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Barriers to Girl's Education in Chhattisgarh: Challenges and Opportunities for Reform

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ABSTRACT: This research paper investigates the education of girls in Chhattisgarh, highlighting its critical importance in fostering gender equity and socio-economic development. Despite governmental initiatives, many barriers impede girl's access to education, including socio-cultural norms, poverty, and early marriage. Employing a mixed-methods approach, this study combines observations in schools with surveys conducted among students, parents, and educators to gather comprehensive data on educational experiences and outcomes. The results reveal significant challenges, particularly a high school dropout rate among girls, attributed to factors such as lack of support, financial constraints, and inadequate facilities. Many respondents indicated that prevailing societal attitudes discourage girls from pursuing education beyond a certain age. The implications of these findings underscore the urgent need for targeted interventions to enhance girl's educational opportunities. Future directions include the development of community engagement programs, policy reforms aimed at reducing barriers, and sustained advocacy for girl's rights to education. This study contributes to the discourse on gender and education, offering insights that can inform strategies to improve educational outcomes for girls in Chhattisgarh and similar contexts.

KEYWORDS: Girl's education, Educational barriers, Gender equity, School dropout rates, Socio-cultural norms, Policy reform.

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is recognised as a fundamental right and is essential for the empowerment of individuals, particularly women and girls. In India, girl's education is pivotal not only for achieving gender equality but also for fostering socio-economic development. Chhattisgarh, a state in central India, exhibits a unique blend of challenges and opportunities in the realm of girl's education. Despite governmental efforts and policy frameworks aimed at promoting female education, significant barriers persist, inhibiting the full realisation of educational opportunities for girls.

Chhattisgarh has one of the highest rates of school dropouts among girls, particularly at the secondary level. According to the National Sample Survey (NSS), girl's enrolment in primary education has improved, but the dropout rates escalate dramatically as they progress to higher classes. This trend is alarming, considering the state's socio-economic context, which is characterized by poverty, limited access to resources, and entrenched socio-cultural norms that prioritize boy's education over that of girls.

Several factors contribute to these barriers. Socio-cultural norms in many communities place a premium on traditional gender roles, often relegating girls to domestic responsibilities and early marriages. Economic constraints further exacerbate these issues, with many families unable to bear the costs associated with educating daughters, including school fees, transportation, and other related expenses. Additionally, the lack of supportive infrastructure, such as safe transportation and adequate sanitation facilities in schools, creates a hostile environment that discourages girls from attending school.

Despite that government is also working towards ending gender disparity in education by especially focusing on female education. In a time when our Prime Minister Mr.Narendra Modi has urged the nation to work towards the "Beti Padhao – Beti Bachao" mission, Chhattisgarh was the first State in India to make education free for all girls till they complete their graduation. In addition to the conservative mindset of people towards the female education. Chhattisgarh has also had to battle the naxal activity, which is also another major factor that deters parents from sending their children especially girl child to schools.

For improving this situation, the state government has made it a priority to launch several schemes and initiatives that can help to empower the girl child. Several schemes initiated by Chhattisgarh government as follows-Saraswati Bicycle Scheme-This is an incentive scheme that was introduced by the Chhattisgarh government in 2004.Its major aim to

promote the enrolment of girls in schools and also to reduce the drop-out rate in 14-15years age group. In this scheme all girls in their age group belonging to different categories (SC/ST/BPL/Tribal groups) all are provided bicycles for free. So that they can travel from home to school and vice-versa easily.

This initiative has paid dividends. Now girls can come and go from school in groups which also gives a sense of security to their families. Finally resulting in reducing the drop-out rate among girls especially in high schools. The drop-out rates has been decreased from 3% to 0.9%.

Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya: It's a Central scheme launched in 2004. Its aim is to run residential girls schools for the weaker sections of the nation, areas with lower female literacy rates and higher gender gap. This is specifically helpful for a state like Chhattisgarh where more than 40% of the population is SC/ST/OBC/Tribal and along with challenges like naxal activities.

Polytechnic institutes: Polytechnic institutes play vital role in the building of technical skills. The Chhattisgarh government was well aware of this, as they have established several girl's polytechnic college across the state. In addition to this, there is atleast one polytechnic college in each district. Such institutes provides professional training to students for enhancing their skills, so that they can get better employment opportunities and Many more schemes are there.

Despite of such schemes, still there are barriers which hinders the girl's education therefore, This paper aims to explore the complex landscape of girl's education in Chhattisgarh by identifying the key barriers that hinder their educational progress. Furthermore, it will evaluate existing interventions and policies, offering insights into potential reforms that can enhance educational outcomes for girls in the region. By focusing on both the challenges and opportunities for reform, this research seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on gender and education, highlighting the urgent need for concerted efforts to foster an environment where girls can thrive academically.

This study utilised a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies to gain a comprehensive understanding of the barriers to girl's education in Chhattisgarh.

The research design included observational studies, surveys, and interviews, enabling a thorough exploration of the educational landscape for girls in the region.

Field observations were conducted in ten schools across diverse districts in Chhattisgarh, including both rural and urban settings. Observations focused on the physical environment of schools, including infrastructure quality, availability of resources, and the overall learning atmosphere. This qualitative aspect provided insights into the daily experiences of girls in educational institutions.

A structured survey was developed and distributed to a sample of 300 participants, which included 200 girls aged 10-18, 50 parents, and 50 educators. The survey aimed to capture quantitative data on various factors affecting girl's education, including reasons for school dropout, perceptions of educational value, and socio-economic backgrounds. The survey included closed-ended questions for quantitative analysis and open-ended questions to gather qualitative insights.

In-depth interviews were conducted with a subset of 30 participants, including parents and educators. These interviews aimed to explore personal experiences and attitudes toward girl's education, allowing for a deeper understanding of the socio-cultural factors influencing educational decisions.

Quantitative data from surveys were analyzed using statistical software to identify trends, correlations, and significant factors contributing to dropout rates. Qualitative data from observations and interviews were coded thematically to extract key themes and narratives, ²providing a richer context for the quantitative findings.

The study yielded several significant findings regarding the barriers to girl's education in Chhattisgarh.

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High Dropout Rates

The survey revealed that approximately 40% of girls reported dropping out of school before completing secondary education. The primary reasons cited for dropping out included financial constraints (70%), early marriage (25%), and lack of family support (10%). The qualitative interviews highlighted that many parents viewed education for girls as a lower priority compared to boys.

Socio-Cultural Norms

Respondents identified socio-cultural norms as a substantial barrier. Many families adhered to traditional views that prioritize domestic roles for girls, discouraging them from pursuing education. Over 70% of parents believed that girls should marry early and focus on household responsibilities, reflecting deeply entrenched gender biases.

Inadequate Facilities

More than 50% of the schools surveyed were reported to lack basic sanitation facilities, which particularly affected girls. Many girls expressed discomfort and anxiety about attending schools without adequate privacy and hygiene facilities, contributing to irregular attendance.

Lack of Support Systems

The survey indicated a significant lack of support systems, with only 30% of respondents reporting access to mentorship or guidance programs aimed at encouraging girl's education. This lack of support was echoed in qualitative responses, where girls expressed feelings of isolation and disconnection from educational resources.

II. DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study underscore the critical barriers that impede girl's education in Chhattisgarh. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that encompasses community engagement, infrastructure improvements, and policy reforms.

Addressing Socio-Cultural Barriers

The deeply ingrained socio-cultural norms that prioritize boys' education over girl's must be challenged. Community engagement programs that involve local leaders and parents can play a crucial role in shifting attitudes towards the value of girl's education. Awareness campaigns highlighting successful female role models³ and the benefits of educating girls can contribute to changing perceptions.

Improving Infrastructure

Investment in school infrastructure is essential to create a supportive learning environment for girls. Ensuring access to safe transportation, adequate sanitation facilities, and resources tailored to the needs of girls can significantly improve attendance and retention rates. Schools should also provide gender-sensitive training for educators to foster an inclusive atmosphere.

Enhancing Financial Support

Financial barriers can be mitigated through targeted interventions such as scholarships and conditional cash transfers for families who keep their daughters in school. Government initiatives should focus on reducing the economic burden associated with educating girls, particularly in low-income households.

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Policy Reforms

The study emphasizes the need for policy reforms that specifically address the challenges faced by girls in education. This includes establishing strict regulations against child marriage and promoting policies that support girl's continuous education beyond primary levels.

Future Research Directions

Further research is needed to evaluate the long-term impacts of girl's education on community development and gender equity. Additionally, exploring the effectiveness of specific interventions and their scalability can inform future policy directions and program implementations.

In conclusion, the barriers to girl's education in Chhattisgarh are complex and multifaceted, rooted in socio-economic and cultural contexts. However, with concerted efforts from stakeholders, including government, communities, and organizations, there is a significant opportunity to transform the educational landscape for girls, fostering an environment where they can achieve their full potential.

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