

**A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY ON EFFECT OF COVID-19 ON GIRLS'
EDUCATION IN SELECTED RURAL AREAS OF TRICHY**

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ABSTRACT

Education seems one of the major enterprises of the 21st century to cater the needs of individuals in global economy and knowledge society. In the past five decades and more, many rural development programmes have been launched. The aim of these programmes have been to cover all the facets of rural life such as agriculture, animal husbandry, roads (communication facilities), health, education, housing, employment and nutrition. Recently, government undertook several schemes for enhancing girl child education. For example, free education for the girl students up to higher secondary level, stipend for the girl students up to secondary level, etc. Swami Vivekananda voiced "Education is the process of bringing out the potential that is latent in every human being." There has been a strong push towards illiteracy in India, particularly in the distribution and usage of information and communication technologies (ICT) in schools for economic and social growth. He enlightened that the very essence of education is concentration of mind, not the collection of facts. India has shown significant progress in the field of education since independence. This paper aims at explaining the essentials of education in the rural areas through enhancing literacy, business skill and social awareness. The paper also identifies possible barriers, suggesting plans as tools to enhance quality of rural schools.

Keywords: *Girl Education, Rural Areas.*

Introduction

To contain the speed of the virus most governments across the world have shut down schools. During the height of school closures in April 2020, almost 91% of students around the world were out of school which means that about 60% of schools across 186 countries have been closed thus 1.5 billion students are forced to stay at home. To avoid zero academic year governments of several countries have initiated a secondary way of education i.e., digital education.

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This initiative was taken to keep the students in touch with education at home. Countries like India, Japan, China, France, Germany, and the U.S have started digital education systems. Even though this system was thought to have a positive start, it didn't have a positive one. Digital education was criticized by many people.

School closures are the main reason for this situation and also added that the spike could also be later as most families are struggling with economic fallouts. Parents from urban who have attained better education have a more positive attitude towards the necessity of girl's education than those parents from rural who are less educated. The economic backgrounds and occupational levels of the parents influence their attitude towards girls' education. And the discrimination of gender prevails in society, though it still exists in different forms and different degrees. Therefore, through education of the parents give a positive attitude, cultural lag of the parents on the other hand gives a negative attitude towards girl's education. We take the same broad definition of ICT to include radio, television, satellite, fixed and mobile telephone, fax, computers and CD-ROMs and the internet, as used by DFID.¹⁴ The ICTs can be divided into two groups: traditional or old ICTs (namely, radio and TV) and the new ICTs (namely, the Internet and telecommunications). Learning through new ICTs is also called e-learning. Recent studies show the enormous potential of e-learning, especially in industrialized countries.

Objectives:

- 1) To find that the girls are still being the vulnerable groups even in the time of crisis and to know the opinion of parents about girl's education.
- 2) To The study also examines whether there were any benefits of rural girls in pursuing education from school and the problems faced by them in its absence and to understand the possibility of continuing education for girls among school dropouts with help of schemes and sponsors.

Statement of the Problem:

This problem was faced mostly in the developing and the under developing countries like India, China, Australia, etc.

The lockdown hit largely on teenage girls whose mid-day meals; sanitary napkins provided by schools are all gone. In a country, where girls enrolled in public school and boys in private schools, a shift in online classrooms would benefit only students in private school, which means

girls are most hit. Many studies suggest that whenever there is a crisis like conflict or war or pandemic, the rates of child marriage increases. Even though many organizations work to combat it, it becomes harder to operate in lockdowns. The UN report of April 2020 which predicted that child marriage could increase an extra 13 million in the upcoming decades.

Methodology:

For the present study, the researcher has adopted the explanatory research. It attempts to verify why and how there is a relationship between two or more aspects of a situation or phenomenon. This research also tries to identify the actual reasons a phenomenon occurs. It does not report the things as facts. It helps to understand and define the things beyond the facts of a research problem. It also helps to analyse the quality of the explanations among various explanations on a research problem. It helps to measure the accuracy of a theory if one researcher wants to analyse a theory. It also explains the process underlying the problem. The area of study is located in the Rural areas of Trichy.

Sample tree outline (Table 1)

Sample Size

S.No	Village Name	Sample size
1	Adavathur	50
2	Ariyavoor	50
3	K. Kallikudi	50
4	Inam Kulathur	50
5	Nagamangalam	50
6	N. Kuttapattu	50
7	Punganur	50
8	Sethurapatti	50
9	Thayanur	50
10	Duraikudi	50
11	Olaiyur	50
12	Somarasampettai	50
Total		600

Status of Female Literacy:

Mahatma Gandhi opined that "Illiteracy is a curse in our country" and the lack of universal illiteracy is one of the major factors which has thwarted total development in India since independence. As per 2011 census, literacy rate in India has been reported as 74.04% with a 14% increase to that in 2001, where as the hike is maximum for rural women at 26% in the last decade, which may be attributed to literacy mission of Government of India. Over all female literacy rate in India much lower than that of male literacy rate. The female literacy levels according to the Literacy Rate 2011 census are 65.46% whereas the male literacy rate is over 80%. The adult literacy rate (15+) for male has increased from 73.4 to 78.8 where as increase in adult literacy is more in case of females from 47.8 to 59.3 from 2001 to 2011. In 2011, just half of the rural adult females are literate against 76.9% urban females. 88.3% Urban adult males are literate against 74.1 rural adult males. (Source: Census of India, Office of Registrar General, India. For 1951, the population male, female and persons refers to effective literacy rates and the breakup of Rural, Urban and male, female components are crude literacy rates.)

Today's position of Rural Schools:

ASER is an annual household survey to assess children's schooling status and basic learning levels in reading and arithmetic in India. & one government school in each sampled village is also visited. In rural schools status of education is very poor. As per ASER's Annual Status of Education Report, January 2018, findings are

Enrollment for the age group 6-14 has been 96% or above since 2009. This proportion increased from 96.7% in 2014 to 96.9% in 2016. In rural India.

Nationally, the proportion of children in Std III who are able to read atleast Std I level text has gone up slightly, from 40.2% in 2014 to 42.5% in 2016.

In 2014, for the country 25.4% of Std III children could do a 2-digit subtraction. This number has risen slightly to 27.7% in 2016. This improvement has come primarily from government schools where the percentage of Std III children who could do a 2-digit subtraction increased from 17.2% in 2014 to 20.2% in 2016.

Children's ability to read English is slightly improved in Std III but relatively unchanged in Std V. In 2016, 32% children in Std III could read simple words in English as compared to 28.5% in 2009.

ASER records whether toilets are available and useable on the day of the visit. Since 2010, there has been significant progress's in the availability of use able toilets. Nationally in 2016, 68.7% of schools visited had toilet facilities that were useable as compared 47.2% in 2010. In 2016, only 3.5% of the schools visited had no toilet facility.

This is serious issue in rural school. Strong focus is needed to ensure that basic skills are built in these early years. Without basic skills, they cannot progress in school. As per findings in rural schools not taking care on girl education. Literacy while going through various research findings, literatures many questions are coming in my mind. Finally I compare those studies two scenarios are came in front of me. That is, from before independence endeavors are for to educate girl child & after independence effective schemes implemented for girls education, spend lot of money on those schemes for better development of rural schools. Till today we face problems.

Literature Review:

Kananga Robert Mukuna (2020): This study explored the perceived challenges of online learning encounter by rural educators in response to COVID-19 pandemic at a selected rural school in South Africa. Within the qualitative approach, a multiple case study was used as a research design. A sample size of six participants (N=6, two males and four females) was drawn from a rural school in a Thabo Mofutsanyana District in the Free State Province. Data were collected through telephone interviews and analysed using thematic analysis. The finding suggested that the Protection Motivation Theory was an insightful framework in responding to the challenges emanating from COVID-19 induced online teaching and learning. Thus, the study revealed that there are various challenges to online learning. These include poor parental involvement in children's homework, incomplete work and poor performance, insufficient personal protective equipment, poor access to network access, and lack of learning devices.

Rafaeli (2020): This rapid review focuses on identifying evidence on the secondary impacts of COVID-19 on women and girls in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). It aims to enable a greater understanding of the unique circumstances of women and girls in the region, which could assist with the provision of effective support throughout the COVID-19 crisis and its aftermath. Guided by available evidence, the review explores the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women and girls in SSA across various issues. These include some of the following – girls' education, social protection, unintended pregnancies, access to health services, poverty, livelihood, land rights, women's and girls' informal employment, food security and nutrition, female health workforce, and access to WASH.

Momoe Makino (2021): Using data collected through a telephone-based survey in rural Bangladesh during the height of the pandemic, we present evidence on the effects of COVID-19-led lockdown and school closures on children, focusing on three child-related outcomes: time use of children during the school closure, plans regarding children's schooling continuation, and the incidence of child marriages. Our analysis reveals heterogeneity in the effects of lockdown and school closure in terms of the child's gender and the type of shocks. We find a decrease in children's study time and an increase in time spent on household chores during the school closure, and these changes were significantly larger for girls than for boys. Within the household, respiratory illness lowered expectations that a child would return to school and increased the probability of marriage-related discussions for girls. Our findings offer a cautionary tale regarding the potential long term effects of pandemic for girls in developing countries.

Shahzad, A (2021): In response to the emerging and ever solution to the COVID-19 outbreak. This study proposes a theoretical framework based on literature and model to determined E-learning portal success. The study compared males and females to E-learning portal usage. The study objective is to check the difference between male and female E-learning portals' accessibility among the students' perspective. The study included service quality, system quality, information quality, user satisfaction, system use, and E-learning portal success. The empirical data of 280 students participated from the different universities of Malaysia through google surveys analyzed using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling. The study further divided the full model into two domains, which are female and male. In the male model, information quality and system quality have direct relationships with user satisfaction. Information quality also supported the relationship with system use. At the same time, there is a positive relationship between user satisfaction and E-learning portals.

National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE): The National Council for Teacher Education, in its previous status since 1973, was an advisory body for the Central and State Governments National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 and Indian School Education System the Programme of Action there under, envisaged a National Council for Teacher Education with statutory status and necessary resources as a first step for overhauling the system of teacher education. NCTE is very broad and covers the whole gamut of teacher education programmes including research and training of persons for equipping them to teach at preprimary, primary, secondary and senior secondary stages in schools, and non-formal education, part-time education, adult education and distance (correspondence) education courses. In addition, many rural

communities lack the professional help, and support, governance structures, books and learning materials that they need to provide the necessary support and care for learners.

Null hypothesis: There will be no effect of child discrimination on the education of the girl child of these respondents.

Empirical hypothesis: There will be effect of child discrimination on the education of the girl child of these respondents. It was observed from the table 4.32, among rural population, there existed effect of child discrimination on the education of the girl child, $r=0.286^*$ and was Significant at 0.05 level of probability. Among tribal population, there was effect of child discrimination on the education of the girl child, $r = 0.446^{**}$ Significant at 0.01 level of probability. In rural and tribal population, there was effect of child discrimination on the education of the girl child at 0.282^{**} and was highly Significant at 0.01 level of probability. These results revealed that there was effect of child discrimination on the education of the girl child was in rural and tribal areas, indicating that there was impact of discrimination of the child on education and the impact was more in both rural and tribal areas. The reason may be the discrimination attitude of these respondents, majority (80.83%) of these respondents were illiterates they were considering girl as a liability, burden to them, to invest for both education and marriage of the girl child.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents according to their age n=120

Age (in years)	Rural (n=60)		Tribal (n=60)		Total (n=120)	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Young (20-30)	31	51.66	21	35.00	52	43.33
Early middle (30-40)	28	46.68	36	60.00	64	53.34
Late middle (40-50)	1	1.66	3	5.00	4	3.33
Total	60	100.00	60	100.00	120	100.00

Table 2. Distribution of respondents according to their educational levels (n=120)

Educational Level	Rural (n=60)		Tribal (n=60)		Total (n=120)	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Illiterate	44	73.33	53	88.34	97	80.83
Primary School	2	3.33	2	3.33	4	3.33
Middle School	7	11.67	1	1.67	8	6.67
High School	6	10.00	2	3.33	8	6.67
College Education	0	0.00	2	3.33	2	1.67
Graduation & Above	1	1.67	0	0.00	1	0.83
Total	60	100.00	60	100.00	120	100.00

Table 3. Correlation analysis of Discrimination of girl child with education of the girl child n =120

Type of respondents	Discrimination of girl child Vs. Education of girl child Correlation coefficient (r) value
Rural	0.286*
Tribal	0.446**
Grand Total = Rural+Tribal	0.282**

*= Significant at 0.05 level of probability

**= Significant at 0.01 level of probability

Suggestions:

These initiatives certainly had significant impacts on girl child education. In many developing countries of the world, rural areas are the most populous and are the most neglected region in the provision of basic amenities such as good roads, primary and affordable health care, electricity supply, potable water, well-equipped schools and other essential infrastructural facilities. According to Ministry of Rural Development, GOI(2014), more than half of the world's population and more than 75% of the world's poor are in rural areas where hunger, illiteracy and low school achievement are commonplace. Education for a large number of people in rural areas is crucial to achieve sustainable development.

Conclusion:

Depending on results achieved in the study, majority of the rural and tribal women respondents were illiterates and there was effect of discrimination on their education of the girl child. There was a significant difference between the association of variables like discrimination of girl child and education of the girl child among the total and tribal samples at 1% level of significance and between rural villages, it was significant at 5% level indicating the impact of discrimination of the child on education of girl was more both the areas and especially in tribal areas.

Further Scope of the Study:

Girls' education goes beyond getting girls into school. It is also about ensuring that girls learn and feel safe while in school; have the opportunity to complete all levels of education, acquiring the knowledge and skills to compete in the labor market; gain socio-emotional and life skills necessary to navigate and adapt to a changing world; make decisions about their own lives; and contribute to their communities and the world.

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