



Youth and Family Support Mechanism

Chandana Mitra*

*Professor and Head, Department of Sociology, Government Mahamaya College,
Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh, India

Abstract

The current study approaches the willingness of a girl child for higher education and the support received from the family to achieve her goal. Nowadays, the family perception has a tremendous transformation in the mindset. In Indian society, girls were considered 'PARAYA DHAN' and it was considered irrational to spend money and time to educate them. The one and only aim was to rear a girl child with minimal education and get her married at the earliest. In India, as per the survey of All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2019-20, the Gross Enrolment Ratio of female students stands at 27.3%, which is more than the 26.9% of male students. This is not only restricted to the nation but women's enrolment in higher education has increased even on the international level. There are certain push and pull factors that motivate women to enroll in higher education. The study is based on secondary data as well as data from some respondents, who supported their daughters for higher studies. This study reveals the contribution, support, and role of the family in achieving this goal for their girl wards negating the traditional socio-cultural and socio-economic constraints.

Keywords: higher education, girl child, family support, social transformation

Corresponding Author's email id. dr.chandanamitra@gmail.com

Introduction

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." Margaret Mead, American Cultural Anthropologist.

The development of any nation has some parameters like education, economy, health, politics, psychological health, culture and communication, etc. Education promotes the development of human resources. It makes people aware of human rights, health deficiencies, exploitation, oppression, deprivation, communicable diseases, medicine, and various development programs. It also provides modern job opportunities. Education plays a valuable role in development.

According to the UNESCO Report, India has the largest illiterate population in the world. It is well below the World Average Literacy rate of 84%. According to a survey by UNICEF, approximately 60% of the girls in developing countries do not go to school. Another survey revealed that most girls living in rural areas are not sent to school because most villagers believe that the girls are only homemakers. The 'Girl Child' typically faces discrimination including the common preference for male children and early marriage. Poor families are more likely to keep girls at home to care for younger siblings, the sick, the elderly or to work in the family enterprises. Most often, if a family has to choose between educating a daughter and a son, because of financial constraints, typically the son is chosen.

Negative parental attitudes towards educating a daughter can also be a barrier to a girl's education. It is seen that many parents view educating sons as an investment as they are considered responsible for their old age support. On the other hand, many parents see the education of daughters as a waste of money because the daughters eventually live with their husband's family. She is considered as (*Paraya Dhan*), who is someone else's property. So, parents do not benefit directly from their education. At the same time marrying a highly educated daughter becomes expensive to pay a high dowry to find a perfect highly educated match for their daughter.

Objectives

1. To study the present status of women's enrollment in higher education in India.
2. To specify the role of family in attaining higher education of a girl child.
3. To identify the challenges that Indian women face on the path towards higher education.
4. Find out the Socio-cultural transformation to mobilize the girl child towards higher education.

Methodology

The study is based on secondary data as well as data from some respondents, who supported their daughters for higher studies.

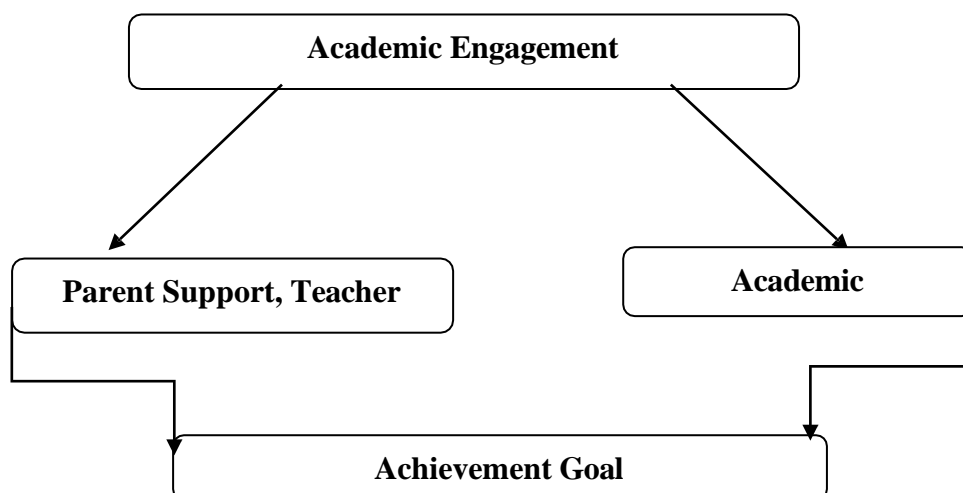
Literature Review

According to "Views of Swami Vivekananda on Women's Education", by Ms. P Sindhuja, and Dr. K.R. Murugan, among the modern Indian religion reformers, Vivekananda is considered the first monk to work for the equality of men and women. (Sindhuja and Murugan, 2017)

According to "Role of Education in the Empowerment of Women in India", by Rouf Ahmad Bhat, Education plays a key role in empowering women and making them capable of facing objections by opposing the traditional role and bringing changes in their lives. (Bhat, 2015)

Tushar Kanti Ghara, in "Status of Indian Women in Higher Education" says in his study that women's education is an important tool for a country to walk towards development. (Ghara, 2016)

Fig.1, Youth and Family Support Mechanism



Results

The present research on family support to encourage the girl child for higher studies is based on various variables like the education of the mother, education status of parents, economic condition, religion, caste, region-rural or urban, etc.

The research says that the enrolment of higher education in rural areas is restricted to masters in arts, commerce, and science in very less numbers. But for STEM, the growth is very low. These are also very rare from rural localities, poor economic backgrounds, backward castes SC and ST categories.

On the other hand, girls from these categories of well-to-do families are enrolled for Medical, BE, B. Tech, and MBA if they have the capability. The families of the general category with good financial condition inspire their girl child to opt for higher studies in fields like masters in arts, science, commerce, Engineering, MBA, MSW, creative writing, performing arts like different forms of classical dance, folk dance, different forms of classical vocal songs and folk songs, painting and sculpture, mass media and many newer emerging subjects. These help the women not only get the education/knowledge but also get empowered, confident, and capable of earning and standing beside their families and husbands. This also helps to raise their standard of living altogether. This also contributes to the National GDP. (Desai, 1999)

Research validates how the socio-economic mobility of families leads to an increase in the number of women students pursuing Higher education overseas. (Gupta and Gupta, 2012)

After independence, various commissions and committees were set

up in India. Kothari Commission (1964-1966) suggested to focus attention on woman education. The commission was in favour of gender parity in all the stages of education and opportunities for jobs for women. The national policy on education and the Program of Action in 1992 put enormous emphasis on the promotion of gender equity in education by reducing the gender gap in access, retention, and transition from one stage to another. The national policy on education stressed that education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women. In order to neutralize the accumulated disadvantages of the past, the national policy for the empowerment of women has been a remarkable achievement for women. The year 2001 was celebrated as Women's Empowerment Year, which recognized women as agents of socio-economic change and development in the country.

Indian Government continues to encourage higher education for women through programs like the Indira Gandhi Scholarship for single girl children to pursue higher education and in order to support higher education through scholarships and by constructing women hostels and by capacity building for women managers in higher education.

According to a study conducted to understand the relationship between gender study abroad and parents' social class (proxied by education), in India, female students, who hail from highly educated parental backgrounds are more likely to be allowed or encouraged to study abroad.

The data available about this is very sparse to understand the intentions, motivations, and challenges of prospective female international students. Certain 'push and pull' factors

have been identified that motivate women to study abroad which are primarily driven by the region, religion, socio-cultural and socio-economic functions.

Economic Development is an important accelerant of gender equity. Asia, China, and India are examples. This crosses the bar of religion.

Another cause enforcing women to pursue Higher Education abroad is the socio-cultural constructs in their home country. For example, in traditional societies, the gender stereotype related to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths) education discourages woman students from adopting such programs. So, this induces them to study abroad. Besides this, the compulsion of marriage also sometimes makes them go away from the country to study abroad.

Many times, parents' economic condition is also responsible for a girl child to opt for a simple master's in Arts, Science, and Commerce and not any technical subject.

Women in India do not obtain a homogenous category and their journey of education is influenced by socio-religious and socio-cultural context.

Discussion

With the passage of time, the transformation of society has brought changes in social values. The importance of formal education has been recognized.

Education helps to gain knowledge and knowledge is transferred from one generation to another.

According to Leslie Alvin White, an anthropologist, human beings are different from animals in five ways: (i)

the capability of humans to stand straight, (ii) the ability to move the hands in a circular motion, (iii) the keen and movable sight, (iv) the power of thinking, (v) and last but not the least, the language to express their views.

So, humans have a distinctive power to acquire knowledge and transmit it from generation to generation. This helps in the advancement of science and technology.

Educational area of development includes the development of personality, attitude, opinion, equal opportunity, and many more in society. Education also helps in the development of infrastructure and human resources, sports, and others.

Higher education can be considered the gateway to economic security and opportunity, especially for women. They are part of the socio-economic system. Women are the agents to justify the rich cultural, traditional, and social values. For about two decades, in India, women have played a major role as leaders in knowledge societies. They are leaders, addressing issues, and creating ideas and information to contribute towards equity, quality, significance, and access. These actions bring women on an important platform and prove them as powerful members of society. This happens by learning only. (Thakur, 2021)

Higher education leads women to "complete living" with self-confidence, fulfilment of necessities of life, family welfare, and involvement in social and political activities and complete living. Complete living includes being physically strong, earning a living, being a responsible parent, and as an earnest citizen. Higher education helps women to be mentally and emotionally stronger to face challenges, overcome

obstacles in life, and become complete women.

Women should follow some factors to live a complete life such as social values, spiritual values, ethical values, and intellectual values. So, it is only higher education that makes a complete woman. Then the woman becomes empowered, confident, and a social reformer.

As told by Swami Vivekananda, "*To educate your women first and leave them to themselves, they will tell you what reforms are necessary.*" (Sindhuj and Murugan, 2017)

Family is the most crucial part of the society. The family's role in encouraging to socialize human beings cannot be denied. It is a universal truth that gender inequality is prevalent all over the globe. Especially, in India, as girls are considered as "Paraya Dhan", so spending too much money on their nurturing is not taken as wise enough. They are trained for domestic chores. This helps to become a good homemaker in the future.

The barrier to education for women in India was the persistent belief that women should not deign (lower themselves) to take paid employment although voluntary work was acceptable. It is generally observed that against social customs many educated women professionals did not marry. However, the present situation is different as more women are working.

Children start learning from their parents only. It is the parent, who can plant the seed of knowledge and wisdom in the life of a daughter and make her believe that she can achieve whatever she wants in her life. When parents remain engaged in the upliftment of and education of their

little girl, it has a positive impact on the mindset of the child. There are so many things that can be done to develop a girl child with an excellent personality and overall development. Parents can make their children curious about new technology and new gadgets, and teach them politeness and other virtues. These things are not taught in schools. Even the accession of the internet is also not allowed to the girl child by their family due to social stigma.

According to the 2011 Census data, the national literacy rate is 74.04% while the male literacy rate is 82.14% and the female literacy rate is 65.46% in 2018. In 2001, the total Male Literacy rate was 75.26% whereas the female literacy rate was 53.67%.

The status of women in society will not improve until the existing disparity in education between males and females minimizes.

But gradually the scene changed and the number of enrolment of women in higher education has taken pace. According to AISHE, there has been an overall increase of 28% in female enrolment in higher education from 2014-15 to 2019-20.

According to AISHE, although the enrolment at the Masters' level has risen sharply in Arts, science, and commerce between 2015-16 to 2019-20, it is low at the graduate level in courses like BCA, BBA, B. Tech, or BE, and LLB. So, women's participation in professional and technical courses is significantly low.

The data received from AISHE further says that the percentage of students enrolled in the BA program is 47% for males and 52.9% for females, while B.Sc. has 47.07 lakh students enrolled in total, and out of that 52.3% are

females. However, B.Sc. Hons. with 54.8% males, MBA 57.4% males, B. Tech 71.5% males, and BE 71% shows a different story. Enrolment of ST and OBC has increased consecutively by 38% and 30% in higher education.

The family perception is undergoing transformation at present. We see that the participation of women in education and the proportion of their success is tremendous. This is obviously because of the awareness of the parents both in rural and urban regions. The only difference is in choosing the field of study. Sometimes that is due to ignorance, lack of proper knowledge, or financial constraints. (Fernando, 2022)

AISHE findings say that category-wise, a high percentage of rise is seen in Muslim women. About 40% of Muslim women had been enrolled in higher education in 2019-20 as compared to 2015-16. Scheduled tribe women enrolled 38% more, OBC 30% more in higher education. This proves the social change as the door of schools was barred for SC-ST women for centuries. Still bridging the gap between male and female enrolment in higher education is not easy.

India has registered improvements in the GPI (Gender Parity Index) in higher education in 2019-20 by moving about 1.01 against 1 in 2018-19. This has shown a rise in female participation in the field of higher education compared to male candidates of the entitled age group. (Gohain, 2021)

The improved GPI shows a rise in access to higher education by eligible female students in comparison to male students. The positive figure proves the socio-economic mobility of Indian families that mirrors enhanced opportunities for female students in Higher education.

Here the role of family cannot be denied who supports and inspires their girl child to opt for higher studies. Still, it is seen that the inclination of girls towards STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Maths) is still on the lower side.

After contact with the respondents, it became clear that in contemporary society, the role of the family to encourage a girl child is very important.

Conclusion

The socio-cultural environment of Indian society exerts influences on all aspects of a woman's life. Against all odds, women in India achieve a high tier on the educational front. Women from all sections of society have entered the principality of higher education with full enthusiasm. As we have seen the participation of women in higher education has increased but still, the gap between enrolment of males and females needs to be bridged which is not an easy task. As the data revealed by AISHE, the share of Muslim women in higher education is still abysmally low at 2.7% which needs attention and action. SC women hold only a 7.3% share. Women in the PWD (persons with disabilities) category occupy only 0.1% of the total higher education seats. The share of women enrolment in institutions of national repute is only 25%. During 2015-16, women's share increased by a mere 3%. Although we have already seen higher enrolment in higher education. In spite of increasing participation in higher education among women, their participation in the labour force is very low.

According to AISHE data, women constitute around 48% of the total population of India. One of the major issues in India is gender equity in education in which India has achieved

huge growth since independence (increase of about 42%). This has reduced the gender gap in higher education to some extent. About 14.72% of women have enrolled in professional courses Goa is the highest and the lowest is Bihar.

According to the World Economic Forum's Report, India is among the five worst-performing countries in the world in the domain of economic participation of women.

The study of Development is considered valuable because it is expected to make people develop. It is also expected to bring improvement in quality of life. But its dilemma is that it also brings a negative impact. Educational development has caused unemployment. The experience of author says that the educated youth do not want to take up their traditional occupation rather they would prefer to remain unemployed. So, the unemployed youth are trapped to become victims of intoxication, drug abuse, frustrations, murder, suicide, terrorism, and others.

Society needs a socio-cultural change where the intrinsic and instrumental values of education in the lives of women can be recognized. Although we have to walk a long way to achieve a gender-neutral society. Some measures such as the "Gender Inclusion Fund" and "Special Education Zones" (proposed in NEP 2020) for socially and economically disadvantaged groups can be game-changers.

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Cite as: Mitra, C., (2023), Youth and Family Support Mechanism, *International Journal of Society and Education*, 2(1), pg. 10-17