



The Unfinished Agenda: Addressing Hurdles in Women's Education

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ABSTRACT

Women's Education is a fundamental human right and a significant instrument for creating an equitable society. Women's education is crucial for the development and progress of any society. Educated women have the potential to become strong leaders, role models, and agents of change in the communities. They are more likely to participate in the workforce, earn higher wages, and provide for themselves and their families. This article, "The Unfinished Agenda: Addressing Hurdles in Women's Education" aims to explore several problems faced by women while pursuing education such as Social, Cultural Barriers, and Economic Barriers. Addressing these challenges requires some policy and awareness to tackle these issues.

Keywords:

Women Education, Issues, Obstacles, Gender Disparity.

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INTRODUCTION

Education leads to success and happiness of a person. It is the key for the development of national advancement. As education is an essential process of human empowerment, women's education helps in overall development of a country. Hence after independence, the Government of India adopted the Constitution and conferred various fundamental rights to all Indians irrespective of race, caste, religion, and gender. As the importance of women's education is growing day by day. It is not only important to educate girls and women, but also it is necessary to provide them with basic facilities. In many countries, especially in developing countries, the literacy rate of women is low as compared to men. The main reason behind the illiteracy rate among women is the lack of proper resources.

In India, most of the women face problems regarding education because they are not allowed to go to school. Most of the society thinks that men must educate their children, especially boys, because they think that women's role is only to take care of the house and family. This is because of the social customs and traditions which are still prevailing in our society. In this paper, an attempt has been made to examine & analyze the Socio-Cultural Barriers, Economic Barriers, Safety & Security Concerns and Health related Issues of Women.

NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN EDUCATION

The need and importance of women's education cannot be brushed off, as it plays a decisive role in shaping the country's socio-economic landscape. For advocating gender equality, Women Education enables individuals to challenge societal expectations, pursue diverse career paths, and participate in decision making process. Education is closely linked to better health outcomes for women. Educated women have higher awareness of reproductive health, family planning and disease prevention. They were



more likely to seek healthcare services and make informed decisions about their own well-being and of their families.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To highlight the specific problems faced by girls in accessing education.
2. To raise awareness about the importance of Women Education.
3. To suggest some measures to improve their status in different aspects of their life.

BARRIERS OF WOMEN EDUCATION

1) Socio-Cultural Barriers:

1.1 Gender Biased and Stereotypes: Socio-cultural barriers deeply impact women's education as society creates gender biasness. Prioritizing household task over education and limits girls/women education. Most of the Society thinks that men must educate their children especially boys, because they think that women's role is only to take care of the house and society/family. This also lead girl towards early marriage and forcing women to discontinue their studies.

1.2 Early Marriage: Early marriage is a vital reason of many patriarchal societies. As they think women were only born to do domestic chores and take care of their children and family. These societies prioritize boys' education over girls. Early marriage and early pregnancies also lead towards health related problems and often it lead to death.

1.3 Limited Resources or Mobility: Limited resources significantly hinders women's education by creating barriers to access and infrastructure, affordability, limited access to higher education, these barriers leads to. It also includes insufficient funding for education particularly for girls from low-income background. Restricted mobility due to societal norms and safety concerns, long distances to schools increasing the risk of harassment and parental restrictions.



2) Economic Challenges:

2.1 Poverty: Economic barriers directly impact women's education, particularly in low income family. Limited financial resources for education forces family to prioritize boys' education over girls'. Hardship of economic often lead towards child labour & early marriage which limits girls' educational opportunities.

2.2 Cost of Education: The constitution of India (Article 21A) provides free and compulsory primary education for the age group 6 to 14 years. But after 14 years the additional cost lead to discontinuation of education for many girls. Cost of Education such as uniforms, books and transportation can be prohibitive for low-income families. These hidden costs can deter families from sending their daughters to school regularly.

2.3 Limited Access to Economic Opportunities: Limited job opportunities in rural areas can discourage investment in girls' education. Low-paying jobs for women reduced the perceived value of education. Certain jobs may be seen as more suitable for men who limits girls' career choices and aspirations.

3) Safety & Security Base Concerns:

3.1 Restriction on Mobility: Some cultures impose strict restrictions on women's mobility & independence, they may face physical and verbal violence, harassment, and abuse on the way to school. It makes difficult for them to travel to educational institutions. These restrictions can limit their access to education. Also unwillingness of many parents to send their daughters to mixed schools.

3.2 Inadequate Infrastructure: Inadequate Infrastructure in schools can significantly impact women's education. Insufficient or unhygienic toilet facilities, unsafe water, poor lighting & broken unsafe building can create an uncomfortable and intimidating learning environment. Lack of proper sanitation facilities, inadequate access to clean water makes it difficult for girls to maintain personal hygiene. These are the reason leading to absenteeism or dropout of girls.



3.3 Not Enough Female Teachers and Role Models: The scarcity of female teachers or role model lead towards dropout rate of female students. In many cultures & rural areas as families prefer to send their daughters to schools where female teachers are highly appointed due to safety and security issues. The absence of female teachers can create discomfort and distrust leading families to keep their daughters out of school. The female teachers serve as crucial role models, providing examples of educated and empowered women to these societies.

3.4 Physical Safety: Physical safety barriers are towards increasing drop-out rate of girls from school at early stage. Issues such as violence and harassment on gender basis, sexual assault which can have severe physical and emotional consequences. Unsafe transportation can also be included because many girls have to travel long distance to school, particularly in areas with inadequate transportation where they may face safety risk. Lack of suitable school building and equipment which tend to create poor school environment.

4) Health Related Issues:

4.1 Physical Health Issues: Physical health issues can be said as a major problem in women's education. As women faces physical problem such as menstruation, unwanted pregnancies during teenage, chronic diseases along with nutritional deficiencies.

4.2 Menstrual Hygiene: Lack of proper knowledge about menstrual hygiene causes death of women's. As in rural areas they could not aware about menstrual hygiene, this should be taken during menstruation. They were unaware about sanitary products and used cloths which were used repeatedly during menstruation. In many rural areas women didn't go to hospital and daughters faces health related issues during their menstruation which can lead to cervical /uterine/ ovarian cancer.

4.3 Unaware Pregnancy: Unaware pregnancy during teenage or teenage pregnancy negatively impacts education by reducing a young mother's ability to attend and



concentrate study due to health related issues. As parenting a child which increase the risk of maternal health complications. Teen mothers face higher risk of pregnancy complications like anemia, nutritional deficiency, (STDs) Sexually Transmitted diseases. This directly affect to their infant as it increased risk of low birth weight, preterm birth and neonatal mortality.

4.4 Chronic Diseases: The lack of knowledge about chronic condition presentation in women has contributed to significant morbidity and mortality. Lack of health literacy can lead to inadequate lifestyle choices, such as poor diets and insufficient sun exposure, increasing risks for conditions like obesity-related metabolic syndrome, type II diabetes and vitamin D deficiencies.

4.5 Nutritional Deficiency: Nutritional Deficiencies significantly impact women's health and education, which Causes fatigue, weakness, paleness, and shortness of breath due to reduced oxygen transport. It also increases the risk of complications during pregnancy and maternal death.

5) Welfare Scheme and Government Initiative:

5.1 Mahila Samakhya Programme: The Mahila Samakhya Programme which was launched in 1988 aimed at empowering rural women, especially from marginalized communities, through education. The programme focused on creating awareness about women's rights, providing literacy and vocational training, and building confidence so that women could participate in decision-making processes in their families and communities. It emphasized education as a tool for social transformation and equality.

5.2 RTE Act: The Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009 is an Indian law that mandates free and compulsory education for children between the ages of 6 to 14 years. The Act provides a legal framework for universal elementary education. The Act mandates the provision of quality elementary education including adequate school, building, trained



teachers, and appropriate learning equipment. Thus RTE Act create fear base environment for both boys and girls.

5.3 Nijut Moina Scheme: The Mukhya Mantri Nijut Moina Scheme is a vital initiative designed by Government of Assam, India to combat child marriage, by preventing and aims to empower girl students by providing financial support to support school dropout rates and promote higher education. By tackling the socio-economic factors that lead to child marriage the scheme helps to improve their future prospects and ensure that they grow up in a safe and supportive environment.

5.4 Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP): BBBP was launched in 2015 aims to address the issues of declining child sex ratio. It also aims to generate awareness and improve the efficiency of welfare services intended for girls. The program combines efforts in health, education and child protection to address gender disparities.

5.5 Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalyaya (KGBV): This scheme was launched in 2004 to set up residential schools at the upper primary level for girls belonging to disadvantaged communities such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, and minority groups. The schools provide free education, food, uniforms, and books to encourage girls' enrollment and reduce dropout rates.

5.6 Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana: Although primarily a savings scheme under the "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao" initiative, it indirectly supports girls' education by encouraging parents to save for their daughters' future education and marriage expenses through long-term deposits with attractive interest rates and tax benefits.

5.7 Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan: This integrated scheme for school education subsumes earlier programs like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan. It ensures inclusive and equitable quality education from pre-school to senior secondary levels. Special focus is given to girls' education, with provisions for separate toilets, free textbooks, and gender-sensitive teaching methods.



SUGGESTIVE MEASURES

- 1. Awareness Campaign:** Awareness campaign can help to educate and inform people about specific issues, awareness of the importance of women's education and its benefits. It can challenge societal stereotypes and biases that hinder women's education and promote equal access to education for women and girls.
- 2. Social Media Campaign:** By leveraging social media platforms, campaigns can raise awareness, engage with the community and promote women's education. As social media platforms have a vast user base, tailored campaigns can reach a wider audience and increase visibility. It can promote women's empowerment and education, featuring stories of women who have overcome challenges to achieve their goals.
- 3. Education for Parents & Adult Education:** By providing adult education and education for parents can create a supportive environment that promotes girls' education and addresses socio-cultural barriers. As education can help parents to overcome societal stereotypes and biases, it can also help parents to change their attitude toward girls' education, recognizing its value and benefits.
- 4. To address Limited Resources:** Institutions can help to address the limited resources and mobility constraints through providing transportation services or subsidies. They can ensure that educational Institutions have accessible infrastructure, along with clean washroom and sanitization. Community learning centers can provide access to educational resources, mentorship and support where women can share experiences, advice and support to each other.
- 5. By Providing Financial Support:** Financial barriers are one of the biggest challenges in women's education in India. Many families are unable to afford school fees, books, uniforms, transportation and other related expenses. By providing scholarships, fee waivers, stipends, and financial aid programs, the government and institutions can encourage families to send their daughters to school. Financial support can also include incentives such as conditional cash transfers for parents who ensure their daughters' regular attendance. Moreover, providing free textbooks, midday meals



and learning materials can reduce the economic burden on families and help increase enrollment and retention of girls in schools.

6. Strengthening legal framework: By strengthening women's education it helps to address the barriers of women's education. By promoting compulsory education laws that make education compulsory for girls and women up to a certain age or level. It enacts laws that prohibit discrimination against women and girls in education, including harassment and violence.

CONCLUSION

Women's education in India continues to face multiple obstacles such as deep-rooted societal stereotypes, financial constraints, lack of infrastructure, safety concerns, and socio-cultural barriers. These hurdles not only restrict women from accessing equal educational opportunities but also limit the overall progress of society, as the empowerment of women is directly linked to national development. However, through awareness campaigns, supportive government initiatives, financial assistance, and community participation, these barriers can be gradually overcome. Ensuring equal access to education for women is not just a matter of social justice but also an essential step toward building an inclusive, progressive, and empowered India where women can contribute equally in all spheres of life. Therefore investing in women's education is an investment for future, unlocking the potential for social, economic and political progress.

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