

Extent of Female School Drop outs in Kangra District of Himachal Pradesh

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ABSTRACT The present study was aimed at finding out the extent of school dropouts among girls and to know the factors responsible for low enrolment and dropout of girls in schools. A total sample of 150 respondents was selected from local Government Senior Secondary Schools of Bhawarna Block of Himachal Pradesh. Data were collected from respondents and their parents through specific interview schedules. The major findings revealed a significant association between family type, income and education of mothers with incidence of dropouts. Class wise and year wise analysis showed a decreasing trend of dropping out in the past two years. In parents' opinion, behaviour of teachers, inappropriate teaching methods, unsuitable curriculum, lack of child's interest in studies, low grade in class, financial strain and girl's requirement in household work and care of siblings were important factors for low enrolment and dropout of girls in schools.

INTRODUCTION

Education is the basic requirement for human development and survival of the society. It is necessary and a universal feature of society by which every generation transmits social heritage to the next generation. Education is the principal instrument in awakening the child to cultural values and thus is the strongest force in the development and growth of a child in preparing him to be responsible, intelligent, strong and healthy citizen.

Despite professed equality of opportunity to all citizens, glaring disparities exist between men and women. The educational level of Indian women continues to be disappointing. In India, although the percentage of literacy is rising year after year, what is more alarming is that the number of illiterate children in the age group of 6 to 14 years is also increasing. The many ways in which education affects women's status have been widely recognized and discussed. Education contributes to an increase in confidence, exposure to the outside world and decision making power within the household. The dropout rate of girls is higher than that of boys. This is understandable given our socio-economic conditions. It is also being felt that parents are less interested in sending their girls to schools as they are not able to meet their school expenses and also because they are needed at home. According to Rao Mohan (2000), illiteracy, poverty, inadequate earnings and poor living conditions of parents force them not

only to withdraw their wards from school but also put them in various types of jobs for contribution to the family income.

Education is the means through which a society perpetuates and spreads its own culture. The development of an individual and the progress of a nation depend on education. There are many factors that are responsible for female school dropouts. The problem of education of girls is further compounded if the school is located in distant village or town and transport facilities are poor. Bhagyalakshmi (2001) revealed that the major factors in dropouts are improper physical availability of school, access and facilities are less than satisfactory, tangible and intangible costs of education, conditions of household level, poverty, etc. The dropouts mostly belong to families with low socio-economic status, minimal family education and economic necessity for wage earning to support the family.

The present study has been conducted with an objective to have in-depth insight into the problem of female school dropouts in primary to higher secondary classes during the last five years in Bhawarna Block and judging the factors responsible for low enrolment and dropouts of girls in the schools.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in Bhawarna block of district Kangra of Himachal Pradesh. A sample of 150 female respondents in the age group of 10

to 18 years were randomly selected from local Government Senior Secondary schools of the block with equal sample distribution from primary-middle, middle-high and high-secondary sections. The extent of female school dropouts from 5th standard to 12th standards was seen through the attendance registers obtained from the school administration. The reasons for dropouts were judged by interviewing the dropout girls and their parents through home visits. Girls and their parents were interviewed using a self-structured schedule that comprised of information regarding school and home atmosphere and background information. Opinions of parents about causes behind dropouts of girls were also sought. The data were analysed with the help of frequencies and percentages in addition to applying correlation for seeing the relationship among variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

With a large number of developmental programmes focusing on achieving hundred percent literacy in the next coming years, there still exists instances where girls do not complete their school years due to certain social norms. A large number of girls are kept at home because of responsibilities pertaining to housework.

The socio-economic background of respondents in the present study is given in Table 1 which reveals that majority of them belonged to joint families; their parents were primarily labourers and had a small family income of Rs 500/- to Rs 2500/- per month. The educational status of their parents was low as majority of the mothers were illiterate and fathers were educated upto primary level. Significant relation was found between educational status of the girls and family type, family income and mother's education (Table 4). This implies that more the parents are poor, living in a joint family and less educated, more are the incidences of girls being dropped out of school. This also means that girls are forced to take up the responsibilities of household tasks at an early age and this affects their education in terms of dropping out instances. Studies by Rao Mohan (2000) and Mathur (1999) also indicate that poverty is one of the main causes of drop out of girls.

According to Upendranath (1995) Indian education has been ploughed with high incidence of dropout at middle level (6th to 8th classes) and

Table 1: Socio-economic background of respondents

<i>Socio-economic variables</i>	<i>Number (N = 150)</i>	<i>Percent- age</i>
<i>Type of Family</i>		
Joint	79	52.66
Nuclear	71	47.34
<i>Occupation of Parents</i>		
Farming	79	12.67
Labourers	73	48.67
Government Service	30	20.0
Business	18	12.0
Miscellaneous	10	6.67
<i>Family Income (Rs/- per month)</i>		
500 – 1500	50	33.34
1500/- - 2500/-	52	34.66
2500/- 3500/-	26	17.34
3500/- and above	22	14.66
<i>Education of Father</i>		
Illiterate	42	28.0
Primary	44	29.0
Middle	33	22.0
Matric and above	31	20.66
<i>Education of Mother</i>		
Illiterate	81	54.0
Primary	48	32.0
Middle	18	12.0
Matric and above	2	1.33
<i>Distance from Home to School (in kms)</i>		
0 – 0.5	10	6.66
0.5 – 1.0	83	55.34
1.0 – 1.5	10	6.66
1.5 – 2.0	47	31.34

this is more for girls than boys. . Data shows that in most countries, like India, more girls than boys drop out, resulting in a widening of the gender gap between primary and secondary and between secondary and tertiary enrolment ratios. Year wise and class wise extent of dropouts was observed in the present study and it was found that although there is a decrease in incidence of dropouts of girls from 1998 to 2002, the class wise extent of dropouts shows that the rate is higher in the 5th, 7th, 8th, 10th and 12th classes of the schooling (Table 2). As for secondary enrolment, Bangladesh, India and Nepal have the largest gender gaps. The gender gaps in secondary enrolment ratios were also wider than that for primary enrolment ratios, implying that a greater proportion of girls than boys discontinued their education after secondary education . This implies that the rate of dropout increases as we go higher in studies for girls in schools. According to Pal and Pant (1995) obstacles to female education stemmed up from cultural factors like early marriage, restriction on physical mobility of girls, etc. In addition, interest of studying on child's part and financial conditions of the family plays

and important role in letting the girls dropout of the schools.

Among the factors related to causes of dropouts, personal and economic factors were

Table 2: Class – wise extent and year wise extent of dropouts among girls

Year / Class	Total enrolment	Drop-outs	Dropouts as total % age to total enrolment	Percentage of total dropouts
<i>Year wise</i>				
1998	471	73	2.95	30.41
1999	458	67	2.70	27.91
2000	495	45	1.81	18.75
2001	493	37	1.49	15.41
2002	557	18	0.72	7.50
<i>Class wise</i>				
5 th class	223	33	1.33	13.75
6 th class	372	08	0.32	3.33
7 th class	383	47	1.89	19.58
8 th class	530	50	2.02	20.83
9 th class	295	15	0.6	6.25
10 th class	401	35	1.41	14.58
11 th class	162	24	0.97	10.0
12 th class	108	28	1.13	11.66

the most prominent which came up through interview with parents. Majority of the parents agreed that lack of child's interest in studies, financial strain, involvement of child in household tasks and teachers discriminating behaviour were responsible for the dropout of their girls (Table 3). Studies by Visaria (1993) and Chatterjee (1990) reported reasons of lack of interest and financial strains of family as prominent causes of dropouts. Desai (1994) asserted that parents' reluctance to educate daughters has its roots in the situation of women. Parents have several incentives for not educating their daughters. Foremost is the view that education of girls brings no returns to parents and that their future roles being mainly reproductive and perhaps including agricultural labour, require no formal education. As more and more boys are engaged in education there is a growing reliance on the labour of girls. Also lack of conveniently located and / or adequately equipped schools and girls attaining puberty were the major reasons of dropout in addition to low parental interests and support for further schooling.

CONCLUSION

Although the female literacy has gone up by five times since 1951 (54.17% in India and 68.08% in Himachal Pradesh as compared to 75.85%- male

Table 3: Opinion of parents about causes of dropouts

S. No.	Factors	No. of parents (N = 150)	%
<i>a) School Factors</i>			
1.	Discriminating behaviour of teachers	41	27.33
2.	Insecure school environment	37	24.33
3.	Unsuitable school curriculum	36	24.0
4.	Rude behaviour of teachers	33	22.0
5.	Absence of female teachers	10	6.6
<i>b) Personal Factors</i>			
1.	Lack of child's interest	90	60.0
2.	Low grade of child	58	38.6
3.	Teasing by classmates	35	23.3
<i>c) Economic Factors</i>			
1.	Financial strain	117	78.6
2.	Support from child's earning	13	8.6
<i>d) Familial Factors</i>			
1.	Involvement in Household chores	87	58
2.	Conflicts at home	41	27.3
3.	Prolonged illness in family	15	10.0
<i>e) Societal Factors</i>			
1.	System of early marriages	63	42
2.	Problem of adjustment	62	41.3
3.	Training in Household work	36	24.0
4.	Trend of not educating girls in community	30	20.0
<i>Reasons for Dropouts</i>			
1.	Poverty	20	13.3
2.	Large family	15	10
3.	Household work	18	12
4.	Parental pressure	45	30
5.	Lack of interest	27	18
6.	Unsuitable school timing	10	6.67
7.	Other reasons	15	10

Table 4: Correlation between socio economic factors and educational status of girls

S. No.	Socio Economic Variables	Correlation Matrix Educational Status
1.	Family Type	0.20360*
2.	Family size	0.05697 N.S.
3.	Caste	-0.07771 N.S.
4.	Land Holding	0.05911 N.S.
5.	Income	0.21893*
6.	Occupation	-0.04094 N.S.
7.	Father's Education	0.10781 N.S.
8.	Mother's Education	0.21319*

* Significant at 5 percent level
N.S. Non Significant.

literacy in India and 86.02% in the state), but cases of dropouts of girls are still there. The participation of girls in vocational, higher and technical education is very low. We all know that most of the dropouts occur during middle and high school level. Therefore, sustained efforts are needed to attract the girls to school and retain them until they complete their education. Special structured programmes / advertisements in the

television and print media can play an effective role in improving the dropout rate of girls.

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