



Women Education in Rural India



Paras Jain ^a; Rishu Agarwal ^b; Roshni Billaiya ^c; Jamuna Devi ^d

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Correspondence Author ^a

Abstract



In India, the status of the girl child has been a subject of much discussion, controversy, and debate. From the start, girl children are seen as burdens rather than blessings, bearers of exorbitant dowries, who will eventually move into the homes of their husbands. There are some overwhelming cultural and economic reasons why female children are not receiving the same medical, emotional, and educational attention as their male counterparts. The result is low literacy rate among women in rural areas. There has been increasing proportion of women, who are literate in just 20 years. Despite the improvements, there continues to be a large gap between the educational levels of men and women in rural India. The present study is focused on status, causes, and recommendations for rural women education.

Keywords

Controversy;
Debate;
Female autonomy;
Social impact;
Woman education;

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Contents

Abstract	21
Introduction	22
Research Method	23
Results and Analysis	23
Recommendations	25
Conclusion	55
Acknowledgements	25

^a Director, Silicobyte Katni Degree College, Katni, Email address: parasjainkatni@gmail.com

^b Principal, Silicobyte Katni Degree College, Katni

^c Registrar, Silicobyte Katni Degree College, Katni

^d Asst Prof. Silicobyte Katni Degree College, Katni

Introduction

In 2015, 3.7 million eligible girls are out of school. In rural areas, girls receive an average of fewer than four years of education. Numerous studies show that rural women have high levels of fertility and mortality, poor nutritional status, low earning potential, and little autonomy within the household. A woman's lack of education also has a negative impact on the health and well-being of her children. This low level not only has a negative impact on women's lives but also on their families and country's economic development. It has been found out that infant mortality is inversely related to mother's educational level. Therefore, there is a need for a minimum threshold of education that must be achieved before bringing about significant improvements in female autonomy. Of the literate women in India, 59 percent only have primary education or less. This level of education may not be sufficient to meaningfully improve the status of these women.

The major educational problem faced by girls from rural areas is that although they may be enrolled at the beginning of the year, they do not always remain in school. It is estimated that 45 percent of girl's drop out of school between grades 1 and 5. Girls are often taken out of school to share the family responsibilities such as caring for younger siblings, etc. Girls are also likely to be taken out of school when they reach puberty because of the high premium placed on virginity. India has the highest rates of child brides in the world. The data on school attendance shows the proportion of girls attending school decreases with age.

Generally, families choose to educate a son rather than daughters because of financial restrictions. Negative parental attitude towards educating daughters is also a barrier to a girl's education. Many parents view educating sons as an investment because the sons will be responsible for caring for aging parents. On the other hand, parents see the education of daughters a waste of money as daughters after marriage lives with their husband's families, and the parents do not get benefit directly from their education. In addition, daughters with higher levels of education likely have higher dowry expenses, as they want a comparably educated husband.

Lack of female teachers is another barrier to girl's education. Girls are more likely to attend school and have higher academic achievement if they have female teachers. Currently, women account for only 29 percent of teachers at the primary level. The proportion of teachers, who are female, is even lower at the university level, i.e., 22 percent. These proportions reflect the historic paucity of women with the educational qualifications to be teachers.

A study of Indian textbooks found that men were the main characters in the majority of lessons. In these lessons, men held high-prestige occupations and were portrayed as strong, adventurous and intelligent. In contrast, women were depicted as weak and helpless, often as the victims of abuse and beatings. These depictions are strong barriers to improving women's position in society.

Rural children lack the advantages of modern amenities and facilities, such as transportation, electricity, media, hygiene, health care, and access to education. Rural girl children spend their time cooking, cleaning, fetching wood and water, caring for children, and working in the fields sowing, transplanting, and weeding. Girl children contribute over 20% of total work at home. The only advantage a girl child has in rural areas is visibility. The greatest disadvantage is that her mother, who faced neglect herself, discriminates against her. Increasingly girl children contribute income to their household from Beedi making, gem polishing, embroidering, or paper bag making. Communities need to create a demand for rural girl children's education.

The policy framework, provision of educational opportunities for women and girls has been an important part of the national endeavor in the field of education since Independence. In 1994, India passed a universal female education bill that offers parents incentives for access and punishment for keeping a girl out of school. Though these endeavors did yield significant results, gender disparities persist, more so in rural areas and among disadvantaged communities. Now many govt. and non-govt. organizations are working in this field. The lives of many girls are

being transformed by these organizations. However, there are countless others still waiting for work. They allocate specific schools, adopt keenly observe the progress of the children and their achievements. Govt. is expanding activities and setting up schools in additional villages. The Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan stresses on improving access to secondary schooling to all girls according to norms through proximate location (Secondary Schools within 5 kms, and Higher Secondary Schools within 7-10 kms), efficient and safe transport arrangements, residential facilities, depending on local circumstances including open schooling and ensures that no child is deprived of secondary education of satisfactory quality due to gender, socio-economic, disability, and other barriers.

Research Method

The present study is based on survey. Data is collected from schools, govt. offices, websites, newspapers, and magazines. Collected Data is tabulated and analyzed. 3 tables are prepared out of which table-1 contains data regarding the status of literate rural girl education status. Data related to causes of discontinuation of study and beneficiaries of govt. assistance is depicted in table-2 and table-3 respectively.

Results and Analysis

Table-1: Status of Literate Rural Women Education

S.N.	Educational Level	Percentage of women (%)
1	Less than primary Level	28
2	Primary Level	31
3	Middle Level	21
4	High School Level	11
5	Higher Secondary Level	9

Table-2: Causes of Discontinuation of Education of Rural Women

S.N.	Cause	Percentage of women (%)
1	Reluctance for Education	28
2	Preference to son	37
3	Negative Parental attitude	33
4	Family Responsibility	43
5	Early Marriage	39
6	Lack of Female Teachers	21
7	Financial Problems	62
8	Conveyance Problem	36

Table-3: Rural Girl Beneficiaries Getting Govt. Assistance

S.N.	Govt. Assistance	Percentage of women (%)
1	Bicycle	31
2	Mid Day Meal	64
3	Scholarship	61
4	Uniform	59
5	Books & Stationary Material	59

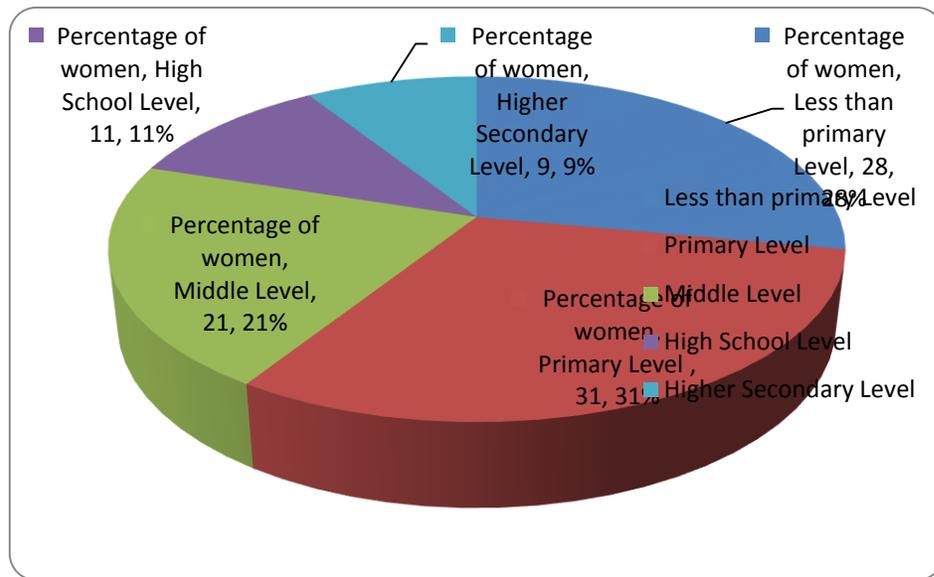


Chart-1: Status of Literate Rural Women Education

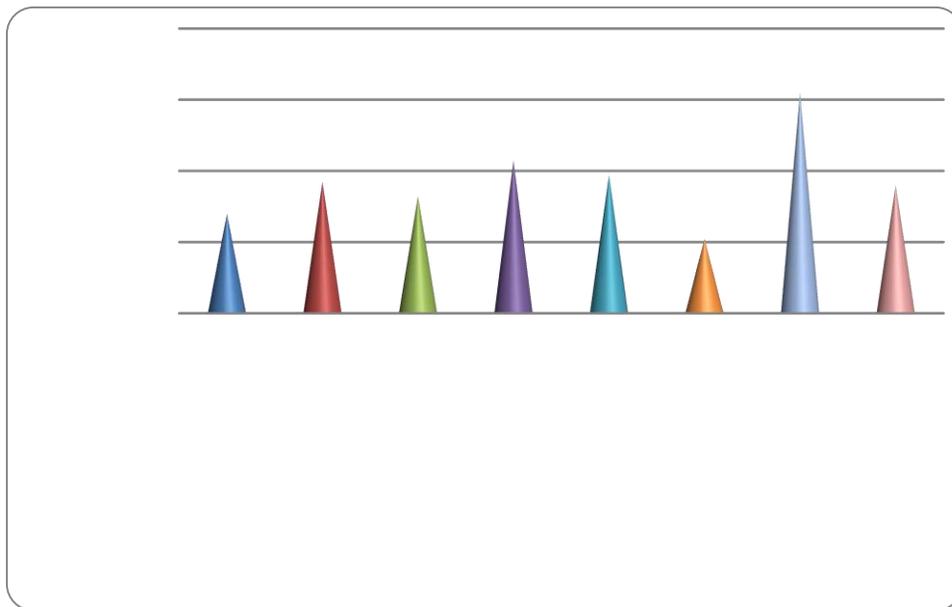


Chart-2: Causes of Discontinuation of Education of Rural Women

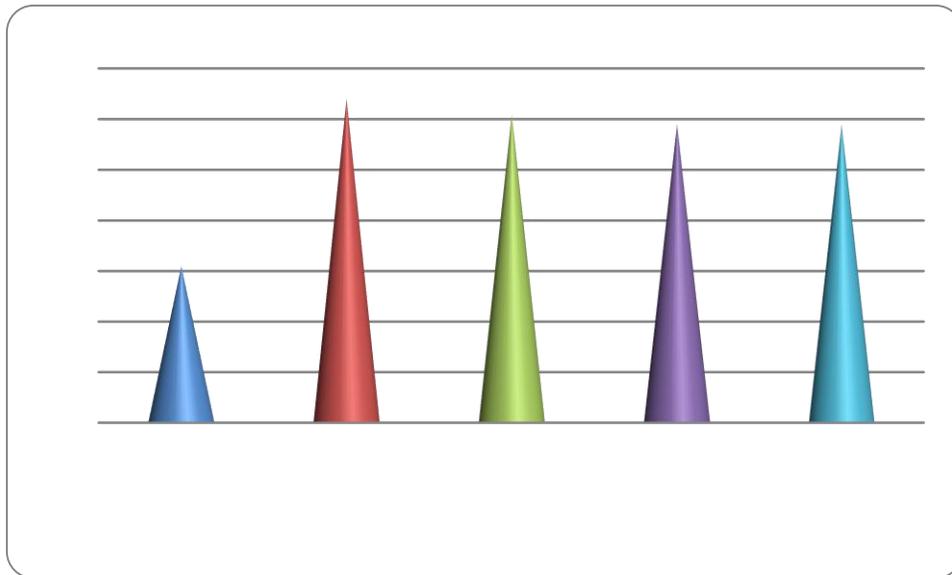


Chart-3: Rural Girl Beneficiaries Getting Govt. Assistance

Recommendations

Our society needs to change view regarding girl's education. We should establish that education is necessary as food, cloth, and house. Educated girl's parents should be honored by society. In the new system of society, girls should take care of their parents after marriage also. Like age, there should be a rule regarding minimum education for marriage. Govt. is promoting girl's education in rural areas. Scholarship, mid-day meal, bicycle for conveyance, uniform, book, and stationery material is providing to facilitate education. New schools are opened with good infrastructure in distant areas. Rural girls should be preferred in govt. jobs. Transportation development is also necessary to apart distance between villages and city. Communication should be stronger. Mobile phone, the internet has proved very effective tools in this connection. To make girls more powerful, skill development should be focused.

Conclusion

In rural India, an exclusive emphasis on girl's education is necessary. Education for adolescent girls is constraint due to many factors; the most prominent of them is non-availability of the appropriate infrastructure of schools. Secondly, the travel time taken in reaching school, fear of crime and unknown eventuality would raise therefore provision of public transport exclusively for the girl child is necessary. A legal provision would help rescue girls from the early marriages and open doors of development for them. Awareness program is needed which would focus on the dynamics of nutrition in physical and mental growth. However, it is to be reiterated that girls need a lot of compassionate treatment and favor to enable them to lead a respectable and meaningful life, and in ensuring this, the role of family members and society is undoubtedly crucial and of prime significance.

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