

Gender Disparity, Education, and Sustainable Development Goals: An Analysis of Initiatives to Enhance Education for Girls in India

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Abstract

Many efforts are being made to establish gender equality in the world. The United Nations has also given importance to women and women's education in its Sustainable Development Goals, which are to be achieved by 2030. Many other organizations at international and national levels are working in this direction. Despite all these efforts, women's education has still not reached a stage where women can become economically independent. This paper analyzes the real situation of women in the society through different reports. The Indian government has also made many efforts to educate women and girls and has launched many schemes. This paper also analyzes some of these schemes. If women empowerment is to be achieved then it should start with school education.

Keywords- Sustainable Development Goals, Girls Education, Gender Inequality, Gender Gap

1. Introduction

Gender equality is a significant part of human rights in the world because of male dominating society. It is a substantial part of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) that is to be achieved till 2030. According to Goal number 17 of SDGs that is "Partnership for Goals", preserving social values and equal rights of women are the responsibility of each country. As Millennium Development Goals were established in the year 2000, from that time real progress has been made through collective and collaborative efforts in the direction of women empowerment. Sexual inequality exists highly in the world, and millions of females continuously face this in everyday life. UN report titled "*Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The gender snapshot 2022*" gives some data on gender which is given ahead. According to report - It could take an additional 286 years to repeal discriminatory legislation and address existing disparities in women's and girls' legal safeguards if current conditions continue. Long-running wars, conflicts, and new initiatives to prevent girls from attending school- all contribute to the persistence of gender disparities in educational opportunities. Around the world, 54% of girls not enrolled in formal education reside in nations experiencing crises. Only two out of ten positions in science, engineering, and information and communication technology are held by women worldwide.

2. Objectives

- a) To understand the actual situation of female participation in socio-political processes even after consistent efforts.
- b) To analyse the schemes run by Indian government for girls education.

3. Significance of the Study

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals very significantly focus on gender equality but even after consistent efforts by the international organisations and various governments the dream is lagging behind, there is very slow progress to achieve the goal. It is important to know where the drawback is at the global level. This is what makes research significant. Secondly, Indian Government has initiated good programs for girl's education that needs to be analysed.

4. Research Methods

This research is descriptive and analytical therefore quantitative data has not been used. Resource materials from different books, government websites, international reports, research articles, online papers, and national and international organisations have been used based on the need.

5. Gender Discrimination and Society

Gender discrimination in every part of the world limits female rights and ties them, thus they fail to be self dependant. They face discrimination through social policies and laws that prohibit them from obtaining rights equal to their counterpart. Gender-based atrocities sometimes become the reason for declining social and economic conditions which decreases further. Achieving equal human rights requires a thorough grasp of the power dynamics and social references that influence politics, the economy, social conventions, and domestic life. In order to get rid of outdated notions of what a woman should accomplish, it is also crucial to remove some damaging customs. In addition to human rights, gender equality is a key component of a sustainable, peaceful, and successful society. UN data (*Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The gender snapshot, 2022*) says - Without women, there would be no strong institutions to maintain societies that are just and peaceful. Nonetheless, women only comprise 16% of police forces worldwide and 42% of judicial posts. Just 26.4% of parliamentary seats worldwide were occupied by women as of July 2022. The representation was less than 10% in twenty-three nations. Parity won't be reached until 2062 if current trends continue. More over one-third (34.3%) of the seats in municipal decision-making bodies are occupied by women. This rate of their social participation is very less that may be increased by education only. Education is an essential contributor to economic growth. It is essential to everyone from women to child. Countries that has better facility of school education and higher education leads to better human health, better income, better human capital, and empowerment. Therefore it should be give immense importance in policy formulations.

Gender disparity has long been a problem in India's educational system as well, as seen by the country's enrolment and participation rates, among other indicators. Only 63% of women are literate overall, which is much lower than the 80% literacy rate for men, according to the 2011 census. With a national literacy rate of only 74%, India falls short of the worldwide average of 83%. Though this rate is better than 1990s but that should be better than that. Gender gap in literacy has decreased. According to data from MoSPI's National Sample Surveys, the gender gap in literacy rates decreased from 18.2 in 2007–08 to 14.4 in 2017–18. The gap reduces work participation ratio of females. Rural girls are more vulnerable related to education in comparison to urban girls. It is evident that the gender difference is 9.4 percentage points in urban areas and 16.5 percentage points in rural areas. Sons are given priorities in families and they enjoy more freedom. This tendency is present in Indian families, and even in mother who is a female prefers the same.

The son is given preference in a variety of areas, including schooling, work participation and societal dealings. Discrimination against daughters is a result of lack of education to other females in family and male dominance. There should be greater opportunities for women to attend education. Though most of the state governments have prioritised girl's education and they have started giving sufficient funding for that. Better programs and financial aids has helped them to raise their educational standards. "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao" has become a remarkable slogan of the decade. Many

academicians write that the primary factor for females to drop out of school is the family's lack of education, knowledge, and financial resources. Many parents do not want their girls to go to school, particularly common in rural areas because they fear of many social customs that may impact girl's marriage. Financial self dependence of females is a big goal to be achieved, that can only change already established mindset. But that needs more struggle for education.

When a woman receives the right education, her life significantly improves; she contributes to her family and community and has more opportunities as a result. It increases the household's financial independence. She even instructs her generations on the need of understanding women's lives in order to elevate their position and attributes.

6. School Structure in India

India's school system is the world's largest school system which is divided into several stages according to National Education Policy 2020. They are Foundational, Preparatory, Middle and Secondary. It is a 5 +3+3+4 model.

Foundational Stage- It is again divided into 3+2 structure. 3 include Anganwadi/Balwatika/Pre School children's between the age of 3 to 6. It is basically preparatory stage for starting class one and two. 6 to 8 years is the age for class 1 and 2 and duration is 2 years. Total years of Foundational Stage reach 5.

Preparatory Stage- Duration is three years dedicated to class 3 to 5 and age is between eight to eleven years.

Middle Stage- Duration is again three years dedicated to class 6 to 8 and age given in the document is between eleven to fourteen years.

Secondary Stage – It is last stage of schooling that is for class ninth to class twelfth. The student's age should be between 14 to 18 years and the duration for these classes is of total four years.

7. Schemes for Girls Education

Gender Gap in school education is a big problem. Even after consistent efforts it has not been resolved. All children male or female have the right to basic education according to the Right to Free and Compulsory Education. With this children's between six to fourteen years of age are guaranteed free and necessary education under the Article 21-A of the Indian Constitution. So, to put this constitutional right into effect, the Right to Education Act (RTE) of 2009 was passed. Every kid has the right to receive an elementary -education in a formal school full-time. Elementary schools must meet the minimal requirements outlined in the RTE Act. Surveys are required by the RTE Act in order to determine which children require education and to establish facilities for them. The RTE Act forbids mental harassment, physical punishment, and admissions screening. Additionally, the RTE Act forbids teachers from working on non-educational projects including disaster assistance, elections, and censuses.

In 2000–2001, a set of interventions known as Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA) was put into place with the goals of eradicating existing social and gender disparities in education, completing national projects, and raising educational standards. Achieving Universalisation of the Elementary Education (EE) in the nation is SSA's main goal. Its prime objectives are to improve children's learning levels, bridging the gender and social category gaps in education, and ensuring universal access and retention. These goals are accomplished by targeted interventions that are in line with the legally required norms, standards, and free entitlements stipulated in the RTE Act of 2009 and the Model Rules that are periodically released. Opening of new schools was a main focus of the initiative.

A program called Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) was established in 2004 to provide upper primary education and housing for girls from underprivileged castes and minorities. This initiative was put into place in areas of the nation where rural female literacy is lower and the gender gap in literacy is greater than the national average. The majority of these educational spaces are designated for females from underprivileged backgrounds. Girls from minority groups and the remaining households below the poverty level are given priority seating. Girls in KGBV schools are entitled to free textbooks and uniforms, medical care, residential education, support, and guidance, among other things.

Definitely KGBV was a good step to establish equality in gender education. Set up of schools is not exactly but similar in approach to Navodaya Vidyalayas. Though all these are better steps but family environment is most significant. Elizabeth King and Anne M. Hill (1993) have advocated higher education for women. Field research should be established concerning women's education. Mothers must avoid toxic environments and raise healthy children. This is frequently brought about by improved knowledge of health services, a balanced diet, and personal hygiene. An educated mother can fight for their daughter's right to education. In rural spaces girls are more susceptible to be dropped after secondary schooling.

The goal of state policy is to guarantee free and compulsory education for all, which is happening though at slower rate than expected. Education in India has long been characterized by inequality. Furthermore, this gender gap has also been examined by many scholars and reports. Alia Khalid (2023) asserts that- Strong correlations have been shown between mothers' and women's education and its effects on future generations as well as the possibility that their children would attend school. Parents who make decisions about their daughters' attendance at school do not fully understand the advantages of education for both the girls and their nation. According to a 2010 study by Kajisa and Palanichamy on farming families in Tamil Nadu, India, adults' educational attainment toward the end of the 1990s had a beneficial impact on children's schooling at home; however, this relationship has since weakened. Nonetheless, a study conducted across three Asian nations revealed that daughters are more impacted by their mothers' education than by their fathers' (Hill and King, 1993). Many times parents are left in a very challenging position when choosing which school to take their children to because education expenses such as textbooks, uniforms, and school fees are widespread in order to provide public schooling. Choosing a good school is very necessary. A good school gives better environment to study.

Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana (SSY) is a significant savings plan where parents of the girl child may save money for their daughter's future (marriage and education). Accounts can be opened at authorized commercial banks or India Post offices. After 21 years from account opening date, it matures. Up to 50% of the remaining funds may be taken out for marriage or further study after the girl kid turns 18. BBBP stands for "Beti Bachao-Beti Padhao" which is a flagship program that uses community involvement and public awareness to improve child sex ratio. The program was effectively launched by the Prime Minister of India in January 2015 in Panipat of Haryana. This scheme helps to prevent reducing child sex ratio across the life span and this also focuses many issues associated to women empowerment. This scheme is being put into action by 3 important ministries namely Ministry of Health Family Welfare, Ministry of Women and Child Development and Ministry of Human Resources.

Through the CBSE Udaan Scheme, deserving girls from homes with just one girl child can get financial aid for their further education. National Portal of India by Indian Government writes- Under the direction of the Ministry of Human Resources, the Central- Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) commenced the project "Udaan". The target of the project is to address the teaching gap between engineering entrance exams and school education as well as to increase the low enrolment of female students in prestigious engineering institutions. The three facets of education—curriculum design,

transactions, and assessments—are being addressed in an attempt to improve science and math instruction at the school level.

Girls who successfully pass Class 8 might receive a one-time monetary incentive under the National-Scheme of Incentive to Girls for Secondary Education (NSIGSE). In May of 2008, the NSIGSE was introduced. Target of the scheme was to inspire females in the 14–18 age range to enrol in secondary school, particularly those who have finalised Class eighth, and to support their secondary education; the Centrally Sponsored Scheme was established. Many such schemes are running at centre and state level in India to encourage girl's education. One of such schemes was initiated by the then-Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu in the year 1992 called the Chief Minister's Girl Child Protection Scheme. That is a groundbreaking and innovative program for the welfare of girls. By strengthening and defending the rights of girls via direct government funding, the Girl Child Protection Scheme seeks to abolish gender biases and discriminations. The program's objectives are many such as: a) Encourage girls to enter and stay in school and to guarantee that they receive an education at least as high as an intermediate level. b) Girls should be encouraged to wait until they are eighteen to get married. c) Encourage parents with two girls to follow the family planning convention. d) Safeguard the rights of girls and give them financial and social control. e) Enhance the family's contribution to raising the status of girls.

8. Conclusion

There are many schemes running simultaneously for the girl's education. Gender Equality in school education and higher education is a big issue. Females and girls combine make almost half of the population of the world and if they don't get proper opportunities for study and work than that is a loss. Now a day's, government has understood that they are half of the total workforce that's why government is spending sufficient for girl's education. Schemes are reaching to masses but problems at implementation level must also be taken care of. Sustainable Development Goals has specially focussed female participation in different areas of life. The documents and reports published by UN has specifically analysed women's role in social, economic and political aspects in the world. These reports show actual picture, based on that plans and schemes are made, and implemented. The gap in male-female education in India that has reduced is the result of many schemes made on the basis of various reports. The SDGs have certainly given better direction to these efforts at various levels.

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