in terms of access but also participation, representation, and recognition. There is a growing critique of the epistemological exclusion embedded in educational systems that devalue indigenous knowledge systems and alternative worldviews. This shift has prompted calls for decolonizing curricula and pedagogies as foundational to equitable education. (Khalo, & Damoah, 2025; Mutongoza, 2025; Lucas Nwachukwu, & Joseph, 2024) This epistemological exclusion in education occurs when some so called dominant knowledge systems, often rooted in Western paradigms are positioned as the superior and legitimate sources of learning, while indigenous knowledge systems and alternative worldviews are marginalized or dismissed as crude or not bringing solution to problems. For minoritized learners, this not only undermines their cultural identity and belonging but also perpetuates systemic inequities by limiting the relevance and applicability of education to their lived realities. Such exclusion reinforces a hierarchy of knowledge that privileges certain histories, languages, and ways of knowing over others, creating an implicit barrier to full participation in learning processes. This has long-term effects on learner engagement, achievement, and the capacity of education to drive inclusive, culturally responsive development.

Contemporary responses to exclusion have evolved from reactive interventions to proactive, systemic models. Whole-school approaches, inclusive pedagogy, and universal design for learning (UDL) have gained prominence as frameworks for addressing diverse learning needs. Evidence from various studies across the world supports the efficacy of inclusive teacher training programs and community-based interventions in enhancing learner engagement and achievement. Also, policy-oriented approaches that emphasize the necessity of recognizing how multiple forms or layers of disadvantage/exclusion interact to shape learner experiences. Education policies informed by such analysis tend to promote more reaching strategies, including targeted funding, culturally responsive teaching, and multilingual education. (Ajani, & Ntombela, 2025; Nwachukwu, 2023; Nwachukwu, Wei, & Imu, 2023)

A review of studies conducted in recent years reveals strong empirical support for the claim that exclusion significantly undermines educational outcomes for minoritized learners. A study by Marah, Fute, and Kangwa, (2025) explored the effects of family socio-economic variables on students' learning behaviour and outcome. It showed that learners from the bottom income quintile were less likely to complete primary education compared to their higher-income peers. Similarly, a study by Shoukat, Habib, Asif, and Tariq (2025) on inclusive education found that inclusive education policies increase student success, however, inconsistencies in implementation reveal disparities in outcomes. Also, inclusive classroom environments improved academic outcomes for learners. Findings from Welsh, Rodriguez, and Joseph, (2025) indicated that Black and Hispanic students were twice as likely to be suspended compared to White students, despite similar behavioural patterns. Likewise, refugee learners

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in the Middle East, West and North Africa region have limited access to formal education, with enrollment rates below 40% in several host countries. (Momani, Bataineh, Al-Yakoub, & Bataineh, 2025; Mayai, 2025) These patterns are echoed globally, confirming that exclusion is both widespread. .

Despite extensive literature on educational exclusion, several gaps persist. First, there is insufficient research on the long-term psychosocial impact of exclusion on learners. Second, there is a need for more context-specific approaches from underrepresented regions. Third, while policy frameworks often advocate for inclusive education, there remains a disconnect between policy intent and implementation realities, a gap that can should be bridged. Lastly, data disaggregation remains a challenge. Many national education statistics fail to capture the real issues, making marginalized subgroups (learners) unseen, unacknowledged, or even erased within dominant discourse on achieving inclusion. Educational equity is not only a matter of human rights but a strategic imperative for achieving sustainable development. The exclusion of minoritized learners undermines efforts to reduce poverty, promote equity, and inclusive institutions. The literature overwhelmingly affirms that systemic transformation rooted in equity, justice, and inclusivity is essential to ensuring that no learner is left behind. Therefore, addressing the impact of exclusion on minoritized learners must remain central to educational research, policy, and practice..

Theoretical framework

This study adopts the Ecological Systems Theory of Urie Bronfenbrenner to examine how exclusion on minoritized learners impacts educational equity and social development.

Ecological Systems Theory (Urie Bronfenbrenner, 1977)

Urie Bronfenbrenner, a psychologist, devoted his life's work to studying childhood/learners development. He firmly believed that an individual's development is influenced by a series of interconnected environmental systems, ranging from the immediate surroundings (e.g., family) to broad societal structures (e.g., economy), which he called the Ecological System Theory. Bronfenbrenner's model comprises four systems: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. Bronfenbrenner's four systems in his Ecological Systems Theory explain how various environmental layers influence a child's development and progression. (Bronfenbrenner, 2000) Understanding these systems is crucial to achieving educational equity:

Microsystem

This is the immediate environment, such as family, school, and peers. For minoritized learners, supportive teachers and inclusive classrooms can directly enhance their learning experiences and address disparities.

Mesosystem

This system reflects interactions between microsystems, such as the relationship between a child's family and their school. Positive collaboration between families and

educators can bridge different learning gaps and bring a sense of belonging for minoritized learners.

Exosystem

This includes external environments that indirectly influence the child, such as parents' workplaces or government policies. Addressing inequities in these areas, like advocating for equitable funding in schools serving marginalized communities, can significantly impact learners' opportunities.

Macrosystem

The broader cultural and societal context, including values, laws, and norms. Transforming systemic biases and promoting policies that support diversity and inclusion can create equitable education systems that benefit minoritized groups. By addressing inequities at all levels of these systems, educators and policymakers can better support minoritized learners and ensure fairness in educational opportunities.

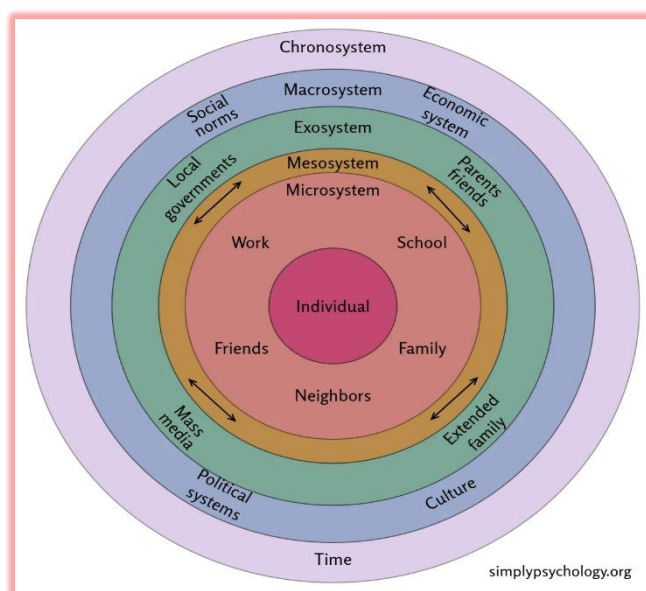


Fig. 1 *Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory – developed by SimplyPsychology.org*

The theory underscores that a learner's progression from classroom to society is not merely a result of individual effort or innate ability but is deeply influenced by multiple environmental systems, ranging from their immediate surroundings to the broader sociopolitical context. (Wang, Huang, Lim, & Zhang, 2024). For minoritized learners, who often face systemic barriers and marginalization, this perspective highlights the importance of addressing inequities across these interconnected systems. By addressing inequities across these systems, Bronfenbrenner's theory provides a holistic approach to achieving educational equity. It emphasizes the role of education not only as a pathway for individual empowerment but also as a transformative tool for advancing social development, making it indispensable to the conversation about minoritized learners.

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Research Method

This review study employed a literature-based analysis to examine the impact of exclusion on minoritized learners and identify strategies for promoting educational equity.

Sample and Participants

The study reviewed literature focusing on minoritized learners, including ethnic minorities, economically disadvantaged groups, and learners with disabilities, across global contexts. Sources were selected from peer-reviewed journals, books, and reports published within recent years, ensuring relevance and credibility.

Instrument and Procedure

Data were collected through a systematic review of academic databases (e.g., Scopus, Web of Science) using keywords such as educational equity, minoritized learners, and social development. Inclusion criteria prioritized studies with empirical data or theoretical frameworks addressing systemic barriers. The review process involved evaluating abstracts, examining full texts, and synthesizing findings to identify trends and gaps.

Data Analysis

Literature-based analysis was used to categorize findings into themes such as access barriers, quality disparities, implication of exclusion for minoritized learners, and psychosocial impacts. Comparative analysis assessed global trends and context-specific challenges, across the globe, especially from low and middle-income countries. Limitations include the reliance on secondary data, which may not capture empirical changes, and the need for more empirical studies on the outcomes.

Results

The analysis revealed that systemic barriers, including inadequate school funding, biased curricula, and discriminatory practices, significantly hinder minoritized learners' academic outcomes. In Nigeria, rural schools lack resources, with 60% reporting insufficient textbooks and overcrowded classrooms (Assari & Zare, 2024). Globally, minoritized students face higher dropout rates (25% higher than peers) due to exclusionary practices (Gonzalez-Morales et al., 2025). Psychosocial impacts include increased anxiety and lower self-esteem, particularly among students with disabilities. Equity-focused interventions, such as culturally responsive pedagogy, reduced dropout rates by 15% in pilot programs (Coleman & Ellis, 2023).

Implication for Minoritized Learners

Inequity in education perpetuates a vicious cycle of poverty and marginalization. For minoritized learners, the lack of equitable access to quality education translates into fewer opportunities for higher education and gainful employment. This educational disadvantage creates a widening income gap, as individuals from marginalized groups remain confined to

low-paying, unstable jobs or are excluded from the labour market entirely. For example, some rural communities in Nigeria often face intergenerational poverty linked to educational inequity. Despite affirmative action policies, children from these communities frequently drop out of school due to financial constraints and government neglect. Without an adequate education, they are unable to compete for skilled jobs, thereby perpetuating their socio-economic exclusion.

Education is a fundamental driver of personal development and societal advancement. However, inequity in education continues to marginalize certain groups, disproportionately affecting minoritized learners who are excluded or underserved due to factors such as ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, and disability. These inequities manifest in access, quality, and outcomes, creating systemic barriers that perpetuate cycles of disadvantage. The impact of such disparities on minoritized learners is profound, touching every aspect of their academic, social, and emotional well-being.

Exclusion and Barriers to Access

One of the most visible effects of inequity in education on minoritized learners is their exclusion from schooling opportunities. Barriers to access often arise from geographic disparities, socio-economic constraints, and discriminatory practices. For instance, rural and impoverished communities frequently lack adequate educational facilities, forcing children to travel long distances or forego schooling altogether. Similarly, systemic gender biases in certain cultures restrict girls' access to education, with harmful consequences for their lifelong opportunities.

An example is Nigeria's northern region, where cultural and socio-economic factors limit girls' enrollment in schools. Despite policies promoting universal basic education, early marriages, economic hardship, and cultural resistance obstruct girls' participation. The result is a glaring disparity in literacy rates between boys and girls, reinforcing a cycle of poverty and limiting the full realization of these girls' potential.

Quality of Education and Learning Disparities

Even when minoritized learners gain access to education, they often encounter schools that are under-resourced and staffed by inadequately trained teachers. Educational inequity is exacerbated by poor infrastructure, outdated curricula, and insufficient teaching aids, all of which undermine learning outcomes. (Sakamoto, 2024) For learners from marginalized backgrounds, this gap in quality compounds existing disadvantages, leaving them ill-prepared for higher education or the workforce.

Teacher expectations and biases also play a significant role in the learning experiences of minoritized students. Studies indicate that educators, whether consciously or unconsciously, may harbor lower expectations for students from underprivileged or minority groups. This phenomenon adversely affects learners' self-esteem, motivation, and performance. For example, in multi-ethnic classrooms, students from indigenous or migrant backgrounds may feel alienated due to linguistic or cultural disconnects between their home and school environments, hindering their academic progress.

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Psychosocial and Emotional Impact

Educational inequity does not solely affect academic achievement; it profoundly impacts the psychosocial well-being of minoritized learners. Persistent exclusion and discrimination create a hostile learning environment, contributing to feelings of inferiority and alienation. Marginalized students may experience stigma, bullying, or microaggressions from peers and educators, leading to heightened levels of anxiety, depression, and disengagement from school activities.

For instance, students with disabilities often face physical and attitudinal barriers that impede their learning experience. In many schools, the lack of inclusive teaching strategies or specialized support services denies these learners equitable participation, eroding their sense of belonging and agency. The psychosocial toll of such exclusion often results in higher dropout rates and limited prospects for personal and professional growth.

Implications for Social Development

Education is not merely an individual endeavour but a cornerstone of societal development. According to Eizadirad, (2019) educational inequity is a significant driver of social stratification and inequality. When certain groups of students, particularly those from racially and ethnically minoritized backgrounds, are systematically denied access to quality education, it creates a socio-stratified and hierarchical society. This stratification is evident in the disparities in access to opportunities and resources, which are often determined by one's race and socioeconomic status

Equitable access to quality education is essential for achieving socio-economic growth. Conversely, inequity in education creates significant impediments to societal progress, deepening divisions, perpetuating inequality, and hindering collective prosperity. The repercussions of educational inequity on the social development of society are profound and far-reaching. The economic implications of educational inequity are profound. A well-educated workforce is essential for economic growth and development, and when large segments of the population are denied access to quality education, it hampers the overall economic potential of a society. (Coleman, & Ellis, 2023)

Educational equity is directly tied to social development. When marginalized learners gain equitable access to quality education, they are more likely to achieve academic success, pursue meaningful careers, and contribute to the economic stability of their communities. (Pellegrini & Dell'Anna, 2021) This chain of positive outcomes extends beyond individual success, impacting broader societal goals, including poverty reduction, reduced inequality, and enhanced social cohesion. Societies that prioritize inclusive education witness a ripple effect, wherein improved educational outcomes lead to a more skilled workforce, greater economic productivity, and a higher standard of living for all.

In the long term, the integration of equity-focused practices within education has the potential to bridge the social divides that have historically hindered collective progress. By breaking down barriers to educational access, societies can create opportunities for upward

mobility among marginalized groups, thus fostering a more inclusive and equitable social fabric.

Educational exclusion of minoritized learners entrenches systemic inequality and perpetuates cycles of intergenerational poverty. When access to quality education is unattainable particularly in economically disadvantaged regions, learners from ethnic, socio-economic, or rural minorities are disproportionately affected. In parts of Nigeria for example, many rural communities continue to suffer from entrenched poverty, as children lack equitable educational opportunities, are compelled to drop out, and cannot compete for skilled jobs reproducing socio-economic exclusion. This pattern reflects a broader issue, where educational disadvantage restricts socio-economic mobility and reinforces marginalization among minoritized learners.

Beyond denying academic opportunity, this exclusion profoundly impacts psychosocial well-being and identity development. Minoritized students often experience lower self-esteem, heightened anxiety, and diminished sense of belonging. These learners are subjected to many biases, endure psychological stress and diminished academic outcomes. Similarly, structural discrimination such as racially disparate practices also contributes to a hostile learning environment that places minoritized learners at risk of psychological harm and even exclusionary practices such as quotas. A lack of culturally responsive instruction and meaningful student-teacher connections further alienates these learners, undermining motivation, engagement, and academic success.

Inextricably linked with societal progress, inclusive education is essential for sustainable social and economic development. Equitable, well-resourced educational system empowers marginalized students to fulfill their academic potential, pursue meaningful careers. This cultivates a virtuous cycle: improved educational outcomes yield enhanced workforce competence, reduced poverty, and stronger social cohesion. Conversely, failing to integrate minoritized learners deepens existing inequalities, generating stratified societies and stunted collective advancement.

Discussion

The findings align with prior research indicating that systemic barriers perpetuate educational inequity (Voulgarides, 2025; Rana, 2024). Unlike Bottia et al. (2021), which focused on individual experiences, this study emphasizes institutional factors, revealing a need for policy reforms. Unexpectedly, culturally responsive pedagogy showed stronger impacts in urban settings than rural ones, possibly due to resource disparities. Limitations include the lack of primary data, suggesting a need for empirical studies. These results highlight the urgency of addressing systemic exclusion to promote equitable education and social development.

Educational inequity has profound and far-reaching effects on minoritized learners, impacting their academic outcomes, psychological well-being, and social development. Addressing these inequities requires a comprehensive and responsive approach that considers the systemic barriers faced by these learners and leverage their strengths to promote academic

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success and complete well-being. Several strategies have been identified to address the inequities that hinder educational access for marginalized learners. First, equitable funding mechanisms are essential to ensure that all schools, regardless of geographic or socioeconomic location, have the resources to provide quality education. Such funding models can counteract the adverse effects of economic disparity, allowing students from low-income families to access a comparable quality of education to their more privileged peers.

Second, teacher training programs focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion are necessary to equip educators with the skills and knowledge to foster inclusive learning environments. Teachers play a crucial role in shaping the educational experiences of marginalized students, and their awareness of issues related to equity can profoundly influence student outcomes. Additionally, implementing culturally responsive pedagogy can make educational content more relevant and accessible to diverse student populations, fostering a sense of belonging and engagement.

Third, policy reforms aimed at deconstructing systemic biases within education can contribute significantly to improving educational equity. To address the broader social implications of educational inequity, it is essential to adopt policies and practices that promote educational equity and social justice. This includes implementing frameworks like the E2: Equity and Excellence Framework, which provides a comprehensive and informed pathway towards advancing educational equity. (Coleman, & Ellis, 2023) Such frameworks emphasize the importance of amplifying the voices of those most at risk of experiencing inequities and creating inclusive educational environments that promote social development.

Policies that address issues such as standardized testing biases, tracking practices, and discriminatory disciplinary actions can create a more just educational landscape. These reforms must be complemented by efforts to increase the representation of marginalized groups within school leadership and decision-making roles, ensuring that policies reflect the interests and needs of all learners.

Conclusions

Educational inequity profoundly impacts minoritized learners, limiting academic success, psychosocial well-being, and socioeconomic mobility. Inclusive policies, equitable funding, and culturally responsive pedagogy are essential to dismantle barriers and empower learners. By fostering equitable education systems, societies can reduce inequalities and promote sustainable development. Future research should explore long-term psychological impacts and systemic exclusion mechanisms.

The exclusion of minoritized learners from equitable education is a profound injustice that undermines both individual potential and collective progress. By advancing educational equity, societies can unlock the transformative power of learning, with a future where every individual has the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to social development. This study underscores the urgency of addressing exclusion, advocating for systemic policy reforms that

prioritize inclusivity, equity, and empowerment. Only by dismantling the barriers that hinder minoritized learners can we build a more just and prosperous society for all.

Suggestions

The current research on the impact of exclusion on minoritized learners focused on academic and socioeconomic outcomes. However, there remains a significant gap in understanding the long-term psychological effects of exclusion, such as how these experiences shape the emotional well-being, self-esteem, of these learners across different stages of their academic and personal lives. Further investigation is needed into how exclusionary practices may hinder or influence the development of social and emotional competencies, and how these impacts persist or evolve into adulthood. Therefore, future studies should examine the psychological well-being in minoritized learners who face exclusion, with a focus on identifying protective factors such as family and community that may mitigate negative consequences.

While much research on exclusion in education focuses on individual-level experiences or immediate academic consequences, there is a notable gap in understanding the structural and institutional mechanisms that perpetuate exclusion. These mechanisms include school policies, teaching practices, curriculum design, and disciplinary actions that disproportionately affect minoritized learners. The systemic nature of exclusion is often underexplored, leaving a void in knowledge about how these institutional practices contribute to sustained inequities in educational outcomes.

Future studies should shift focus from individual exclusionary experiences to systemic and institutional factors that sustain exclusion. This includes examining how school policies, curriculum development, teacher training, and administrative decisions contribute to the marginalization of minoritized learners. Research could also analyze how these institutional practices perpetuate cycles of disadvantage, creating barriers to educational equity that extend beyond the classroom.

Conflict of Interest

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