

# DISPARITY IN EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF SCHEDULED CASTE GIRLS

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## ABSTRACT

*Literacy and Educational attainment is one of the important indicator of any country's level of human development. Education is essential for everybody irrespective of gender, caste, class, colour and creed, it is essential for both men and women. Education is a tool that enable women to find the right path for their overall growth and development. There are several challenges in schools and our societal mind-set for education of Scheduled caste children especially adolescent girls. Urgent need to tackle by problem of gender bias towards girl child education and create awareness towards the education of rural areas children.*

**KEY WORDS:** *Disparity, gender bias, human rights, constitutional provision*

## INTRODUCTION

The basic right to human development is education. Educational attainment is one of the key developmental indicator of any nation. Gouda and Sekhar (2014) reported that educational achievements might improves the job opportunities and corresponding to raises in wages. Education helps to increase the economic growth of a country by structuring human capital (Abuya et al., 2014). An individual's growth and a nation's development depend on the quality of education he or she receives. Education greatly benefits individuals and countries and is one of the most effective development indicator (USAID, 2008). Educational process needed for everyone because through education only we can be differentiating humans from other species. Education guides us on equality and equal opportunities to everyone, but unfortunately, it hindered due to the lack of women's participation. Men and women are like a chariot's two wheels. It can move by balancing both the wheels towards goal of development. Gender equality in manner helps not only the development of the nation alone but also the development of the individuals. They are equally important and they need to work together for progression in life. Education of girls in India is also one of the important factors for the overall development of the country. Girls education is the most powerful way to increase economic growth in particular families and countries as a whole (Ahamad and Narayan, 2016). Consequently, the achieving the gender equality by reducing gender disparity create overall development and increases the participation of girls. However, girls remain disadvantaged in terms of access to schooling and are likely to leave school earlier than boys (Lalitha et.al, 2016).

Each child should have dignified and equal access to quality education without discrimination (UNICEF, 2007). Education for women in many developing countries has been a major focus for

policymakers and administration in recent years (UNICEF, 2009, p.6). Education helps a woman to utilise health systems during pregnancy and childbirth, along with knowledge on sexual health, contraception, STIs and HIV (UNICEF, 2011). Dakar Education for All (EFA) goals and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were focused on girls' access to primary education through the set targets for gender equity in participation in primary schooling. During the implementation period of these goals, there was a significant raise in access to schooling by SC girls. Unfortunately, this trend was not continued in a steady progressive status. Apparently, the girls' education was monitored to achieve the objectives of MDGs goals but in the case of SC girls, it has not reached the similar graph. Like others, SC girls experiences many challenges when she gets to education. The ambiguous custom and patriarchal bias make these challenges further burdensome and difficult (Odomore, 2015). In the Indian context, caste plays a significant role in shaping the interaction around the school and members of the SC groups are much less likely to stay in school than other children, especially girls. The Scheduled caste girls of the hindu caste system has stigmatizing system of social exclusion which affects all aspects of life including financial security due to poor livelihood options (Olcott, 1944).

## **DISPARITY IN ACCESS TO SCHOOLING**

The disparity in education between genders is visible in India's childhood literacy rates. According to Census of India 2011, 82% of boys are literate while 65% of girls can only read and write. Statistics revealed that around 9% more girls were enrolled in secondary school in India by 2016 compared to the year 2011. Nine percent growth for 5 years is a significant increase but still a long way to go in confirming that girls have the same access to quality education as boys.

In India, school enrolment has been steadily increasing since the last decade. However, majority of the poor children, girls in rural areas, scheduled caste and tribe children are still deprived of the basic education. It is a clear violation of fundamental rights provided in constitution of India. There is a prominent inequality in terms of caste, gender, class etc. so it was felt that a detailed study of school enrolment has to be made across various regions of the states in terms of gender, caste and tribes.

Provision of free and compulsory education to all children up to the age of 14 is a directive principle of the state policy incorporated in the constitution. Despite five decades of effort of social and economic development since independence a more than one third of people continued to remain deprived of education. Retention of children in the school cannot ensured unless the satisfactory quality of education provided. It is more important to keeping view on the economic, social status of children and the affectionate environment in the school. Although formal education is now viewed as both as human rights and as a means of bringing transformation towards more human and enlightened society. However, the worst situation still create wider gaps in school enrolment between the deprived sections and elitist of the society and tremendous inequalities across regions, religion, gender etc. among various social groups.

The privatization of education appears to have widened the gap between the elitist and the depressed class of the society. Privatization proves to be beneficial to those who can afford education irrespective of the urban – rural difference. For instance, a poor migrant staying in urban slum invariably forced to send their children in to a dysfunctional public school. In some regions, educational institution increasingly being influenced by concept of communalism. When such environment experienced by a poor child of depressed section, it may be a disaster in the future of child development and their might arise a feeling of guilt and insecure in young minds. It may lead to poor performance and thus is an obstacle to the continuation of education. Hence, it becomes necessary to focus a special emphasis on struggle against this phenomenon.

In India, society as deeply stratified regarding disparities in education. It can observe through various distributions, such as caste, religion and gender, among others. However, the widespread gender disparity in educational attainment observed even within disadvantaged communities. It is a double burden on the girls of scheduled caste and scheduled tribe. She bears the burden of disadvantaged group moreover a girl. The gender gap of SC and STs in education is almost 30 per cent at the primary level and 26 per cent at the upper primary stage. In India's most depressed regions, the probability of girls getting primary education is about 42 per cent lower than the boys of same age group. It remains the same even when other variables, such as religion and caste, are controlled. To curb this menace, it needs a courageous and creative policy to bridge the gap. Recognizing this, the Indian Government has made female education a priority. Its flagship programme for the achievement of universal primary education - Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) or "Education for All" - places special emphasis on female education and the achievement of gender parity.

## **MALE AND FEMALES LITERACY RATE IN INDIA**

The 2011 Census report indicates that literacy among women as only 65.46 percent and it is virtually disheartening to observe that the literacy rate of women India is even much lower to national average i.e. 74.04. In case of rural areas, the growth of women's education is very slow. This visibly means that still large women population of our country are illiterate, excluded and not available equally to all.

Gender inequality is reinforced in education which is proved by the fact that the literacy rate for the women is comparatively lower than male counterpart from the census 1901 to 2011 (Table 1). In 2011 census female recorded only 65.46% against 82.14% of men. The literacy rate among Scheduled caste women remains well below compared to other category women. The literacy rate of SC women, about 42% in 2001 increased to 56.5% in 2011. Among SC males, the literacy rate went up from 66.6% to 75.2% in the same period, but the gap has closed significantly in the last decade. Compared to male SC of 8.5, female scored 14.6 in percentage literacy rate.

**Table 1: Literacy Rate from the year 1901 to 2011 in India (in %)**

Year	Persons	Males	Females
1901	5.3	9.8	0.7
1911	5.9	10.6	1.1
1921	7.2	12.2	1.8
1931	9.5	15.6	2.9
1941	16.1	24.9	7.3
1951	16.7	24.9	7.3
1961	24.0	34.4	13.0
1971	29.5	39.5	18.7
1981	36.2	46.9	24.8
1991	52.1	63.9	39.2
2001	65.38	76.0	54.0
2011	74.04	82.14	65.46

Source: Census of India (2011)

## CHOICE OF COURSES FROM DIFFERENT SOCIAL GROUPS

Table 2 showing the different social groups pursuing various courses. Caste matters when it comes to choice of courses. Majority of SC students pursuing Humanities courses (48.8%), compared to 40% OBC and 36.6% other categories. When it comes to Science, OBC students leading in percentage of choices. For commerce courses, 18% other category students pursuing against the 16.5% of OBC and only 14.5% of SCs. The number of SC students were less in choice of professional courses like Engineering, Medical and Management compared to others category including OBCs.

**Table 2: Students of different social groups pursuing various courses**

Courses	SC (%)	OBC (%)	Others (%)
Humanities	48.8	40	36.6
Science	18	20.7	16.4
Commerce	14.5	16.7	18
Medicine	1.6	1.8	3
Engineering	7.3	11.5	11.8
Law	0.4	0.4	0.9
Management	0.9	1.2	2.9
Others	8.6	7.7	10.4

Source: NSO data on education 2015

The large majority of students were going to English medium schools and SC's found in lowest percentage (14.9%) share as compared to other social groups (37.9%). Perhaps this leads to interpretation on the status of SC's education and most importantly on SCs girl education.

## **PREDEFINED NOTIONS ON GIRLS EDUCATION:**

Social factors influenced to the deprivation in access to school education to girls created numerous institutions of gender inequality. Traditionally, gender disparity favoured to boy's education and seen it has an investment, believed to increasing the earnings and social status of the family. However, the education of girls generally seen as benefits to family she marries. Thus, rigid society provide little encouragement to invest on uncertain and scarce resources in terms of both human and monetary activity. It applies different standards for girl child. In addition, relatively low educational attainment of girls, especially in rural areas, tends to the notion of marriageability of an educated girl has its own problems. These factors combined to attitudes of society and inherently opposed to female education.

The value of her community directly influenced on education of girls. Like other communities in India, Scheduled Castes also valued educating boys than educating girls, belief that there is no use in educating girls. This kind of dominant view and generalised gender bias in the minds of society continuing cutting-edge some parts of India. Many members of the community expressed that boys are encouraged to study more because girls would finally be sent to their husband's home. Also stated, boys will be the ones to study well and get a job to take care of parents. This kind of dominant view in the psyche of people would create gender bias in favour of boys. Another strong sense of fear that girl should stop schooling after reaching puberty otherwise girl's reputation being ruined. Many parents having a strong sense of fear on girls engaging an affair with boys. It considered the inappropriate behaviour within cultural context and reputation of family within community. To avoid such risks many find way to avoid schooling of girls. There was also a strong belief about the girls of SC/ST that there is no value in educating because even if a girl were educated, there would be no livelihood opportunities for her other than farming and manual labour.

However, Sushrut Desai in UN report stated the vary in attitudes of southern and western states of India. It is being encouraging in education of girls than the northern and eastern states. It may observe that those with the rich states, such as Punjab and Haryana, as well as poor ones, such as Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. It indicates that financial factor alone cannot play significant role for the attainment of girl's education (UN report).

## **DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL**

Despite the government programmes that enable girls to attend school through the provision of financial incentives such as bicycles, school uniforms, scholarships etc. the poor percentage of attendance found in schools of rural India. The question of quality education causing embarrassment many times, as some

girls did not know how to write their own names, even after completing primary school. This is one of the reasons for dropping out of school.

Another issue that lack of toilet facilities for girls at some schools. Even, the government constructed toilets for almost all the schools, but the usability and cleanliness of those is the question. This poses a problem for girls, especially during menstruation period and may mean they are more inclined to stay home than to attend the school to avoid this problem.

Child marriage is also one of the major issue among the lower community of society. Despite law banned and it is an illegal act, but child marriages are still practicing in some places secretly. Girls drop their schools sometimes to support their families by taking care of domestic work. The other barriers to education included the influence of peers in dropping out of school as well as a girl not valuing education herself.

## CONCLUSION

Education is a fundamental human right in India. The Article 21-A of constitution of India describes the free and compulsory education of all children in the age group of six to fourteen years. However, there are several challenges in schools and our society for Scheduled caste and Scheduled Tribe children especially adolescent girls. Fruitful interventions will need to address the education of girls by creating supportive school and family environment.

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