

Women's Education: A Case Study of Female Education in Rural Areas of District Budgam in Jammu and Kashmir

¹Naseema Akhter, ²Dr. Shobha Kulshrestha

¹Research Scholar, Mewar University, Gangrar, Chittorgarh (Rajasthan)

²Research Supervisor, Vice President, Shri Venkateshvar University
Department Mass Communication & Journalism

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Abstract: Women who form one-half of the population have always played a specific and crucial role subtle as well as visible, in society and history. Undoubtedly, women is a magnificent creature—a power of benevolence and tolerance, a protection and provider, an embodiment of love and affection, an epitome of integrity and understanding—all wrapped in one. They play an active role in day-to-day life doing house chores and in some cases running the household. However, there is an urgent need to acknowledge the role played by women in the society and address the marginalization of their rights.

No nation can achieve success unless education is accorded in all its citizens. Mothers are the first educators of the children, who establish virtues in all its citizens. They encourage the child to acquire perfection and good manners, warn him against unbecoming qualities and encourage him to show firmness and endurance during hardships and advance on the road of progress. Due regard for education of girls is therefore necessary. Furthermore, the education of women is more important, for woman is the trainer of the child from its infancy. And if women were imperfect, then it will imply a condition of imperfection for all mankind. In proclaiming the oneness of mankind the thought that men and women are equal in the eyes of God and there is no distinction to be made between them is important. The only difference between them is the lack of education and training. If woman is given opportunity of education, the distinction and inferiority complex will disappear. However, the women are denied the right and privilege of equal development. If equal opportunity is granted to her, there is no doubt she would be the peer of man. Educated women in Jammu and Kashmir can play an important role in all round development of the state. So, we cannot ignore the importance of women's education in reference to women. The aim of this study is to examine the status of women's education and causes of decreasing female literacy rate in rural areas of district Budgam.

Keywords: status, women education, female literacy rate, endurance

INTRODUCTION

The women in Kashmir have faced several crucial problems in the fields of education, employment, healthy, hygiene, family, marriage and so on. Due to these factors the problems of women could not be solved wholly but were expanded and intensified. The root cause of problems faced by women in these fields is less emphasis on imparting basic education to them. Women could play a major role in these

fields, only when they are fully educated. But unfortunately, if we look into the present scenario of Kashmir, women still are far from men in educational field. No, doubt government has provided various facilities like free education, free uniforms, free books, free meals etc. for improving education standard of women herein. But unfortunately some sections of our society still consider women inferior to men and therefore do not bother about their education.

The Indian government has expressed a strong commitment towards education for all. However, India still has one of the lowest female literacy rates in Asia. In 1991, less than 40 percent of the 330 million women aged 7 and over were literate, which means there are over 200 million illiterate women in India. This low level of literacy not only has a negative impact on women's lives but also on their families and on the country's economic development. Numerous studies show that illiterate women have high levels of fertility and mortality, poor nutritional status, low earning potential and little autonomy within the household. A woman's lack of education also has a negative impact on the health and well being of her children. For instance, a recent survey in India found that infant mortality was inversely related to mother's educational level. Additionally, the lack of an educated population can be an impediment to the country's economic development.

As we are known to the fact that women play a major role in the development of a nation. So, a nation can only be strong and developed when its women are educated. The future of a society is secure only when its future generation is advanced enough to create opportunities and stand firm in their decisions. But the future generations get this strength only if the women in our homes are educated because it is the mother who is the first school of the child.

Education of women calls for urgent attention in order to reduce the inequalities, exploitation and discrimination against the marginalized groups of society and thus, eliminating the thousands of social evils with the best remedies called "education". Women still lag behind men in education in most developing countries with far reaching adverse consequences for both individual and national well being. A developing country like India can ill afford if half of the human capital remains unutilized thereby being a liability and not an asset for the nation.

Promoting education among women and girls particularly in rural areas would go a long way in bridging the wide gap of inequality and accelerate the process of social, economic and political change in the status of women.

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EDUCATION SCENARIO OF FEMALES IN DISTRICT BUDGAM

As per 2001 census, the district has a population of 6,23,309 consisting of 3,26,050 males and 3,03,259 females. The population density is 459 persons per square kilometre. The district is mostly rural in character except the notified areas of Chari-Sharif, Budgam, Khansahib, Magam and Beerwah, while as some areas fall in the outgrowth of

Srinagar city. As many as 5,58,721 persons (88.8%) live in rural areas of the district. While as only 70,558 persons (11.2%) fall in urban areas as per census 2001. There are 6 K.G schools, 659 primary schools, 406 middle schools, 61 high schools and 32 higher secondary schools in the district totalling 1103 schools including 270 schools for girl's education. District Budgam consists of 12 Educational Zones. The zone wise literacy scenario is given in the table below:

Table: 1

S.No	Name of the zone	Tehsil	Overall Female literacy (%age)	Female literacy (Schedule Tribe)	Female literacy (rural areas)
01	Budgam	Budgam	51		29
02	Khansahab	Do	41	12	28
03	Dreegam	Do	42		29
04	Soibugh	Do	51		27
05	Narbal	Do	51		27
06	B.K Pora	Do	56		31
07	Nagam	Chadura	42	14	35
08	Chari Sharif	Do	52	15	35
09	Chadura	Do	51	14	37
10	Magam	Beerwah	51	16	29
11	Beerwah	Do	42		30
12	Hardu Panzoo	Do	32	12	27
Total			47%	14%	30.33%

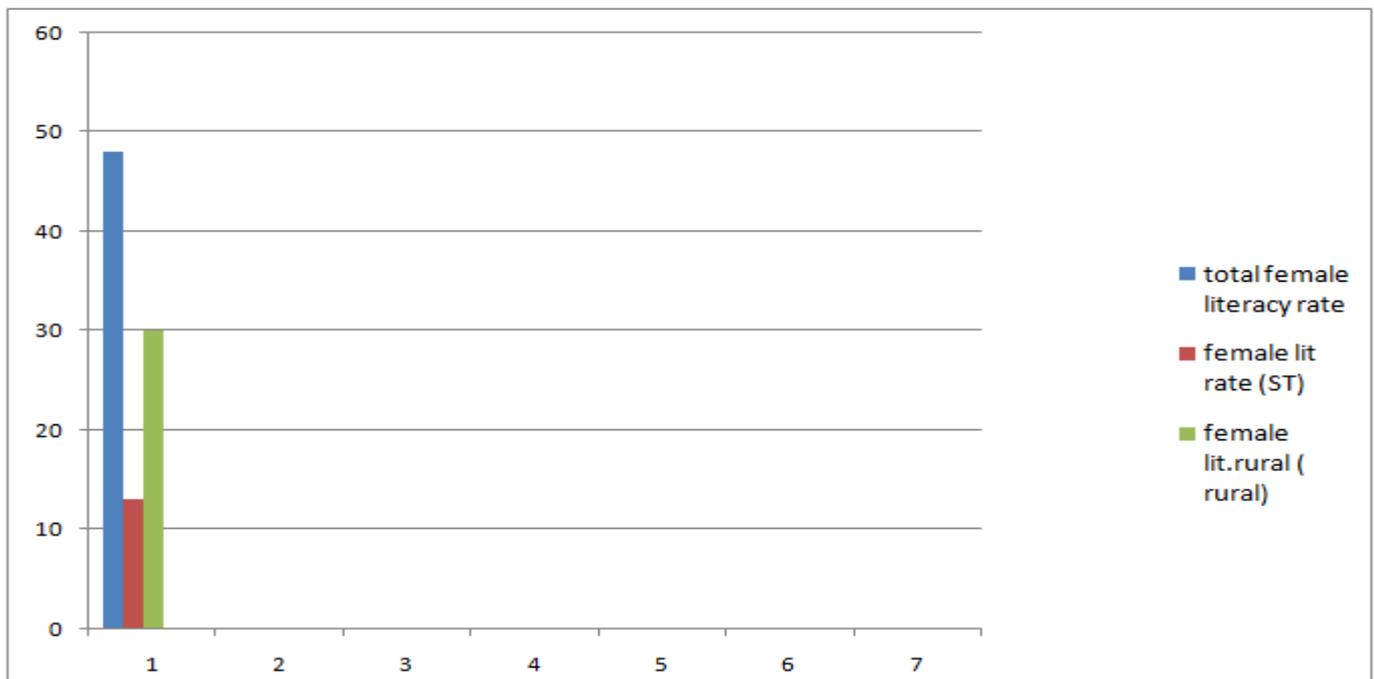


Figure: 1 Comparative Female literacy rate in District Budgam

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main objectives of the study were:

- To understand the education scenario of the girls in rural areas of district Budgam
- To identify the causes and factors responsible for the low female literacy rate in such areas.
- To find out the barriers (if any exists) to the education of the females in the district.
- To find out the efforts made by the government and other non-governmental organizations for the upliftment of the female education in the district.

- To find out the reasons behind the increased number of the female drop-outs.
- To recommend the measures that needs to be taken at different levels for improving the status of female education in the district.

METHODOLOGY

- This study is based on secondary data collected from the following sources:
- The researcher approached the District Planning Officer (DPO) Budgam to gather some data regarding the status

of female education in rural areas of district Budgam in order to recognize the most educationally backward area which could serve as target block.

- After recognizing “Hardu Panzoo” as the target area the researcher went to the Zonal Education Office to get detailed information about female literacy rate as compared to males. The zonal education officer Hardu panzoo also gave an insight of the problem, the ways out and the efforts made by the government to overcome this problem.
- The researcher also visited the Government Higher Secondary School and Government Middle School Hardu Panzoo and talked to some students and teachers about the problem at study that came up with some very important points regarding this issue.
- Some case studies were also carried out by the researcher in the village Hardu Panzoo. This helped the researcher to talk to the respondents as well as their parents.
- The researcher also met some teachers at different schools who also gave their views regarding the low female literacy rate in the area at study.

CASE STUDIES

1. Rukhsana, a 10 year old girl of village has never been sent to school by her parents who prefer her to stay at home to take care of her younger brother who is hardly 5 years old.
2. Tasleema, an 11 year old girl of village Hardu Panzoo belongs to a very poor family. His father owns no land and weaves carpets throughout the day and earns

mere 20-30 rupees a day. Tasleema helps her parents in their work and takes care of her younger sister as well.

3. Tahira, a 16 year old girl of the village Panzoo has never been to school. Her parents ask her to do household work while as her 14 year old brother goes to school.
4. Rubeena, a 15 year old girl of village Panzoo was forced by her parents to drop out when she was a 6th grade student. She is now involved in household work and part time shop keeping.
5. After being asked the reason Shahida, a 16 year old girl of village Hardu Panzoo who was sitting idle at home replied that she was herself not interested in education and nobody forced her to stay at home.
6. Muneer, a 13 year old girl of village Panzoo has never been to school due to ignorance of her parents regarding education
7. Tahira, a 16 year old girl of village Hardu Panzoo has never been to school. Her parents ask her to do household work while as her 14 year old brother goes to school.

FINDINGS

The case studies done by the researcher revealed that 57% parents and guardians are not aware and thus remain ignorant about female education. They do not think education as a necessary practice for their daughters. 28% of the girls are themselves not interested in education and prefer to stay at home to help their parents in household work and sibling care. About 1% of the people do not send their daughters to school due to poverty or they just portray poverty as one of the reasons. The other reasons for low female literacy rate count for just 1%.

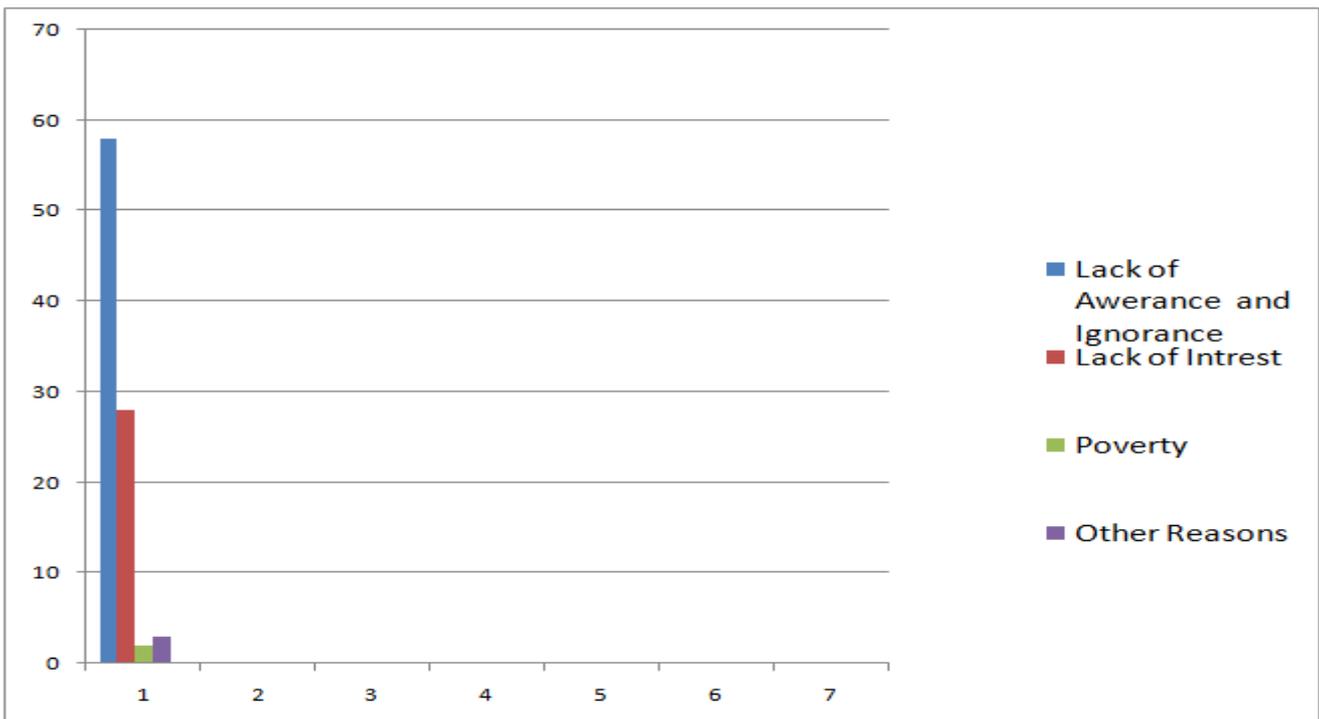


Figure 2

On the basis of case studies done and the points given by by some people associated with the field, the researcher came to know about certain causes which are responsible for low female literacy rate in rural areas of District Budgam.

1. **Ignorance among parents:** the case studies done revealed that most of the parents are ignorant about the values of female education. They don't take the education of their daughters seriously and prefer them to stay at home mostly for household work and sibling care.

2. **Poverty:** Most of the people in this area are below poverty line and it is very difficult for them to afford the education of their children. They do not have enough agricultural land and most of the times stay at home doing the traditional carpet weaving at their homes. Indulging their daughters in this work provides them more man power and saves too many expenses.

3. **Awareness:**

a) **Awareness about education:** The people are not aware of the merits of providing education to their daughters. Most of the people send their sons to the schools and prefer their daughters to stay at home. They think that it is not important to educate their daughters and the girls should just be trained in household work and some skills so that they can be better home makers in future.

b) **Awareness about different educational schemes:** Most of the people the researcher met portray poverty as a reason of not sending their daughters to school. The basic problem is that they are not aware of the different education schemes provided by the government of india like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), National Policy for Education (NPE) etc. under which free education is being provided to the students with free uniforms, books and mid-day meals.

4. **Inactive behaviour of Government officials and village heads to mobilize people:**

The government officials like Zonal Education Officers, Heads of different institutions and village heads seem to be very inactive in their approach to mobilize and motivate people to send their daughters to school. The Zonal Education Office, the Government Higher secondary school and Government Middle School in Hardu Panzoo are all adjacent to each other and very near to the population of the village. The officials could easily have carried some campaigns with the help of village heads to motivate the people.

5. **No separate female education institutes:**

There are no separate schools for girls in the whole Hardu Panzoo Zone and all the 100 schools have co-education. This is one reason that most of the parents hesitate to send their girls to schools. The people are more conservative in his regard and this is one of the reasons of increased female dropout rate from primary to middle level.

6. **Lack of interest among girls:**

Some of the girls are themselves uninterested in acquiring higher education and prefer to drop out after primary or middle level. Their interest also diminishes if

they fail to pass some of the subjects at middle level and mostly at high school level.

- The dropout rate is highest in the middle level.
- Most of the girls who do not go to school are involved in household work and sibling care.
- There are no separate schools for girls in any part of the zone which is probably one reason for low female literacy rate.

THE GOVERNMENT'S APPROACH

The government of India is investing millions of rupees per year to increase and improve the level of female education in the country. Different schemes have been launched under which free education is provided to the students and special care is given to those students living in rural areas. Females are provided extra facilities to increase their level of education and grab their interest in studies. Jammu and Kashmir is also not behind in applying these schemes. In district Budgam there are 1103 government schools out of which six are K.G, 659 ARE Primary, 406 are middle, 61 are high and 12 are the higher secondary schools. Different educational schemes have been launched in every school of the district including the zone Hardu Panzoo. Some schemes which are running and some which are expected to be launched in future are:

1. **National Policy for Education (NPE):**

This scheme was started to bring about change in the status of women and serve as a tool of development. The females are provided extra facilities in every school. Additional classrooms for girls, separate washroom and toilet facilities, different scholarships and model cluster schools for girls are highlights of this scheme which have helped to improve the level of female education to a reasonable extent.

2. **Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV):**

These schools are specifically opened to provide free education to the girls who are orphans or belong to families which are Below Poverty Line (BPL). Besides providing free education all the basic facilities like free meals, uniforms, books and other convenience facilities are also provided. These schools cover almost 5% of the total population of the district.

3. **Non-Residential Bridge Courses (NRB^s):**

Separate centres for girl education have been started in every village in separate buildings other than the schools. Separate teachers are employed in these centers for a time period of ten months.

4. **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA):**

SSA is the most wide spread and most successful scheme which has tremendously increased the level as well as the standard of education in every corner of the district, in fact the whole state. Under this scheme door-to-door education is being provided by opening primary schools every kilometre distance and local teachers are employed who know their localities better. Besides free education, free books, uniforms and mid-day meals are also provided to the

students. This scheme has so far been the most successful of all and attracted the interest of a reasonable number of girl students and their parents.

5. *Rashtriya Madimik Shiksha Abhiyan (RAMSA):*

This is a national scheme planned to be launched by 2010. Under this scheme girls belonging to poor families will be provided incentive, scholarships to continue their education. Besides maintenance, grants will be provided to schools to provide vocational training to the girl students to enhance their skill in tailoring, embroidery, weaving etc.

NGOs are not behind:

Besides the central and state governments, some Non-Government Organizations are also working in this regard. One such NGO is Indo-Global Social Service Scheme (IGSSS) headed by Fouzia Geelani. This NGO is working to ensure the motives of SSA schemes and conduct training programmes to build the confidence of teachers as well as the students. The measures by this NGO have paid off to some extent as the enrolment of different schools in district Budgam especially in Zone Hrudu Panzoo has increased as compared to previous years. Asif Gul, a teacher at Middle School Panzoo said that SSA scheme and IGSSS have ensured better enrolment of girls in these schools. There is now almost 50-50 boys-girls ratio in their school which would have been just 70-30 a couple of years earlier.

CONCLUSION

Gender equality is an important issue of human rights and social justice. A woman represents half the resources and half the potential in all societies. Efforts to promote greater equity between women and men can also contribute to the overall development of human society. The empowerment and autonomy of women and the improvement of women and the improvement of women's educational, social, economic and political status is essential for the achievement of sustainable development in all the significant areas of life.

Women education is a major concern in rural areas-mostly far flung. In Jammu and Kashmir, areas which are far away from the summer capital-srinagar this problem exists. People always link women education with religious and socio-psychological concepts because of their ignorance. Budgam district which is not more than 10-15 kms away from summer capital still lacks in female education in spite major of its population lives in urban areas. It is so far been the most backward as far as the female education is concerned. An overall literacy rate of just 47% tells the story itself which gets worse in rural areas where it is just 30.33%.

Despite of the fact that the government is providing free education up to the middle level and running different schemes to improve the level of female education, most of the people still hesitate to send their girls to the schools. SSA, NPE, KGBV, RAMSA and NRBC are doing a reasonable job but problems still persist at gross root level. Government is investing money more than needed, but there is no proper usage of the funds at the basic level which is a major setback to these schemes. Very little percentage of the funds is actually used which accounts for the very little

developments in this sphere because of the corruption of the people in the administration right from top bottom.

Our case studies revealed that ignorance on part of the parents is the major cause of low female literacy rate in most zones of district Budgam. The girl child is deemed as a liability and investing in their education is considered to be an immediate economic loss. The parents prefer to retain their daughters at homes to do household work, take care of their siblings and help in agricultural activities.

Another reason for low female literacy rate is poverty and again the authorities are to be blamed for their inactive approach to implement different educational schemes. If these schemes are implemented properly, no parent would hesitate to send their daughters to school because of their fear that they have to make large expenses for their education. More importantly the people are not aware about the benefits of educating their daughters as well as the schemes implemented by the government.

There is a need to make people aware about importance of female education and motivate them to send their daughters to schools to have a better future as important components of this society.

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