

Study on Women Empowerment Through Higher Education During COVID-19 Pandemic in India

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Abstract

The highest function of education is to bring about an integrated individual who is capable of dealing with life as a whole. Education of woman is the most powerful means to change the position in society. Education serves as important instrument for empowerment of women. The impact of pandemic COVID-19 is observed in every sector around the world. The closure of schools, colleges and universities interrupts the teaching for students. The education sector has been fighting to survive the crises with a different approach. Women education is already an issue in India and during COVID-19 Pandemic this issue becomes burning. Women have been able to establish their potentialities but no of such women are less. The real empowerment of women is possible with the help of education only.

Keywords: Empowerment, Covid-19 pandemic, higher education, India

Article History: Submitted: 26th August, 2021, Revised: 10th September, 2021, Accepted: 21st September, 2021, Published: 30th September, 2021.

I. INTRODUCTION

“Empowerment of women leads to development of a good family,
good society and ultimately a good nation”

Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam

Education plays very important role in every one's life. Women are most important factor in every society. There are some elements in society which are deprived of their basic rights due to lack of awareness in every society, state and nation. Women would at the top in the list of these elements. Education ensures that women grow up with knowledge of the world, ability for critical thinking. Education of women plays a pivotal role in improving living standard of family and also of the nation. Gender inequality is the main problem. In modern Indian society a lot of changes happened in women's life due to education. But advantage of such changes available only to them who are aware about their rights and corresponding duties. The awareness regarding rights and duties can bring to women only by way of education and higher education. Status of women changed in the 20th century. But during the pandemic of COVID-19 education sector affected adversely. The pandemic has significantly disrupted the higher education sector. In India more than 32 crores of students have affected by the various restriction and the nationwide lockdown. Outbreak of COVID-19 has impacted about 1.2 billion student and youth across the globe by school and universities closer.

Objectives

The present paper focused on the following objectives.

- To describe the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on women education.

- To describe the importance of women higher education for empowerment of women.
- To make some suggestion to deal with the issues related to the women empowerment and higher education.

II. METHODOLOGY

The present study focused on various reports on education during COVID-19 pandemic prepared by national, international agencies for collection of data and information. Authentic websites accessed for information collection. Journals and e-contents relating to impact of COVID-19 on educational system also referred. Information Collected by the way of observation and formal discussion with women, students, parents, academician. It is not possible to collect data systematically due to impact of covid-19 pandemic.

III. EMPOWERMENT

According to oxford dictionary empowerment means “the process of becoming stronger and more confident especially in controlling one's life and claiming one's right”. The concept of women empowerment was introduced at the International Women's Conference at NAROIBI in 1985. Keshab Chandra Mandal defined women empowerment in five separate categories: - Social, Educational, Economical, Political and Psychological.

As per United Nation Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) the term women's empowerment means:

- Acquiring knowledge and understanding of gender relation and the ways in which these relations may be changed.

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- Developing a sense of self- worth, a belief in one's ability to secure desire changes and the right to control one's life.
- Gaining the ability to generate choices exercise bargaining power.
- Developing the ability to organized and influence the direction of social change, to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally.

IV. IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION

Education is a crucial part growing and developing. Without a proper education for all gender empowerment isn't possible. Education puts everyone on equal footing and lets young girls have access to what their rights and duties. Obtaining knowledge can boost self-confidence, self-esteem and make girls self-sufficient. Education also gives access to the development of social, political, intellectual and religious consciousness and can discourage the growth of bigotry narrow-mindedness, superstition, and intolerance and so on. Education enables women not only in changing their life but also in confrontation of their traditional role and also enable women for responds to the challenges of their life so education is milestone of women empowerment. National Policy on Education recommends promotion of women empowerment through education in 1986.

V. CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS IN SUPPORT OF WOMEN EDUCATION

Constitution of India provides a large consideration for the development and welfare of children and women. Various provisions are found in the Constitution which deals with the equality and prohibition of discrimination and protection children and women. Major constitutional provision in support of women are...

Fundamental Rights

Article 14 "... Equal rights and opportunities to men and women"

Article 15 "... Prohibits discrimination on any ground"

Article 15(3) "... Special provision for women and children"

Article 21A "...Right to education"

Article 23 "...Forced labour are prohibited"

Article 24 "...No child below the age of 15 years shall be employed to work"

Directive Principles

Article 42 "...Provision for just and human condition of work and maternity relief"

Article 45 "...Free and compulsory education for all children"

Article 47 "...Raising the level of nutrition and the standard of living"

Article 73&74 "...Participation of women in the political and grass root development process"

VI. LITERACY RATE IN INDIA

Year	Persons	Males	Female	Difference
2011	69.3	78.88	59.28	19.6
2015	71.96	80.94	62.98	17.96
2018	74.37	82.37	65.79	16.58
2020	74.04	82.14	65.46	16.68

On observing the above table, we come to know that at no point literacy rate of women match that of men. The gap of male- female literacy rate is just a simple indicator of gender discrimination in India. High women literacy rates improve the quality life both at home and also outside the home. During the last decade difference rate of male and female education reduced but existence of difference show us the actual condition of education. During the year 2020 the difference of male and female education goes up with comparison of year 2018. We can say that the female education reduced in year 2020 due to COVID-19 pandemic.

VII. IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON WOMEN EDUCATION

According to report of ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India conducted survey on higher education and observe that there are 993 Universities, 39931 Colleges and 10275 Standalone institution listed on their portal which contribute to education. Total enrolment in higher education every year nearly 37.4 million reflect the expand horizons of the education industry. The national lockdown striking the education of the student and educational institute including universities being closed and also shut their syllabic standard. A large no of Indian students, enrolled in different universities abroad are leaving those countries, and if the situation persists there will be significant decline in the demand for international higher education.

According to report published in Forbes India, it is estimated that nearly 10 million secondary school girls in India could drop out school due to the pandemic, and also putting them at risk of early marriage, early pregnancy, poverty and violence. During lockdown and school closures implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic have already caused 743 million girls to miss out their education and 10 million secondary school girls are predicted to be out of school. According to one report only 12% of household in the poorest country have internet access at home, and access to mobile internet is 26% lower for women and girls than for their male peers. Girls are the first to be pulled out of school, put to work for younger siblings when families face economic hardship due to COVID-19 pandemic. As a result may be girls don't get time and chance for educational work and may not return to educational institutes which becomes obstacle for higher education. Research work has both positive and negative impact during the Covid-19 pandemic. No of women enrollment in higher education rise up compared to previous decade but only few women get the benefit of it. Government has launch no of scheme for promotion of higher education in women yet the result is not satisfactory.

Even though the country has adapted new method of learning process, but still obstacle are lies there for successful endeavor in field of education. Shift toward online education during COVID-19 pandemic leads to barrier for education for those students whose families have not sufficient facilities for online education, among them girls student got less chances for online education due to gender inequality in India. only 45 crore people of our total population of country have access to the internet, among them it is difficult to differentiate the use of internet for the purpose of education. Online education system has its own drawbacks such as poor internet connectivity; lack of technical education, high rate for internet use and other issues also leads to negation of education. The position in rural area worse than of in urban areas. Many states in India have started offline education after unlock phase for schools and universities but due to COVID-19 impact no of students attending offline classes are reduced.

Four factor are stalling improvements in girls education in the country

1 School Nutrition

School provided meals have helped in reducing the cost of girls schooling. In lack of free meals, families might choose to take their daughter out of school. In order to control spread of COVID-19 education institute shut down might lead in higher dropout rates and less re-enrolment.

2 Access to Educational institution

During the COVID-19 pandemic total shift of education in digital format. The girls are less likely to have access to technology for remote learning and in rural areas only 28% of women have access to technology while in urban areas 33% have access. Many parents may be reluctant to send back their children to educational institution. Poor families who have lost their livelihood during pandemic may not be able to afford the expenditure for education.

3 Unemployment

High unemployment rates are also discouraging women from continuing their education during the pandemic. 12 million women lost their jobs in April and May alone in which-9 million in rural areas and 3 million in urban areas. Due to lack of opportunities for pursuing education and employment women are putting in far more hour's hard labour in form of paid and unpaid work than men. This unpaid labour is neither recognized nor accounted for in system of national accounting. Women work is not considered as productive labour and therefor they are denied equal wages social protection etc. In India lots of students or their parents take education loans for higher education. If the employment market does not pick up student debt crises may rise and create serious issues.

4 Diversion of Funding of girl's education.

Funds are being diverted from girl's education to address the pandemic. During the last four year nearly a third of corporate social responsibility investment were made in field of education, but due to COVID-19 pandemic this year funding are redirecting toward COVID-19 pandemic.

VIII. RECOMMENDATION

- To set up system now to track re- enrollment in education.
- Gather data regarding girls at-risk and take initiatives for returning such girls to education institute.
- Focus should be given toward rural areas.
- To take necessary steps by the Government for women's education.
- Social contribution can be used as means to reduce the problem.
- Government should include women's unpaid work within formal definition of productive work.
- Priority should be given to girl's education funding in COVID- 19 recovery plans.

IX. CONCLUSION

"If women are expected to do the same work as men, we must teach them the same thing."

Plato

International Convention in all forms of Discrimination against Women (ICDAW), 1993 mentioned that education is one of the most important tools for empowering women. Women empowerment is very important part in any society, state or country. With the help of Education, empowerment of women can bring positive attitudinal change. The constitution of India empower the state to adopt affirmative steps for empowerment of women. If we want to see progress of our nation and also empowerment of women we must give them equal opportunity in education. To reduce the impact of COVID- 19 on women's education emphasis should be given for strategic planning in field of women education.

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