

Impact of socio-economic status on female education in Varanasi city (a case study)

Uzma Ashraf

Geography

Research scholar

Department of Geography

Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, India

Abstract

Female education is essential to change the status of women in the society and also to empower them intellectually. Female education in India has been among the most significant concerns of both administrative and civil society as educated women can play a vital role in the socioeconomic development of the community. This study aims to analyze the socioeconomic conditions of females and its impacts on their education in Varanasi City. The study is based on primary survey. Data of Pandareeba Ward was collected through a questionnaire by using random sample survey. Participation of women of different ages was considered in the survey. An analysis was made to find out the causes of low participation of females in education and access present educational condition of the females. The study concluded that females with educated parents, get higher education and suffer less from gender discrimination. A small percentage of females are affected by economic problems. More than half of the females are interested in higher education and support education. The main barriers to female education are low income and unemployment. Also they are often subjected to violence leading to low attendance and high dropout rates.

Keywords: 1. Education, 2. Female empowerment, 3. Gender discrimination, 4. socioeconomic

Introduction

Education is one of the vital components of human capital. It is not only enhancing the capabilities of the individual in the form of better efficiency and improved skill but also contributes to the nation building. Education means a lot in everyone's life;

it significantly contributes toward demography improvement by reducing fertility and improving the uses of better methods of population control; by influencing the age of marriage, desired family size, improvement of infant mortality, child nutrition, and health of the member of the household. The Education completely changes the person's thoughts and personality and helps us to attain positive attitude. Home is the first place of education and parents are the first teacher in everyone's life. The first lesson of life comes from the mother.

The education of females means making society more meaningful and make next generation well educated, and confident. Moreover, this helps in making society capable of nation development and free from orthodox and useless superstition. The educational development of females is regarded as a critical approach to raise the level of productivity and reduce the malicious circle of poverty and suppression which ultimately enriches health and hygiene, thereby improving the quality of life.

Education for females not only relates directly to the universalization of primary school education but also has a significant impact on economic development and prevents rapid population growth. In India, the more severe problem in universalizing primary school education is a low fixed student enrollment or high dropout. Despite the fact that Indian government adopted a policy of universalization of primary school education which placed great emphasis on female education, the illiteracy rate of the female population is still higher than that of their male counterparts, and show no sign of falling (Xiaodan & Narumi, 1996).

The educated females are very much aware of rapid population growth and associated problems; hence their decision is always in favor of population control schemes. Such positive changes come in the thought process of females when they are well educated to understand the seriousness of the problem. Researchers also gave their view about educated females that the educated females are more likely to adopt family planning techniques in comparison to uneducated or illiterate females. As far as fertility reduction is concerned, educational policy should give high priority to expansion of female primary education, particularly by reducing the currently high repetition and drop-out rates from primary schools (Jain & Nag, 1986). The gender discrimination has been formalized and instituted through a plethora of cultural norms and practices, and this has contributed in no small measure to gender gap and gender disparity in all sphere of life. Women belonging to marginalized groups such as the schedule tribes (STs) are more vulnerable to economic hardship. As girl children are engaged in domestic chores, besides survival task, they are less likely to get enrolled in school (Ghosh, 2007; Husain & Sarkar, 2011; S. K. Rao,

2011). An increment in the number of professional female and reduction in the gender gap will not only enhance the economic growth but will also improve the quality of life. The investment in women's education should help relieve the burdens of poverty because women bear a disproportionate cost of poverty (Norton & Tomal, 2009).

Education is indispensable to economic development. Education, mainly female education affects the income considerably and plays a major role in controlling fertility, so proper steps should be taken to reduce the gender gap in education by incorporating appropriate policy measures suggested by the planners (Das, 2010). After independence in India, one of the most pertinent issues which have attracted the attention of the policy makers was gender issue and related concerns. Gender issues have become central policy arena. The policymakers have firmly believes that a real commitment to gender equity and equality will strengthen every stratum of society that leads to reducing poverty as women can bring new energy and insights (Jayaweera, 1987; Pakhare, 2015; S. M. Rao & Ramu, 2011). Women education in India has been the primary preoccupation of the both administrative and civil society because educated women can play a vital role in society for socioeconomic development, besides political, and legal. It is one of the opportunities for women empowerment because it enables them to respond to the challenges; to confront their traditional role and change their lifestyle (Ganapathi & Arju, 2014; Venkatachari, 2010).

Aforementioned literature has emphasized the importance of female education as a valuable tool for society and nation development. The existing literature accepted that primary schooling of a girl child is utmost important and this literature also suggested that the female education leads high quality of life, low fertility rate and less gender discrimination (Hossain & Kabeer, 2004). There is an abundance of empirical literature which links the female education and low gender discrimination. However, some authors questioned this link and said that the only females of marginalized families or backward class still suffered from gender discrimination and low educational status, but the general census there is a positive relationship between women's education, healthy society, and nation development. Accordingly, Indian Census 2011 states that only 65.46% of country's female population could have classified as literate. The ratio of female education in Varanasi city of Uttar Pradesh is 57.2%, (*District Census Handbook: Varanasi*, 2011) which is significantly lower than Indian female educational percentage. This paper is an endeavor to interpret the education scenario, problems, and challenges of the female of Varanasi city, mainly how the social and economic condition affects the female education.

Objectives

The study was undertaken with following objectives:

- To find out the female educational status according to their socioeconomic position in Pandareeba ward.
- To access the present condition of female education in Pandareeba ward.
- To find out the impact of the socio-economic status of female on education.
- To examine the reasons for gender discrimination and its impact on female education.

Database and methodology

The data have a vital and significant role in giving the abstract shape of the unit. These also help in either comparing or contrasting unit within the framework of a particular geographic phenomenon (Khan, 2013). The present work is an outcome of intensive fieldwork. This study has tried to cover the impact of societal and economic conditions over female education. The study is a cross-sectional study which deals with female educational status on socioeconomic conditions, and how the socioeconomic conditions positively and negatively affect the women's education and their interrelationship with each other. The study has been conducted on a micro level where sampled Ward has been taken as a unit of analysis and data is collected through a general survey with the help of comprehensive questionnaires.

The variables are generated through a questionnaire based on a survey of 100 respondents taken from the *Pandareeba ward* of Varanasi city. The purposive sampling was used by considering the lower female participation rate in education and educational status of households. The results have been derived through simple percentage method.

The study area

Varanasi is also known as Kashi and Banaras. The city stretches from Banaras Hindu University in the south, to villages and agricultural land in western and northwestern parts. Varanasi is a major trade center of Purvanchal (eastern Uttar Pradesh and western Bihar). Varanasi is also known as the cultural, and spiritual capital of India, and its implication is quite visible among the tourist, scholars, and philosophers. The city is located along the crescent-shaped bank of river Ganga. It extends between 25° 15' to 25° 22' N latitudes and 82° 57' to 83° 01' E longitudes, covering an area of 74.3 sq.km. (according to MCA) (Fig. 1.). It lies between the Varuna river in the north

and Assi river in the south; and is situated in the middle Ganga plain having a sub-humid climate with sweltering hot summer and dry winters (Bano & Mishra, 2014).

The city is part of Varanasi Urban Agglomeration (VUA). Due to increasing population and rapid development, by 1991 Varanasi became a million plus city. According to census 2011, Varanasi had a population of 3,676,841 of which male and female were 1,921,857 and 1,754,984 respectively. In the 2001 census, Varanasi had a population of 3,138,671 of which males were 1,649,187, and remaining 1,489,484 were females. There was an increase of 17.15% in the population as compared to the population in 2001. The average population density/km² is 2395. Varanasi Municipal Corporation consists of 90 municipal wards.

Impact of socio-economic conditions on female education

(A) Society and Female Education: Religion and caste are one of the main parameters of the society. The religion affects caste, which reflects the family's ability to provide education. Cultural and religious or caste norms

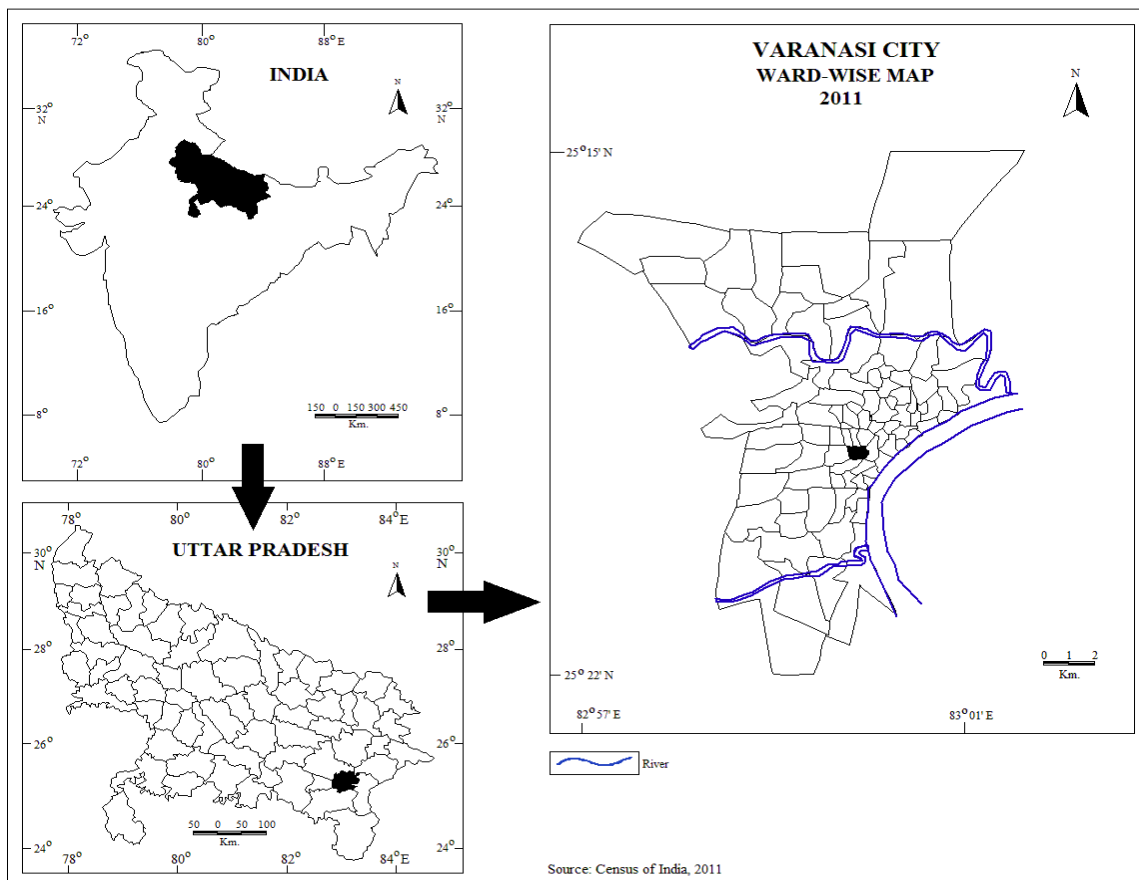


Fig. 1. Location map of study area

Note. Source: Census of India, 2011

may also reflect gender-specific educational level. The girl's marriage is the main issue in every family. Those families who are economically deprived will invest less in their daughter's education in comparison to their son, who is expected to provide monetary help for their family.

TABLE I Educational profile of the females in Pandareeba ward, Varanasi city

Categories	Religion wise (education in %)			Caste wise (education in %)			
	Hindu	Muslim	Other Religion	SC/STs	OBC	General	Others
Illiterates	3	5	0	0	2	6	0
Primary	2	6	1	2	4	3	0
High School	2	6	0	1	1	6	0
Senior Secondary	1	6	0	1	2	4	0
Graduation	16	22	1	1	12	25	1
Post-Graduation	17	9	0	0	4	22	0
Others	2	1	0	0	1	2	0
Total	43	55	2	5	26	68	1

Note. The Data is based on personal survey.

TABLE I contains descriptive statistics for female education attainment level, for the sample of Pandareeba ward. The data of the table reveals that according to religion 43% Hindu, 55% Muslims and 2% female of other faiths were educated. The table above also depicts that Muslim females (5%) were more illiterate than Hindu females (3%). The primary cause of illiteracy in Muslim female are early marriage, big family, and gender discrimination. TABLE I also shows that 32% Muslim women and 35% Hindu female were engaged in higher education. These percentages indicate that the Hindu community is much interested and involved in girl's higher education. The educational attainment of women of other religion is very low. But this small percentage shows the substantial growth of female education. Moreover, 2% and 6% females of Hindu and Muslim community were primary educated, respectively (Fig. 2.). And 3% and 12% females of Hindu and

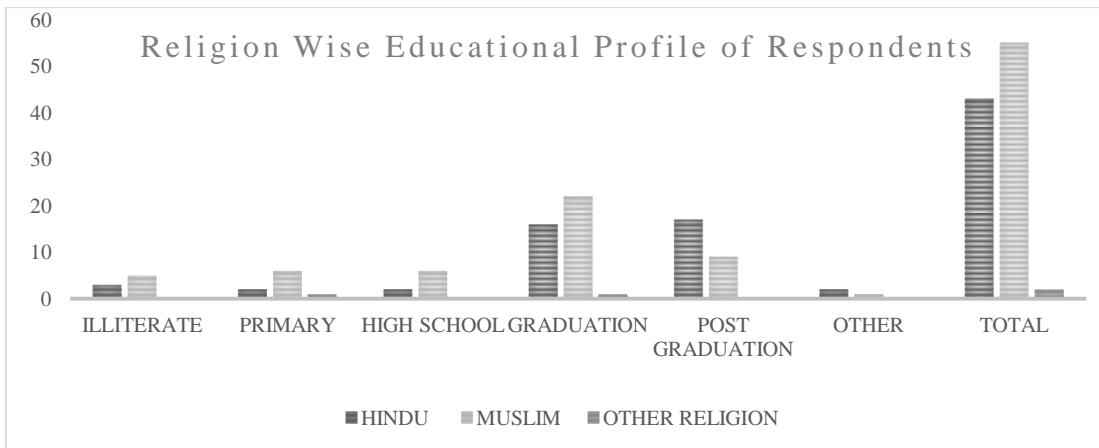
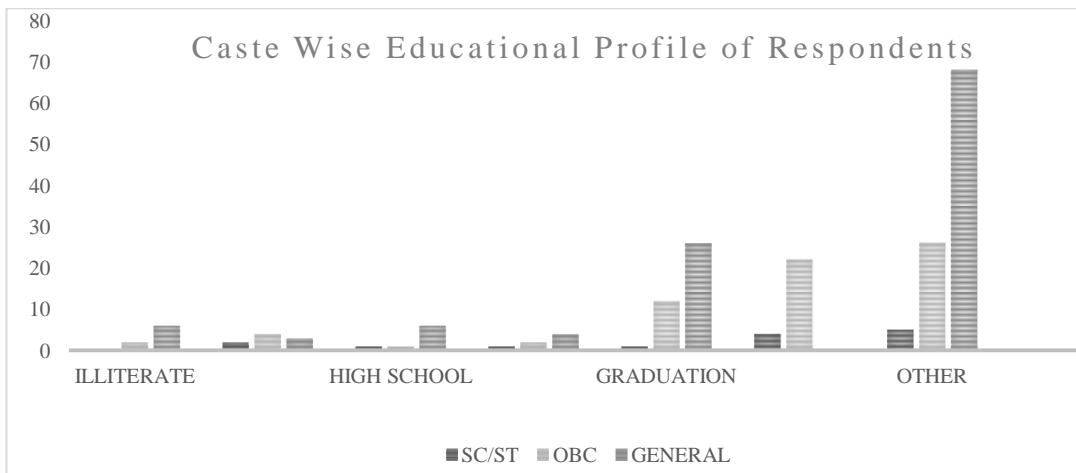


Fig. 2. Religion wise female educational status.

Note: The Data is based on personal survey

Muslim were educated up to senior secondary, respectively.

If we see the caste wise educational status of respondents (Fig. 3.), we observe that female from general caste were highly educated in comparison with OBCs, SCs, and STs. TABLE I shows that in general category total 62% female were literate of which 3% were primary educated, 10% were educated up to secondary and senior



secondary, 25% were graduate and 22% were postgraduate. Inclusive, 16% OBC and 1% SC and ST female were in higher education. In which 4% OBCs, 2% SCs and STs female had only primary schooling. On the other hand, 2% SCs and 3% OBCs female were educated up to senior secondary. This shows that OBCs and SCs/STs are also interested in higher education and actively involved in the educational field. Despite this, the SC/ST females are not fully participating in the educational field. The major causes behind the low literacy among the SCs/STs are employment, social-economic and political backwardness. The general caste female's families are more open minded, and females are also sincere, and they are enjoying the fruit of education more effectively than other caste females.

(B) Economic Condition and Female Education

The economic factors influence the educational decision of the family. The economic situation of female's parent plays a major role in the schooling status of females. Female's parents who earn more than ₹12000 per month support higher women's education (31%) than others. Those families whose monthly income is up to ₹6000, they had lower female educational status because they have a large number of sibling (TABLE II). Only 9% females were literate whose family's income was less than ₹3000.; the families with monthly income of ₹3000-6000 had 11% literate females. As the household income increases, the educational status of females also goes up.

TABLE II Income of the families of respondents

Income of the Respondent's Family					
Educational Status of the Respondent	<3000 (in %)	3000-6000 (in %)	6000-9000 (in %)	9000-12000 (in %)	12000< (in %)
Illiterates	2	1	3	1	1
Primary	0	1	4	3	2
High School	0	2	2	1	3
Senior Secondary	1	1	1	2	3
Graduation	4	3	8	12	9
Post-Graduation	1	2	5	5	12
Others	1	1	0	2	1
Total	9	11	23	26	31

Note. The Data is based on personal survey.

23% literate female were from those families who have a monthly income of ₹6000-9000 and 26% of literate females belong to monthly income group of ₹9000-12000 (Fig. 4.). Mostly richer families have a high rate of women's education and also have a good societal background which supports female education. According to the study, 70% female got their primary and secondary education through government schools as state schools are more affordable and subsidized than private school. Only

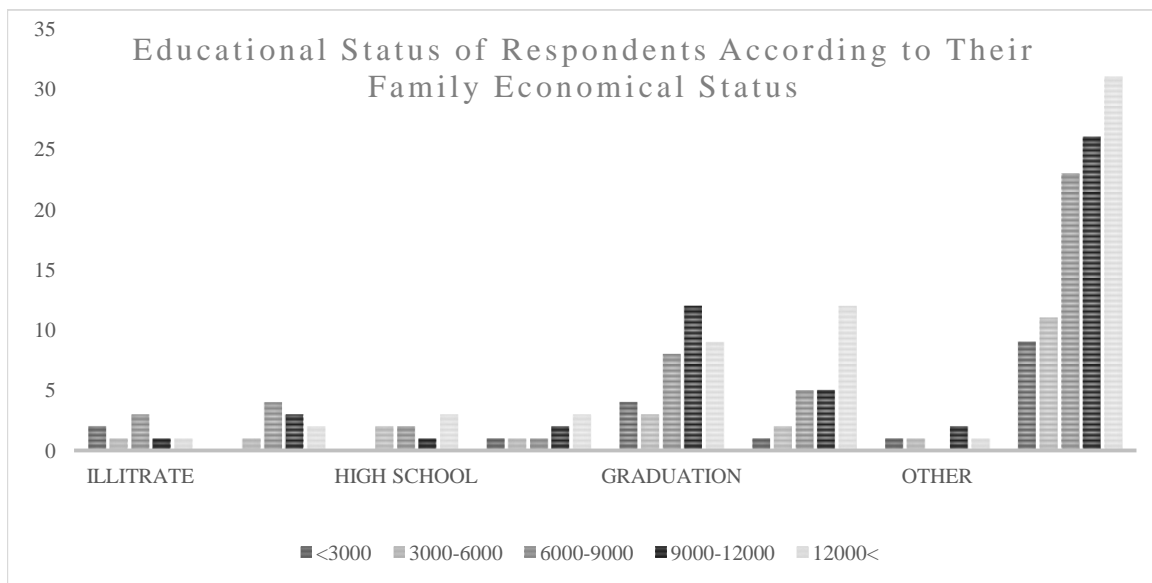


Fig. 4. Income wise educational status of the respondents.

Note: The Data is based on personal survey

30% females opted for private school education as these females were more financially robust.

(C) Gender Discrimination and Female’s Dropouts in Educational Areas

India is a country dominated by customs, ruled by religious belief and superstitions have been experiencing a higher degree of gender discrimination and widespread gender inequality. Due to illiteracy, rural background, poverty consideration, dowry problem, women are often discriminated against right from their birth. Consequently, many parents used to discriminate girls in providing a

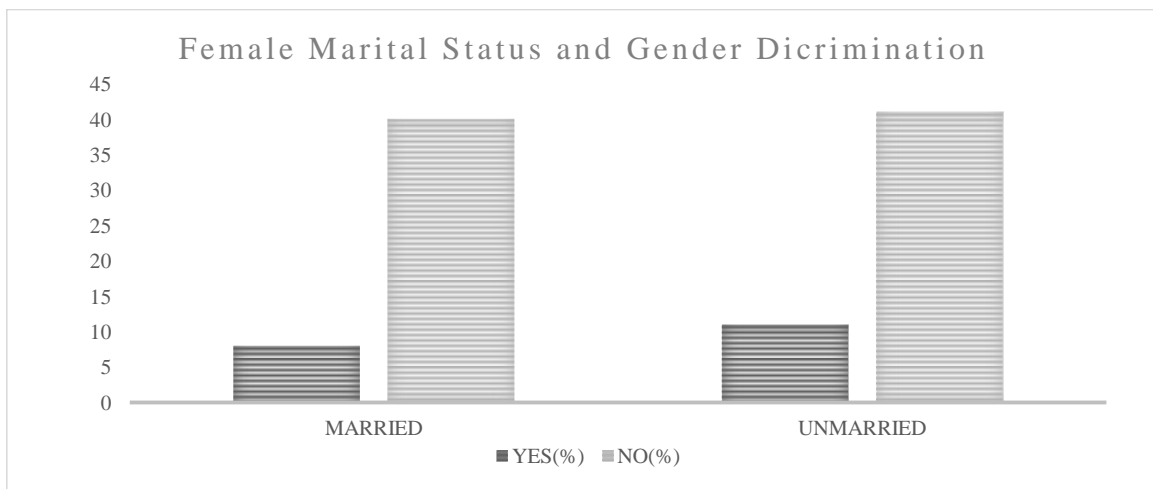


Fig. 5. Female marital status and gender discrimination.

Note: The Data is based on personal survey

good education. Early marriage is the principal cause of early school dropout of girls. According to study 48% females were married, out of which 18% females suffer from early marriage. These females had not completed their senior secondary education at the time of the wedding. The married (7%) and unmarried (9%) women had suffered from the pain of gender discrimination (Fig. 5.). Most of the females from the lower-class group suffered gender discrimination. 15% respondent’s family members are not interested in women’s education. The most important reason of women dropout is gender discrimination. Gender is seen closely related to the role and behavior assigned to women and men based on their sexual differences.

There are 16% women who have suffered from gender discrimination (Fig. 6.). Nearly 3% Hindu and 13% Muslim females have suffered from gender discrimination. Muslim females are majorly discriminated because of the low educational status of the family.

According to cast, 1% SCs/STs, 3% OBCs, and 12% general females were discriminated on several grounds (Fig. 7.). As per our study, the general female was mostly discriminated, because these females had a large number of sibling and most of them were the elder sister. So, they took the responsibilities of the family instead of going school and college for an education.

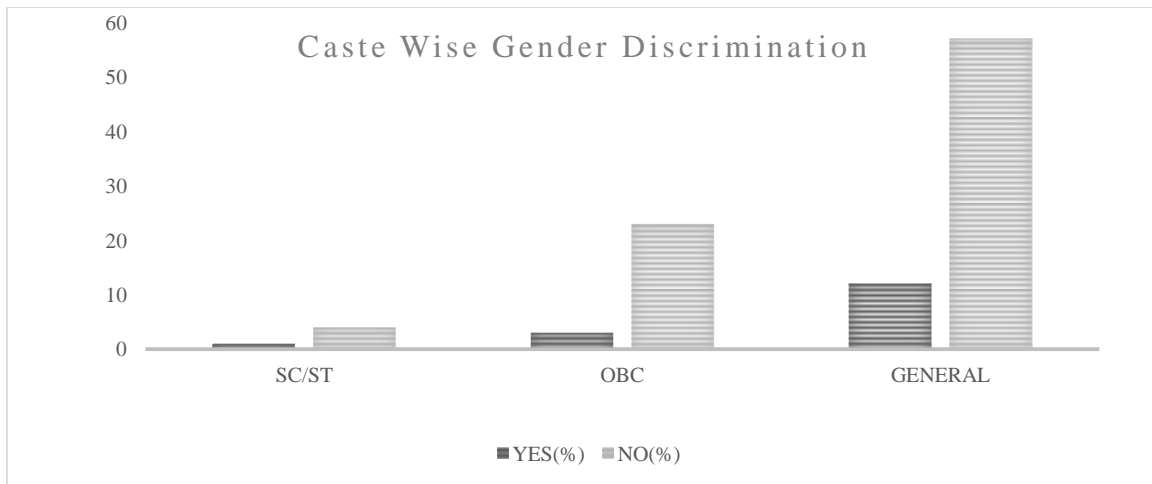
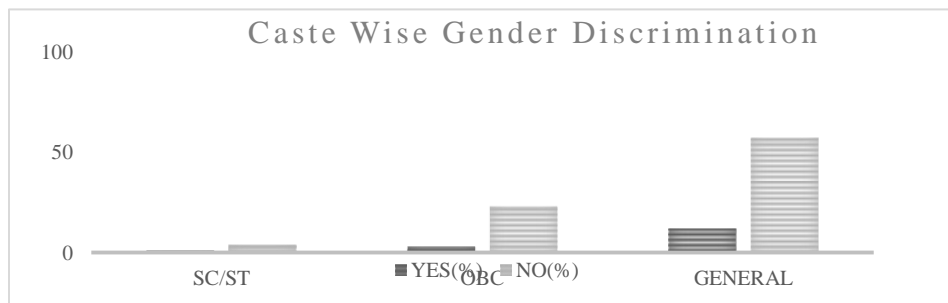


Fig. 6. Caste wise gender discrimination.

Note: The Data is based on personal survey

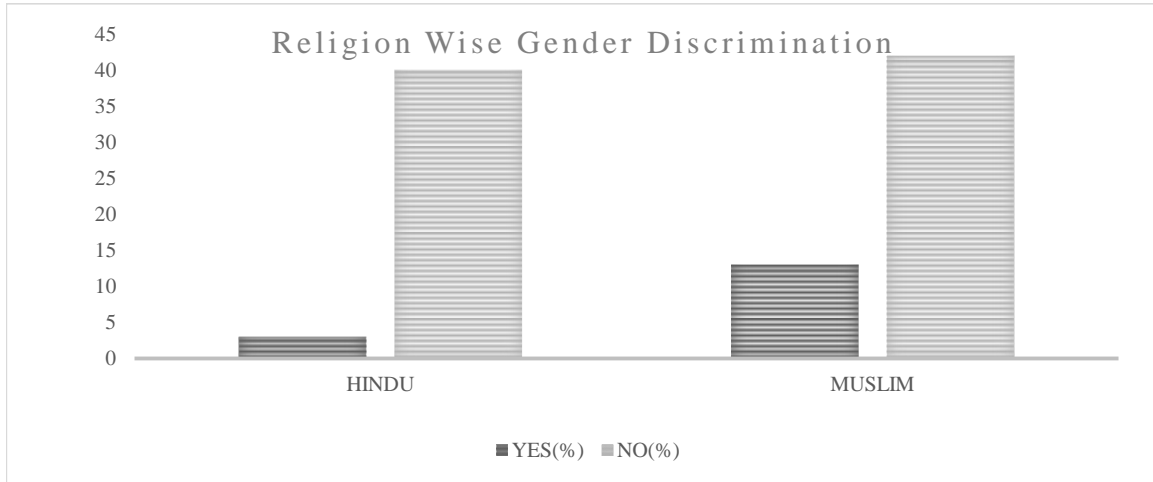


Fig. 7. Religion wise gender discrimination. Note: The Data is based on personal survey

Present Condition of Female Education

The empowerment of women through education instils them with essential qualities like knowledge, working skills, and self-confidence. These qualities are necessary to participate in the development process of the community. According to the census of 2001, 53.05% female were literate, and 66.69% female were educated; conferring to the census of 2011 in which 61.9% of females of rural areas and 72.9% female of urban areas were educated, SCs and STs females also had a significant size of educational status and had literacy of 54% and 61% respectively.

TABLE III Educational status of the respondents

Educational Status of the Respondent's								
Age of the Respondent	Illiterates (in %)	Primary (in %)	High School (in %)	Senior Secondary (in %)	Graduation (in %)	Post-Graduation (in %)	Others (in %)	

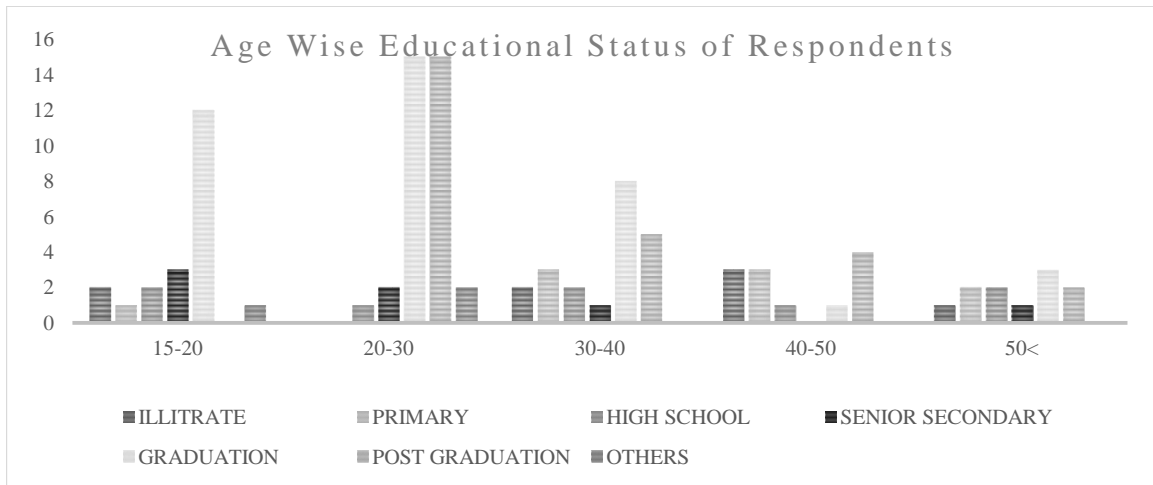


Fig. 8. Age wise educational status of Note: The Data is based on personal survey

15-20	2	1	2	3	12	0	1
20-30	0	0	1	2	15	15	2
30-40	2	3	2	1	8	5	0
40-50	3	3	1	0	1	4	0
50<	1	2	2	1	3	2	0
Total	8	9	8	7	39	26	3

Note. The Data is based on personal survey. Data are in percentage

According to the TABLE III, for the age group of 20 to 30 years; 35% women were educated, having high educational status on another age group. In the age group of 15-20 years and 30-40 years, females had equal participation rate in education. In these age groups, 21% women were educated. Female of 40 to 50 years and 50 plus age groups had only 11% and 12% of educated women, respectively. This data exhibits little participation of female in education (Fig. 8.).

Education of females is also affected by their marital status. It is observed that married women are not interested in further study, instead of unmarried women are in favor of future study and also support the women empowerment. Women have the potential to change their economic status, and that of their communities and countries in which they live yet usually women's economic contributions are unrecognized, their work undervalued and their promise undernourished (Carmon, 2013).

Conclusion

The present paper examined the socioeconomic impact on female education. The education survey results found a positive correlation in the context of women education. The education of parents plays a vital role in women's education. The educated parents encourage female education as they very well know about the importance of education and its role in their empowerment. The survey results postulated that up to 80% parents of respondents were educated and they support female higher education. Survey also states that up to 95% females were educated and more than 60% females were getting the higher education. This result shows that society has started supporting women's education. At the same time, 16% female respondents were facing gender discrimination by their families, and 15% respondent's families were not interested in female education.

But this only one side of the coin. The positive point was that, 84% female respondents were not suffered from any type gender discrimination, and 85% respondent's families support female education and also interested in female higher education. Up to 90% females were having all kinds of freedom in society for their educational developments. These percentages show that society is supporting women's education which discards the thinking of social aspects affects the female's education negatively.

If we go through economic aspects, then we observe that a small portion of female respondents was affected by low economic status, but most of the economically suffered respondents were related to higher age groups. Overall my survey "socioeconomic impact on female education" gave me positive results which break stereotype for female.

Suggestion and recommendation

The present study gives some suggestion related to objectives and through results for the encouragement of girls and women education:

- The women's education is utmost important for our social development. Providing free and compulsory education for girls up to 18 years by the development of female educational status.
- The SC/ST female involvement in education is much less than OBC and GENERAL female due to their low economic background. The parents with low income should enroll their daughters in a government school and Nagar Mahapalika School.
- There should be comprehensive literacy program in all national schemes to remove the gender biases and gender discrimination.

- Gender discrimination is the evil face of the society. Parents and other society members make differences between boys and girls. These differences also come in their studies also. As per my survey, 16% female suffered from gender discrimination. All children are equal, and discrimination makes them separate from each other. This behavior of society leads to inequality among children.
- The increment of girl's enrollment in school is significant. If girls are educated, then they become the active members of the society and contribute possibilities toward national development and country growth.
- Promote gender equity and women's empowerment by adopting new welfare schemes and educational programs for the girls/ women education.

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