



Research Paper

# Revisiting the Challenges of Indian Girls' Education in the Post Covid-19 Period

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**Abstract:** Girls' education remains a pertinent and a very significant topic in the context of the overall development of India still today. In spite of adopting various Government schemes, amending educational policies, and disseminating awareness programs, India's current female literacy rate is only 70.3% which is one of the lowest female literacy rates in total Asia (Gandhi, 2021). Many societal, economic, educational and political issues have been identified as the possible hindering reasons behind this frustrating fact. All these factors collectively impede the effective spread of girls' education at every level of Indian society. The disastrous pandemic attack of 2020 brings another major threat to this educational scenario and makes it even more complex. The present article addresses these different challenges acting against the growth of Indian girls' education in the post COVID time and analyzes their individual changing status caused by the pandemic attack.

**Keywords:** India, Girl, Education, Challenge, COVID-19.

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## I. Introduction:

India, as a prominent developing country, still considerably lags behind its desirable aim of 100% female literacy. However, a significant improvement in the rate of female illiterateness has been earned through extensive efforts of last 75 years from its independence. Today in one side, Indian woman are flying fighter jet, reaching in space, discovering new science, setting confident foot-steps in every possible fields of life, while on the other, millions of unfortunate girls are crying for their basic education. Studies have shown that education can be the main tool for any nation to become socially, economically, and politically developed (Illakiya and Ratnam, 2018). Young children who are the future citizens of this country will be truly empowered only through proper education. But what is understood theoretically has not been practically implemented in Indian people's lives. Girls, especially of rural and backward places, urban slums, lag far behind in comparison to boys in accessing education. Many of them have never been to a school at all. As a long-term consequence of this, only a limited percentage of females are presently included in the national labour force resulting in a crippled economic growth of this nation. Over all of these, the pandemic hit for two long years has brought several disastrous changes in multiple national sectors and on the overall human lives for which the attainment of education became even more challenging especially for under privileged girls. This article is written to reanalyse these various possible barriers of Indian girls' education in post COVID-19 period and also to understand how these issues have changed following this deadly outbreak.

## II. Objectives of the Study:

- To understand the possible hurdles in the attainment process of Indian girl's education in post COVID-19 time
- To analyse the altered status of these barriers caused by the pandemic hit
- To find out some basic measures to mitigate these problems

## III. Literature Review:

Literature review suggests that only 6 articles (Bose and Velath, 2020; Manglam, 2020; Sahu, 2024; Ghatge and Parasara, 2022; B, M. 2021) have been published within the last five years on the topic of Indian Girl's education and its post COVID-19 impact. Most of them have highlighted the issues of financial crisis, increased drop-out rate of girl students, impact of nation-wide school closure, domestic violence, forced marriage of

teenagers and the digital divide across the country which are undoubtedly some of the very vital contributing factors behind the serious setback of girl's education after the pandemic attack.

#### **IV. Research Gap:**

The article narrates the overall status of girl's education in India in today's time and aims to fill up certain gaps that exist in the present literature. COVID-19 pandemic has impacted multiple aspects of human lives, society, economy and politics which have either direct or indirect influence on girl's education. Now, as mentioned in the literature review section, majority of the earlier documentations on this topic encompass only a few important key reasons, whereas many other relevant issues such as the momentous impact of the patriarchal Indian society on girls' education, the extra load of domestic chores, child labor, parental attitudes, number of available teachers, importance of financial and infrastructural support, have been left undiscussed, especially how these factors have been altered after the COVID-19 outbreak and what were their consequential impacts on Indian Girls' education have not been thoroughly analyzed till to date. Moreover, the previous publications lack in their graphical statistical data representation especially with a comparative approach. Therefore, to contribute to these particular areas, the present article attempts to explain a range of different obstructing factors including both the very long standing Indian societal, economic problems as well as some newly fused post COVID-19 hindrances along with the graphical depiction of reliable statistical data. Pertinent discussion on each and every factor supported by comparative data interpretations, wherever possible, of the last three to four-year statistics, thoroughly helps in understanding the significance of individual responsive factor behind the haltered growth of Indian female education and also to analyze their altering trends from pre-COVID-19 time to post-COVID-19 time.

#### **V. Methodology:**

This article is an analytical, descriptive type article, focusing on various sets of statistical data and their interpretations to analyze the factual condition of Indian girl's education following the destructive attack of COVID-19. The statistical data used in this theoretical research, are collected from different primary as well as secondary sources like national, international, state, NGO level survey reports, human resource blogs, journals, research paper magazines and related websites.

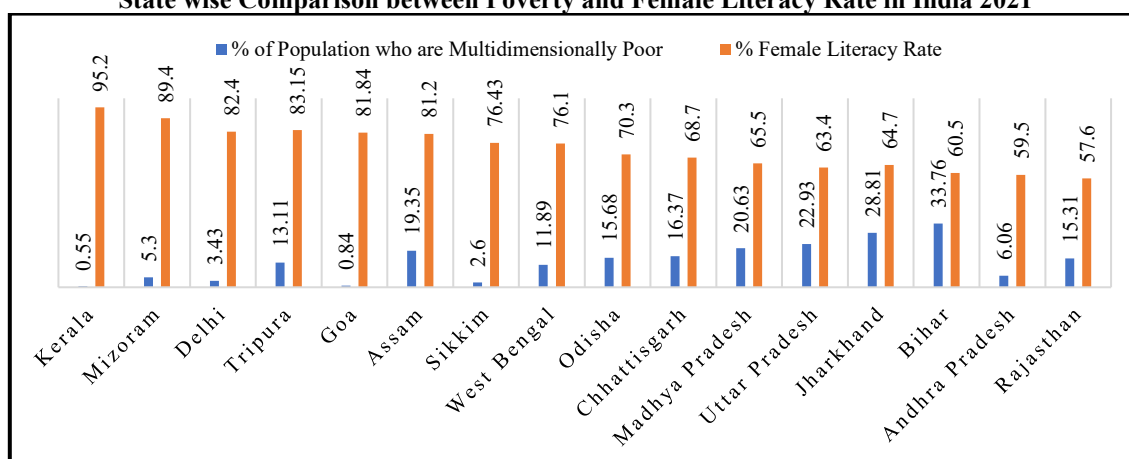
#### **VI. Research Findings:**

##### ***Different Hindrances behind the Effective Dissemination of Girl's Education in India:***

##### ***Augmented Burden of Poverty***

Poverty is considered to be the prime reason behind the scar of illiteracy in Indian populations, especially among girls. The 75<sup>th</sup> round survey of National Sample Survey (NSS) report 2017-18 revealed that the literacy rate of India is 77.7% in 2021. Country-wide the female literacy rate is reported to be 70.3% whereas the estimated male literacy is 84.7% resulting a gender gap of 14.4%. As per this report, Kerala has the highest female literacy rate of 95.2% while Rajasthan has the lowest rate of 57.6% (**Figure 1**). Upon comparing the poverty rate with the female literacy count for different states a striking inter-relationship has been observed. In most cases, higher the poverty rate lower is the female literacy. The reason behind such observation has been explained by saying that poor people cannot spend money to buy education for their children, especially for the girls (Hunter, 2020; Singh, 2015). Expenses required for buying books, uniforms, giving tuition fees are much more than their family income. So, naturally, education seems to be an extra luxury rather than a basic need for them. Although, the Right to Education Act of 2009 has made education essentially free of cost for all citizens until the age

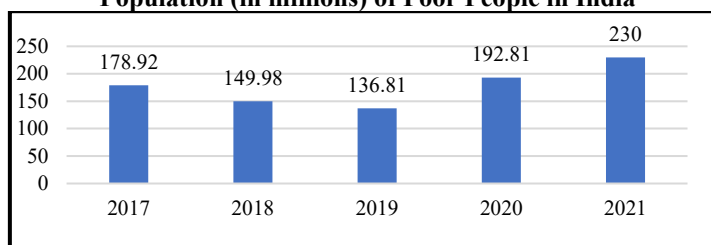
**Figure 1**  
**State wise Comparison between Poverty and Female Literacy Rate in India 2021**



Source: 75<sup>th</sup> Round of National Sample Survey Report 2017-18 and Census 2011

of 14 (Education Act 2009), but still, the NCPCR report revealed that 40% of the adolescent girls in India are out of the light of education (Singh, 2018). So, the mere provision of free education could not achieve the desired goal of complete literacy in this country. There are many other factors that need to be equally addressed to uproot the problem. A study by the World Economic Forum in 2020 disclosed that around “220 million Indians sustained on an expenditure level of less than Rs. 32 per day-the poverty line for rural India-by the last headcount of the poor in India in 2013” (Mahapatra, 2020). According to a report published in The Wire 2021, another 230 million people can go below the national minimum wage poverty line due to the disastrous economic damage caused by the COVID-19 attack (The Wire 2021; **Figure 2**). Under such stressful financial condition, the Indian girls' education experienced a

**Figure 2**  
**Population (in millions) of Poor People in India**



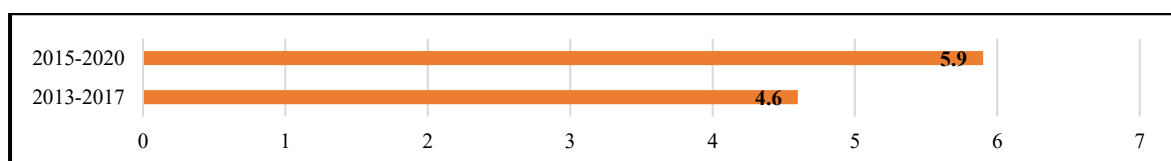
Source: World Bank and UN Data

massive disruption; about 10 million school girls may discontinue their education from the secondary level due to this pandemic hit (Rana, 2021; East Asia Forum).

### ***Ingrained Patriarchy and its Repercussions***

Indian patriarchal social system is the next major roadblock against the expansion of girls' education. Here, society fixes the gender role. Men are considered to be superior to women, hence they would make the rules, control the society and women have to obey them. A young boy of a family is expected to be the future breadwinner, responsibility bearer while a young girl will eventually get married off and perform mostly the household duties. Keeping such notion in mind, it is predefined that good education, decent opportunities, proper attention should be given to a boy not to a girl. Little education is enough for a girl to perform her role either as a good mother or a humble wife. The society never thinks how an uneducated or a less educated girl will become an able mother to make her child a worthy citizen of this country. A girl is considered as the ‘parayadhan’ while a son can sustain the lineage, participates in the family ritual rites and inherits the patrimonial property. In India, according to UNFPA, an average of 5.9 lakh girl children is lost from 2015 to 2020 due to the prenatal sex selection practice (Sarkar, 2020; **Figure 3**). Education can only defunct this patriarchy by liberating the

**Figure 3**  
**Number of Female Foeticide Cases in India (in lakhs)**



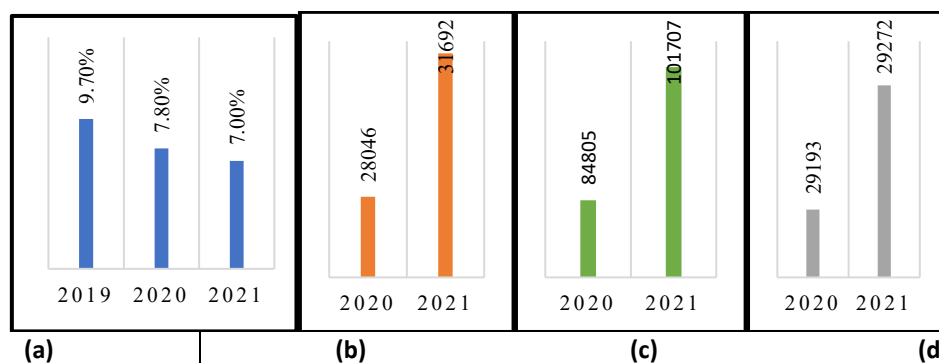
Source: United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Report 2020 and the State of World Population 2020

minds of the young girls (Kumar and Sangeeta, 2013), equipping them to become a strong personality who can voice against all injustice and inequality. A girl becomes economically independent by her education and so, it is not much wanted for a male dominated society who wants to enjoy the monopolistic advantage of the patriarchal system. During COVID-19 massacre, the condition of Indian females was further deteriorated. A huge percentage of women lost their job. The urban women labour force participation rate dropped from 9.7% to 7.0% (PLFS 2021-22; **Figure 4a**). Different sorts of crimes against young girls like rape (Athar, 2024; **Figure 4b**), kidnapping (NDTV Report 2023; **Figure 4c**), murder (NDTV Report 2023; **Figure 4d**) have noticeably increased during this period, exposing the brutal face of Indian patriarchal system.

### Conservative Social Mindset

In Indian society, especially among the poor people, a girl is treated with contempt and disgrace starting from her birth. Family members express their grief, burden by naming the newly born girl child as Mafi (sorry), Dhapu (enough) etc (Vikalp Sansthan). Parents always teach their daughters to be submissive, timid, and obedient. The outspoken behaviour of a girl is considered to be her bad and rough nature. The common saying 'raising girls is like watering

**Figure 4**  
**(a) Year wise Labour Force Participation Rate (%) of Urban Women in India; Different Types of Crime against Children (b) Number of Rape Cases, (c) Number of Kidnapping Cases, (d) Number of Murder Cases.**



(a) (Source: Periodic Labour Force Survey Annual Reports 2021-2022)

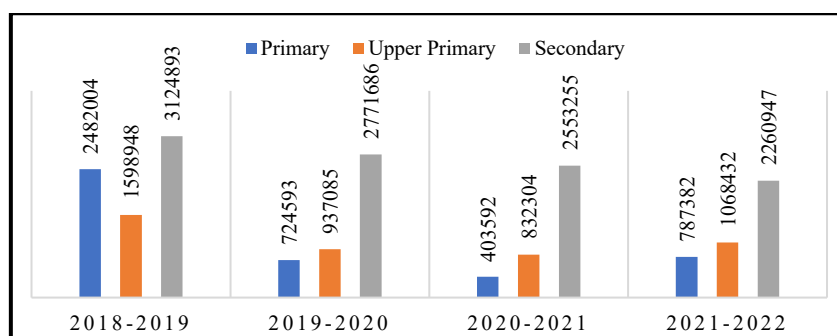
(b) (Source: NCB 2021 Report)

(c) (Source: NCB 2021 Report)

(d) (Source: NCB 2021 Report)

someone else's lawn' represents the true condition of a young girl in her family. Poor parents don't want to spend a lot from their pockets for the education of their daughters because anyway, they have to sacrifice an exorbitant amount of dowry at the time of their marriage. Societal conservativeness in different states namely Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar etc. is so intense that it does not even allow a girl to realize the importance of education in her life (Yagbala et al., 2019; Kundu, 2020). Elders reveal their fear that educated daughters may demand much more educated groom which can hike their marriage cost further. They also believe that little education is of no values for their teen girls rather becoming efficient in performing domestic tasks can attract wealthy grooms from conservative families. Moreover, the out-home activities of the young girls may demolish their character sanctity. Majority of girl students are taken away from school as soon as they reach their puberty. As a result, a large number of girl students are drop out every year from schools. After COVID-19 outbreak, these numbers, in case of primary and upper primary level, have risen considerably upward (UDISE+ 2021-2022; **Figure 5**) which clearly showcases the critical condition of Indian girls' education subsequent to the pandemic.

**Figure 5**  
**Year wise the Number of Drop out Girl Students from Different Level of School Education**

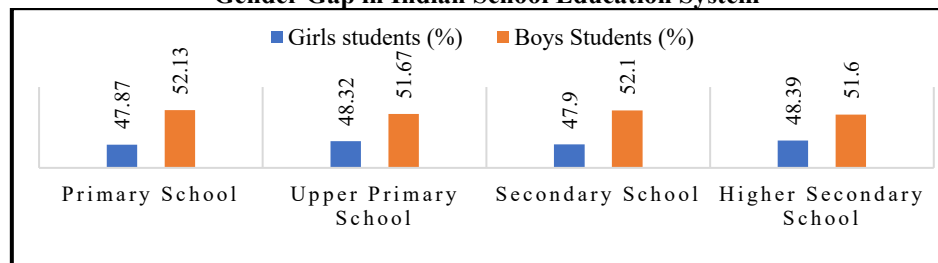


Source: UDISE+ 2021-2022 Flash Statistics

### Escalated Gender Discrimination

Gender disparity is another stigma of Indian society which is very vivid in different domains of Indians' lives including health, education, employment, business, economy, and politics. Everywhere women are significantly underrepresented compared to men. A young girl encounters with varied sort of discriminations in the different stages of her life. In childhood, she may receive shorter durations of breastfeeding as her parents expect another child, preferably a son. Compared to 47.8% of baby girls, 52.9% of boys aged 6–8 months receive complementary foods alongside breast milk (Aurino, 2017). The National Family Health Survey-5 highlighted an alarming rate of anemia among 57% of women compared to 25% of men aged 15–49, indicating the existence of a clear gendered malnutrition. UDISE+ report of 2021-22, revealed that out of total 145.13 million enrolled students, only 12.28 million are girls and 132.84 million are boys (**Figure 6**). As the post pandemic impact, the girls' enrolment in

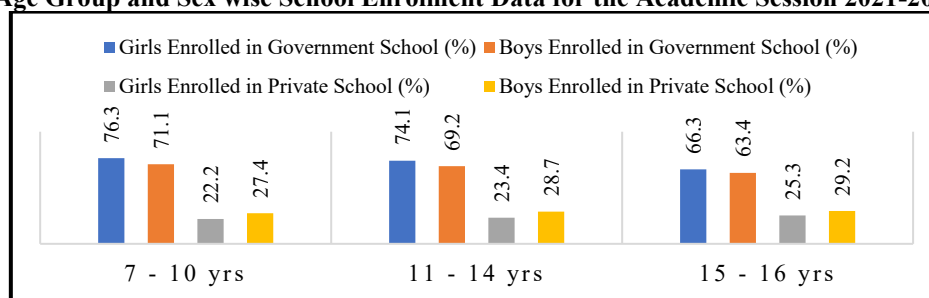
**Figure 6**  
**Gender Gap in Indian School Education System**



Source: UDISE+ 2021-2022 Flash Statistics

pre-primary level has decreased by about 10 lakhs in 2021-22 compared to that of in 2020-2021. However, in the primary and upper primary levels, the rate remains almost same in these two academic years. The rural ASER 2022 report observed that girl students of different age group are enrolled in government schools more, while the numbers of boy students in private schools are maximum (**Figure 7**). Boys are more preferred for roles like class monitors and receive greater academic motivation than girls (Kumari and Sangwan, 2021). Despite being in the 21st century, Indian girls still face deterrence while choosing their career paths in the fields of engineering, defense, police, transportation, aviation, sports, and others. Such discriminatory outlooks considerably undermine the confidence and potential of many young Indian girls. In case of the female labor force participation rate, the PLFS Report 2022–23 showed a 4.2% increase in 2023. Although the worker-population ratio (WPR) for Indian females of age 15 years and above, is still at a meager level of 36% compared to 76% of the male ratio. Over this, the job loss and persistent unemployment of 15% female workers in the post COVID-19 period, until December 2020, compared to 2% of male workers, makes the situation even more critical (Anand, 2020). Presently, India with 0.437 score points, stood at the rank of 108 out of 193 countries on the Gender Inequality Index (UNDP report, 2024).

**Figure 7**  
**Age Group and Sex wise School Enrolment Data for the Academic Session 2021-2022**



Source: ASER (Rural) 2022

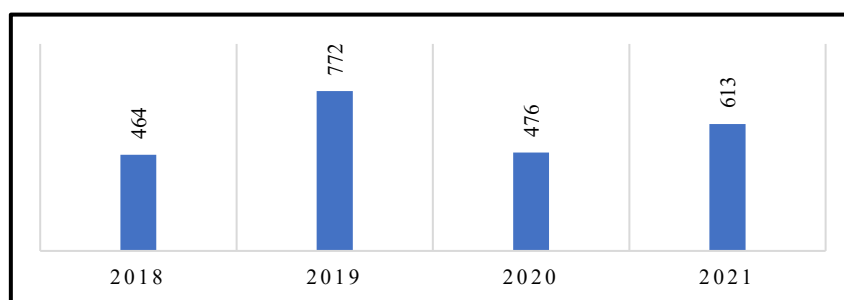
### **Increased Load of Domestic Chores**

The burden of household tasks is another significant cause hindering Indian girls' access to education. Across communities, cultures, and religions, young girls are taught to help their mothers with various domestic chores from a very young age. The workload increases further if the girl's mother is employed outside the home. Many of such girls being unable to strike a balance between their domestic duties and study time often quit their studies and miss out their crucial childhood. According to Educational Statistics Data 2018, 29.70% of young girls cited their engagement in domestic chores as a primary reason for quitting the school education. The UDISE+ 2021-2022 report revealed that the average dropout rates for girl students are 1.4% in the primary level (classes 1-5), 3.3% in the upper primary level (classes 6-8), and 12.3% in the secondary level (classes 9-10). As per the UNICEF India poll conducted on International Women's Day 2022, each of 38% of respondents reported about at least one girl who left their studies incomplete mainly because of either domestic work or early marriage. The problem has been further aggravated during the pandemic due to the growing financial crisis, the temporary closure of millions of schools and the overspread of online education. Many young girls of economically backward families discontinued their education to ease their family expense burden and sought employment in various informal sectors (Hussain, 2020).

### **Rising Graph of Child Labour**

As per the Child and Adolescent Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986, amended in 2016, employment of any child labour in any kind of work sector below the age of 14 years is strictly prohibited. Adolescent children between the ages of 14 to 18 years cannot be involved in any types of hazardous work. In spite of these regulations, the National Census 2011 report revealed that 10.1 million Indian children, comprising 5.6 million boys and 4.5 million girls are working as child labour (UNICEF report 2011). In urban households, as domestic maids, young girls can be seen more often. Poverty-stricken parents without getting other decent work opportunities, push their daughters to such various low-paid services. In severe cases, girls are even trafficked, and forced to work as beggars or sex workers. The wretched conditions of such victimized girls are beyond explainable. The NSS 2017-2018 household survey data suggested that about 3.22 crore children of the age group 6-17 years are out of school education. According to International Labour Organization and UNICEF, worldwide the number of child labour has increased to 160 million (UNICEF report 2021) with the declining economic condition during lockdown. In India, the NCRB report revealed a significant surge in the number of registered cases under the Child Labor Prohibition & Regulation Act, 1986 after the outbreak of COVID-19 (NCRB Report 2022; M, P. K., M, P. K. 2023; **Figure 8**). A study by Campaign against Child Labor (CACL) disclosed that out of 818 surveyed children the proportion of working children has increased from 28.2% to 79.6% due to the closure of school during pandemic (International Labor Organization, 2021; Rise in Child Labor). Several studies revealed that a school-going student who converted to a laborer under the pandemic pressure would never back to school again (How to Help Children of India to Go Back to School; ReliefWeb, 2021). As a far-reaching consequence, this would surely impose a grave impact on Indian girls' as well as overall Children's education.

**Figure 8**  
**Year wise the Number of Registered Cases of Child Labour**

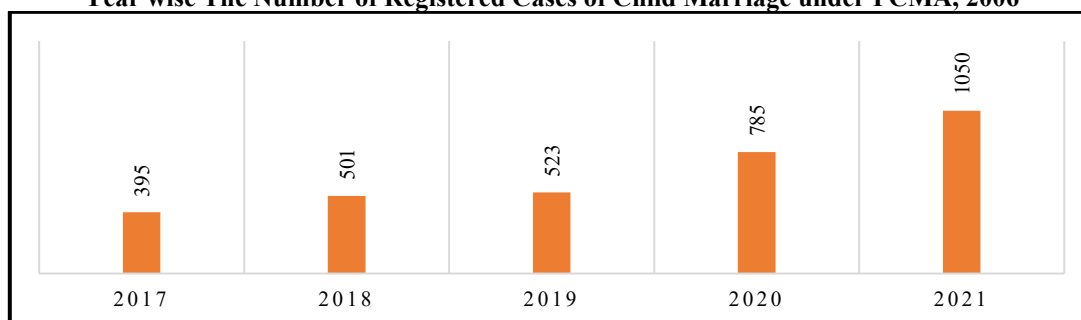


Source: NCRB Data

### ***Grave Problems of Child Marriage and Early Pregnancy***

Child marriage remains the serious obstacle to the education of Indian girls (Pramila, 2013; UNICEF 2019). Orthodox people follow this ancient, non-scientific practice with much importance. Festivals like Akshaya Tritiya, Akha Teej, etc. serve as some auspicious occasions for widespread celebration of child marriage across different parts of India (Arjunpuri, 2012). UNICEF reports that 1.5 million Indian girls under the age of 18 are married off every year (Chakraborty, 2022). In Rajasthan, one-third of all its adolescent girls are married. Early pregnancy of such young brides makes their lives even more miserable. In 2017, 11.8 million cases of teenage pregnancies are reported in India (Sharma and Dharma, 2021). As a consequence, the country loses around 12% of its total GDP (The Milli Gazette 2014). Different media reports claim that the cases of child marriage have been increased by 33% during the past pandemic years (**Figure 9** and **10**) (Jejeebhoy, 2021). Closure of schools,

**Figure 9**  
**Year wise The Number of Registered Cases of Child Marriage under PCMA, 2006**

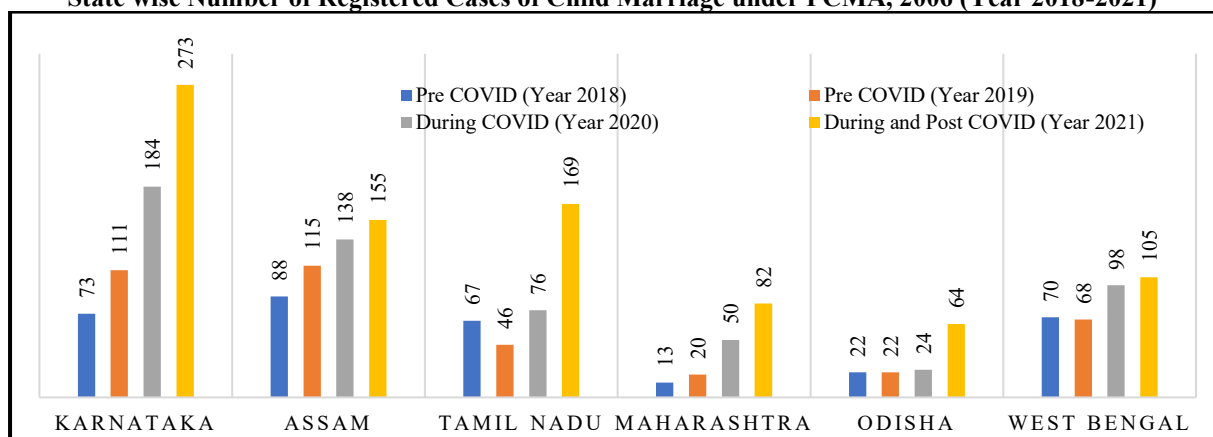


Source: NCRB Data

isolation from friends and other support systems, and escalated poverty deranged the condition to a great extent. In exchange for a small dowry, several daughters of a family irrespective of their ages have married off in single ceremony. As a result of numerous unfortunate parental deaths during the corona virus outbreak (NCPCR2021-2022), the education of abundant young girls was impeded and stopped before completion.



**Figure 10**  
**State wise Number of Registered Cases of Child Marriage under PCMA, 2006 (Year 2018-2021)**



Source: NCRB Data

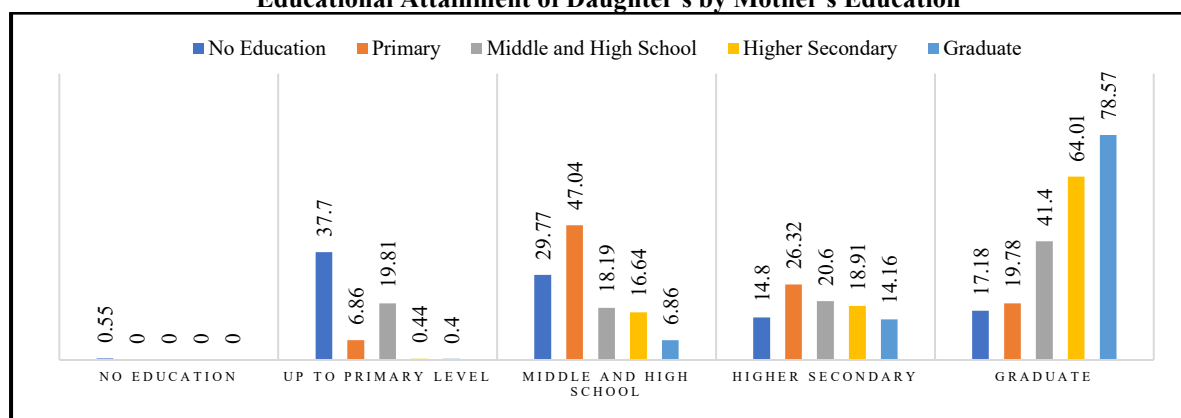
### Impact of Parental Education

The education of parents has a vital role to play on the development of any child. Most of the educated parents do not discriminate between sons and daughters in terms of their education. In any difficult situation, these parents never think of sacrificing their daughter's education while a lot of uneducated parents ignore their daughter's academics quite easily. Like in pandemic time, several uneducated parents, especially in rural and backward places of India remained completely apathetic towards their daughter's education. Almost 7.9 and 10.7 lakh girl students dropped out from their school at primary and upper primary level, respectively in 2021-22 (UDISE+ 2021-22). Several on-ground researches suggest that even a primary level of education of the parents, particularly if the mother received that education; can bring a drastic change in their outlook towards girl's education. A study utilizing the data from the 3<sup>rd</sup> round of District Level Household Survey (DLHS-3), 2007-08 indicates that the rate and the level of girls' education increases vividly with the increasing education of their mothers among 1.85 million of females from 601 districts of India (Borkotoky et al., 2015; **Figure 11**).

### Wretched Condition of Marginalized Girl Students

A large number of girl children from Indian marginal society are still deprived of education. Age-wise, these marginal girls often reach school late and feel embarrassed to study with relatively younger students. Their clumsy, untidy looks make them an untouchable group of

**Figure 11**  
**Educational Attainment of Daughter's by Mother's Education**

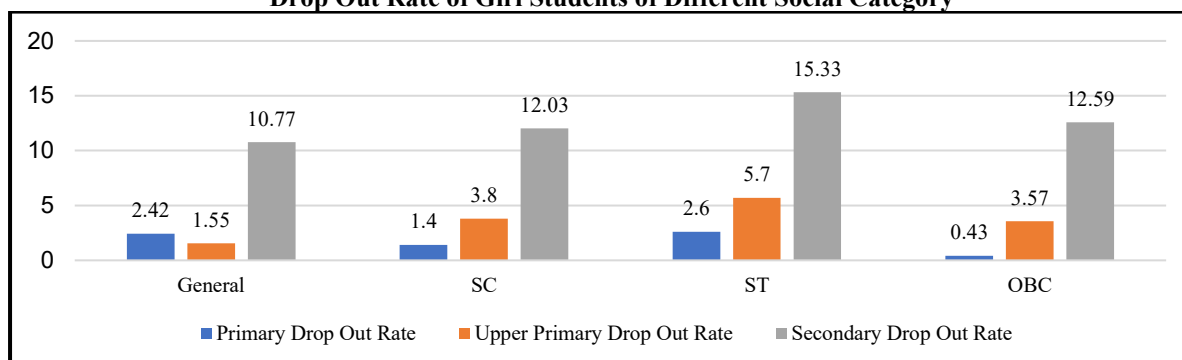


Source: DLHS-3, 2007-08

people, who are not allowed to sit and mixed with other students. Insensitive teachers often overlook such differentiation, and as a result, these factors collectively force them to drop out of school education (Krishna, 2021). As per the UDISE+2021-22, after pandemic, the dropout rate of other category girl students is found to be relatively more compared to that of general category especially at upper primary and secondary educational level (**Figure 12**). Eruption of the corona virus exacerbated the economic stress of these marginalized people manifold, making it even harder for these poor students to acquire their basic education.



**Figure 12**  
**Drop Out Rate of Girl Students of Different Social Category**

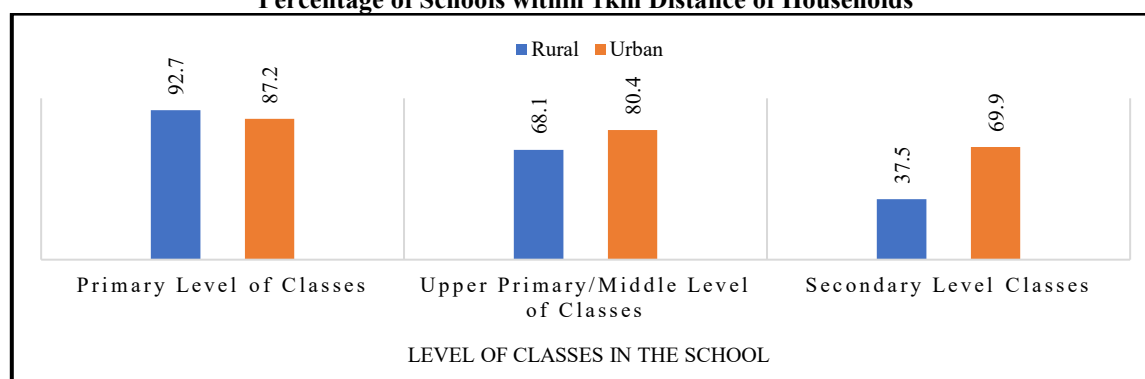


Source: UDISE+2021-2022 Flash Statistics

### **Distant Locations and Nation-wide School Closure**

Distant location of schools from households and the poor transportation facility is the other challenging issue for many Indian students. Considering the gravity of this problem, Indian Government has put enough effort to ensure the availability of at least a primary school within a 1 km radius of residential areas in various remote and underdeveloped regions. As per the NSS report on Household Social Consumption on Education in India 2017-18, 92.7% of rural and 87.2% of urban households now can avail these facilities. However, the School Education Survey of 2016 reported that the number of secondary schools within a 1 km distance in rural places is only 38% (**Figure 13**). Children of such areas still face great difficulties in attending school, especially the girl students in their menstrual days. Approximately, 62% of girl students walk on bare feet to their schools (Gohain, 2020). Only 11.3% and 15.3% (NSS 2017-18) of students from rural and urban areas, respectively, use public transport to travel to their schools. During the spread of COVID-19, various digital platforms brought classroom education of any such distant schools to in-house education. But, unfortunately, multiple disadvantaged girls from poor and backward communities could not participate in this online realm of education either due to the lack of smart phones or any reliable internet connections. Over that the permanent closure of about 20,000 schools throughout India creates another stern obstruction (UDISE+ 2021-22). Moreover, a long gap in the structured school education during the entire course of the pandemic led to a decreased interest among many students who did not return back to school again when they reopen.

**Figure 13**  
**Percentage of Schools within 1km Distance of Households**



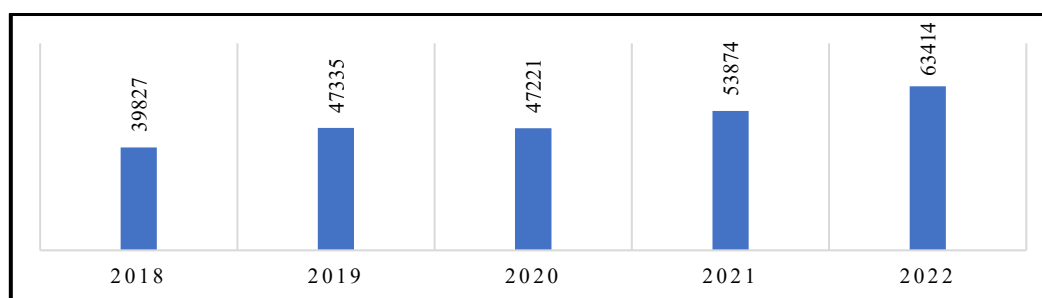
Source: 75<sup>th</sup> NSS Report 2017-18

### **Increasing Child Abuse and Child Insecurity**

According to NCRB, in India a total of 149,404 cases of crimes against children were registered in 2021. Among which 45% cases are of kidnapping and abductions. After the pandemic hit in 2020, the crime rate against children has notably increased by 16.2% in 2021 (Shrinivas et al., 2023; Education World, 2023; **Figure 14**). Related research suggests that the cumulative problems of unemployment, economic crisis, isolation, mental frustration and home bound conditions during lockdown could be the possible reasons behind such ascending statistics of child abuse (Poddar and Mukherjee, 2020). The NCRB report highlights that 2 out of every 5 crimes against children are of a sexual nature (NCRB, 2022). Under the POCSO act, the number of offenses against girls was alarmingly high at 52,836, compared to 1,038 against boys (Kailash Satyarthi Children's Foundation, 2023).

The number of heinous crimes against girl students within school premises have been considerably increased in the recent past that flared up the concern of girls' safety in educational institute too (Dave and Yagnik, 2020). The victims of these brutal incidents are sometimes as young as 4 or 5 years (Bhambhry, 2020; Kumari, 2018). Multiple cases of physical abuse by their own teachers, molestation, bullying, ragging of girl students have been reported by different news media. As a consequence, schools are no more considered as a safe place for the girls in India which becomes another vital reason for the declining enrollment rate of girls in schools especially in rural areas. Amidst, the pandemic, when the schools shut down, the possibility of such horrible incidents within the school premises had stopped but the domestic aggression, violence towards children by their own family members had shoot up making their lives miserable (Datt, 2022).

**Figure 14**  
Year wise the Number of Registered Offenses under POCSO Act

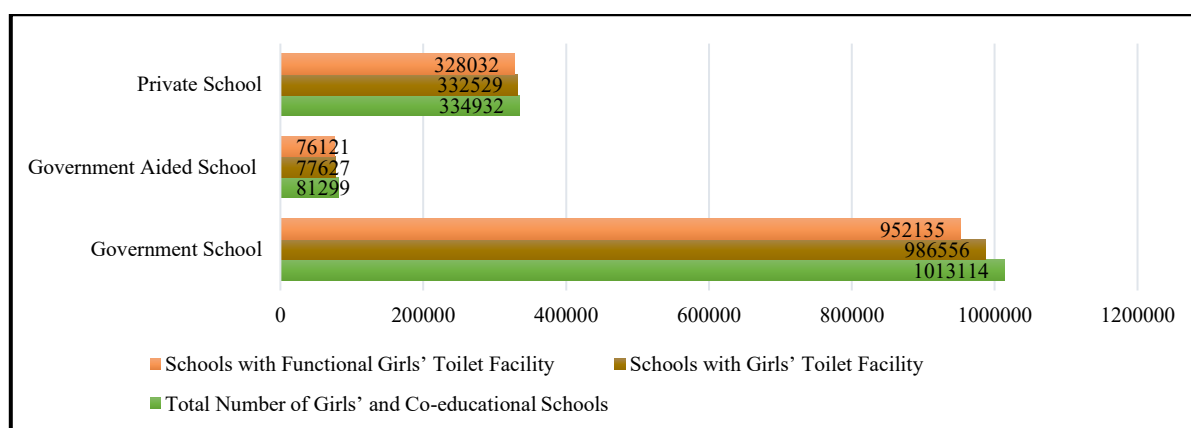


Source: NCRB Data

### Poor Sanitary Facility

The unavailability of proper sanitary facilities poses another crucial problem behind the progression of Indian girl's education. More than 26,000 Govt. schools do not possess any girls' toilet facility (UDISE+ 2021-22) (Figure 15). Out of which in 34421 schools, toilets are either under construction, or kept locked. 72% of washrooms have no water supply. During menstruation, girl students face tremendous problems due to such poor sanitation system. An earlier survey report suggested that a girl student remains absent for an average of 50 school days during her menstruations and 23% of adolescent girls are compelled to quit school altogether yearly because of poor sanitary infrastructure (Lack of Sanitation Facilities in India, 2017). During the outbreak of COVID-19, with the absolute closure and no maintenance of the school system across the country, the conditions became more pathetic and unhygienic.

**Figure 15**  
Status of Sanitary Facility at Different Types of Schools



Source: UDISE+2021-2022 Flash Statistics

### Inadequate Infrastructures and Other Facilities

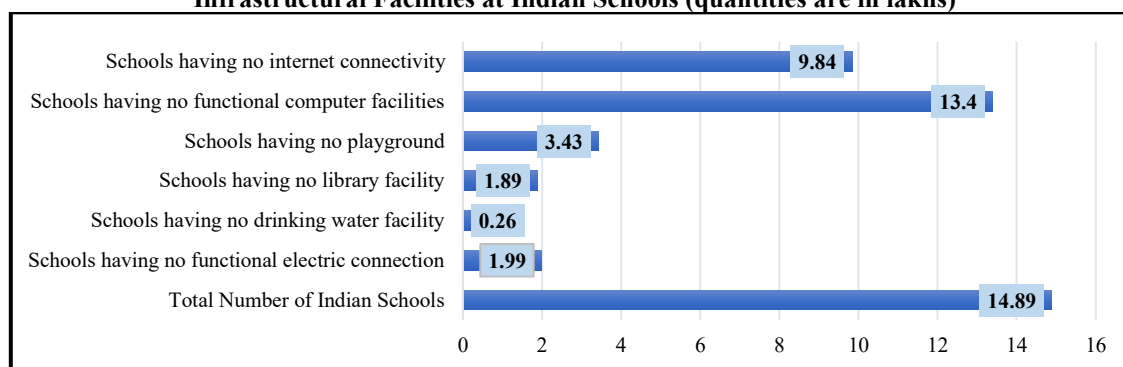
Despite some facility-related improvements, achieved in the last couple of years spanning from pre-COVID to post-COVID times, the present infrastructural conditions of many schools are not up to the mark to assist an encouraging growth of Indian girl's education. The UDISE+ 2021-2022 report disclosed that 1.99 lakh schools among total 14.89 lakh schools, have no functional electric connections, about 26445 schools do not have any drinking water facility within the school premises (Sanjay, 2021; Figure 16). Across India, 13% of schools

do not have any library facility, 43% of public schools are devoid of any boundary wall and 23% of schools have no playground. Very unfortunately, in this present digital era, only 47.5% of Indian schools provide computer facilities, of which only 33.9% schools have the internet connectivity (Ezyschooling, 2022). A different report published by United Nations Children's Fund revealed that the number of girl students' users of YouTube, and WhatsApp for online studies are considerably less and almost 8% lower than that of boys (Kumari, 2022).

### Scarcity in Boarding Facility

Number of girl students find it very difficult to pursue their higher study due to lack of proper boarding facilities in various educational institutes. According to UDISE+ 2021-22, 154346 out of the total 14.89 lakh schools in India, are residential schools with boarding facility. A separate study by the Indian Researcher 2021 showed that lakhs of students reside in about 44 thousand hostels all over our country of which 52% are female. In different places, without

**Figure 16**  
**Infrastructural Facilities at Indian Schools (quantities are in lakhs)**



Source: UDISE+2021-2022 Flash Statistics

getting any decent hostel accommodation, girls are compelled to live as paying guests or in rent with higher cost which becomes an extra burden for poor parents. During 2020 pandemic, almost all these hostels got shut down which hit female's education in this country very badly (Indian Researcher 2021).

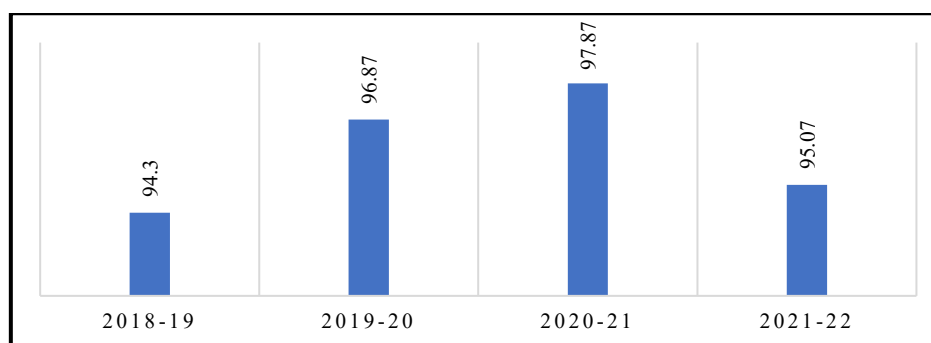
### Poor Health Issue

Poor hygiene and health issues among rural girl children create a major problem in the development of women's education (Dhok et al., 2021). A study on school-going girl students disclosed that improper diet and inadequate supply of clean water cause problems of malnutrition among them (Adhikari and Banik, 2021). Such unnourished, anaemic girls very naturally cannot attend school regularly. Over the course of pandemic, with the complete school closure, the mid-day meal scheme come to a temporary halt. The Government issued the food security allowance for the children who are especially bound to study at home. But, in practice, the performance audit report suggested that in various states, children do not receive food that has put detrimental impact on their overall health (Chaudhary, 2021).

### Less Number of Teachers

As per the UDISE+ 2021-2022 report, after two consecutive increase in the total number of teachers in 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 academic year, in 2021-2022 the number falls by 2.83 lakh (**Figure 17**). The report disclosed that the student-teacher ratio had visibly improved over the last four academic years, which is indeed an encouraging fact. But, this all-India level average calculation does not really reflect the actual grey scenario of several segregated states like Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh etc. Around 0.35 million schools do not meet the target student-teacher ratio at the primary and upper primary level which are 30:1 and 35:1, respectively (Roy Barman, 2021). In the Parliamentary Standing Committee report 2023 (Parliamentary Standing Committee Report, 2023), the Department of School education and Literacy revealed that 16% of teachers' post are still vacant. About 3.42 lakh Indian schools do not have required number of teachers (Nanda, 2021). 77% of primary schools have no subject wise specialized teachers (Nair, 2017). Over all these, the most shocking fact mentioned by the UDISE+ 2021-22 report is that more than 1 lakh schools are single teacher schools of which 90% are situated in rural India (Saxena, 2021). The teacher in such schools if went on leave, the entire system temporarily collapsed (UNESCO, 2021). According to World Bank

**Figure 17**  
**Academic Session wise the Total Number (in lakh) of Indian School teachers**



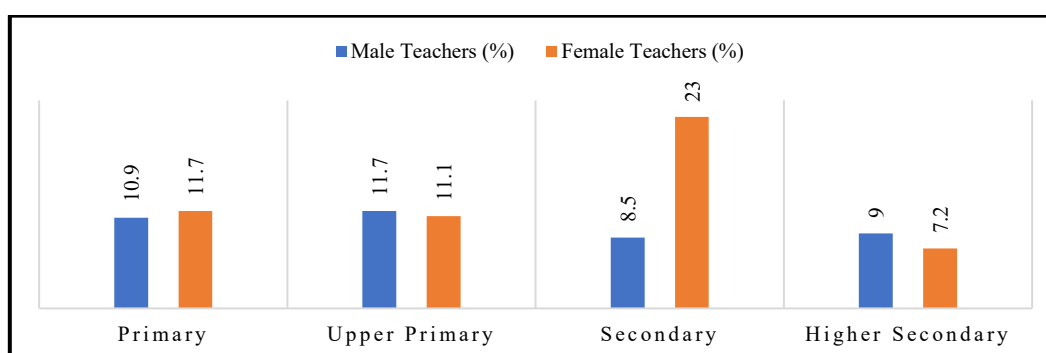
Source: UDISE+2021-2022 Flash Statistics

Study, one in every four teachers is found absent in typical government-run primary schools (Kremer and Muralidharan, 2004). Amid such situations, the students start to lose their interests and parents stop sending their wards, especially the daughters. During pandemic, lots of students were shifted from private schools to government schools to cut down their educational expense. As a result, around 1.89 lakh teachers lost their jobs from different private institutions disturbing the student teacher ratio in the Govt. schools significantly (Barman, 2022).

### Untrained Educators

A qualified, trained and empathetic teacher can play a very important role in shaping the lives and the career of his/her students. India, being the hub of 265,235,830 school students, needs good school teachers and numerous able academicians who can truly contribute in the country's overall growth by educating its young population. Various educational program like B.Ed., M.Ed., vocational trainings, certificate courses and workshops, organized both by the state and central Govt., are aimed to equip the teacher's community with better efficiency, subject specific expertise and skill enhancement. But, UDISE+ 2021-22 data suggested that a considerable number of Indian teachers of different educational levels have never attended any training programs for their professional development (Kundu, 2019; **Figure 18**). At the time of the COVID-19 attack, when a sudden shift in the conventional pedagogy took place from chalkboard to various digital platforms, such teachers with poor technical skills faced difficult challenges and struggle a lot to prepare and deliver online teaching contents. Students felt less interested and lost attention in the online classes of such untrained teachers either due to their poor communicational skill, non-attractive style of teaching or less engaging capability which potentially lead to a high dropout rate (Education for all in India, 2024).

**Figure 18**  
**Percentage of Untrained Teachers by Gender and School Level of Education**



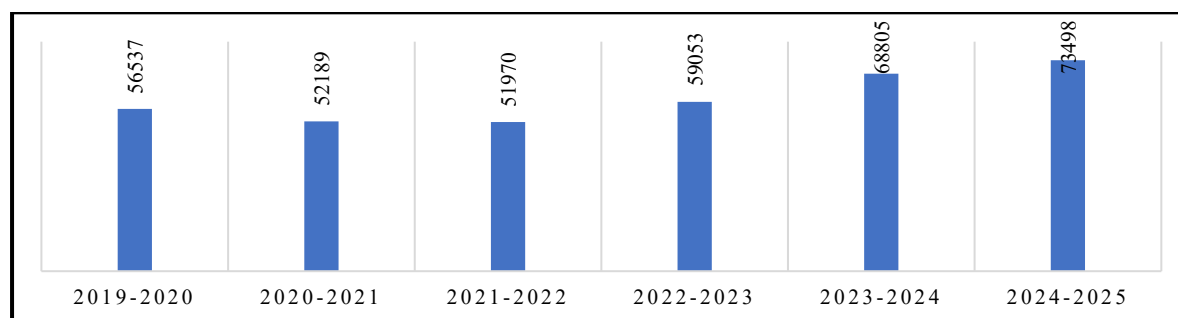
Source: UDISE+2021-2022 Flash Statistics

### Insufficient Fund Allocation

Insufficient fund allocation in the educational sector on the part of the government causes big trouble in eradicating the problem of female's illiteracy in India. Especially after the Covid-19 outbreak where girls' education has been severely hampered, many educationists demanded special provisions in the education budget. But, contrary to their expectation, the Union Government reduced the fund by 8.3% for school education in the

fiscal year 2021-22 (Sagar, 2021). Under the National Scheme for Incentive to Girls for Secondary Education, only one crore rupee has been allotted this year (Budget 2021-22). Many activists and social workers think that this would further complicate the situation by causing a serious leap in the dropout rates of the poor, marginalized girl students from schools. A survey report conducted in July 2020 revealed that only 26% girl students get smart phones to attend online classes (Sen, 2021). So, it is needless to mention that without sufficient budgetary support, the inclusion of poor girl children in digital education platforms will always remain partial. Considering such many factors, this year in 2024-25, a considerable increase by 12,024 crores in the budget allocation has been done for more enrolment in the school education and literacy in India (Ministry of Education, 2024; **Figure 19**).

**Figure 19**  
**Budget Allocation on School Education and Literacy (in crores)**

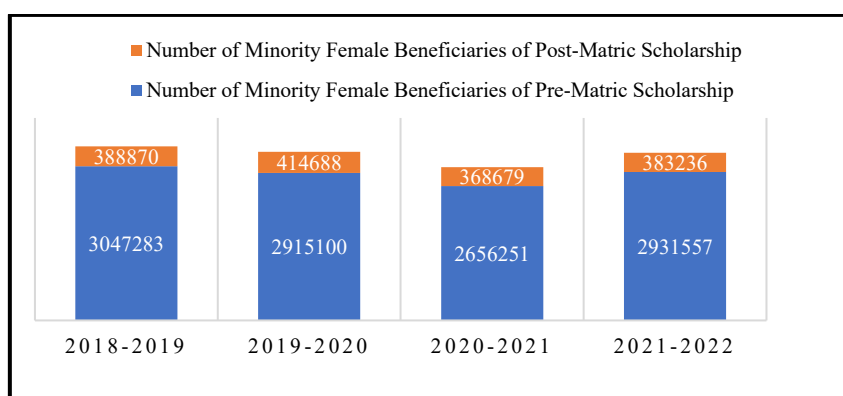


Source: Ministry of Education, India

### ***Inadequate Fellowship***

The Indian Government offers financial assistance to poor and minority girl students through various schemes like National Means-cum-Merit Scholarship, Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya scheme, National Scholarship for Higher Education of ST girls etc. to assure their education. But for the last few years, a discrete decline has been observed in the number of these student beneficiaries (Das, 2022). As per the report of the Indian Ministry of Minority Affairs, around 29 and 3.8 lakh minority girl students received different pre-and post-matric fellowships, respectively, in 2021-22 (Annual Reports 2021-2022; **Figure 20**). Few NGOs have also stepped ahead to support the

**Figure 20**  
**Year wise Number of Minority Female Beneficiaries of Pre- and Post-Matric Scholarships**



Source: Ministry of Minority Affairs, Govt. of India Portal

education of Indian women (Kumara Swamy, 2021). But, due to the lack of enough awareness, and inadequate circulation of appropriate information, a large number of girl-students practically cannot avail these benefits and continue to struggle. During Covid-19, many students could not even apply for different educational scholarships either online or offline because of the closure of cyber-caf  s, limited availability of office staff, and extended lockdown etc. resulting into a considerable drop in the number of applicants and beneficiaries during 2020-2021 (**Figure 20**).

## VII. Conclusion

From the discussion, it is evident that due to various back-pulling socio-economic factors girls' education in India could not pick up its expected pace till today. Orthodox patriarchal society, its superstitious and stagnant mentality impose difficult barriers on different efforts made towards the aim to spread education among the country's female population. Several backward provinces are still there where many young girls are completely deprived to access to education. The Indian Government is continuously trying to eradicate this problem by implementing diverse plans and schemes but remains unsuccessful to a considerable extent. Because we, the common people of India still did not understand the actual benefit of 100% female's literacy on our country's societal, economic, and political growth. The increasing statistic of female literacy and their true empowerment will also help to tackle any economic disaster like what happened during the recent pandemics. Therefore, various awareness programs and their effective executions are very much needed to help the citizens of this country to discern the significance and necessity of spreading girls' education. We hope such understanding will surely inspire the countrymen to shake off their regressive attitudes and drive them to help the illiterate, deprived girls to come under the umbrella of enlightened education. The other problems like limited fund allocation, poor infrastructure, and inadequate numbers of qualified teachers are also need to be addressed with proper care and sensitivity for ensuring an effective dissemination of education among poor and marginalized girls in schools and other levels. At last, it can be said that not only the Government, but a concerted effort by the empathetic people from all walks of society can only bring the expected change in the statistics of Indian girls' education and help our country to progress fast.

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