

INTERVENTIONS FOR PROMOTING GENDER EQUITY AT ELEMENTARY EDUCATION LEVEL IN SOUTH KASHMIR: AN EVALUATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to evaluate the interventions for promoting gender equity at elementary education level in South Kashmir. Descriptive survey method was used in this study to obtain pertinent and precise information. The sample of this study included 120 head teachers and 90 local community members selected by using purposive sampling method from the three districts of Jammu and Kashmir namely Pulwama, Shopian and Anantanag. The self developed questionnaire and an interview schedule was used by the investigator to evaluate the intervention schemes. The results evaluated the effectiveness of different gender intervention schemes and also identify some new interventions made by the local, state and central agencies for promoting gender equity at elementary education level. The results supported that the schemes like NPEGEL, KGBV and Mid day meal seems to be much more acceptable by people where as DPEP and scholarship schemes where moderately accepted by the people. The new interventions identified were- personal guidance to girls, financial support to girls, meeting with parents and providing motivation to girls who are not in schools. These schemes made an enormous contribution for promoting gender equity at elementary education level.

Keywords: Interventions, Gender Equity, Elementary Education, Evaluative Study.

INTRODUCTION:

The state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) has been the focus of concern over more than a two decade and has drawn the attention of the world. A gradual rise in terms of gender disparity especially during the last two decades due to the existing economic, social and political turmoil has become prominently displayed. Women’s participation in the socio-economic and political processes has taken a back seat. The impact of such a development results in an erosion of their freedom of speech, freedom to attain education and enhancement of employment opportunities. Women in the Kashmiri society are generally subjected to discrimination, oppression and inequality. The role of women remained limited to domestic affairs and so they are also debarred from education in rural areas (Dabla, 2007). People living in rural areas are highly traditionalist and the realization that women need to be educated is totally lacking.

Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) State is considered as one of the most educationally backward states with reference to the developmental indices such as literacy rate, dropout rate, teacher pupil ratio and the absorption pattern of the educated people. The distressing features are low literacy rate, gender inequality, mismatch between education and employment. As per 2011 census, the state ranks 23rd in literacy among the states of India and reported that the literacy rate of J&K is about 68.74 per cent. But the rate of women's literacy is only 58.01 per cent. It is a well known fact that about 80 percent of the people in Jammu and Kashmir State, live in the rural areas, where the educational facilities beyond the mixed primary schools are hardly sufficient. The violence during the last 14 years has crippled the economy and worsened the situation further. The dropout behavior between boys and girls in different regions of the state shows that the percentage of girls dropout is highest; one out of three adult women in the J&K today cannot read and write, compared to one out of five adult males (Pramod, 2008). In some backward and rural areas of J&K, girls are considered as household servants. In contrast to when a boy is born in such areas, friends and relatives exclaim congratulations. A son is consider as an insurance as he will take over his father`s property and get an employment to help and support the family. When a girl gets birth, the response is very different. Some women cry when they come across to know that their baby is a girl because, to them, a daughter is just expenditure. Her place is in the home only, not in the world of men. A combination of severe poverty and deep biases against women creates a remorseless cycle of inequality. Education is the instrument that can help to break the pattern of gender inequality and bring lasting changes for women. Educated women are essential to reduce gender inequality and to create an educated state. Girls’ education also means a comprehensive change of a society. As women get the opportunity to go the school and attain higher level jobs, they attain status in their communities.

The educational situation in the state of Jammu and Kashmir clearly indicates that there exists a gender inequality in education.

MALE-FEMALE LITERACY:

A glance at the table I explain that there is male-female gap in literacy rate in the state. As per census 2011, the literacy rate climbed up from 12.95% in 1961 to 68.74% in 2011 but it still lags far way the national average of 74.04% (census report, 2011). Further study of the data indicates that the male literacy level is higher than the female literacy level in all the years. The male literacy level reached to 78.26% in 2011 which was only 19.75% in 1961 whereas the female literacy level increased from 5.05% in 1961 to 58.01% in 2011. The male-female gap in literacy rate has increased from 14.7% in 1961 to 20.25% in 2011. In the delineation of the above information, it can be argued that though there is a significant progress in the female literacy rate but the gender inequality in literacy rate still exists in the state.

Table I: Literacy Rates by Sex in J & K

	Male	Female	Total	MFG
1961	19.75	5.05	12.95	14.70
1971	31.01	10.94	21.71	20.07
1981	41.46	18.73	30.64	22.73
1991	NA	NA	NA	NA
2001	65.75	41.82	54.46	23.93
2011	78.26	58.01	68.74	20.25

Note: MFG-- Male Female Gap; * Estimated Literacy Rates

Source: Census of India J & K 20011

In Jammu and Kashmir, the education of male child holds preference and the education of girls is considered as

of secondary importance. However, the enrollment of girls at the elementary stage has increased in the recent years, gender inequality still persists and the drop-out rate is greater among girls as compared to that of boys at the elementary level. The government has implemented a large number of schemes for the education of girls making special provisions and incentives to promote girls' participation in education. SSA, an umbrella programme to increase the Universalization of Elementary Education, gives special importance to the education of girls and aims to bridge the gender gap in elementary education. There are lots of gender specific educational equity programmes under the Ministry of Human Resource and Development (MHRD) to promote girls' education such as National Programme of Education for Girls at the Elementary Level (NPEGEL), Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV), and Mid day Meal Scheme, District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) and Scholarships benefit girls in general.

The gender gap in retention, enrollment, achievement and completion has been reduced consistently as an attempt of several programs for girls' education. However, in a number of parts of the country, the gender gap is still so much high and is not declining rapidly. There is a need of hour is to introduce an effective plan for the successful implementation of the centrally sponsored and state sponsored schemes.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

Gender disparity has been a major issue in Jammu and Kashmir pursuit for obtaining the goal of universal elementary education. In order to overcome the troubles faced by girls, several interventions have been initiated across the state. What impact have the interventions made as reflected in the existing statistics? This is one of the questions that the present study will examine. This study is of great importance for the promotion of gender equity at elementary education level. It will provide an account of interventions that work to promote gender equity in schooling in South Kashmir, with a particular emphasis on educational access and enrolment of girls, curriculum and physical facilities. It aims to highlight educational access issues affecting girls in South Kashmir and the types of interventions considered necessary to secure consequential and sustainable access for all. It will provide us insight about the present position of girl education at the elementary level in South Kashmir.

Gender discrimination in society is a huge concern that can't be tackled by education alone. However, schools and education systems can contribute to gender equity rather than sustaining inequities. Areas of fruitful action include curriculum change, tackling sexual harassment in and around school, the training of gender-sensitive teachers, and attention to diverse learning styles. The study will analyze, synthesize and evaluate the interventions that local, state and central agencies launched to enhance the gender equity at elementary education level. The above and other such interventions and new initiatives taken by community if any, in the field of girls' education and gender equity will be covered in the study.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE:

Our literature review focuses on the work on gender inequality and biases in elementary education. The main question that our research focuses on is why more girls do not start and stay in school in Jammu and Kashmir, despite the interventions schemes for promoting gender equity at elementary education level. 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 girls, at international, regional as well as national levels, with arguments being made for increasing financial investment and policy focus on education provision (Levine, Lloyd, Greene, *et al.* 2008; 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 (King and Hill, 1993). Education of the girls and thus future of women are seen as key to securing intergenerational transfers of knowledge, and hence providing long-term gender equity, 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, 2002). However, along with the instrumentalist rationale, the intrinsic value of education for girls and women is also discussed (Sen, 2000). The 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 elementary education is considered a first

step towards achieving equality. Chisamya et al. (2012) investigated to discover the special effects of rapid increases in gender parity in the primary schools in Malawi and Bangladesh on gender biasness/inequities in schools and communities. Based on the study of comparative case studies of the marginalized communities, they argued that educational intervention/initiatives paying attention on achieving gender equity provide restricted evidence that girls' educational experiences modeled drastically diverse gender norms than in communities. The data shows persistent gender inequality related to the educational attainment and learning, and gender-based violence in schools. Govinda and Bandyopadhyay (2008) narrated that the review papers sketch's on recent data to record the participation and access rates of girls relative to boys. The papers offer a critical appraisal of findings of different recent researches on the school education in India locating the areas that need further research. The paper disclose that while enrolment of girls has enlarged rapidly since the 1990s, there is still a considerable gap in upper primary and secondary schooling and gender biasness interlock with other forms of social inequality, ethnicity, notably caste and religion. The paper concluded with recommendation for execution of enabling policy to meet up the challenges for improving the quality of schools ensuring well again opportunities for girls at higher stages of education, especially at upper primary and secondary schools.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To evaluate the interventions implemented by the local, state, and central agencies for promoting gender equity in elementary education.
2. To identify the new interventions made by the local, state, and central agencies for improving the enrollment of girls at the elementary stage to promote gender equity.
3. To evaluate the interventions made in curricular and co-curricular activities to remove gender bias in elementary education.
4. To evaluate the interventions made in physical facilities at schools to promote gender equity in elementary education.
5. To study alternative programs available to girls who are at risk of dropping out to maintain gender equity in education.
6. To analyze the factors responsible for the success or poor implementation of gender intervention schemes.

SAMPLE:

The investigation was conducted in Pulwama, Shopian, Kulgam and Anantanag districts of Jammu and Kashmir, Purposive sampling and Random sampling technique were used by the investigator and took a sample size of 100 head teachers from 100 elementary schools and 200 local community members associated with schools. For this Descriptive survey method was used.

TOOL USED:

The selections of suitable tools are of vital importance for successful research. Different tools are appropriate for collecting various kinds of information for various purposes. The following tools were used in the study.

- A self-constructed questionnaire (for head-teachers).
- A Semi-structured interview schedule (for local communities).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

The aim of the present study was to evaluate the different intervention schemes made by the government as well as local communities in order to promote gender equity at elementary education level like Mid-Day Meal Scheme, National Programme for Girls Education at Elementary Level (NPEGEL) and the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV), DPEP (District Primary Education Programme) etc. and to identify the new interventions made by the government as well as local communities for promote gender equity in elementary education.

RESULTS PERTAINING TO EVALUATION OF DIFFERENT GENDER INTERVENTION SCHEMES:

The first objective of the study was to evaluate the interventions implemented by the local, state and central agencies for promoting gender equity at elementary education level. After the evaluation and verification of different intervention schemes, the investigator reached on the results.

Table 1: Effectiveness of NPEGEL, KGBV, DPEP, Mid Day Meal and Scholarships schemes for promoting gender equity at elementary education level

S. No	Items	Responses		
		Very useful	Useful	Not useful
1	Effectiveness of NPEGEL scheme for promoting gender equity	10%	77.5%	12.5%
2	Effectiveness of KGBV scheme for promoting gender equity	32.5%	62.5%	5%
3	Effectiveness of DPEP scheme for promoting gender equity	47.5%	37.5%	15%
4	Effectiveness of Mid-Day Meal scheme for promoting gender equity	62.5%	27.5%	10%
5	Effectiveness of scholarships to improve the enrolment of girls	83%	10%	7%
6	Satisfaction of Head Teachers/ Community Members regarding different intervention schemes to promote gender equity	7.5%	75%	17.5%

Table 2: Comparison of different gender intervention schemes for promoting gender equity

Item	Comparison regarding the effectiveness of different gender intervention schemes				
	DPEP	NPEGEL	KGBV	Mid-Day Meals	Scholarships
Responses	17.5%	27.5%	10 %	22%	23%

RESULTS PERTAINING TO IDENTIFICATION OF NEW INTERVENTIONS MADE BY THE GOVERNMENT AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY FOR IMPROVING THE ENROLLMENT OF GIRLS:

The second objective of the study was to identify the new interventions made by the local, state, and central agencies for improving the enrollment of girls at the elementary stage to promote gender equity. The details of new interventions/support services are given below:

Table 3: New interventions for promoting gender equity in elementary education

Item	Responses about new interventions and innovations			
	Personal guidance to girls	Financial support	Meeting with parents	Providing Motivation
Responses	35%	15%	30%	20%

RESULTS PERTAINING TO INTERVENTIONS AND INNOVATIONS MADE IN CURRICULAR AND CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES:

The third objective of the study was to assess the interventions and innovations made in curricular and co-curricular activities for the purpose of removing gender biasness in elementary education. In order to assess the interventions and innovations made in curricular and co-curricular activities, the investigator investigated as follows:

Table 4: Assessment of the interventions in curricular and co-curricular activities for removing gender biasness in elementary education

S. No	Item	Responses	
		YES	No
1	Equal opportunities in all curricular activities are given to girls	82.5%	17.5%
2	Equal opportunities available to girl students to express their views	97%	3%
3	Equal treatment given to girls in solving academic or personal problem	75%	25%
4	Difference in learning between boys and girls.	13%	87%
5	Assignment of gender specific role in organizing curricular/co-curricular activities	39%	61%
6	Organization of co-curricular activities according to the needs and interests of the girl students	35%	65%
7	Equal participation is given to girls in games and sports activities	85%	15%
8	Gender balanced school curriculum	80%	20%

Table 5: Type of problems girls faces during their studies

Item	Type of problems girls faces during their studies		
Responses	Shyness	Financial problem	Lack of parental support
	55%	27%	18%

RESULTS PERTAINING TO INTERVENTIONS MADE IN PHYSICAL FACILITIES AT SCHOOLS TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUITY IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION:

The fourth objective of the study was to evaluate the interventions made in physical facilities at schools to promote gender equity in elementary education. In order to identify the physical facilities available at schools made by the government and local community, the investigator identified the following:

Table 6: Availability of adequate number of teaching rooms, playground, furniture and library facilities

Item	Availability of teaching rooms, playground, furniture and library			
Responses	Teaching rooms	Playground	Furniture	Library
	87% out of 100%	55% out of 100%	78% out of 100%	15% out of 100%

Table 7: Drinking water facilities at schools

Item	Availability of drinking water facilities at schools	
Responses	Yes	No
	62%	38%

Table 8: Toilet facilities available at schools

Item	Toilet facilities available at schools		
Responses	Separate toilet for boys and girls	Toilet only for girls	No toilet facility
	23%	67%	10%

RESULTS PERTAINING TO STUDY THE ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS AVAILABLE TO GIRLS WHO ARE AT RISK OF DROPPING OUT AT ELEMENTARY STAGE:

The fifth objective of the study was to identify the alternative programs available to girls who are at risk of dropping out at elementary stage. In order to identify the alternative programs available to girls who are at risk of dropping out at elementary stage, the investigator investigated as follows:

Table 9: Reasons for dropout rate specifically among girl students

Item	Reasons for dropout specifically among girl students		
Responses	Orthodox parents	Poverty	Dearth of lady teachers
	30%	24%	46%

Table 10: Alternative programs available to girls who are at risk of dropout

Item	Alternative programs available to girls who are at risk of dropping out		
Responses	Community participation	Parental meet	Personal guidance
	39%	34%	27%

RESULTS PERTAINING TO FACTORS THAT ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR POOR IMPLEMENTATION OF GENDER INTERVENTION SCHEMES AT ELEMENTARY STAGE:

The sixth objective of the present study was to study the factors that are responsible for poor implementation of gender intervention schemes at elementary stage. In order to identify the factors that are responsible for poor implementation of gender intervention schemes, the investigator explored various aspects as follows:

Table 11: Factors responsible for poor implementation of gender intervention schemes

Item	Factors responsible for poor implementation of gender intervention schemes		
Responses	Corruption	Lack of awareness	Lack of proper supervision
	30%	60%	10%

RESULTS PERTAINING TO SUITABLE SUGGESTIONS GIVEN BY HEAD TEACHERS/ COMMUNITY MEMBERS FOR IMPROVING GENDER EQUITY IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION:

Table 12: Suitable suggestions for improving gender equity

Item	Suitable suggestions for improving gender equity				
Responses	Moral education	Equal opportunities	Organization of awareness programs	Equal treatment	Financial support
	87% out of 100%	75% out of 100%	82% out of 100%	92% out of 100%	60% out of 100%

CONCLUSIONS:

The conclusions are the substance of an investigation and holds significant importance. The conclusions are presented below:

EVALUATION OF THE INTERVENTIONS SCHEMES IMPLEMENTED BY THE LOCAL, STATE, AND CENTRAL AGENCIES FOR PROMOTING GENDER EQUITY IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION:

- Almost 87 percent of respondents found the NPEGEL scheme as useful; the scheme seems to have been accepted by the people in general.
- The KGBV scheme seems to be much more acceptable by people because only 5 percent of respondents reflect it to be not useful. Even this scheme has a greater acceptance in people as compared to the NPEGEL. Being a residential program for the underprivileged girls, it looks to be appealing to the people.
- The DPEP scheme seems to be acceptable because 75% of head teachers/ community members were of opinion that the scheme is useful for the purpose of promoting gender equity in elementary education.
- About 90% of respondents agreed to the mid day meal scheme as useful. The scheme shows much more effectiveness as compared to other schemes.
- Use of scholarships helped in improving the enrolment of girls. Around 83% of head teachers/ community members supported this view.
- The comparison between different intervention schemes showed that mid day meal scheme ranked on the top. The scheme is very effective as compared to other schemes for the purpose of improving the enrolment of girls.

IDENTIFICATION OF THE NEW INTERVENTIONS MADE BY THE LOCAL, STATE, AND CENTRAL AGENCIES FOR IMPROVING THE ENROLMENT OF GIRLS AT ELEMENTARY STAGE TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUITY:

- The new interventions and innovations identified were- personal guidance to girls, financial support to girls, meeting with parents and providing motivation to girls who were not in schools.

EVALUATION OF THE INTERVENTIONS MADE IN CURRICULAR AND CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES TO REMOVE GENDER BIAS IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION:

- In order to promote gender equity in elementary education, about 82.5% provide equal opportunities to girl students in all curricular activities.
- In order to solve academic or personal problems, about 97% give equal opportunities to girls to express their views.
- Seventy percent agreed that equal treatments are given to girl students at elementary level in solving their academic or personal problems.
- Around 87% of head teachers/community members were of the opinion that there is no difference in learning between boys and girls in curricular as well as co-curricular activities.

- Near about 61% respondents were of the opinion that they did not give any preference to any specific gender during assigning the tasks to students.
- Majority of respondents (65%) agreed that co-curricular activities were not organised according to the needs and interests of girl students.
- Equal participation is given to girl students in games and sports activities, as 85% agreed this view.
- About 80% agreed that the school curriculum is gender balanced. As it do not give any special privilege to any particular sex.
- The girls face problems like shyness, lack of finance and lack of proper parental support during their studies. As regard the problems faced by girl students during their studies, shyness is a major bother neck as compared to financial problem and lack of parental support.

EVALUATION OF THE INTERVENTIONS MADE IN PHYSICAL FACILITIES AT SCHOOLS TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUITY IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION:

- Majority of schools have adequate number of teaching rooms, playground facility and necessary furniture, whereas only 15% of the schools have library facility available.
- Only 62% of schools have drinking water facility available.
- About 90% of schools have toilet facility available.

ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS AVAILABLE TO GIRLS WHO ARE AT RISK OF DROPPING OUT TO MAINTAIN GENDER EQUITY IN EDUCATION:

- The respondents agreed that some important reasons for dropping out of girls at elementary level were orthodox nature of parents, poverty and dearth of lady teachers. Among the problems, dearth of lady teachers is of severity type as compared to other problems.
- The respondents were of the opinion that for promoting gender equity in education some measures are necessary like community participation, parental meet and personal guidance to girls. The community participation is more useful than other majors as majority of respondents supported it.

ANALYSIS OF THE FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR SUCCESS OR POOR IMPLEMENTATION OF GENDER INTERVENTION SCHEMES:

- Some important factors responsible for poor implementation of gender intervention schemes are corruption among different official's, lack of awareness among masses and lack of proper supervision. Among all the factors, lack of awareness among masses is most serious problem.

SUGGESTIONS ABOUT SUITABLE MEASURES FOR IMPROVING GENDER EQUITY IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION:

The suitable suggestions recommended by head teachers and community members were provision of moral education at schools, equal opportunities to girls, organisation of awareness programmes about the importance of girl education, equal treatment and financial support to girls. Among all the suggestions, equal treatment given to girls was supported by the majority of respondents.

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