

A Perceptual Study of Girls Education, its Factors and Challenges in South Kashmir

Showkeen Bilal Ahmad Gul¹ and Dr Zebun Nisa Khan²

¹Research Scholar, Department of Education, Aligarh Muslim University, U.P, India

²Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Aligarh Muslim University, U.P, India.

Abstract

Education is accepted as an important tool for human development in all dimensions of life, it is at same level of significance for boys and girls. Despite this recognition, girls are one of the most vulnerable groups, deprived of education by various socio-cultural, economical and political reasons. The present study is a perceptual study, which has tried to elicit stockholders perception regarding girls' education, its factors and challenges in South Kashmir. In the present research study, obtained findings revealed the fact that situation of girls' education in South Kashmir is inadequate. The result clearly indicated irregular attendance, inappropriate curriculum, boring teaching methods, additional burden of work at home, poorly developed or maintained buildings or inadequate basic facilities at school, shortage of teachers, and lack of motivated teachers were the causes of girl illiteracy. Girl's education can be improved by raising additional resources and directing them to where the need is greatest. It requires adequate funding, well trained teachers, a school environment that promotes girls' learning, and a social environment that values educated girls and women, removal of school fees, free textbooks and school uniforms, construction of schools closer to communities to lower transport costs and travel time.

Keywords: *Perceptual, Girls Education, Factors, Challenges*

INTRODUCTION:

Education is the main instrument of human progress and its importance has been emphasized through fundamental rights, principles, statutes / acts in a number of countries. The progress and prosperity of a nation and of the community are determined by the level of education. This remarkable potential of education needs to be realized by every individual or social community and must go in for it (Ahmad, 1987). At the international level, efforts have been made at various congregations to focus on aspects of education as a part of basic human right. According to the Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR):

“Every person has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the fundamental and elementary stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory... Education shall be directed to the all-round development of human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms” (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 26)

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, 2001). 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 Tribes and Scheduled Castes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation”. The gender issue runs through this. The girls form a disadvantaged or underprivileged

section due to the cultural prejudice involved in them (Ahmad Gul and Khan, 2013). 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. “Educating a girl is equal to educate a whole family”, “educate a man, you educate an individual, but educate a woman, you educate a nation” both are old sayings what convey the essence of girls' education. Rena (2007) has referred to the statement says that there will be no educated people without educated women. In case one of the two sexes is preferred, women are to be prioritized because they possess the ability to pass education on to next generation. After lessons were learned from human history the world states came together to ensure dignity, equality and basic human rights for every member of this globe regardless sex, religion, ethnicity and geographical location.

True progress and development for any society is impossible if girls are excluded. The social and economic goals of the future, depends heavily on the condition of girls. Girls' education yields some of the highest returns of all investment in development benefitting individuals, families and society as a whole. Girls have the ability to bring unprecedented social and economic change to their families and communities.

Education of girls in India, particularly in rural areas is one of the chief concerns of the educationists, policy makers and administrators.

Out of the total children who are not attending the schools, more than two-third of them are girls. Education of girls is the prime focus of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) for attaining the goals of Universalisation of Elementary Education. Hence, it is well thought-out that there is a need to visualize the status of education of girls at the elementary level and the problems that usually hinder their education. Government of India exhibits a wider range of commitment to speed up the education of girls especially the ones belonging to SCs, STs and rural areas. In spite of this, much need to be done to improve the educational status of girl children particularly in rural India (MHRD, 2002-03). At all levels enrollment status of girl children is lower than that of boys and this difference goes on increasing as we move towards higher level.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE:

Our literature review focuses on the girls' education, its factors and challenges in South Kashmir. The main issue that study focuses is gender discrimination at elementary education level in South 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 centre 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 equality, 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, 2005). However, along with the instrumentalist rationale, the intrinsic value of education for girls and women is also discussed (Sen, 2000). Then 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.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

This paper aims to elicit the stakeholders (parents, teachers, head teachers, District level education functionaries and village education committee member's) perceptions regarding the current situation of girls' education, its factors and challenges in South Kashmir.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The study is mainly based on primary data. The main sources of data were the stakeholder's perceptions (parents, teachers, head teachers, District level education functionaries and village education committee member's), which were elicited by conducted focussed group discussions.

RESULTS/ ANALYSIS:

The objective of the present investigation was to elicit the stakeholders (parents, teachers, head teachers, District level education functionaries and village education committee member's) perceptions regarding the current situation of girls' education, its factors and challenges.

The corresponding research question for this objective was:

What are the perceptions of stakeholders (parents, teachers, head teachers and village education committee members) regarding the current situation of girls' education, its factors and challenges?

Focus Group Discussion

In order to arrange a focus group discussion, guided questions were developed. The purpose of focus group discussion was to elicit the views of different stakeholders about the existing situation of girl's education, their issues regarding enrolment, retention and dropout and also to highlight the factors, challenges, role of government, local bodies and NGO's for improving the situation of girl's education.

The focus group discussions were arranged at eight leading elementary schools of the area. The researcher arranged eight focus group discussions in two districts of South Kashmir. In one focus group discussion 7-10 persons participated. The duration of focus group lasted from 2 hours to 3 hours. The following stakeholders participated in the focus group discussion:

- ❖ District Level Educational Functionaries
- ❖ Head Teachers
- ❖ Parents of Girls
- ❖ Teachers of schools
- ❖ Girl Students
- ❖ Village Education Committee Members

The analysis of focus group discussions are presented as under:

According to respondents

- ❖ Girl's education is more important than boy's education.
- ❖ Islam emphasizes girl's education clearly in the Holy Quran and Hadith.
- ❖ District level educational functionaries, and head teachers termed it satisfactory. The respondents claimed that, they became successful in enrolling girls at school, but regular attendance is difficult or impossible and girl students do not complete the full cycle of their basic education.
- ❖ All respondents agreed that moderate type of gender bias exists in certain areas towards girl's education. They were of the opinion that parents' belonged to rural area, OBC and ST community usually engage their daughters in domestic work.
- ❖ Majority of parents and VEC members were not satisfied with the performance of department of school education. They were of the view that their daughters were suffering in schools due to inappropriate curriculum, boring teaching methods, additional burden of work at home, poorly developed or maintained buildings or inadequate basic facilities at school.
- ❖ Majority of parents, girl students and VEC members quoted that shortage of teachers, lack of good motivated teachers, particularly experienced teachers and unacceptable behaviour of some teachers and head teachers are also the causes of girl illiteracy.
- ❖ Parents and VEC members quoted poverty, unavailability and untimely provision of stationary and uniforms as one of the main reasons for not sending their girl children to schools. Other reasons quoted by VEC members, head teachers, teachers and district level education functionaries were nomadic way of life of Gujjar and Bakerwal community and lack of schools nearby.
- ❖ Parents and VEC members especially living in hilly areas also highlighted that their daughter have to travel long distances to attend schools.
- ❖ Parents and VEC members put allegations that teachers remained absent or came late. Teachers were not interested in teaching.
- ❖ Head teachers and teachers indicated that they had not been exposed to gender sensitive teacher training.
- ❖ Teachers, head teachers and other community members shared different examples which show the different ideas about the girl's education. The major issues were relating to access of basic education, equity-related issues and issues relating to poor quality of girls education.

- ❖ The parents and VEC members complained about the large corruption in education department from top to bottom.
- ❖ Teachers and head teacher complained about lack of opportunities for professional growth and VEC members raised their voice against non availability of funds for schools.
- ❖ According to head teachers, teachers, parents and VEC members the main causes of girls drop out from schools were poverty, domestic work and lack of physical lack of a school nearby, facilities at schools, a school far from home compounds the already existing hindrances such as fear of harassment, eve teasing and other safety related issues.
- ❖ The VEC members also shared different examples from their contexts, which showed that parents of girls remain under pressure and they were not happy with the performance of teachers in schools.
- ❖ District education department had lack of staff to reach all schools. There is shortage of staff in the department. Due to shortage of manpower schools are suffering.
- ❖ All the respondents agreed that government, local bodies and NGO,s are playing positive role in educating girls and whereas, they were moderately satisfied with the existing intervention schemes.
- ❖ The entire respondents were of the opinion that there came a positive improvement in attendance, enrollment and retention of girls.
- ❖ There was general agreement that the cost of education, poor school environments, the weak position of women in society, conflict, and social exclusion are the issues and challenges for girls education.
- ❖ All the respondents agreed that girl's education can be improved by raising additional resources and directing them to where the need is greatest. It requires adequate funding, well trained teachers, a school environment that promotes girls' learning, and a social environment that values educated girls and women.
- ❖ Other suggestion given by stakeholders were- a sensitization programme to educate the community, remedial classes during vacations, quiz competitions and debates to install the spirit of competition among girls, study clubs under trained coordinators to enable girls study in group, guidance and counseling to help resolve obstacles to persistence and performance.
- ❖ All respondent agree that girl education can be improved by the removal of school fees, free textbooks and school uniforms, construction of schools closer to communities to lower transport costs and travel time.

DISCUSSION

While education is widely recognized as a fundamental human right of every individual, in

practice, many boys, girls, men and women have been historically locked out of educational systems. Girls in South Kashmir face the greatest challenges. Their burdens are a unique intersection of discrimination based on ethnicity, restrictive traditional roles for women and in most cases, endemic poverty. Girls from South Kashmir also often live in remote geographic locations that are neglected by government social services. Often, they have to travel great distances to the nearest school, thereby multiplying the risks to the personal security of girls. When occurring together, these barriers can be almost insurmountable. The ramifications of being denied the right to a quality education are vast. The principal findings may be discussed as follows:

What emerges most noticeably from the results pertaining to the perceptions of stakeholders (district level education functionaries, parents, teachers, head teachers, girl students and village education committee members) regarding the current situation of girl's education, its factors and challenges? In the present research study, obtained findings revealed the fact that the current situation of girls' education in South Kashmir is inadequate. The result clearly indicated that all respondent agreed that girl's education is more important than boy's education. They further quoted that stakeholders became able to enroll girls in elementary schools but regular attendance is difficult or impossible. All respondents agreed that moderate type of gender bias exists towards girls. They were of opinion that parents' belonged to rural area, OBC and ST community usually engage their daughters in domestic work. Majority of parents and VEC members were not satisfied with the performance of department of school education. They were of the view that their daughters were suffering in schools due to inappropriate curriculum, boring teaching methods, additional burden of work at home, poorly developed or maintained buildings or inadequate basic facilities at school. Majority of parents, girl students and VEC members quoted that Shortage of teachers, lack of good motivated teachers, particularly experienced teachers and unacceptable behaviour of some teachers and head teachers are also the causes of girl illiteracy. The result of the present study is substantiated by the studies conducted earlier by **Bandyopadhyay (2012)** analyzed the gender gap in educational access, participation and learning outcome of children in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh in India. The paper examined whether and how gender determines the access of children to schools of different nature at the primary and upper primary levels and also the primary stage completion rates. It also explored whether gender becomes a determining factor for regular attendance and participation of children in school and to what extent the learning achievement of girls and boys differs from each other. The paper focused on school and family related factors that determine access of children to school, their regular

and meaningful participation and learning outcome. An attempt has been made to facilitate a wide debate on educational access and participation covering enrollment, attendance, repetition and performance of children in competency tests to investigate how gender is intrinsically linked to the meaningful access to school in target locations such as remote rural and tribal areas.

The findings further revealed that there was general agreement among respondents that the cost of education, poor school environments, weak position of women in society, conflict, and social exclusion are the issues and challenges for girls education. Girl's education can be improved by raising additional resources and directing them to where the need is greatest. It requires adequate funding, well trained teachers, a school environment that promotes girls' learning, and a social environment that values educated girls and women. All respondent agree that girl education can be improved by the removal of school fees, free textbooks and school uniforms, construction of schools closer to communities to lower transport costs and travel time.

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 in South Kashmir. 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 women education in South Kashmir reflects pathetic scenes. Their rate of education is very low. Girls of South 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 in all the four districts of South Kashmir- Pulwama, Shopian, Kulgam and Anantnag. 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 especially in south Kashmir. Hence, there is a need for quick checks and proper supervision

of implementation of the education policies in the State.

REFERENCES/ BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- Aggarwal, Y. (1999). *Trends in Access and the Retention*. New Delhi: National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA).
- Ahmad, I. (1987). Educational Development of Minorities in India: Future Perspective, *Educational Planning and Administration*, Vol.1, No.2, p.201.
- Ahmad Gul, S.B & Khan. Z. (2013). Interventions For Promoting Gender Equity At Elementary Education Level In South Kashmir: An Evaluative Study, *International Refereed Research Journal*, Vol.– IV, Issue–3, July 2013 [130].
- Census of India. (2011). *Literacy Rate of India*. New Delhi: Government of India.
- Census of India. (2001). *Literacy Rate of India*. New Delhi: Government of India.
- DISE. (2007). *Elementary Education in India Progress towards UEE: Flash Statistics 2006-2007*. NUEPA, New Delhi.
- DISE. (2008). *Elementary Education in India Progress towards UEE: Flash Statistics 2007-2008*. NUEPA, New Delhi.
- DISE. (2009). *Elementary Education in India Progress towards UEE: Flash Statistics 2008-2009*. NUEPA, New Delhi.
- DISE. (2010). *Elementary Education in India Progress towards UEE: Analytical Report 2008-09*. New Delhi: NUEPA.
- DISE. (2011). *Elementary Education in India Progress towards UEE: Flash Statistics 2009-2010*. NUEPA, New Delhi.
- DFID (2005). *Girls' Education: Towards a Better Future for All*. London: Department for International Development.
- Herz, B. (2006). *Educating Girls in South Asia: Promising Approaches*. UNICEF. At: http://www.ungei.org/1612_709.html.
- Mishra, R. C. (2005). *Women's Education*. New Delhi: A. P. H. Publishing Corporation.
- Sen, A. (2000). *Development as Freedom*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Subrahmanian, R. (2005). *Gender equality in education: Definitions and measurements*. Sussex: Institute of Development Studies.
- UNICEF (1990). *Convention on the rights of the child (CRC) article (28) on education* <http://www.unicef.org/crc/> - retrieved Nov. 22, 2013
- UN (1990). A Universal declaration of human rights: article (26) on education <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/> - retrieved Nov. 25, 2013