

## **Exploring Factors Affecting Girl child Education in West Bengal**

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### **Abstract**

Education plays an important role to live in harmony whether it is a boy or a girl child. Education helps an individual to be smarter, to learn new things and to know about the facts around the world. Especially girls' education in India is the need of the hour. In terms of inhabitants, India is the second largest nation in the world but the rate of girls' education in India is extremely low. Overall development of a country depends on the status of girls' education. So, girl children must be educated for the overall development of the country because they play an essential role in the all-around process of the country. Generally in the rural part of this country, some people rarely want to send their daughters to school, they think that education is not important for girls as they grow up and eventually get married and settle down after a certain period. People think that girls should stay at home to help their family and nothing else.

**Keywords:** Girls education, School education, Girls empowerment, West Bengal

## 1.0. Introduction

Education is a universal right. Girls are still in the minority in schools in low –income countries, accounting for more than half the children who do not attend primary school. Education for girls is one of the best development investments one can make, having a positive impact on a number of areas. It promotes health and welfare for the next generation, and can help reduce poverty and slow down population growth. Girls' education is a strategic development priority. Better educated women tend to be healthier, participate more in the formal labor market, earn higher incomes, have fewer children, marry at a later age, and enable better health care and education for their children, should they choose to become mothers. All these factors combined can help lift households, communities, and nations out of poverty (Tyagi, 2010). The woman of modern India is liberal, educated and suave. She is no longer confined to the four walls. They have an opinion on each and every matter. This has resulted in changed power equations at her home, workplace and the society. The number of working woman is rising day by day. The Indian women have been significantly progressing in obtaining responsible position in organization. According to the Constitution of India, education is a fundamental right of every child. Education of a girl child is the first stride towards the wholesome development of a country (Worah, 2014).

## 1.1. Challenges of Girls' Education

Some girls do not start or complete schooling for many reasons. The reasons for the lack of education of girl child can be mentioned as follows:

- **Family Problem:** First of all, the birth of a girl child is frowned upon in few areas of India. People in elements of rural India believe that it is less important to educating the girl child. Girls are believed to stay at home to take care of the household works and then get married at a suitable age.
- **Societal Views:** Education of girl child is regarded as a waste of time and money by the backward, orthodox sections of the society. The pursuit of education is not encouraged as girl child has the burden of domestic responsibilities and having a professional career is seen as a sign of disgrace to the family name. Also, educating a girl child would mean paying a heavier

dowry for her marriage. These are the kind of ridiculous societal norms that a girl has to face (Sahoo, 2016).

- **Financial Struggle:** Poor families who earn just enough to feed their children cannot afford education for a girl child. In their view, a girl has to get married eventually and educating a girl child is seen as a waste of money (Latha, 2014).
- **Child marriage:** Child marriage is an important reason which hampered the girls' education. Sometimes girls are getting married before attained the minimum level of education. It is estimated that 15 millions girls under the age of 18 are married each year.
- **Early pregnancy:** Early pregnancy is a result of child marriage. Due to early marriage girls become early pregnant. So, they don't have any options to back to her school. Girls who become pregnant and have children often do not return to school.
- **Gender based violence:** Gender based violence is also noted in this society. Girls are exposed to sexual harassment and violence on their way to, or at school. Teachers and other school staff are often involved. Due to these type of violence girls students do not feel secure at school. So they feel less interested to attend the educational institute.
- **Gender stereotypes and gender attitudes:** Traditional perceptions of gender roles often mean that educating girls is not regarded as being equally relevant and vulnerable as educating boys. Society does not equally emphasize the gender stereotypes and gender attitudes.
- **Lack of female teachers:** There is a lack of female teachers in the educational institutes. Some parents do not want to send their daughters to school, or remove them from school when they reach puberty due to lack of female teachers in schools.
- **Lack of sanitary facilities:** In pubertal age, girls need extra care about their health and sanitary also. Many educational institutes are unable to provide good sanitary system. Due to lack of sanitary facilities many girl students leave the school when they reach the puberty stage.

### 1.2. Government Schemes for Girls' Education

Both Central and State government have taken conscious efforts to promote education for the girl child. All girl children are entitled to free education up to class VIII under the Right to Education Act, 2009. To address the declining sex ratio and raise awareness regarding the importance of girl education, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao. Several State Governments provide free education for the girl child, free text books, educational loan. Sukanya Samridhi Yojana and many others policies to help girl child obtain a formal education. Mamata Banerjee, chief minister of West Bengal launched 'Kanyashree Prakalpo' as financial support to the girl child for the education and protects the early marriage.

### 1.3. Benefits of Girls Education

- **Girls' Education Promotes Sustainable Development:** When girls gain access to education they acquire important knowledge that gives them greater potential for employment and income earning as adults. Even with limited schooling, the impact of education can be observed. As a result, girls can also play a more active role in the political and social debate and in the development of their own society.
- **Improved Health:** There is a clear association between education and improved health. Girls' education has a positive effect on the level of health in society. Being able to read and acquire knowledge will enable mothers to better look after their own and their children's health. This has a positive impact on maternal and child health.
- **Gender equality:** Equal educational opportunities for girls and boys are a fundamental human right and the basis of equal opportunities later in life. Equality in education is about more than equal access. It is then vital to include knowledge and understanding of gender equality and gender sensitivity in the development of the curricula and to include knowledge of human rights and sexual reproductive health rights (Kumar & Sangeeta, 2013).

- **Educated future generations:** educating a girl child results in educating the entire nation. The first teacher of a child is the mother. Education of a girl child results in empowering them which makes the community stronger and more developed.
- **The decrease in Child Marriage and Female Foeticide:** when an educated girl child understands her worth she will not give in for an early marriage, aborting a female foetus, demand for dowry, sexual and domestic abuse.
- **Participation in Political Process:** Women are not just great home workers, they are great leaders. Education allows girls to step out of their houses and participate in the decision-making process, discussions, and political assemblies for an adequate representative government.

#### **1.4. Pointers for Reform in Girls Education**

- School going should be made convenient and acceptable for girls. This can be done in a number ways like exempting girls from paying fees, periods of free education for girls may be made longer than boys, staffing of primary school with fairly elder and mature women teachers can also increase the holding power of schools.
- A nursery or pre-primary school should be attached to every girls school where the pupils are allowed to bring their younger brothers and sisters during school hours etc. As many girls are not sent to school, not because of the social stigma, but because they are required at home to look after young brothers and sisters and shoulder the household work.
- Special incentives like additional allowances commensurate with hardship of rural areas should be given to the lady teachers.
- Accommodation for lady teachers should be provided near the schools.
- A social climate needs to be created among the village community to enroll all girls of school going age.
- Family education should be made an integral part of girls education.
- Contents of girls education should be emphasis the needs of womanhood.

- Central and State Governments should join hands and seek the cooperation of all voluntary organizations to spread education for girls every nook and corner of the country.
- Post elementary education should enable a woman to become a better wife, a better mother and a useful citizen. This education should increase the earning capacity of woman. Therefore, it must definitely be job oriented. Volunteers, NGO, Women Welfare Associations and Government agencies can help in running short term, useful and job oriented courses, Accountancy, Child Care, Nutrition, Dietician, Para Medical Courses ,Interior Decoration, Cuisine, Repairing fuses, Electronic Goods etc are some of the jobs which prove helpful in the home and also enable some to get employment.
- There are more than six thousands National and State Welfare associations in India. Government should urge them to take up at least one common item of work.
- Voluntary agencies can further play an important role in creating the right kind of public opinion in favor of women education.

Girls' education in India plays a very important role in the overall development of the country. It not only helps in (the development of half of the human resources, but in improving the quality of life at home and outside. Educated women not only tend to promote education of their girl children, but also can provide better guidance to all their children. Moreover educated women can also help in the reduction of infant mortality rate and growth of the population.

#### **1.4.1. Problems Associated with Girls Education in India**

The concept and phenomenon of education based on school-going is of modern origin in India. Education in the past was restricted to upper castes. However, today, to lead a comfortable life in this fast-changing world, education is seen as the most influential agent of modernization (Bagehi, 2005). The educational attainments in terms of enrolment and retention in rural India generally correspond to the hierarchical order. While the upper castes have traditionally enjoyed and are enjoying these advantages, the Scheduled Caste and other backward castes children have lagged behind in

primary schooling. Studies have revealed that children of backward castes are withdrawn from school at an early age, by about 8 or 9 years. An important reason for withdrawal of children from school is the cost and work needs of poor households. Income and caste are typically correlated with lower castes having lower incomes and higher castes having better endowments in terms of land, income and other resources. Thus, one fact is certain that there is a clear divide in the villages, along caste lines, regarding access to schools.

The very poor children are enrolled in the municipal school because it provides a number of incentives such as lower expenditure on books, uniforms, fees, etc. The well-off children go to the private school, where English and computers are given more importance. The tendency in favour of private schools in rural areas is influenced by people's perception of private schools, as a means of imparting quality education in English medium. Moreover, education and the subsequent attainment of town jobs is often looked upon by many of these rural families, especially families belonging to lower castes, as a means to break out of their position in caste hierarchy (Agarwal & Agarwal, 1994).

- **Defects of Present System:** According to Amartya Sen, 'Primary education in India suffers not only from inadequate allocation of resource, but often enough also from terrible management and organization. To him, management and organization of schools is still in a terrible State in India. That means, there are three major defects in the present educational system. The first is the physical environment in which the student is taught, the second is the curriculum or the content, which he/she is taught, and the third is the teaching method or the teacher, who is teaching.

- **Physical Environment:** Today's society clings to schools to such an extent that a co-dependent relationship is created between the broader and friendly notion of education and the manipulative reality of school. Education should not be limited to the sphere of the school. It should have to encompass nearly every aspect of life. Schools are not considered as places, where the students are taught many life skills that will help them succeed in their future endeavors.

- **Defects in Curriculum:** The educational system presents a contrasting experience to these children. These outdated school systems do not allow for a child's mind and personality to develop. Moreover, the knowledge imparted is not continuous and are disjointed fragments of information that are arranged in the form of different pieces in the syllabus (NCERT, 2007). The education systems in this region are highly monopolistic and rigid, and are controlled by bureaucratic departments that are resistant to change (Bandyopadhyay, 2012).
- **Most Important Resource - The Teacher:** The protagonist of the educational system and the most important resource for quality education, the teacher, in reality has the feeblest voice in the matters of concern. The rural primary school teacher occupies the lowest position in the hierarchy. Apart from teaching, he/she is expected to bear the burden of many other assignments such as collecting census, propagating family planning programmes, conducting poverty surveys, etc. The teacher in a village acts as the sole multi-purpose village functionary, and is expected to perform whatever function the government finds necessary at any time. This problem becomes most acute in the case of village schools, having a single or at most two teachers. For days together, the school may remain closed because the teacher has been summoned on 'duty', further discouraging children, who in the absence of support at home need much more attention and extra time (Sudha, 1997).

Another major problem that has come up in recent days is that, due to the ceiling on recruitments, there is insufficient number of teachers in many of these schools. A considerable proportion of available teachers do not have the requisite qualifications. Women teachers constitute only 31 percent of the total number of teachers in rural areas, which is supposed to be one of the causes for low literacy rate (Mishra & Yadav, 2013). Lack of motivation on the part of teachers, who generally are academically low-qualified and have chosen this profession as a last resort, is a serious problem. Added to this, the teachers are burdened with unmanageable classes, irrelevant curricula, dismal working conditions, and lack of recognition of their efforts. Moreover, these teachers are lowly paid. The result is that the teachers tend to give up.



#### 1.4.2. The importance of school education in child development

A school must stimulate curiosity in the young, impressionable minds and equip them with tools to be better human beings. It is widely accepted that the learning process is instrumental in shaping one's personality and the way he/she deals with situations of life. The shift of thoughts from bookish knowledge to knowledge of life, in schools, has brought forth a sea of change. People have warmed up to the idea of education being the key to a well-rounded development instead of just a mean to acquire degrees and monetary success in life. Education must facilitate the cultivation of a healthy thought process and groom our cognitive abilities (Mondal, 2015). In the present competitive world, education is a basic necessity for human beings after food, clothes and shelter. School education must focus on the following aspects, which contribute immensely to the development of the young minds as they step into adulthood.

- **Mental aspect:** School is the foremost fountain of knowledge children are exposed to. It gives a chance for them to acquire knowledge on various fields of education such as people, literature, history, mathematics, politics, and other numerous subjects. This contributes to cultivation in the thought process. When one is exposed to the influences coming from various cultural sources, his/her on world and existence becomes vast.
- **Social aspect:** School is the first avenue of socialising for a child. Up till then, parents and immediate family members are the only people the child has human interactions with. And familiarity is a breeding ground of stagnancy. With schools, children are exposed not only to new ideas but also to same aged compatriots. This instills sociable practices such as empathy, friendship, participation, assistance which turn out to be important in their adulthood.
- **Physical aspect:** A child, after conception, goes through various physical developments. While home provides a restricted outlet, in school, a child can channelize his energy into more sociable avenues. Studies have pointed out that while in familiar environment, the child is equipped to deal with sudden bursts of energy, the learns to be at his/her best behaviour only when exposed to same-aged individuals. Plus, familiarity leads to taking advantage of situations, while in school, the playing field is levelled. Also, the presence of

activities such as sports, craft helps children direct their boundless energy into something productive.

• **Overall development:** In the current educational scenario, a child learns to go beyond the traditional way of rote learning. They are taught to develop a mind of their own and through the flexible curriculum, curiosity is promoted. The child is free from the shackles of mental blocks and lets his/her imagination run its courses. Importance of imagination is stressed upon extensively. At school, children are exposed to various sources from which they can imbibe immense knowledge, instrumental for their development (Chakraborty, 2010). Hence school is necessary for children to inculcate the workings of life. Education forms the foundation of any society. It is responsible for the economic, social, and political growth and development of society in general. So, schools play an important role in moulding a nation's future by facilitating all round development of its future citizens (Selvan, 2016).

### **1.5. Conclusion**

Education plays an important role to live with harmony whether it is boy or a girl child. Education helps an individual to be smarter, to learn new things and to know about the facts around the world. Especially girls' education in India is the need of the hour. In terms of inhabitants, India is the second largest nation in the world but the rate of girls education in India is extremely low. Overall development of a country depends on the status of girls' education. So, girl child must be educated for the overall development of the country because they play an essential role in the all around process of the country. Generally in rural part of this country, some people rarely want to send their daughters to school, they think that education is not important for girls as they grow up and eventually get married and settle down after a certain period. People think that girls should be stay at home to help their family and nothing else. This mentality is completely wrong and since girl education can bring around a massive revolution in the society.

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