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Education of girls with disability in the state of Haryana

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Abstract:

Education is irreplaceable and fundamental for human development. It helps in developing an equitable and egalitarian society. Providing quality education is the main investment of a nation towards its economic and social growth. If we talk about CWSN then its importance increases manifold.

Girls with disability also belongs under this umbrella and are doubly disadvantaged. Both the variables i.e. disability and gender make their position more vulnerable in the society. This paper talks about the education of girls with disability with special reference to the state of Haryana. It also talks about some of the challenges faced by them in their social, physical and psychological domain.

Keywords: *equitable, egalitarian, Girls with disability, disadvantaged, vulnerable, challenges.*

Introduction:

Today I met with an eighteen years old girl, khushi (pseudo name). She wanted to be an IAS officer. A girl with so many aspirations and dreams for her future. But life is not so easy for her. She has to struggle a lot to achieve her aim in the life because of social, physical and mental challenges she faces everyday. She is a girl with 75% mental retardation on documents. In my first conversation with her I was not even aware of the fact that she is being diagnosed for MR. later, her class teacher told me about the disability and the academic performance of this girl. And I am sure that no one can tell in the first meeting that she is a child with disability. Her confidence, clarity of thoughts, perseverance towards her goals and communication skills make her personality very different from any other girl of her class.

I know, being an ethical and responsive researcher I should not have any biasness and pre-conceived notion towards any kind of disability or CWSN but after talking to her I melted down all my opinions or pre-ideas about 'such' children.

When I asked about what are the things you aspire for then she replied innocently, "Books". On further interaction I came to know that she belongs to lower middle class family with conservative mindset. Her parents are more interested in fulfilling the needs of her two brothers and overlook her genuine basic needs. Reason being she is a girl that too with disability. But she never give up for her education and keep on putting efforts to make it possible because she know how important it is for every child.

We know education is irreplaceable and fundamental for human development. It helps in developing an equitable and egalitarian society. Providing quality education is the main investment of a nation towards its economic and social growth. If we talk about CWSN then its importance increases manifolds. It provides them a social and economic upliftment. Education is the key to harness complete innate potential of an individual.

There are currently 2 billion disabled persons in the world, which makes 37.5% of the world's population. Out of them between 93 million to 150 million are children with disabilities worldwide (UNESCO). Their enrollment and retention in schools is the need of the hour. As per data produced by UNESCO, 90% of CWDs in developing countries do not attend school. The reasons are lack of awareness, non-supportive parents, bad health conditions, poverty and many more. Education promotes their inclusion in society and gives them a way of life. It helps them in increased access to employment, health, and other services, and develop a better awareness towards their rights.

Now many questions scratch our minds like, what is 'inclusion' ? Why it is important to include them in the mainstream society? Do they only need to include into the society or society also need them? These are some of the interesting questions and we will try to find the possible answers to above mentioned questions as per our best knowledge and wisdom.

Inclusion is the concept which deals with each and every child irrespective of their differences. It talks about equity over equality. Advocates of inclusion reiterates the agenda of providing equal access to all children to gain equal opportunities to education and learning. As per inclusion, we need to put extra efforts to vulnerable groups based on gender, caste, class, age, race, ethnicity, disability, religion, region, sexual orientation etc. In easy words, inclusion in terms of education is catering needs of each and every child in the classroom.

Next why they need inclusion? In the larger society, we need them and they need us. It's a mutual growth, one completes other. Special settings fulfill their needs but by mainstreaming they would know how to cater life challenges by their own in the bigger society. Education tells us the way to live a better life.

Girls with disabilities in the Indian context face challenges which are indicators of these more complex scenarios. More importantly, societal responses towards the girls with disability changes their orientation towards their goals. In this paper, we

would like to bring these nuances which deals with the challenges faced by the girls with disability in the context of their education. Also, how society affects their upbringing and changes their major goals.

Educating Girls with disability:

The male population with disabilities in India is somewhere more than the female population with disabilities. As per statistics given by NSO (National Statistic Office, 2016) out of 62.32 Cr male Indian citizens, 1.5 Cr males are disabled in India. Among them 38% are illiterates. If we talk about females, out of 58.76 Cr female Indian citizens, 1.18 Cr are disabled. Among them 55% are illiterates. The educational level of disabled males and females is better in urban areas as compared to rural areas. Terms like disability, impairment, handicaps, physically challenged, etc. are not just attached with a stigma but they are also used to segregate PWDs from the rest of the society in multiple ways. If a girl is disabled then a gender perspective further complicates the matrix. Girls with disabilities are considered as the most marginalized group in our society if social norms and cultural biases are concerned (Mehrotra, 2006). So, educating them is the prime need of our nation.

Education not only empower the girl child but the entire family profited from it. An educated women knows her rights well and can lead a better life. In this paper we would be discussing the cultural and social context towards disability and gender. That is the reason we have chosen Haryana as a sample state. The research objectives needs to be contextualized in the cultural and social context of Haryana.

Education of girls with disability in the state of Haryana:

Haryana is located in the northern part of the India. Haryana got its identity as a state on 1st November 1966 via Punjab Reorganization Act. Out of 28 states and 8 union territories, Haryana is the only state which shares its capital with Punjab which makes it further significant to study. Chandigarh is the capital of Haryana and Punjab. It has intense historical significance also.

Some important statistical information about the state is given below in the table:

Characteristic	Data obtained
State	Haryana
No. of districts	22
Population size	2.54 crores
Sex ratio	877 females per 1000 males
Official language	Hindi
Regional language	Haryanvi, Ahirwati, Mewati and Bagri
Literacy rate	75.55% (Male : 84.06% and female:65.94%)

*As per census 2011

When we probe further in district wise classification on the basis of literacy rates then Gurugram with a literacy rate 84.7% topped in the ranking while Nuh with 54.08% literacy rate is at the bottom of the list. On further probing we found that the sequence of the district wise list is similar when we talked about the female literacy rate in Haryana. Highest female literacy rate is in Gurugram i.e. 77.98% while lowest female literacy rate is in Nuh i.e. 36.6%. As per the data given by the Haryana School Siksha Pariyojna Parishad (HSSP) under the right to information act 2009, 1.33 lakh physically challenged girls remain excluded from schools in Haryana. So, we need to think about their inclusion in school setting for their holistic development.

Disability is gendered, culturally constituted, and socially negotiated (Mehrotra, 2006). Girls with disabilities are among the most marginalized groups of society due to social and cultural biases. They were considered as doubly marginalized due to their gender and disability (Ali, Gaib & Andrae, 2017). There are provisions and policies on right to education for all at national and international level but still, children with a disability faces a lot of challenges in getting a quality education, social acceptance and economic upliftment (Sarton & Smith, 2004). Other challenges

in educating GWDs are lack of government policies, few numbers of trained teachers, distant schools, social and cultural biases of society, financial issues and family tradition and background etc (Mor.et al. , 2015). These factors somewhere restrict schooling of GWDs and dropped them down from the ladder of social and cognitive development.

Disability locates the individual in a compromised position not as a function of biology but also product of a complex interaction among non-biological factors like.....gender, caste, class, neighborhood relations, and the nature of kinship and family structures (Mehrotra, 2004). Based on this statement we can say that women and girls with disabilities experience double discrimination i.e. by virtue of their gender and disability both. This results in a high risk of sexual abuse, exploitation, gender based violence, and maltreatment. As per UNDP, the global literacy rate is as low as 1% for women with disabilities. Gender, disability, and illiteracy further complicate the situation for them. So, there is a need to increase the number of quality researches in this area to uplift their status in society.

Following are some of the challenges from social, physical and psychological domain of GWDs,

Social challenges faced by a girl with disability:

Gender inequality is a challenge in Indian society. We have different expectations from both the genders. Right from our childhood, our culture started socializing us how to be a 'girl' and a 'boy'. This gender gap exponentially increases as we grow. It also snatches many opportunities from the hands of a girl child.

Whether she will be going to school or not? Which school she will be admitted to? How much education is enough for her? What she will be doing in future? Almost every important decision of her life will be taken up by the 'significant others' and not by the fundamental rights or Indian constitution of India.

Gender stereotypes mixed with disability further complicates the matrix. These two variables further worsens the situation for a GWD. For example, this is the well known stereotype about GWDs that they are weak and feeble physically and mentally both irrespective of their disability. the social expectations from them are they should marry early , they should take less education, they are *becharis* and *abla*. Our society won't accept them as strong, competent and independent individuals. They are more subjected to sympathy rather that empathy from the society.

Gender roles are also different and produce challenges in their path of education. They have to take care of their younger siblings, household chores and other non-paid jobs. This extra burden reduces their efficiency and outcome towards learning.

Parents perception:

Parents are not much aware about their rights and responsibilities of being parents of GWDs. They consider them as liability and burden. Which needs to be transferred from one shoulder to another. That other shoulder would be of her husband and in-laws. Marriage is an important institution for this transfer.

Another major conception about GWDs is that if they will get more education then it would be difficult to find a suitable groom for them. In the state of Haryana, this is the general perception that males are far ahead than females in every aspect of life. They are the drivers of the married life. So if a female try to deconstruct this famous notion of gender disparity then a state of disequilibrium arises.

Infrastructural challenges :

Infrastructure plays an important role in making teaching learning process more smooth and effective. It somewhere improves the outcome of learning. And if we talk about CWSN, then its importance increases manifolds. Infrastructure should be disable friendly. One should take care of the entry and exit gates, ramps, railings , stairs , sign boards, toilets , playgrounds, classrooms, well- ventilated windows etc. an inclusive schools should adapt as per the need of the child. For example, if talk

about the toilets. Girls with orthopedic challenges shared that most of the time taps are leaking inside toilets. This makes the floor more slippery because of lichen growth. It would be difficult for us to use that washroom because we felt that we might get slipped inside the washroom. In case of emergency we'll go inside with another girl. We feel shy about it.

Safety challenges:

The most important aspect comes into our mind while educating a girls with disability is about her safety. This is the prime concern of their parents that whether their girl child would be safe or not in or out of the school? Safety from physical and sexual assault, safety from gender based violence, safety from harsh social and cultural norms etc. These incidences not only brings academic loss of the GWD but also generate psychological imbalances like trauma, stress, depression, unwanted pregnancies, low self-esteem, sleep disorders etc.

Safety while going to school is also important to ensure. There are many cases where girl child would be assaulted while going to the school. These instances further dampens the parents will for the education of their girl child. Parents ensure escorts for their girl child to pick and drop her in the school which further adds to the cost of her education.

Conclusion:

Education is the torch which brings light in the life of a GWDs. During their life span, they faces many challenges as discussed earlier, these could be infrastructural challenges, social challenges , parents perception, safety challenges etc. One should take into account about these challenges while planning and drafting curriculum for GWDs.

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