



Issues and Challenges Faced by Rural Women Students for Their Higher Education: A Study

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ABSTRACT

The problem of unemployment, illiteracy for their parents is the main reason for the low higher status of rural women. The rural women higher education problems may be eliminated only through collective social action for which the GOs, NGOs, Corporate sector should involved and contribute towards effective empowerment rural women. The present study revealed that there has been significant progress in the performance of women education as the female literacy rate has been increasing over the period and also the gaps between male and female literacy rates are there in our society. Here gender bias played a vital role and domination of rural women in various aspects. The analysis of the data collected has proved that the women face very many serious problems in the course of their studies, but these problems are not insoluble. Some Possible measures to reducing the difficulties faced by rural women in access to higher education should be followed like - government should take steps for making education process easier and inexpensive.

Key Words: Women, unemployment, Illiteracy, Education, Corporate

1. Introduction

Indian social structure marked by inequality, injustice, discrimination, oppression, exploitation etc. against the weaker sections namely, rural women who mostly belong to suppressed section which constitute considerable size of population of the country and also in Tamil Nadu. But it is very unfortunate to say that for long years there has been a strong bias against women. This neglecting attitude towards women is prominent in many respects particularly in the field of education. None can deny the fact that education is the fundamental agent for the socio economic development of a country. But women access in the domain of education has not been fairly treated (Gurusamy, 2019).

Women education has two aspects – individual aspect and social aspect. It is education which increases women's abilities to deal with the problems of her life, her family, her society and her nation. Education increases confidence in a woman. An educated woman can easily understand the demerits of early marriage and a high birth rate. They have the attitude of gender parity among their children right from

health care, nutrition, education and even career. The fruits of education are enjoyed not only by the woman concerned but it passes by her family in later life. In a word, the overall development of a society depends on the development of its total members. But if half of its members are lagged, obviously it will create hindrance to the development.

The education of women in India plays a significant role in improving livings standards in the country. A higher women literacy rate improves the quality of life both at home and outside the home, by encouraging and promoting education of children, especially female children, and in reducing the infant mortality rate. Several studies have shown that a lower level of women literacy rates results in higher levels of fertility and infant mortality, poorer nutrition, lower earning potential and the lack of an ability to make decisions within a household. Women's lower education levels is also shown to adversely effect the health and living conditions of children. A survey that was conducted in India showed results which support the fact that infant mortality rate was inversely related to female literacy rate and educational level. The survey also suggests a correlation between education and economic growth.

In India, it was found that there is a large disparity between female literacy rates in different states. For example, with Kerala actually has a female literacy rate of about 86%, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh have female literacy rates around 55-60%. These values are further correlated with health levels of the Indians, where it was found the Kerala was the state with the lowest infant mortality rate while Bihar and Uttar Pradesh are the states with the lowest life expectancies in India. Furthermore, the disparity of female literacy rates across rural and urban areas is also significant in India. Out of the 24 states in India, 6 of them have female literacy rates

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Article Information:

Article Received for review: 12 January 2023

Article Reviewed: 10 February 2023

Revised Comments: 20 April 2023

Accepted for publication: 18 July 2023 Available Online: 31 July 2023

How to Cite this Article:

S. Raja (2023): Issues and Challenges Faced by Rural Women Students for Their Higher Education: A Case Study East African Journal of Pastoralism, 4(1):10-16.

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of below 60%. The rural state Rajasthan has a female literacy rate of less than 12%. (Khanh Van T Bui ,2002).

In India, higher education is defined as the education of an age group between 18 and 24 and is largely funded by the Government. Despite women making up 24-50% of higher education enrolment, there is still a gender imbalance with in higher education. Only one third of science students and 7% of engineering students, are women. In comparison, however, over half and students education are women(Bui, 2002).

Indian social structure marked by inequality, injustice, discrimination, oppression, exploitation etc. against the weaker sections namely, rural women who mostly belong to suppressed section which constitute considerable size of population of the country and also in Tamil Nadu. Education is also significant in terms of the development of individual's level of intellectual ability which in turn elevates chances of employability. But the accessibility of the education is not easy for everyone, at the same time the higher education is still dream of the many people. The number institutions in the rural areas are comparatively less with urban area. In addition to this larger portion of the rural family have mindset in educating their children based on their genders. Most of the times male have been encouraged to pursue their education compared to female. The financial condition of the families restricts them to pursue their higher education. Awareness about the opportunities from the higher education is comparatively less in the rural areas in parents and the potential candidates of the higher education. The present study focuses on issues and challenges faced by rural women students for their education.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Selection of the study area

In the present study focused on Dindigul district of TamilNadu, similar parameters of Mullipadi and Anaipatti village are selected for the purpose of field investigation. The Mullipadi village is situated in the Dindigul district with district code number 612. Dindigul is the subdistrict (tehsil / mandal), is a low-level administrative division of a district, of this village, having the sub district code is 05764. Dindigul is the Community Development Block (C.D. Block) of this village with C.D. Block code number 0141. The gram panchayat for this village is Mullipadi and its gram panchayat code is 000008. Dindigul is the Sub-district headquarter of this village and it is situated 6 kilometres away from this village. The district headquarters' name is Dindigul and as per distance concern it is 6 kilometres from the Mullipadi village (Jha et al., 2011).

The total number of households in Mullipadi village are 2010. It rely on the total population of 7669 . As far as male population are 3827 of the village Mullipadi and the total female population are 3842. (Jha et al., 2011). About Anaipatti ,(Jha et al., 2011) information the location code or village code of Anaipatti village is 635361. Anaipatti village is located in Dindigul taluka of Dindigul district in Tamil Nadu, India. It is situated 7km away from Dindigul,

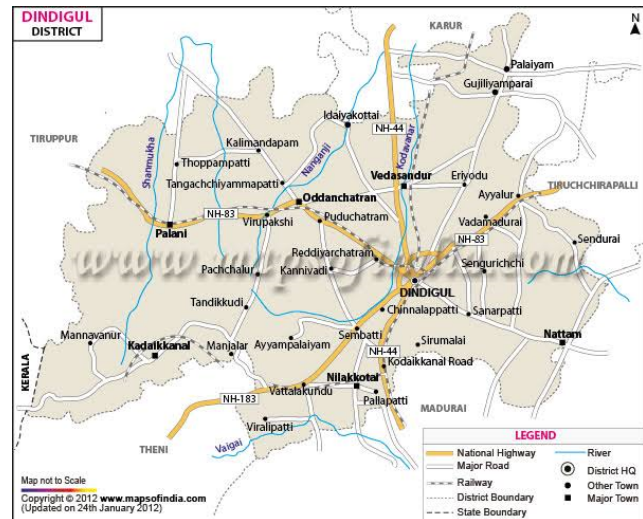


Figure 1: Map of the study area

Source: www.mapsofindia.com Study Area

which is both district & sub-district headquarter of Anaipatti village. As per 2009 data, Anaipatti village is also a gram panchayat. The total geographical area of village is 1059.9 hectares. Anaipatti has a total population 13701 out of which male population is 6,933 while female population is 6,768. Literacy rate of anaipatti village is 54.90% out of which 5.76% males and 4.03% females are literate(DISE, 2 13).

2.2. Objectives of the study

The following objectives have been formulated for the present study:

1. To study the rural social structure in the study area.
2. To analyses the factors influenced among rural women in pursuing higher education.
3. To study the problems faced by rural women in pursuing higher education in the study district.
4. To recommended action points for improving the effectiveness of higher education towards effective empowerment of rural women.

2.3. Research Design

The researcher has adopted descriptive research design with mix methods approached for the study to describe the nature of the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the rural women in Tamil Nadu

2.4. Pilot study

Pilot studies were conducted by the researcher in some of the areas where atrocities on rural women not pursuing higher education had taken place so as to cover certain general particulars, social and economic aspects of life, organization of NGO members and social participation. The women panchayat, village leaders and their knowledgeable person were contacted and focused group discussion held in order to understand the Issues and challenges of rural in pursuing higher education in the study area.

2.5. Universe

The universe of the study has comprised of families of rural women belonging to two village panchayats and SHGs, NGOs formed the universe. The universe of the study consisted of rural women households. There are 5617 households (but in the aspect of not pursuing higher education we have identified 700 households of rural women not going for that).found out from the two panchayats in the list of households collected from the Office of the Village Administrative Officer (VAO).

2.6. Sample design

After conducting the pilot study and discussions with NGOs, SHGs, Knowledgeably person ,organizations, non-governmental organizations and other person, the researcher has selected Dindigul district for conducting the present study. By adopting the snowball sampling procedure 10% of the universes constituting 70 respondents have been identified for conducting the case studies in the selected study panchayats.

2.7. Source of data

There are two types of data collected for the present study.

2.7.1. Primary data

Primary Data was collected from the respondents by the researcher using personal interview schedule, focused group discussion, and other supplementary observational techniques.

2.7.2. Secondary data

Secondary Data was also collected from the following sources; books, journals, reports, national and international publications on women empowerment and also from GOs and NGOs.

2.8. Tools of data collection

An appropriate personal interview schedule was formulated for the purpose of primary data collection. The primary data collected through personal interview which was also supplemented by focused group discussion, case study, observation techniques.

2.9. Pre-test

The structured interview schedules were put to field test with a few rural women, non-governmental organization in order to test their suitability and relevance. Later the schedules were scrutinized edited and standardized based on the result of the pre-test.

2.10. Data editing and processing techniques

After completion of the data collection, the schedules were checked and verified for the removal of errors and omissions. After the editing work was over, the classification of data was taken up. Later on the primary data collected from the respondents was statistically processed through application of Excel and SPSS and other statistical tools and

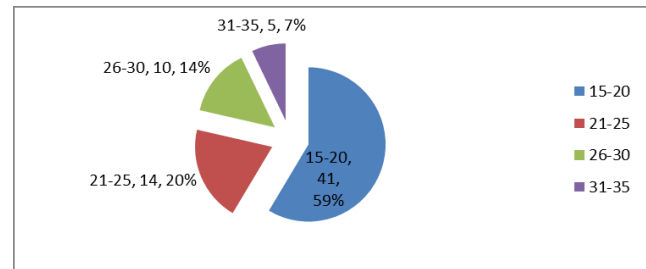


Figure 2: Age- wise distribution of respondents

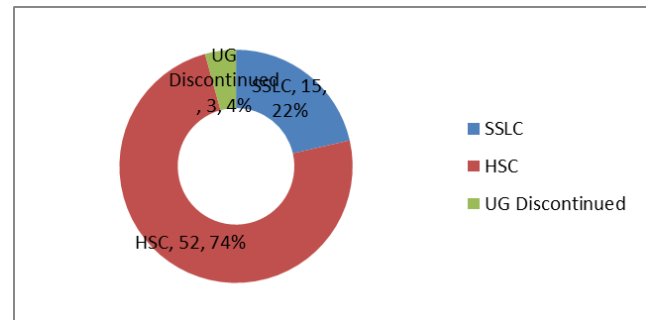


Figure 3: Educational qualification of the respondents

techniques like averages and percentages for the purpose of analyses and interpretation of data.

2.11. Scope and limitations

Though the present study focuses on the issues and challenges of rural women in pursuing higher education it has its own limitations as follow as: Dindigul district of Tamil Nadu rural women and some leaders were identified for this present study. This study concentrates only on the socio-economic condition, problems and challenges of rural women pursuing higher education in the larger framework of social structure formed core areas of this research. This research and its findings are specific to the study area and empirical realities on issues and challenges of rural women in pursuing education and accordingly generalization is applied for logical conclusion and preparation of Action points.

3. Results and Discussion

Age is highly visible psychological fact apart from birth. It affects individuals and it's interwoven with other social structural elements. The fig 2 shows that age wise distribution of the respondents. 59 % of the respondents belong to the age group of 15-20. 20 % belong to the age group of 21-25. 14 % of the respondents belong to the age group of 26-30.7% belong to the age group of 31-35. The inference drawn from this table is that majority (59%) of the respondents belong to the age group of 15-20.

Education is an indispensable component of human resources development. It serves as a sensational tool for

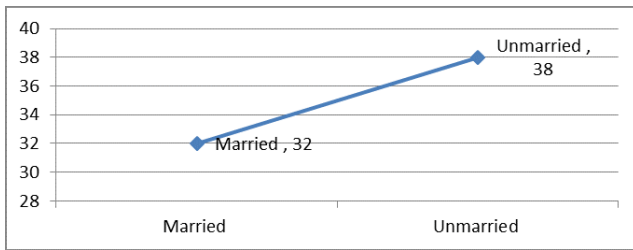


Figure 4: Marital status of the respondents

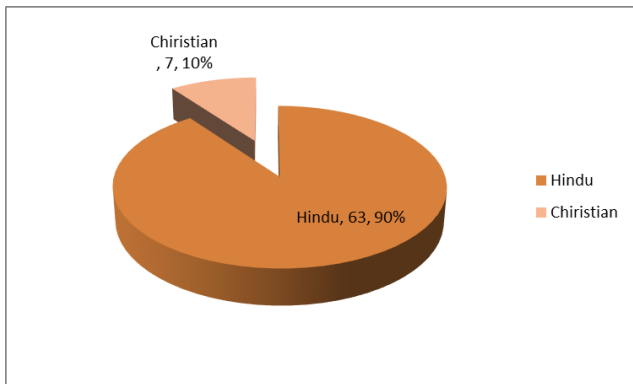


Figure 5: Religion wise distribution of the respondents

communication attaining and sharing knowledge and information. It helps in developing self- confidence and control over the internal and external environment. Educated person feels that they are capable enough to mould and shape the socio- political environment irrespective of the system.

The Fig 3 indicates the educational status of the respondents. It shows that 74 % of the respondents were HSC. 22 % of the respondents were educated up to SSLC level of education. 4% of the respondents were discontinued in ug levels. The Fig 3 also indicated that majority (74%) of the respondents were HSC. In view of this character the respondents remained ignorant, and lacked participation in community affairs.

Marital status is an acquired character and the pattern of marital status distribution of any society is determined by the combined effects of various biological, social, economic, religious and legal factors affecting marriage. The Fig 4 on marital status of the respondents indicates that out of 70 respondents 45.7 % of the respondents were married, 54.3 % of the respondents remain unmarried. The inference drawn from this figure is that majority (54.3%) of the respondents belong to the category of unmarried.

The Fig 5 shows that 90% of the respondents belong to Hindu religion and 10% of the respondents belong to Christian. The above figure clearly shows that 90% of the respondents belong to Hindu religion.

The fig 6 indicates occupation wise distribution of the respondents 62% of the respondents were in private jobs like mobile store, textile showroom, etc.. 21% of the respondents

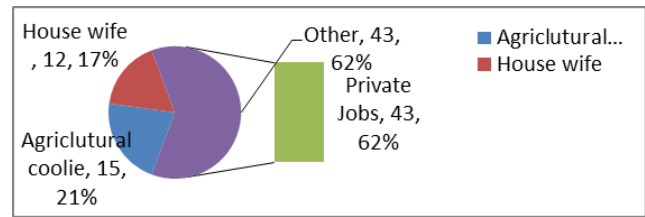


Figure 6: Occupation wise distribution the respondents

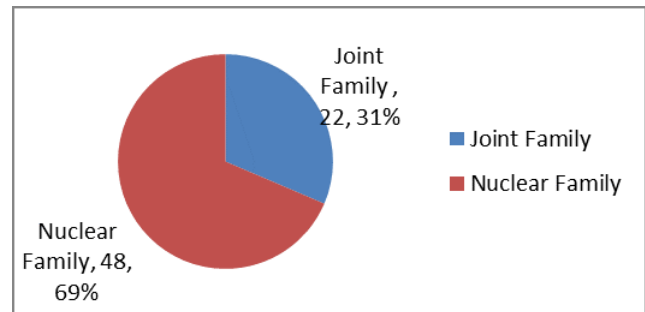


Figure 7: Type of family

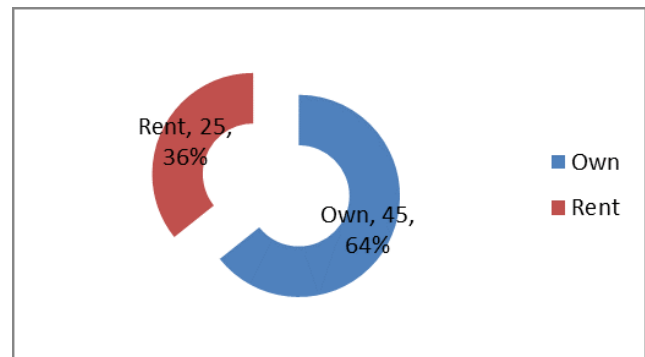


Figure 8: Distribution of the respondents by house ownership

were in agricultural coolies. Remaining 17% of the respondents were in housewife. The fig 6 indicates that 62% of the respondents were in private jobs.

The fig 7 identified out of 70 respondents 48(69%) respondents were living in nuclear family., and remaining 22 (31 %) respondents were living in joint family. The inference drawn from this figure is that majority (69 %) of the respondents were in nuclear family type.

The fig 8 indicated that 64% of the respondents owned houses, and remaining 36 % of the respondents were living in rented houses. The inference drawn from fig 8 is that majority (64%) of the respondents owned houses.

The fig 9 shows that gender bias of the respondents in the study area, 83% of the respondents opined that still gender bias there in their family. 17% of the respondents not opined that gender bias in their family. 83% of the respondents opined that still gender bias there in their family.

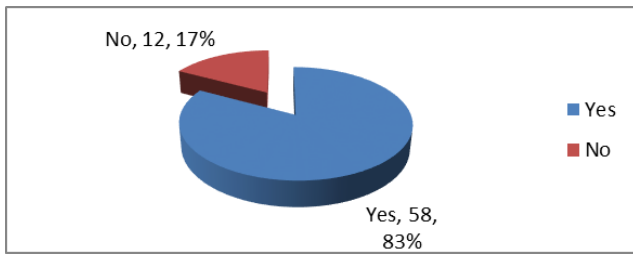


Figure 9: Gender bias wise distribution of the respondents

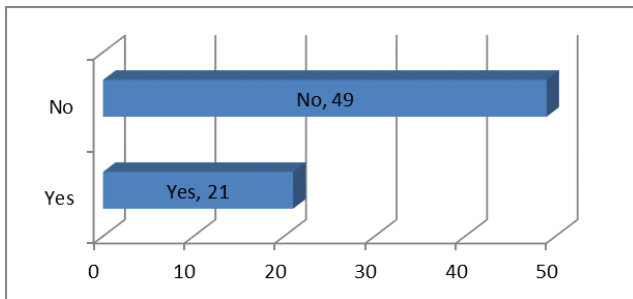


Figure 10: Religious bias of the respondents

Table 1: Marriage related problems

Sl. No.	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	45	64
2	No	25	36
Total		70	100.0

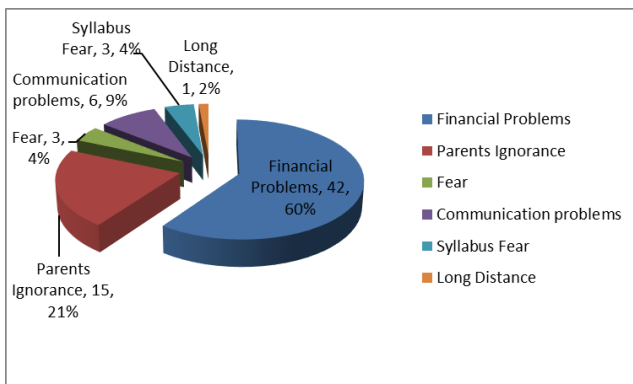


Figure 11: Reason for the not going higher education

The fig 10 indicates that religious bias out of 70 respondents 49 respondents said there is no religious bias there in their area. Remaining 21 respondents said there is religious bias in their area.

Table 1 shows that early marriage or marriage is problem for not pursuing higher education 64% of the respondents agreed and 36% of the respondents not agreed. The inference drawn 64% of the respondents agreed marriage if one the major problem for not pursuing higher education.

Table 2: Awareness about education fellowship

Sl. No.	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	58	83
2	No	12	17
Total		70	100.0

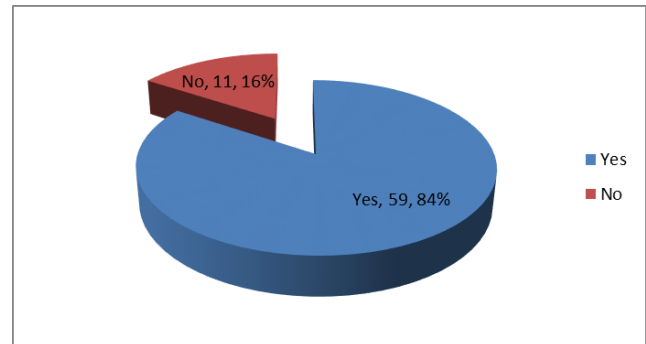


Figure 12: Awareness about the importance of higher education

The fig 11 indicate reason for not going higher education 60% of the respondents were in financial problem. 21% of the respondents parents ignorance is the another reason for not going higher education, fear of respondents 4%, communication problems 9%, syllabus fear 4%.The fig 11 shows that majority 60% of the respondents were in financial problem.

Table 2 indicates that 83% of the respondents aware about the fellowship schemes of education. 17% of the respondents not aware about the fellowship scheme. Majority 83% of the respondents are aware about the education fellowship scheme.

The fig 12 indicates that 84% of the respondents aware about the importance of higher education. 16% of the respondents not aware about the importance of higher education. This figure shows that 84% of the respondents aware about higher education

4. Case Studies

Case -1 Malarvili age 22, married women, she has a one male child, and her husband working as a car driver. She very much interested for pursuing her higher study in the field of physical education. But her family not allowed to joined. Because of his family economic condition she didn't go for higher education.

Case -2 Aruna is 19 years old and has studied up to the twelfth standard. Aruna has a strong desire to study further, and that too she wants to study nursing. But Aruna mentioned that her family relations were not good for a girl to study nursing and it was a misunderstanding that they refused to send Aruna to further studies.

Case -3 Kayalvizhi is 22 years old, married, and wants to go to Chennai for higher education, but his parents refused to send him to higher education, saying that there are very few educated grooms in our caste, if you study too much,

you will not get a groom, so Kayalvizhi is enough to study up to the second standard.

Case -4 Poornima is 18 years old and has studied up to the twelfth standard. Desire to join medical course. Poornima's father works as a daily wage earner. On hearing the news of her daughter's higher education, she refused to let Purnima study further, citing their poverty. Poornima is currently working in a textile shop nearby.

Case -5 Keerthan is 20 years old and works in a nearby textile shop. Keertana's father works as a laborer. Keertana has left school and joined a college, where they take classes entirely in English, and Keertanawal, who studied in Tamil, has a hard time understanding it. He said that he dropped out of college within a month of joining the college. He said that he could not go for higher studies because he did not know English and was afraid of it.

Case -6 Sandhya is 22 years old, married with two children. Her husband works as a bus driver. Sandhya wants to pursue higher education, but her parents listen to her relatives and refuse to send Sandhya to pursue higher studies. In her family, it is enough for only male children to study further, and what is the benefit of the house if a girl studies further, they have married Sandhya without allowing her to study further.

Case -7 Malathi is 19 years old and works in a nearby cell phone shop. His father and mother work in the laundry business, Malathi has two younger sisters. Despite getting good marks in class 2nd, he said that he could not pursue higher education due to the poverty of his family. **Case-8** Murugeshwari is 21 years old, married and has a son. Her husband is an auto driver. Murugeshwari's father is engaged in business. Murugeshwari wants to join college, but her parents don't want her to go to college, because she got married to a boy there when she joined the girl's college next door, out of fear, Murugeshwari's parents did not allow her to join the college.

Case-9 Banumathi is 18 years old, she has two younger sisters, both father and mother are working in a nearby mill. After completing the twelfth grade, Banumathi did not send her to further studies, as both of her younger sisters were small children, Panumathi stayed at home to take care of them and do whatever they needed.

Case-10 Nadia is 20 years old, married with one child, her husband works in construction. Nadia wants to study further but her parents don't allow her to get married but it will be expensive, if you enroll her in college, it will be even more expensive, they will marry you with the money to make you study, they have married her without studying.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1. Conclusion

Education seems to be the key Factor, which only can initiate a chain of a differently perceived for male and Female. Key indicators such as literacy in the access to education and each of these indicators reveal that the level behind their male counterpart. The low adult literacy rates

for women are women and thus do not necessarily capture the recent progress. The problem attendance has also been found incredibly low. Rural girls belong to disable. As per the data, Girl dropout ratio has tended to increase with the enhanced pattern of gender inequality in access to education, which seems to be attainment and from urban to rural and to disadvantaged group in the society.

The imbalances in higher education in reflect differences in family and community attitudes towards the relevance of education rather than the distances to campuses. In other words, the causal Factors in Dropout among girl student's rate are pre-clamantly. Socioeconomic background the effects of powerful social influences for Rural girl students are apparent well before the Final years of senior schooling (or) eligibility for university entry- as school completion rates are lower in rural areas, many rural girl student's do not reach the point at which it is meaningful to speak of potential barriers to higher education. For rural girl student's higher education may be seen as less relevant to life and employment, and completing school and going on to university is not quite the norm that it might be in some urban regions. These imbalances are those between rural and urban girl students and those between Indians of lower socio economic background and those of medium and higher socioeconomic backgrounds. Over all lower and medium socio economic background more girl students in dropout of higher education.

The problem of unemployment, illiteracy for their parents is the main reason for the low higher status of rural women. The rural women higher education problems may be eliminated only through collective social action for which the GOs, NGOs, Corporate sector should involved and contribute towards effective empowerment rural women. The present study revealed that there has been significant progress in the performance of women education as the female literacy rate has been increasing over the period and also the gaps between male and female literacy rates are there in our society. Here gender bias played a vital role and domination of rural women in various aspects. The analysis of the data collected has proved that the women face very many serious problems in the course of their studies, but these problems are not insoluble. Some Possible measures to reducing the difficulties faced by rural women in access to higher education should be followed like - government should take steps for making education process easier and inexpensive. Parents Encouragement and motivation should be provided to females for higher education. Teachers and parents should cooperate to remove obstacles from the way of achievement of knowledge of girls. Proper guidance, counselling and scholarships should be given to girl's who are unable to carry out their education because of financial problems. Gender equity should be maintained through improving educational infrastructure and enhancing enrolment rate retention in schools subsidizing education to the poor and involving local NGOs. Orthodox traditional and value systems should be modified . The following resources such as radio, television, computer-assisted learning, distance

education etc., can be used to inculcate the positivity among the attitude of learners concerning resolve the problems of physical outlook. The facility may be arranged at the local level through the cooperation of people or the union council. Different technical training programs and vocational teaching centres should be started to equip females with skills and quality education. There is a need for more researches to find out the educational problems of females regarding higher education

5.2. Recommendations

- Government should take steps for making education process easier and inexpensive.
- Parents Encouragement and motivation should be provided to females for higher education.
- Teachers and parents should cooperate to remove obstacles from the way of achievement of knowledge of girls.
- Government should provide guidance, counselling and scholarships should be given to girl's who are unable to carry out their education because of financial problems.
- Gender equity should be maintained through improving educational infrastructure and enhancing enrolment rate retention in schools subsidizing education to the poor and involving local NGOs.
- Orthodox traditional and value systems should be modified .
- The following resources such as radio, television, computer-assisted learning, distance education etc., can be used to inculcate the positivity among the attitude of learners concerning resolve the problems of physical outlook.
- The facility may be arranged at the local level through the cooperation of people or the union council.
- Different technical training programs and vocational teaching centres should be started to equip females with skills and quality education.
- There is a need for more researches to find out the educational problems of females regarding higher education.
- GOs and NGOs give proper counseling to the parents to remove their ignorance of higher education fear and all.
- PRIs should and motivate rural women for their active participation in higher education.
- GOs provide proper psychological counseling to the rural women and their parents for their effective involvement of concentration of higher education.
- Government provide proper financial assistance to rural women for their effective involvement of higher education.
- GOs and NGOs provide proper psychological counseling to the rural women to eradicate communication fear and syllabus fear.
- College teachers identified and give proper communication skill oriented training to the rural women

students to remove their fear psycho of language problem.

- NGOs should provide special training programmes create their self confidence and importance of higher education.
- GOs should discuss with private institution to give some fees reduction to the rural women students.
- Rural women students try to understand the importance of higher education for their life.
- Government should take necessary action to avoid early marriage in rural women.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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