

Original Article

Higher Educational Status of Women in Jammu and Kashmir: Government Interventions for their Development

Irfan Assad

Research Scholar, Department of IASE, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi

Summary

Abstract

The status of women's higher education in Jammu and Kashmir, like in many other regions, has undergone significant changes over the years. Historically, women in the region faced numerous social, cultural, and economic barriers that limited their access to education. However, the government and other stakeholders have recognized the importance of women's education and have implemented various interventions to promote their development in higher education. Government interventions for the development of women's higher education in Jammu and Kashmir can encompass several areas like policy frame work, Infrastructure development, Financial Support, Outreach and Awareness, Skill development and Vocational Training, Research and development.

Keywords: Higher Education, Women Education, Government Interventions, Jammu and Kashmir.

Address for correspondence: Irfan Assad, Research Scholar, Department of IASE, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi
Email: assadirfan0.1@gmail.com

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Introduction

'To educate your women first and leave them to themselves, they will tell you what reforms are necessary'- Swami Vivekananda. Education can be understood as a systematic process of acquiring knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes through various forms of learning. It is a lifelong endeavor that occurs in formal institutions like schools and universities, as well as informally through experiences, interactions, and self-directed efforts. The meaning of education encompasses several key aspects: Acquisition of Knowledge, Development of Skills, Personal Growth and Character Development, Socialization and Cultural Transmission, Preparation for Life and Citizenship, Lifelong Learning. Education is crucial for a nation's socioeconomic development, and women's education is especially significant in this regard. Not only are educated women improving their own socioeconomic standing, but they are also broadening their children's intellectual horizons, improving their family's socioeconomic situation, and making a substantial contribution to elevating their family status. Women's educational advancement and national development are closely related. In actuality, women's education is now regarded as being more significant than men's. Dr. karva, a pioneer for the cause of women education, once said, "If you educate a man, you educate an individual, if you educate a

woman, you educate the whole family."The University Education Commission (1949) has also rightly remarked: "There cannot be an educated man without an educated woman. If general education is to be limited to men or to women, that opportunity should be given to women, for then it would more surely be passed on to the next generations." Education, on the other hand, makes women strong, empowered, creates self-reliance, and brings drive in life. It plays a critical part in the struggle for women's equality and empowerment both inside the household and in the community. Lack of knowledge, information, and literacy deepen the situation of deprivation in all aspects of life. Education raises women's awareness of their legal, social, political, and economic rights, provisions, and privileges in the battle against all forms of social discrimination. It enables people to realize their full potential by enhancing their abilities, pursuing work, and improving their nutritional and health status. Education relieves women of the burden of ignorance and tight confinement within the home by providing them with the expertise and knowledge needed to play modern roles, broadening their horizons, and boosting their overall position in society. As a result, educating women promotes not just political involvement and economic independence, but also improves the quality of life of the entire family and, ultimately, the entire nation.

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Higher education contributes significantly to sustainable development through the generation and diffusion of knowledge. The proper management of this area deserves top consideration at a time when universities around the world are facing serious challenges as a result of unprecedented expansion of higher education resources. Furthermore, the numerous and complicated concerns confronting society necessitate that societal investment in institutions of higher education be fully justified in terms of its return to the community.

The under-representation of women in higher education management is well established, and it demonstrates that each country's reservoir of managerial potential is not being efficiently utilized. Current recruitment and promotion practices must be investigated immediately in order to understand the hurdles to women's advancement and to propose methods to achieve a better gender balance based on professional equality.

With 4.3 million students enrolled in 196 university-level institutions, India's higher education system is large and fundamentally diversified. Based on a British colonial system, it has undergone significant development since independence, resulting in broader access to education. Women's entry in to higher education and employment came through the nurturing professions of nursing and teaching towards the end of the last century, owing primarily to social reform's efforts to improve the situation of widows and other marginalized

women. Gandhi emphasized the value of education for women, but this did nothing to alter ingrained social views. The persisting assumption that women should not seek paid job, even while voluntary work was permitted, was a barrier to education for women in India. The "brave exceptions" who sought a profession for personal fulfillment did not frequently marry. Economic factors have recently broken down the barriers to women working to augment family earnings, and women are now highly represented in numerous occupations. However, for girls who reside in rural areas or in towns without colleges or universities, access to higher education is frequently limited. It is observed that the rate of women education is increasing but not in proper manner (kumar).

Objectives

1. To trace the government interventions for empowering women education in Jammu and Kashmir.
2. To find out the challenges for empowering women education in Jammu and Kashmir.

Methodology

The study's primary data source is secondary data. The census reports, websites, research articles, and books are the primary sources of data.

Table:-District wise female literacy rate in Jammu and Kashmir from 1981 to 2011.

Name of the district	Female literacy rate 1981	Female literacy rate 2001	Female literacy rate 2011
Jammu	32.24	68.75	77.41
Budgam	8.02	28.14	46.60
Srinagar	24.66	47.97	63.47
Baramulla	9.57	31.42	55.01
Anantnag	10.94	31.51	54.15
Doda	7.34	28.36	50.34
Kupwara	4.88	26.83	54.79
Kargil	3.14	40.96	58.05
Kathua	21.25	53.92	64.56
Leh	12.09	50.03	64.52
Pulwama	9.21	35.40	53.81
Rajouri	14.32	44.14	57.20
Poonch	11.24	35.30	54.80
Bandipora	N.Est	N.Est	46.24
Kulgam	N.Est	N.Est	49.74
Kishtwar	N.Est	N.Est	44.13
Ganderbal	N.Est	N.Est	47.62
Ramban	N.Est	N.Est	40.04
Shopian	N.Est	N.Est	52.77
Reasi	N.Est	N.Est	47.55
Samba	N.Est	N.Est	74.39
J&K	56.5	42.22	49.12
India	29.76	54.16	65.46

Source: Census of Jammu and Kashmir, 1951, 1961, 1971, 1981, 2001 and 2011, Census of India, 1951, 1961, 1971, 1981, 2001 and 2011. (N.Est= New Establishment)

In Jammu and Kashmir, from 1981 to 2011, the district –level female literacy rate is shown in this table. In 1981, Kargil district had the lowest female literacy rate at 3.14, which was 53.36 less than Jammu and Kashmir and 26.62 less than India. Jammu district had the highest female literacy rate at 32.24, which were 24.26 less than Jammu and Kashmir but 2.48 higher than India. Again in 2001, Jammu district had the highest female literacy rate at 68.75, 26.53 higher than Jammu and Kashmir and

14.59 higher than India, while Kupwara district had a female literacy rate of 26.83, 15.39 lower than Jammu and Kashmir and 27.33 lower than India. In 2011, Ramban district had the lowest female literacy rate (40.04), which was 9.08 less than Jammu and Kashmir and 25.42 less than India. District Jammu had the highest female literacy rate (77.41), which were 28.29 higher than Jammu and Kashmir. This was followed by district samba

(74.39), which was 25.27 higher than Jammu and Kashmir and 8.93 higher than India.

Government Interventions for women education in Jammu and Kashmir:-

The government of Jammu and Kashmir, along with the central government of India, has implemented various interventions to empower women and promote their education in the region. These initiatives aim to address gender disparities, enhance access to education, provide financial support, and create a supportive environment for women's education.

Here is a more detailed explanation of some key government interventions:

1. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA): SSA is a flagship program implemented by the government of India to achieve universal elementary education. In Jammu and Kashmir, SSA focuses on improving access to quality education for girls and ensuring their retention in schools. It includes initiatives such as setting up residential schools for girls in remote areas, providing free textbooks and uniforms, and organizing awareness campaigns to encourage enrollment.

2. Mid-Day Meal Scheme: The Mid-Day Meal Scheme is a centrally sponsored program that aims to improve attendance, retention, and nutritional levels of children in schools. By providing free meals to students, including girls, the scheme incentivizes families to send their daughters to school and supports their education.

3. National Scheme of Incentive to Girls for Secondary Education (NSIGSE): NSIGSE is a centrally sponsored scheme that provides financial incentives to encourage the enrollment and retention of girls in secondary education. Under this scheme, eligible girls receive a cash transfer upon successfully completing Class 8 and continuing their studies in Class 9 and 10.

4. Udaan: Udaan is a special initiative implemented by the central government to support the education and skill development of girl students in Jammu and Kashmir. It provides free coaching and mentoring for entrance exams into premier engineering colleges and other professional courses. The program also includes financial support for girls from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

5. Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA): RMSA is a centrally sponsored scheme aimed at enhancing access to secondary education and improving its quality. In Jammu and Kashmir, RMSA focuses on increasing the enrollment of girls, especially in rural and remote areas, through initiatives such as opening girls' schools, providing separate toilets, and conducting awareness campaigns.

6. Women's Colleges and Universities: The government has established women's colleges and universities in Jammu and Kashmir to promote higher education opportunities for women. These institutions provide a conducive environment for women to pursue undergraduate and postgraduate courses, enabling them to acquire knowledge and skills for their personal and professional development.

7. Scholarships and Financial Assistance: Various scholarships and financial assistance programs have been implemented to support women's education in Jammu and Kashmir. These include Merit-cum-Means Scholarships, Post-Matric Scholarships for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes,

and the National Fellowship and Scholarship for Higher Education of ST Students.

8. Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Programs: Skill development initiatives have been introduced to enhance women's employability and entrepreneurship skills. These programs offer vocational training, workshops, and mentoring to help women acquire practical skills and gain economic independence.

9. Awareness Campaigns: The government conducts awareness campaigns and workshops to promote girls' education, raise awareness about gender equality, and dispel social and cultural barriers that hinder women's education. These campaigns involve various stakeholders, including parents, teachers, and community members, to create a supportive environment for girls' education.

These interventions reflect the government's commitment to empower women and promote their education in Jammu and Kashmir. However, it's important to note that the effectiveness and impact of these interventions may vary, and ongoing efforts are needed to address the unique challenges faced by women in the region. For the most up-to-date information on government interventions, it is recommended to refer to official government websites, educational institutions, and local authorities involved in women's education in Jammu and Kashmir.

Challenges for women education in Jammu and Kashmir:-

Empowering women's education in Jammu and Kashmir faces several challenges that hinder the realization of gender equality and equal access to education. These challenges are rooted in social, cultural, economic, and geographical factors. Here is a comprehensive explanation of the key challenges:

1. Socio-cultural barriers: Jammu and Kashmir, like many other regions, experiences socio-cultural barriers that limit women's education. Traditional norms, patriarchal attitudes, and gender stereotypes often discourage girls from pursuing education, especially at higher levels. Early marriage, societal expectations, and restrictions on mobility can further impede girls' access to education.

2. Security concerns and conflict: The region's history of political unrest and conflict has had a significant impact on education, particularly for girls. Security concerns and the resulting disruption of infrastructure and schooling have created an unstable environment that poses challenges to accessing education, especially in remote and conflict-affected areas.

3. Limited infrastructure and resources: In certain areas of Jammu and Kashmir, the availability of educational infrastructure and resources is limited. Lack of proper school facilities, including safe transportation, separate toilets for girls, and adequate classrooms, can discourage girls from attending school or pursuing higher education.

4. Geographical barriers: Jammu and Kashmir's diverse topography, with mountainous terrain and scattered populations, presents geographical challenges to education. Remote and inaccessible areas often lack educational institutions, making it difficult for girls to access schools and colleges, especially during inclement weather or difficult terrain conditions.

5. Economic constraints: Economic factors can also impede women's education. Poverty, limited financial resources, and the need to contribute to family income may force families to prioritize other expenses over girls'

education. The costs associated with education, such as tuition fees, books, uniforms, and transportation, can be barriers to girls' enrollment and retention in schools.

6. Lack of role models and gender-sensitive education: The absence of visible female role models in education and limited gender sensitivity within the curriculum and teaching practices can impact girls' aspirations and self-confidence. The lack of positive representations of women in textbooks and classrooms can contribute to gender stereotypes and limit girls' educational and career choices.

7. Social stigma and safety concerns: In some communities, there may be social stigma associated with girls pursuing education, particularly at higher levels. Additionally, safety concerns related to commuting, especially in areas with a high incidence of violence or conflict, can deter families from sending their daughters to school. 8. Access to quality education: While efforts have been made to improve access to education, ensuring the availability of quality education remains a challenge. Limited availability of qualified teachers, inadequate teaching resources, and a lack of infrastructure for practical learning can affect the quality of education, making it difficult to achieve meaningful empowerment through education. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-dimensional approach involving government initiatives, community engagement, awareness campaigns, and collaboration between various stakeholders. Strategies such as promoting gender-responsive education, improving infrastructure, addressing security concerns, providing scholarships and financial support, engaging communities, and challenging gender stereotypes can help overcome these barriers and empower women's education in Jammu and Kashmir.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the government of Jammu and Kashmir, along with the central government of India, has implemented various interventions to empower women and promote their education in the region. These interventions include programs like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Udaan, scholarships, skill development initiatives, and the establishment of women's colleges and universities. These initiatives aim to improve access to education, provide financial support, and create a supportive environment for women's education. However, empowering women's education in Jammu and Kashmir faces several challenges. Socio-cultural barriers, including traditional norms and gender stereotypes, limit girls' access to education. Security concerns and conflict disrupt schooling and pose safety risks. Limited infrastructure and resources, geographical barriers, economic constraints, and the lack of role models and gender-sensitive education further impede women's education. Additionally, social stigma and safety concerns, as well as the need for access to quality education, contribute to the challenges faced. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach involving government policies, community engagement, awareness campaigns, and collaboration among stakeholders. Strategies such as promoting gender-responsive education, improving infrastructure, addressing security concerns, providing scholarships and financial support, engaging communities, and challenging gender stereotypes can help overcome these barriers and empower women's education in Jammu and Kashmir. By addressing these challenges and continuing government

interventions, it is possible to create a more inclusive and equitable education system that empowers women and promotes their active participation in all spheres of life, contributing to the overall development and progress of Jammu and Kashmir

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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