

## **Perceptions of Female students regarding the Challenges and Demands of Higher education**

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### **Abstract**

Education is the key to achieving the country's social change. The last stage of education is higher education. Various efforts were made to improve India's higher education system after independence. Gender equality is a principle in the Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties, and Directive Principles of the Indian constitution. The Constitution not only assures women's equality, but also empowers the State to take positive discrimination measures in favor of women. The study focused on the significance of female education and the challenges that women face in higher education institutions. The researcher focused on the need to strengthen the empowerment of women. Hence, the main objective of the study is to know students' perceptions of the challenges they face and to know the demands of empowerment. Objectives of the Study were to study the perceptions of women students towards Challenges and demands in Higher Education and to find out the relationship between the areas of Challenges and demands in Higher Education as perceived by female students. It is possible to obtain better results using the whole sample frame. The subjects were chosen from Degree and PG Colleges, and three B.Ed. Colleges are situated in the Davanagere district of Karnataka. Female students perceived high perceptions with respect to the areas viz. The importance of girls' education, facilities, professional competence of staff, curriculum issues, teacher-related issues, research-related issues, and overall perceptions of challenges and demands in higher education.

**Keywords:** Perception, Attitude, Women Studies and Higher Education.

### **Introduction**

Education is an essential instrument for fostering social change. Reaching the desired social change in Indian society, at all levels and at all ages of children, is the only remedy. Education has been credited with socializing, with teachers and educational institutions being considered socializing agents. The world's population is almost entirely composed of women. Due to hegemonic male ideology, they suffered greatly as they were denied equal opportunities in different parts of the world. The rise of feminist ideas has led to a significant improvement in women's conditions worldwide in recent times. Access to education has been a key demand of these women's rights movements. Higher education sustains women in two ways. Qualified women have the chance to become leaders in society and serve as role models for younger females. It also helps female to choose domains of expertise, whether this is a decision makers

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through influence on policy issues related to social, economic, and cultural development, or by their participation in family and community life.

The objective of higher education is to achieve access, equality, justice, quality, employability, inclusiveness, and create an economy for the knowledge society. To improve accessibility, the number of institutions in the country is expected to double within the next five years. Creating more universities and enhancing existing ones is necessary for the central government. In addition, programmes which enable the team education system, PG evening programmes and integrated UG/PG programmes would help to facilitate access to higher education. Each year, the number of students should increase by about 20% to 30%. Modernizing laboratories, motivating researchers, and funding research are necessary to improve research domains. The promotion of international collaboration in research is necessary and researchers should be freed from needless restrictions on international travel. Participation rates in tertiary education should be increased for women, SC/ST students, minorities and physically disabled people.

Women's literacy in the world is terrible, with at least 880 million illiterate adults and youth, 60% of whom are women, as per the World Bank (2000). There are 130 million out-of-school children between the ages of 6 and 11, approximately 60 percent of whom are girls. During 2002-04, the adult literacy rate in South Asia was 58.7% for both sexes, with males earning 70.5% and females earning 46.3%, as per the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2006). The development of nations is hindered by these illiterate individuals. Female literacy rates are low and the gender gap in South Asia is significant. The current situation in South Asia indicates that there are major challenges for women's literacy. Gender and urban/rural disparities are substantial in countries with low literacy rates. Women's literacy is essential to address gender inequality's wider issues. India's literate population is 70 females per 100 literate males. Over the past decades, great progress has been made in promoting women's education; the gap between male and female literacy rates declined from 26.62% to 21.69% between 1981 and 2001 (Sharmila&Dhas, 2010), which was further reduced to 16.6% in 2011. The 34.5% illiteracy rate in 2011 has resulted in 252, 249, 642 women being unable to read or write in India today. According to the All India Survey on Higher Education 2015-16, the total number of students in higher education has been estimated at 34.6 million, with 18.6 million boys and 16 million girls. There are 46.2% of girls in the total enrollment. In that context, universities reserved for women have the key to promoting women's education. As of March 31, 2017, there are 799 universities in India, of which 13 are exclusively for women, known as women's universities.

## **Need and Importance of the Study**

Education is the only weapon that can effectively fight almost every deep-rooted evil afflicting society. Sex biases are common in any environment, whether it's at home, in educational institutions, at work, or in society in general. These biases create structural and attitudinal barriers that prevent female students from obtaining higher education. The social problem, economic problem, and educational problem are the main problems facing women's education. The social attitude towards women's education is generally negative. Education for women is considered as an important practice of "Patriotic system, Early marriage, parental illiteracy, lack of educational facilities at home, male teachers as the tutors and girls responsibilities at home are the other hindrances among girls access to education. Women may find it challenging to take care of their brothers and sisters and carry out household tasks due to economic problems. Earning and contributing to family income is crucial in economically worse families. At the social level, women with educational difficulties are unwilling to pursue further education or training.

Despite cultural barriers, females are increasingly obtaining higher education at higher levels, as has been observed in recent decades. This is a sign of societal change that occurs in an urban setting. In certain circumstances, the number of female students in higher education is even greater than that of male students. The development of society seems to benefit from the involvement of a large proportion of the population in academic activities. Female students in higher education were the focus of the current study. These issues can be overcome and the impact on our system can be decreased through suggestions. The primary focus of the study was on the significance of female education and the challenges that women face in Higher Education Institutions. The principal focus of the researcher was on prerequisites to improve women's empowerment. The study's main objective is to gain a better understanding of women students' perceptions of the challenges they are facing and to identify the prerequisites for empowerment. Higher Education has a small number of female students compared to male students. Only 18 to 22 per cent of women pursue higher education and the dropout rate is equally high. There are a variety of reasons for this interruption. The study's purpose is to uncover the reasons through academic exercises.

## **The objectives for the study**

- 1) To investigate the perception of challenges and demands in Higher Education by female students.
- 2) To assess the perception of challenges and demands by female students in Higher Education.

## **Research Methodology**

The variables are incorporated into the sample of female students for the present investigation. Female students who were studying at university and professional colleges in the Davanagere district of Karnataka were asked to complete the questionnaire. It is possible to obtain better results using the whole sample frame. Subjects were selected from Five Degree and PG Colleges and three B.Ed. In the Davanagere district of Karnataka, there are thirty-seven Degree Colleges and eleven B.Ed. Colleges. The students who answered were given a personal explanation of the questionnaires' purpose and procedures. The analytical objectives were achieved using the data gathered from the questionnaire. The scale was put into operation as a complicated scale with multiple dimensions. Different methods may be employed to determine the reliability of a test. The test-retest method, parallel form method, split-half method, and method of rational equivalence are among the most popular methods. The split-half method was utilized for the present study's purpose. Female students' challenges and demands in Higher Education had a split-half reliability coefficient of 0.82.

## **Discussions and Implications**

Female students perceived high perceptions with respect to the areas viz., Relevance of girls' education, facilities, professional competencies of staff, curricula, teachers, research questions and general perceptions of challenges and demands in higher education. There is high significant correlation was established between the areas viz., Utility of Girls Education, Facilities, Staff Professional Competency, Curricular Issues, Teacher Related Issues, Institutional Related Issues, Social Issues, Financial Related Issues, Family Related Issues, Research Related Issues and Overall Perceptions towards Challenges and Requisites in Higher Education. The value of girls' education was very different for students of different age groups. The 20-year-old group of respondents viewed it as higher than others. According to their medium of instruction, Telugu medium category respondents perceived high than that of English medium category respondents, according to their type of family, nuclear family type of category respondents perceived high, and also unmarried category respondents perceived high. According to their father qualification, Intermediate qualified fathers of women students perceived high than that of the rest and also according to their mother qualification, Degree & above qualified mothers of respondents perceived high. According to the father's profession, the commercial profession of the respondents' fathers was viewed as high. The income of their parents is below Rs. 50,000 Parents had higher annual incomes than others.

With regard to Utility of Girls Education, there is no significant difference between perceptions of respondents with respect to class studying, locality, management, type of college, mother occupation, social status and religion. It shows that, they expressed one and the same opinion about the usefulness of girls' education. The facilities of all women students from different age groups were significantly different. The respondents from the 20-year age group

thought the facilities were superior to those in the rest. According to the college management, women students studying in Government colleges believed that their education was superior to those in Private and Private Aided colleges. According to their mother occupation, the paid employment of the respondents' mothers was seen as high compared to that of others.

With regard to Facilities, there is no significant difference between perceptions of respondents with respect to class studying, medium, locality, marital status, type of college, father and mother qualification, father occupation, parental income, social status and religion. It is evident that they held the same opinion on Facilities. With respect to the professional competence of staff, all students in different age groups differed significantly and respondents in the 20-year age group were more numerous than others. Based on their educational environment, respondents in the middle kannada category had a high score compared to respondents in the middle English language category. Depending on their qualification as father, Degree & above qualified fathers of respondents perceived high than that of the rest. The income of their parents is Rs. 50000 to 1,00,000 Parental annual income of parents expressed high than that of the rest. With regard to Staff Professional Competency, there is no significant difference between perceptions of respondents with respect to class studying, locality, management, type of college, type of family, marital status, mother education, father and mother occupation, social status and religion. It proves that they had the same opinion about the professional competence of the staff.

The curriculum issues were significantly different among female students of different age groups. The respondents from the 20-year age group viewed the curriculum as higher than that of the others. According to their class studies, those who are studying Professional Courses were more likely to perceive it higher than those who are studying Degree and PG. Based on their parenting income, below Rs. 50000 Parental annual income of parents expressed high than that of the rest. The perception of General Category caste women students is higher than those of OBC, SC, and ST category students, based on their social status.

In terms of teacher questions, all students in different age groups differed considerably and respondents in the 20-year age group perceived a high level compared to others. The class studies showed that those who are studying Professional Courses had a higher perception of it than those who are studying Degree and PG. Rural area category respondents were more likely to perceive high levels than urban and tribal area category respondents based on their locality. The perception of women in the unmarried category is higher than that of women in the married category. According to their mother education, Degree & above skilled mothers of students perceived as high as that of the rest. With regard to Teacher Related Issues, there is no significant difference between perceptions of respondents with respect to medium, management, type of college, type of family, father education, father and mother occupation, parental income, Social Status and religion. It is evident that they had the same opinion on Teacher Related Issues.

The social issues of female students from different age groups were significantly different. The respondents from the 20-year age group perceived the high level of social issues as higher than the rest. Depending on their educational environment, students in the medium kannada category perceive a high level as that of students in the medium English category. According to their family type, Nuclear family category respondents perceived high than that of Joint family category respondents. According to their marital status, unmarried category female students perceived high than that of married category respondents. The illiterate fathers of female students believe that their education is superior to that of others, based on their father's education. The perception of intermediate qualified mothers of female students is higher than the rest, according to their mother education. The perception of fathers and mothers as employees of female students is high based on their occupations. Depending on their social situation, students in the ST category received a high level of satisfaction compared with rest. In terms of social issues, there is no significant difference in respondents' perceptions of classroom education, community, and management, type of college, father's education, parental income and religion. It indicates that they had the same opinion on social issues. In terms of finances, all students in different age groups differed considerably and respondents in the 20-year age group felt that the rate was high. According to their educational method, Kannada medium category women students had a higher perception of themselves than English medium category students. The perception of rural area category female students is higher than urban and tribal area category women students, according to their locality. By family type, respondents in the nuclear family class had high incomes compared to those in the joint family class. The perception of unmarried category women students is higher than those of married category respondents, according to their marital status. The fathers of women students perceive their children higher than those of other students based on their father's occupation. Their parental income is higher than Rs. 100000 parental income of female students perceived high than that of the below Rs. 50000 and Rs. 50,000 to 100,000 family income. The social status of ST category female students makes them perceive themselves higher than others.

## Conclusion

Female students are currently faced with numerous problems that hinder their potential and adversely impact their personal, psychological, and professional development. The current study focused on the challenges facing women students in higher education. It also suggests how to overcome these problems and to minimize the phenomenon in our system. The study focused mainly on the importance of female education, and the issues of women in Higher Education Institutions. The researcher also focused mainly on the requisites for the enhancement of female empowerment. Hence, the main aim of the study is to know the perceptions of Women Students on the Challenges what they are facing and to know the requisites for the empowerment.

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