

AN INSIGHT INTO GENDER INEQUITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN RURAL AREAS OF TELANGANA STATE

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Abstract: Education plays a key role in determining how you spend your adult life – a higher level of education means higher earnings, better health, and a longer life. Equity in education is possible if there is no discrimination on the grounds of gender, social status, economic conditions, ethnic origin or any other reason for that matter. The equity became so important these days as quality of life is related to the quality of education and building a strong nation. India ranked 130 of 188 countries on the Human Development Index in 2014. The average adult man in India gets twice as many years of schooling as the average adult woman. At all levels, including at home and in the public arena, women are widely under represented as decision-makers. In Telangana, rural population is more than that of urban population. According to the DMHO census, child marriage system is more prevalent in Nalgonda district. Women's education plays a vital role in the family as well as in the society in the present day scenario. But women enrolment in higher education by is very low in this district. Various reasons like socio economic background, lack of self-identity, cultural barriers, family background and many other factors are associated with this issue.

Key words: Disparities, Education, Enrollment, Gender inequity, Women education.

Introduction: Education gives you perspective on the world, it makes you a complete person, and of course most importantly of all, it helps you build a career. Education plays a key role in determining how you spend your adult life – a higher level of education means higher earnings, better health, and a longer life. Equity in education is possible if there is no discrimination on the grounds of gender, social status, economic conditions, ethnic origin or any other reason for that matter. It should also ensure a better standard of living and to have basic knowledge that is required to live in this society. The equity became so important these days as quality of life is related to the quality of education and building a strong nation.

In India Higher educational institutions include all those institutions that impart education after intermediate at which include degree and P.G colleges, universities, engineering colleges, law colleges, medical colleges, central and state universities, Research Organizations, Distance education Centers, and vocational Colleges etc.

Background of the study: India ranked 130 of 188 countries on the Human Development Index in 2014, up marginally from 135 in 2013, and its index value had improved slightly over 2013. When inequality is factored in, however, India loses over one-fourth of its HDI value, with education registering the highest inequality in outcomes. There are also substantial gender differences in outcomes; if the women of India were their own country, they would rank 151 out of 188 countries in human development, while India's men would come in at 120. The average adult man in India gets twice as many years of schooling as the average adult woman[1].

In India, the higher education system is the second largest one in the world, next only to China. The US

system now comes only after India. In order to ensure balanced development and social justice, the above discussed inequities should not creep into the educational scenario. But in India, inequity in higher education is seen in different forms. Although the world is making progress in achieving gender parity in education, girls still make up a higher percentage of out-of-school children than boys. Approximately one quarter of girls in the developing world do not attend school. Typically, families with limited means who cannot afford costs such as school fees, uniforms, and supplies for all of their children will prioritize education for their sons. In a study it is found out that, though women comprise more than 50% of the world's population, they only own 1% of the world's wealth. Throughout the world, women and girls perform long hours of unpaid domestic work. In some places, women still lack rights to own land or to inherit property, obtain access to credit, earn income, or to move up in their workplace, free from job discrimination. At all levels, including at home and in the public arena, women are widely under represented as decision-makers[2].

Review of literature: Women participation in all the fields increased considerably in the recent past. But their ratio is less when compared to that of men due to wide range of reasons. In this connection, many studies have been conducted in order to understand the valid reasons behind these gender inequalities in higher education. Some of the cases are reviewed to have a clear insight into the problem[3].

A recent study conducted by university of Sussex and British Council reveals that there are under appointments and leadership positions in higher education. In India, 44% of 27.5 million students accounts for just 1.4% of professors and 3% of vice chancellors in

universities. What is more, 6 out of 13 Vice chancellors are at women only universities. The higher the level, the greater the exclusion of women, the report "Women in higher education leadership in South Asia: Rejection, Refusal, Reluctance, Revisioning" reveals.

Nayar (1993), Murthi, et.al (1995), Acharya (1996), Srivastava and Nigam (1997), in their work stressed up on importance of women education to improve child care, access to health, fertility, mortality and other parameters which will in turn reduce the gender backwardness.

Nandita Singh, in her paper "Higher Education for Women in India—Choices and Challenges", analyses gender disparity in education that is evident across the socio-economic spectrum in India. According to her girls who are from rural areas drop out from school as they either enters into matrimony or indulged in household activities after attaining puberty which restricts her not to avail higher education.

Dr.J.D.Singh, in his paper "Higher Education in India – Issues, Challenges and Suggestions", points out that the low enrolment in higher education is due to poor quality and deteriorating standards of the educational institutions which produce graduates who lack employability in job market. So, he suggested that innovative practices, resource generation, hiring good and efficient teaching staff, maintaining institutions with good infrastructural facilities would gear up the enrolment rate.

Kurana Chanana. (2007), in her article emphasized that women gained access to higher education during the first four decades after independence in 1947 because higher education was fully state funded and fully characterized by clustering in the feminine, non-professional and non-market courses offered in general education. Because of globalization, the individual cost to attain higher education was increased which is regarded as one of the reasons for low women enrolment in higher education[10].

Saraswathi Raju. (2008) found that that the magnitude of spatial and social variations and disparities there in are wide. The enrolment levels varied regionally and spatially and that within the spatial sets they also varied across socio-religious groups, but the magnitude of variations and disparities had never been empirically examined.

Marry E. John. (2012), in his paper points out that even though the participation of women in higher education shows steady improvement and a narrowing of gender gap, the national level data reveals the exclusive forms being currently assumed by gender discrimination. This includes discrimination women from different social groups and secondly, adverse child sex ratio due to practices of sex selection[11].

Meenakshi Gautham. (2015), in her exploratory study showed that the family and the school were the

key institutions that shaped her choice of subject. In most of the cases priority was given to the institution, location and hostel facilities rather than to subject or discipline[12].

Jandhyala BG Tilak. (2015), in his key note address in Indian Economic Association, 2015, points out that most of the women enrolment is seen in state (or central universities) rather than going to private colleges or universities. The main reason identified behind this is the burden of fees in private institutions. But when compared to private sector institutions, state or central universities are less in number which effects the low enrolment of women in higher education.

Case for the present study: In Telangana, rural population is more than that of urban population. As per 2011 census, 81.01 % population of Nalgonda districts lives in rural areas of villages. Most of the urban population is centered in and on Hyderabad and Ranga Reddy districts as shown in Chart 1.2. According to the DMHO census, child marriage system is more prevalent in Nalgonda district. Despite of many women and child welfare schemes are designed to address the needs of the women and children exclusively, still gender discrimination is more prevalent. The child sex ratio in 2015 is reduced to 895:1000 which indicates that there is much gender preference.

Women's education plays a vital role in the family as well as in the society in the present day scenario. But women enrolment in higher education by is very low in this district. Various reasons like socio economic background, lack of self identity, cultural barriers, family background and many other factors are associated with this issue. There are many studies that were taken up to evaluate the issues of higher education with regard to equity and found out the reasons for inequity in the country. The present study focuses on measures and innovative practices that can be taken up to increase the enrolment rate of women and reduce gender inequalities in higher education especially in rural areas.

Objectives of the study:

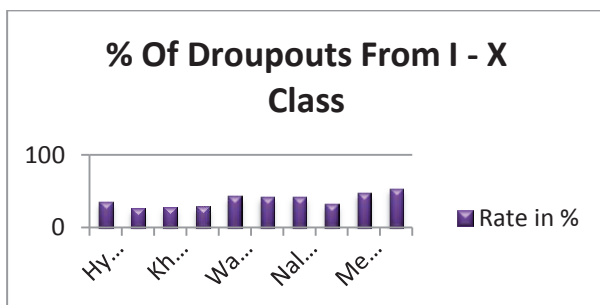
1. To understand the reasons for low women enrolment ratio in higher education in rural areas
2. To explore measures to improve women enrolment ratio in rural areas

Factors effecting Gender Inequity in Higher Education in Rural Areas:

High Dropout ratio from School Level: According to District Information System on Education (DISE) reports 2013-14, there is a high dropout ratio in primary and secondary education itself. Even before the completion of five years of education (Class I to V), a whopping 22.32 per cent students drop out of school which is a very pathetic situation. From chart 1.1, we can observe the dropout ratio at school level. The

dropout ratio is higher in Mahbubnagar District and less in Rangareddy District[4].

Chart 1.1 : High Dropout Ratio at School Level



Source: DICE Reports 2013-14

Low Gross Enrolment Ratio: According to Human Development Index 2010-11, the overall Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Higher Education in Combined Andhra Pradesh is only 28.4% which can be seen in Table 1.1. It can also be observed that there is a significant difference of 7.7% in GER when we take all the categories. If we compare the GER of SC and ST Categories, it is clearly observed that the ST women enrolment rate is low by 9.6% than that of men in that category. These differences are to be checked in order to increase the GER in higher education[8].

Table 1.1: "GER" Of Combined Andhra Pradesh

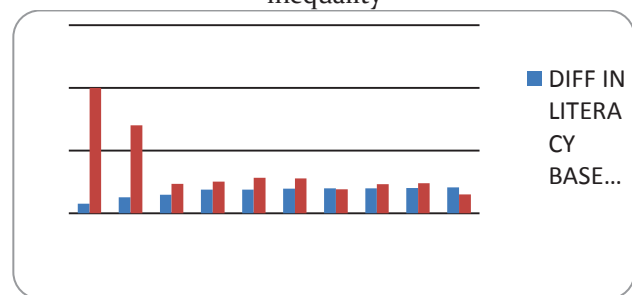
Details	Total	Men	Women	Diff.
All Categories	28.4	32.1	24.4	7.7
SC	25.9	29.8	21.9	7.9
ST	23.8	31.5	21.9	9.6

Source: Gross Enrolment Ratio reports of OECD.

Women gained access to higher education during the first four decades after independence in 1947 because higher education was fully state funded and highly subsidized. Nevertheless, their participation was characterized by clustering in the feminine; non-professional and non-market courses offered in general education. Women students may, of course, like men students, rely on parental help (and in many systems the level of grants makes some parent contribution necessary). But in many developed countries, as well as in developing Countries, there is a lingering belief among parents that it is more sensible to finance a son than a daughter through higher (or any) education. As the cost per year of study gradually increases in higher education, men are given preference in most of the families. Equity in education is not only studied in relation to personal and social characteristics but also associated with the gains such as anticipation of future earnings and better economic circumstances in life[5]-[7].

Low level of Urbanization: The level of urbanization can also be taken as one of the determinants in strengthening higher education. In an urbanized structure we have more opportunities like abundant educational career opportunities, more infrastructural facilities, good transportation, better communication and many more. From Chart 1.2, it is clear that where level of urbanization is more, there the differences in literacy rates between males and females are also low and vice versa. Most of the higher educational institutions are centered in and on urban areas of the district which can also be one of the reasons for higher literacy rates. Where as in rural areas, the facilities above mentioned are very low which effects the level of higher education.

Chart 1.2 : level of Urbanisation and gender inequality



Source: Telangana State Portal

Government Initiatives to improve Higher Education:

Ministry of Human Recourse Development (MHRD): The MHRD’s vision is to realize India’s human resource potential to its fullest in the higher education sector, with equity and inclusion. Its aim is to expand Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Higher education to 21% by 2016-17 and to 30% by the year 2020 which is presently 15%. To achieve this objective, it is taking policy initiatives to expand the higher educational institutional base and also providing opportunity to socially deprived communities and also to promote women education.

Beti Bachao Beti Padoo: The Child Sex Ratio is declining day by day due to various reasons. The main objective of this program is to ensure survival and protection of a girl child and ensuring education and participation of the girl child.

Higher Education Statistics and Public Information System (HESPIS): It is an MHRD initiative to to set up HESPIS in order to maintain the data relating to Higher education so that relevant data would be available for timely policy decisions. All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) is the major component of the scheme for which approximately 80% of the total fund has been allocated.

Telangana Academy for Skill and Knowledge (TASK): Telangana Academy for Skill & Knowledge

was established by the Government of Telangana to enable a platform between Government, Academia and Industry to enhance employability quotient of youth in the state.

Findings:

1. Education in general and women education in particular, is the need of the hour for the healthy development of the society at large.
2. The school dropout ratio is very high in Telangana State which is effecting higher education rate of the state.
3. Poor quality of education and low employability skills are reasons for low enrolment ratio in higher education to some extent.
4. From the literature it is observed that women are mostly into nonprofessional and non-market courses where as men are selecting professional courses in most of the cases.
5. Decline in the sex ratio is also one of the reasons for low enrolment in higher education.

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6. http://www.undp.org/content/dam/india/docs/human_develop_report_andhra_pradesh_2007_full_report.pdf
7. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_Development_Index

6. There are many schemes initiated by central as well as state governments to increase women participation in higher education and also to reduce gender parity in higher education.

Suggestions:

1. The rural population has to be explained about the negative effects of increasing gender parity and help them in understanding the need of higher education for women to address this issue of gender parity.
2. The importance of women education is to be highlighted among the rural population and encourage them to educate their female children.
3. The various schemes that are introduced by the governments at state and central levels are to be communicated through proper channels to the rural public.

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