

AN OVERVIEW AND UNDERSTANDING OF GENDER EQUALITY IN EDUCATION IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR

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Abstract

The focus of this paper is an overview and understanding of the gender equality in education in Jammu and Kashmir. Gender equality is the process of being fair to women and men. To ensure fairness, strategies and measures should be available to compensate for women's historical and social disadvantages. The central government, state government, NGO's and local bodies are jointly working for the promotion of women's education. The paper discussed to what extent the central government, state government; NGO's and local bodies have achieved the gender equality in education and what are the challenges in promoting gender equality in the state? The objectives of this study included first, to understand and explore the women's level of participation in education and to explore the barriers to women's education. The data used are taken from the census of India, report from the education sector of Jammu and Kashmir and National Human Development Report of India. The literacy rate and education of the women of Jammu and Kashmir is far lower than their counterparts and also lower than women at national level. Poverty, ignorance of parents and lack of basic infrastructural facilities seem to be major obstacles in the attainment of gender equity in education. The educational schemes and developmental programmes seem have not helped to improve the condition of girls. There is an essential need to make serious efforts by government, not-for-profit organizations and other local bodies to augment the pace of development in education of the women of Jammu and Kashmir.

Keywords : overview, Understanding, Gender equality, Education, Census of India.

1. INTRODUCTION

Jammu & Kashmir State is one of the States of Indian Union. It is also well known as paradise on the earth is the northern state of India with population more than one crore as per Census figures and covers the area of approximately 2,22,236 sq. Kms. The state has three regions namely, Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh and further subdivided into 22 districts for administration and carrying out developmental programmes. The State has its own Constitution besides the Constitution of India and enjoys the special status under article 370. Topography of the J&K comes in the way of rising adequate infrastructure and is further compounded by terrorism and militancy, which have taken a heavy toll of life and public property besides throwing normal life out of gear. Education could not run away from this calamity as most of the educational institutions in rural areas were destroyed and loss of schooling hours immensely affected the learning outcomes. In the National Educational Scenario, State is subsumed as educationally backward in reference to the established indices namely literacy rate, dropout rate, teacher pupil ratio and the absorption pattern of the educated persons. The troubling features are low literacy rate, higher drop-out rate, mismatch between education and employment. The State strictly adheres to the National Education Policy and with the exponential growth of the institutional framework and reach of services as a consequence of sustained investment through plan strategy; improvement in every parameter is visible.

The improvement is more pronounced in the field of female literacy. Education is one of the most precious means in achieving gender equity and empowerment of women. The ranking of Jammu and Kashmir as per census report 2011.

Table 1: Ranking of States and Union territories by literacy rate: 2011

Rank	India/State/Union Territory	Literacy rate
1	Kerala	93.9
2	Lakshadweep	92.28
3	Mizoram	91.58
4	Tripura	87.75
5	Goa	87.40
6	Daman And Diu	87.07
7	Puduchery	86.55
8	Chandigarh	86.43
9	NCT Of Delhi	86.34
10	Andoman And Nicobar	86.27
11	Himachal Pradesh	83.78
12	Maharashtra	82.91
13	Sikkim	82.20
14	Tamil Nadu	80.33
15	Nagaland	80.11
16	Manipur	79.85
17	Uttarakhand	79.63
18	Gujarat	79.31
19	Dadra and Nager Haveli	77.65
20	West Bengal	77.08
21	Punjab	76.68
22	Haryana	76.64
23	Karnataka	75.60
24	Meghalaya	75.48
25	Orissa	73.45
26	Assam	73.18
27	Chhattisgarh	71.04
28	Madhya Pradesh	70.63
29	Utter Pradesh	69.72
30	Jammu and Kashmir	68.74
31	Andra Pradesh	67.66
32	Jharkhand	67.63
33	Rajasthan	67.06
34	Arunachal Pradesh	66.95
35	Bihar	63.82

Source: Census of 2011

The above table 1 shows that the state of Jammu and Kashmir ranked 30 in literacy rate, as having only 68.74 percent literacy. It becomes clear that the state is one of the educational backward states of India. Education is a vital instrument for human resource development. Human resource development for the advancement of the country requires the capacity building of both the genders. In the Sixth Five Year Plan, women are accepted as a partner as well as a stakeholder in the development of the country. The Ninth Five Year Plan took up 'empowering women as a means of socioeconomic change and development' as a major commitment. The Ninth Five Year Plan

designed to improve the status of the women in the country by shifting the concern from 'development' and 'welfare' to 'empowerment'. Education is the single most important tool that can result in bringing the welfare, empowerment and development of women. An educated and empowered woman can have much to add to the socioeconomic development of the country. If the education of the girls and women remain unnoticed in a country, about half of the human resource would remain unprepared and unutilized. Therefore, education of girls and women holds crest priority amongst various measures to improve the status of the female citizens of the country, so that they can also participate and avail the benefits of the development.

For a long time gender equality in education was dominating the discourse and the interventions. It is still generally believed that gender inequalities in education will be set on if equal access for boys and girls is provided and if gender inequalities in enrollment figures and retention rates are eliminated. Access to schooling is a hazardous issue that still requires attention; however, a wider approach is necessary, which, for e, g, includes the learning content of education such as curriculum, textbooks and teaching learning practices. It is steadily being recognized that the promotion of gender equity in education goes beyond access. To consider achievement of gender equality as a goal to strive at is "a rather narrow aspiration". Education is not only about the knowledge acquisition; education is crucial also in the process of socialization and in the transmission of norms and values, such as the notion of gender equality.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE:

Our literature review focuses on the work on gender inequity and biases in education. The main issue that our research focuses is understanding and exploration of gender equity in education in Jammu and Kashmir, despite the intervention schemes for promoting gender equity in education. The matter of universal elementary education has been debated time and again in the last six decades. In 2000 it became the center of concern once more among policy makers, practitioners, administrators, and the academia circle after the declaration of the Millennium Development Goals (Mishra, 2005). The decade since then has witnessed a considerable increase in the significance accorded to education, especially the education of women, at international, regional as well as national levels, with arguments being made for increasing financial investment and policy focus on education provision (Herz, 2006). Investment in education is regarded as the main way through which nations and their citizens can move towards long-term development goals and improve both social and economic standards of living. Education of the girls and thus the future of women are seen as key to securing intergenerational transfers of knowledge, and hence providing long-term gender equity, enhanced per capita income and social change (DFID, 2005). Global discourses on education highlight the instrumental value of education as central to this debate for securing investments in female education (Subrahmanian, 2002). However, along with the instrumentalist rationale, the intrinsic value of education for girls and women is also discussed (Sen, 2000). The latter regard the *return* of education, for individuals as equally important as the social rate of return. Sen, through his capability approach, suggests that both boys and girls should have access to 'adequate' education to enable them to develop their capacities for informed and rational choices and to have increased agency. This, Sen (2000) argues, will help individuals to lead the lives they value. Thus girls' participation in education is considered a first step towards achieving equality.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To understand and explore the women's level of participation in education in Jammu and Kashmir.
- To explore barriers and constraints to women's education in Jammu and Kashmir.

4. GIRLS LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR

Enshrined under Article 46 of the Indian Constitution are the provisions for a wide ranging and specific welfare of the weaker sections, the underprivileged and the disadvantaged of India's population (Mishra, 2005). The Article states, "The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and in particular of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation". The gender issue runs through this. Girls form an underprivileged or deprived section due to the cultural prejudice involved in them. A girl becomes multiple

disadvantaged when the gender gets compounded with the other disadvantages like poverty, scheduled tribes and scheduled caste, minorities, or disability. Among girls, those belonging to Scheduled tribes or Scheduled castes or belong to Muslim community becomes highly disadvantaged. Girls with disabilities also turn into a highly vulnerable group. SarvaShikshaAbhiyan (SSA) identifies the disadvantaged girls and aims to provide special provisions and incentives to promote their basic or elementary education. Because of SSA, there has been a remarkable growth in the enrollment of girls and decrease in gender gaps in enrollment and dropouts between girls and boys, still girls' enrollment, transition and completion vary across regions and social groups. Girls are disadvantaged or underprivileged because they have not been able to take the full benefit of the available opportunities and amenities due to several economic factors and social-cultural. There is a general indifference to education of girls mainly due to gender bias (Sen, 2007). There is the high occurrence of child labor among girls belonging to the weaker section of the society. As we know that there is also some social resistance arising out of misconceptions and fears that education might estrange girls from tradition and social values. Society also assigns stereotyped roles for girls like doing household chores, domestic work and looking after siblings. Some school related barriers prevent girls to attend school. These comprise: inflexible and unsuitable timings of the school; inadequate provisions of female teachers in schools; lack of toilet and sanitary facilities in schools; non-involvement of the community (Ahmad Gul and Khan, 2013); irrelevant curriculum and teaching; lack of gender sensitivity of teacher in recognizing girl's educational needs.

INITIATIVES TAKEN TO IMPROVE GENDER EQUITY IN EDUCATION

Education of girls and gender equity has been a high priority with the Government of India. The National commitment to provide free and compulsory basic education to all children in the (6- 14) years is now a Fundamental Right of every child in India after the passing of the Constitution (86th Amendment) Act in December, 2002. Reaching out to the girl child is intimate to the efforts to universalize elementary education. SarvaShikshaAbhiyan, or 'Education for the All' program recognizes that ensuring girls' education requires changes not only in the education system but also in societal attitudes and norms. A two-sided gender strategy has therefore been adopted, to make the system of education responsive to the needs of the girls through targeted interventions which serve as a pull factor to enhance access and retention of girls in schools and on the other hand, to generate a community demand for girls' education through training and mobilization. The targeted provision for girls and for promoting gender equity in education under SarvaShikshaAbhiyan includes:

- To provide free textbooks to all girls up to class VIII
- Separate toilets for girls
- Back to school camps for out-of-school girls
- Bridge courses for older girls
- Recruitment of 50% women teachers
- Early childhood care and Education centers in/near schools/convergence with
- ICDS programme etc.
- Teachers' sensitisation programmes to promote equitable learning opportunities
- Gender-sensitive teaching-learning materials including textbooks
- Intensive community mobilisation efforts
- 'Innovation fund' per district for need based interventions for ensuring girls' attendance and retention

In addition, to target pockets where girl's education is lagging behind to boys, the Government of India has launched focused interventions for girls as under;

National Programme for Education of Girls for Elementary Level (NPEGEL), launched in September 2003, is an integral but distinct component of the SarvaShikshaAbhiyan. It offers additional provisions for enhancing the education of disadvantaged/underprivileged girls at the elementary level through more intense community mobilization, the development of model schools in clusters, gender sensitization of teachers, early development of gender sensitive learning materials, child care and education facilities and provision of need-based incentives like escorts, stationery, work books and uniforms etc. for girls. All Educationally Backward Blocks have been included under NPEGEL.

Kasturba Gandhi BalikaVidyalaya (KGBV) is a scheme launched in July 2004, for setting up residential schools at upper primary level for girls belonging predominantly to the ST, SC, OBC and minority communities. The

scheme is being implemented in educationally backward blocks of the country where the female rural literacy is below the national average and gender gap in literacy is above the national average. The scheme provides for a minimum reservation of 75% of the seats for girls belonging to ST, SC, OBC or minority communities and priority for the remaining 25%, is accorded to girls from families below the poverty line.

Pre-matric scholarship by the State Government is provided to girls to enhance their level of literacy and to reduce the burden on the parents to sustain education. To reduce gender disparities in education access and to promote women empowerment 9 women ITIs and 12 Women Wings in the existing ITIs have been established under the Prime Ministers' Reconstruction Program (PMRP).

Comparison of Jammu and Kashmir literacy rate with All India literacy rate

Although, the literacy rate of the state is well short of the rate recorded at the national level, yet figures reveal that the rate of increase in the literacy in the state is more rapidly than at the national level. During 1961-2011, while the literacy rate in the State increased by 56 points, it recorded an increase of 46 points at the national level. Category-wise also, the rate of increase in the literacy percentage both among males and females is better in the State than the country.

Table 3

Census year	J&K			All India			Increase in Literacy %age over the preceding census	
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	J&K	All India
1961	19.75	5.05	12.95	40.39	15.33	28.30		
1971	31.01	10.94	21.71	45.95	21.97	34.45	8.76	6.15
1981	41.46	18.73	30.64	56.38	29.76	43.57	8.93	9.12
2001	66.60	43.00	55.50	75.26	53.67	64.84	24.86	21.27
2011	78.26	58.01	68.74	82.14	65.46	74.04	13.24	9.20

Despite the number of limiting factors, the State has been able to make a remarkable progress in the field of education as is clear from the above figures. Although, the outcomes of investment in education are no doubt quite visible, yet the State is committed to achieve universalization of education. A number of steps in this way have been taken like easy access of schooling by way of opening and up gradation of Schools, development of infrastructure facilities, provision of education manpower, establishment of Seasonal Camps at various Behaks, nutritional support for the children up to elementary level, Scholarships, free text Books etc.

Male-Female Literacy:

A glimpse at the table 3 below shows that there is male-female gap in literacy rate in the state. According to census 2011, the literacy level climbed up from 12.95 per cent in 1961 to 68.74 per cent in 2011 but it still lags far behind the national average of 74.04 per cent (census, 2011). Further analysis of the data shows that the male literacy rate is higher than the female literacy rate in all the years. The male literacy rate reached 78.26 per cent in 2011 which was only 19.75 per cent in 1961 whereas the female literacy rate increased from 5.05 per cent in 1961 to 58.01 per cent in 2011. The male-female gap in literacy rate has increased from 14.7 per cent in 1961 to 20.25 per cent in 2011. In the delineation of the above figures, it can be argued that though there is a considerable progress in the female literacy rate but the gender disparity in literacy rate still exists in the state.

Table 4

Literacy Rates by Sex in Jammu and Kashmir

	Male	Female	Total	MFG
1961	19.75	5.05	12.95	14.70
1971	31.01	10.94	21.71	20.07
1981	41.46	18.73	30.64	22.73
1981	NA	NA	NA	NA
2001	66.6	43.0	55.5	23.6
2011	78.26	58.01	68.74	20.25

MFG- Male Female Gap; * Estimated Literacy Rates

Source: Census of India, J & K 2011

With the planned interventions and sustained efforts, considerable progress has been made in the State in the field of literacy. As already stated that at the time of Independence the literacy rate of the state was only five per cent. Census 1961 puts the literacy rate of the State at 12.95% which increased to 21.71% during 1971 census. In 1981, the literacy rate was recorded at 30.64 and the projection for 1991 was made at 45% as no census was carried out during the latter period. During the decade 2001-2011, literacy rate increased from 55.5% to 68.74% in the State as against 64.84% to 74.04% at the national level.

5. BARRIERS TO GIRLS' EDUCATION

Factors responsible for the barriers to girls' education in Jammu and Kashmir can be categorized according to how one perceives and defines barriers. Barriers take different forms – e.g. Barriers to access, barriers to quality services and barriers to relevant curricula and/or pedagogy. There are many religious, socio-cultural, economic and educational barriers in Jammu and Kashmir, which hinder their participation in education. Some of these barriers are discussed below:

Poverty: The rate of illiteracy is closely linked to poverty. Due to the poverty or low family income, if parents are not in a position to send both boys and girls to school, they usually send boys to schools and retain girls at home to do house-hold work (Virender, 2012).

Parental Illiteracy: The high level of parental illiteracy among also constraints the education of girl children. Lack of parental support and poor learning environment at home makes learning for them very difficult. The present education system does not fit their needs, which lead to stagnation and wastage among them (J & K SRC Report 2009).

Number of children: In poor families generally, there are many children. According to the priority list of parents, girls' education is not compulsory and boys get a high chance of receiving education (Bose, 2000).

Child Marriage: Many girls in many districts of J&K still get married at an early age, which affect their education to a great extent (Dabla, 2007).

Customs and cultural practices: Many customs and cultural practices hinder the higher education of girls. For examples many parents do not send their daughters to schools when they attain puberty. Purdan system is also affecting education of girls (Dabla, 2007).

Nature of Habitat: Most of the tribes live in difficult terrain, forests and remote areas. The dearth of schools in these areas leads to absenteeism among the tribal girl children. Study of VirenderKoundal, Shows that tribal girl children walk 3-4 km on foot to reach school every day (Virender, 2012).

Female teachers in schools: Girls are more interested in going to schools if female teachers are there in the schools. They are more comfortable and more vocal with female, thus actively focusing and participating in the learning processes. In rural areas also, parents are interested in sending their girl children to school if female teachers are present. If qualified female teachers are teaching in the school they feel more secured towards their girl children. They may be hesitating to send their girl children in male environment based school (Ahmad Gul and Khan, 2013).

Molestation/abuse in school: Most of the parents feel in secured towards their girl children as instances of abduction, rape, sexual harassment and molestation of girl dampens the enthusiasm of parents and girl students in pursuing their education beyond a certain age.

6. CONCLUSION

Education is a key indicator of socioeconomic development. It also increases the knowledge and vision of a person. Equally, it is considered as an essential element in bringing change in social, political, economic fields in a society. Emancipation and upliftment of people can be achieved only through education. Indeed, the country's progress and development largely depend upon the educational attainment of its people. Despite considerable progress, sharp disparities continue to exist between male and female literacy levels. There is an urgent need to bridge the gender gap in education in the state because no society and civilization can move forward without the education of its half population as well said by Swami Vivekanand, "There is no chance of the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved". From the above analysis, it can be concluded that the position of education among the women of Jammu and Kashmir reflects pathetic scenes. Their level of education is very low. Women of Jammu and Kashmir are educationally backward when compared to women at national level. It is a

matter of serious concern and problem for the entire country as it affects every individual of the society. The constitution of India promises every support and assistance in mainstreaming the disadvantaged sections of the society and to eliminate histories of discrimination. However, in reality, given the opportunities were not exploited fully. Gender disparity exists both in rural and urban areas, but it is higher in the rural areas. This can be endorsed to a number of factors like Social dogmas, engagement of girl child in domestic activities and other agricultural activities etc. To conclude, education is an important avenue for improving the social and economic condition of the women of Jammu and Kashmir. Hence, there is a need for quick checks and proper supervision of implementation of the education policies in the State.

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