

# A study on gender inequality and education

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■ **ABSTRACT** : Many developing countries including India have displayed gender inequality in education, employment and health. The gender gap in education can be understood in the overall context of the position that women occupy in society. The status of women in India is generally low. They are one of the disadvantaged sections of the society. The disparity between the enrolment of girls and boys has been lessening in the urban areas; the gap between their enrolments is still very wide specially in rural areas. The reasons for this are both economic and social. This study was conducted in Saidpur village of Kurebhar block of Sultanpur district of Uttar Pradesh. For the selection of respondents random sampling was used and percentage was calculated. The objective of this study was to find out the reasons behind gender bias in education. Most of the respondents were not in favor of girl's education due to low socio-economic status and they also thought that girl's education is not necessary.

■ **KEY WORDS**: Education, Gender inequality

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Every country has made progress in developing women's capabilities but inequalities continue to exist between women and men. Many developing countries including India have displayed gender inequality in education, employment and health. Gender inequality is therefore a form of inequality which is distinct from other forms of economic and social inequalities. It dwells not only outside household but also centrally within it. Gender inequalities prevail in work, education, allocation of food, health care and fertility choice. A woman suffers from double deprivation of low attainments and wide gender differentials across all sphere *i.e.* health, education, livelihoods and decision making.

Gender refers the socially determined attributes of

men and women, including male and female's roles. On the other hand, sex denotes the physical and biological differences between males and females. In the society, when women not having the same rights, opportunities, or privileges as men is known as gender inequality.

The number of women in decision making, position in the administration, service etc. is increasing gradually because the hierarchical system allows only a gradual climb up the ladder. They often shoulder more of the work load than man are less educated and have less access to remunerative activities. They have largely been concentrated in the informal sector and insecure work condition children too suffer disproportionately and the future quality of their lives is compromised by inadequate nutrition, healthcare and education. The

gender gap in education can be understood in the overall context of the position that women occupy in society. The status of women in India is generally low. They are one of the disadvantaged sections of the society. This gap which exists between the literacy rates of the two sexes also exists between the enrolments of girls and boys at all levels of education. Right from the primary school to the university, we find that the number of girl students is considerably lower than the number of boy students. Although the disparity between the enrolment of girls and boys has been lessening in the urban areas, the gap between their enrolments is still very wide specially in rural areas. The reasons for this are both economic and social. We watch the variety of factors responsible for girl child education discontinuation. Gender disparity in participation rates (education), particularly in rural areas, reflects the discriminatory social attitudes with respect to the girl child. For the vast majority of Indian's rural poor, pulling a child out of paid labour or domestic work involves an opportunity cost even when education itself is free. The girl children are the first victims of any economic crisis in the family. In rural poor households a girl takes up the role of women as soon as is able to perform the simplest tasks. Girls between the ages of six to eleven not only sweep, wash, collect water and take care of siblings and livestock; they also worked in the field and assist their mother in home based work. We can see that the gender gap access to and utilization of opportunities for education is evident in practically and every level of education. It is no doubt true that there has been a definite expansion in educational opportunities since independence. But severe socio-economic constraints operate against the equal utilization of educational opportunities by all women. Parental apathy towards girl's education is the main root cause behind her educational backwardness. There are many barriers in education of girls which affect their achievements.

Ghosh (2007) reported that a substantially higher proportion of children including girls are engaged in survival tasks such as collection of firewood, and fetching water, tending livestock and so forth, economic hardship is a major factor for dropout of the children. Sibling care and other household chores are equally pressing factors for dropout among the girl children.

Pant (2002) concluded that the samples of households revealed a variety of factors responsible for

girl child's discontinuation of studies. However, for simplification, four to five prominent responses have cited poverty and another other economic handicaps as the main reason, over 21 per cent felt that the general environment of the area was not good, over 20 per cent of the households voiced their concern on the problem encountered in getting them married at an older age while another 17 per cent of the households believed in traditional values that encouraged girl child's early marriage.

Pant (2002) concluded that the perusal of the educational profile of households in the two slums provides a very disappointing picture, as over 63 per cent of the households in the total sample were found to be illiterate, of which the proportion of females was over 70 per cent against male ratio of 57 per cent. Further, about 3 per cent of the households were literate in which the proportion of females was hardly 2 per cent what has been quite disturbing is that hardly 22 per cent of the households had acquired literacy or education up to middle level and only about 15 per cent of has the households had education beyond high school.

Suddhasil and Nandy (2003) concluded that the relationship between gender inequality (here in educational attainment) and levels of prosperity differs by place of residence. For the majority of the population, it shows positive relationship. The convergence of prosperity and anti-female bias is a matter of worry and raises questions about the patterns of development we are pursuing.

Karlekar (2000) has examined in detail the demand and supply side constraints that impede girl's education access to education: if motivational level of parents is low for sending their daughters to school, if there is gender bias within the family and a demand for household chores, and if the household is afflicted with poverty, the enrolment ratio of girl's will be low, with high probability of dropouts. On the supply side, sub standard education, poor accessibility (including long distances) to be covered between school and residence, and non-availability of female teachers and separate toilets for girls contribute to low rates of enrolment of girls.

## ■ RESEARCH METHODS

The study has been conducted in Sultanpur district of Uttar Pradesh. The Sultanpur district was selected

because it is the home district of the researcher. This district has 13 blocks in which Kurebhar block was selected because researcher belongs to this block. This block consists 74 Gram sabha in which Saidpur gram sabha was selected which consists only one village has named Saidpur. For the selection of respondents, random sampling method was used. 100 adolescent girls and their parents were randomly selected. For data collection, schedule-cum questionnaire method was used.

**RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

Table 1 shows that the majority 59 per cent of girl respondents did not had any idea about gender discrimination and rest of the respondents 41 per cent had some knowledge about gender discrimination.

Table 2 shows that more than half of the girl respondents 62 per cent perceived gender as a constraint in her study because they were also involved in household chores and other activities which affect her studies whereas 38 per cent felt that gender is not a

constraint in study.

Table 3 shows one third of fathers *i.e.* 37 per cent were illiterate and 35 per cent were educated up to primary level. 10, 7 and 11 per cent were educated up to middle, high school and intermediate or above, respectively. Majority of the mothers 80 per cent was illiterate. Out of remaining 12 per cent and 8 per cent were educated up to primary level and middle level, respectively. Parent’s low literacy level and illiteracy was the cause behind girl’s low educational attainments.

Table 4 shows that 56 per cent parents were agree that the girls should be educated but this is not satisfactory because large number of respondents 44 per cent were agree with the statement that girl should not be educated because they thought that the girls education is not necessary.

Table 5 shows parent’s responses who were not in favor of girl child education and there are number of reasons given by them. Most of the parents thought that girl’s education is not necessary and low family income

**Table 1 : Distribution of respondents on the basis of their knowledge about gender discrimination**

Sr. No.	Knowledge about gender discrimination	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Yes	41	41
2.	No	59	59
	Total	100	100

**Table 2 : Girl respondents faced gender as a constraint in her education**

Sr. No.	Response of girls	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Yes	62	62
2.	No	38	38
	Total	100	100

**Table 3 : Distribution of respondents on the basis of their parent’s education**

Sr. No.	Education level	Father’s education		Mother’s education	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Primary	35	35	12	12
2.	Middle	10	10	8	8
3.	High School	7	7	-	-
4.	Intermediate and above	11	11	-	-
5.	Nil	37	37	80	80
	Total	100	100	100	100

**Table 4 : Distribution of respondents according to their attitude towards girl’s education**

Sr. No.	Attitude of parents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Should be educated	56	56
2.	Should not be educated	44	44
	Total	100	100

is the other reason for low educational attainments by the girls. They also thought if girl is well educated, for her marriage they pay more dowry.

Table 6 shows about the enrolment of girls in school. Out of 100 respondents 17 per cent girls were not enrolled in school while 27 per cent girls were enrolled but quit studies due to some reasons, whereas, 56 per cent were enrolled and continue her studies.

Table 7 shows that the 37.1 per cent respondents felt that insecurity is the main cause for girl drop outs, while 33.3 per cent respondents perceived early marriage as a cause for girl drop outs, 18.5 per cent and 11.1 per cent perceived lack of interest of girls in studies and financial crisis for drop outs, respectively.

Table 8 shows that 38.6 per cent respondents

perceived that the low socio-economic status was the main reason for not going to school, 15.9 per cent were thought that their family background was the reason and 25 per cent were involved in domestic work (Reddy and Reddy, 1992).

### Summary and conclusion:

The entire study is helpful to unfold the reasons behind gender discrimination in education attainments with special reference to rural areas. Forty four per cent respondent's parents were not in favor of girl's education while fifty six per cent parents were felt that girl's education is necessary for their appropriate personality development and their physical and mental growth. Most parents think that girl's education is not necessary

**Table 5 : Parent's response about girl child education is not necessary**

Sr. No.	Response of parents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Low family income	5	11.4
2.	Girls education is not necessary	15	34.1
3.	More demand for dowry if girl is educated	11	25
4.	Leave the house, low family income	2	4.5
5.	Low family income, girl's education is not necessary	7	15.9
6.	Low family income, more demand for dowry	4	9.1
	Total	44	100

**Table 6 : Distribution of girl respondents on the basis of their enrolment in school**

Sr. No.	Enrolment in school	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	No enrolment	17	17
2.	Enrolled but quit studies	27	27
3.	Enrolled and continue studies	56	56
	Total	100	100

**Table 7 : Distribution of girl drop outs according to the cause perceived by the parents**

Sr. No.	Causes of dropping	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Prevailing insecurity	10	37.1
2.	Early marriage	9	33.3
3.	Lack of interest	5	18.5
4.	Financial crisis	3	11.1
	Total	27	100

**Table 8 : Reasons perceived by the girl respondents for not going to school**

Sr. No.	Reason for not go to school	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Domestic work	11	25
2.	Socio-economic Status	17	38.6
3.	Family background	7	15.9
4.	All above	9	20.5
	Total	44	100

because she has to confine within the four walls of the house after marriage. The girl child is a liability to parents because searching a groom for an educated girl becomes a problem and it requires to pay more dowry. Hence, it is a curse so they were not having positive attitude towards girl child education. Parent's literacy level also affects the girl's education because due to their illiteracy they do not know about the importance of girl education. Dropout rate of girls was higher after primary education. The main reason of dropouts was parent's fear towards girl's security and early marriage and also lack of interest of girl's in studies, financial crisis. Girls perceived gender as a major constraint in her education. More than half of the girl respondents felt that due to engaged in household chores they did not have adequate time to her studies.

#### Suggestions:

Aware people about the benefits of education for girls through some arguments:-

- For better marital status alliance education for girls is a pre-condition and hence now a day's girls are more inclined to get education.
- Educated girl can read and write letters and teach

her own children.

- She can also earn money by doing some sort of job during financial crisis.
- She cannot cheat by the society. She can participate in decision making process.

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