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Arpita Behera

Research Scholar, Department of
Extension Education &
Communication Management,
RPCAU, Pusa, Bihar, India

Dr. Arunima Kumari

Professor, Department of
Extension Education &
Communication Management,
RPCAU, Pusa, Bihar, India

Dr. Bineeta Satpathy

Associate Professor, Department
of Extension Education, PGCA,
RPCAU, Pusa, Bihar, India

Socioeconomic correlates of girl child discrimination: A study in Samastipur district of Bihar

Arpita Behera, Dr. Arunima Kumari and Dr. Bineeta Satpathy

Abstract

Every child is equally vital in society for maintaining social balance. The environment for children should be full of peace, prosperity, fairness, and dignity. But in reality, discrimination affects the purity of social equilibrium between boys and girls, creating a huge difference between the two sexes. Although our country has taken a marvellous jump in various fields like science and technology, medical science, space science, agri production but a common biased view about girl child can be still seen in various parts of the country. It also affects the growth and development of each girl in every stage of life. Discrimination against girls occurs in both higher- and lower-class families and the pattern of discrimination is highly complex. Some stereotypes related to discrimination gradually encroach on every girl's freedom of choice, suppressing the balance between males and females and dragging our society into a bad state.

Keywords: Discrimination, socioeconomic status, girl child, social equilibrium, variables, correlation

Introduction

India is a country of diversified demography. Giving respect to girls not only strengthen society but also sharpens the future of the nation. In our country, we worship girls as a "divinity" but if we go deep down our history, it always leaves a mark of the dominance of boys over girls in each walk of life, and it leads to discrimination. This discrimination affects the purity of social equilibrium between boys and girls, which gets polluted with abuse, torture, and second-class treatment, and it is connected to a single incident born as a girl child in Indian society. Entangled in a web of old-fashioned culture and taboos snatch their basic rights and basic needs as human beings and also as a child. In India, society openly shows fondness toward sons and rejection toward daughters, which is corroded with discrimination and injustice at all levels. Socioeconomic status is a major factor in the enhancement and eradication of discrimination against girls from all corners of our country. Socioeconomic status is a comprehensive measure of a person's social and economic standing in society, based entirely on their education, wealth, and occupation. Socioeconomic status is a term that is commonly used to describe the societal and economic differences that exist between people. As a result, socioeconomic status is typically divided into three levels: low, medium, and high. Socioeconomic status is also important in protecting and enhancing the overall development of each girl in society. Some of the socioeconomic factors like educational level and wealth status of the family are the most significant socioeconomic strong predictors of female child marriage in India (Paul, 2020) [7]. This socioeconomic status revealed one of the unacceptable truths that girls with low socioeconomic status had a latent period of menarche compared to those with middle or high socioeconomic status (Karim *et al.*, 2021) [5]. The most serious issue in India is that most people are aware, unaware, or pretend to be unaware of the discrimination against girls, which has deeply eroded the nation's progress. The foundation of deformity self-image created by faithless truth, outdated religious values, and cultural ideas must be destroyed; otherwise, this never-ending vicious cycle of discrimination will continue from generation to generation for an indefinite period. Beyond all barriers of religion, caste, and tradition, the girl or woman must be seen as a "person" in her own right.

Materials and Methods

The present study was conducted in two villages (Harpur and Bhuskaul) of the Samastipur district of Bihar with a sample size of 60 households of adolescent girls (10-19 years), from each village, totaling 120 respondents. A well-structured interview schedule was prepared and used to obtain relevant data or information from respondents in selected villages in order to collect primary data.

Corresponding Author:

Arpita Behera

Research Scholar, Department of
Extension Education &
Communication Management,
RPCAU, Pusa, Bihar, India

Secondary data on respondents were gathered from government reports, authentic research and review papers, statistical manuals, and other sources. To make our findings more informative and meaningful, appropriate statistical tools was used for the analysis of all data. (Frequency, Percentage, Correlation, etc.).

Results and Discussion

The data of the study revealed that 22.5% of the respondents were within the age of 18 years whereas 3.3% of the respondents were within the age of 11 years in the study area. In the present study area, 53.3% of respondents in the study area belonged to the backward category, but the strength of ST category respondents was completely nil. The result of the present study showed that 83.3% of the respondents belong to joint families whereas 16.7% of the respondents belonged to nuclear families. The results of the study depicted that 37.5% of the respondents were educated up to secondary & higher secondary education whereas 18.3% of the respondents were educated up to the primary level. This study also showed that

35% of the respondents' fathers worked as labourer whereas only 20% of the respondents' fathers were service holders and it also revealed that 69.2% of the respondents' mothers were housewives (any other) whereas only 7.5% of the respondents' mothers were service holders. The present study area showed a clear picture of how annual income is connected with discrimination and it disclosed that 63.3% of the respondents' families had their annual income between 50,000 - 1,00,000/- whereas only 2.5% of the respondents' families had their annual income between 3,00,001 and above. Mass media exposure also plays a vital role in the socio-economic development of each girl child but in the study area, 60.8% of respondents rarely read newspapers only 13.3% of the respondents never had the chance to use and access phones. In the case of television, no one in the study area avoided watching television on a daily basis, and there were no respondents who preferred to pay attention to folk media on a regular basis. So, the remaining details of other socioeconomic characteristics are provided below.

Table 1: Distribution of Socioeconomic characteristics of rural adolescent girls (N=120)

Profile	Frequency (f)	%
Age		
10-19 years	120	100
Caste		
General	32	26.7
OBC	64	53.3
SC	24	20
Religion		
Hindu	120	100
Marital status		
Unmarried	120	100
Family Type		
Nuclear	20	16.7
Joint	100	83.3
Family Size		
No. of family members- (3-13)	120	100
Housing type		
Kaccha	60	50
Pucca	60	50
Education		
Primary	22	18.3
Middle	27	22.5
Secondary & Higher Secondary	45	37.5
Graduation and above	26	21.7
Father's occupation		
Labourer	42	35
Farming	33	27.5
Farming & Service	10	8.3
Business	11	9.2
Service	24	20
Mother's occupation		
Labourer	17	14.2
Farming	9	9.2
Service	11	7.5
Any other (Housewives)	83	69.2
Annual Family income (Rs.)		
50,000- 1,00,000/-	76	63.3
1,00,001- 2,00,000/-	20	16.7
2,00,001- 3,00,000/-	21	17.5
3,00,001 and above	3	2.5
Exposure to mass media		
Television (R, O, Ra, N)	32, 34, 32	26.7, 28.3, 26.7
Newspaper (R, O, Ra, N)	15, 15, 73, 17	12.5, 12.5, 60.8, 14.2
Folk media (R, O, Ra, N)	3, 41, 76	2.5, 34.2, 63.3
Mobile phone (R, O, Ra, N)	47, 18, 39, 16	39.2, 15, 32.5, 13.3
Internet (R, O, Ra, N)	36, 29, 31, 24	30, 24.2, 25.8, 20

*R- Regularly, O- Occasionally, Ra- Rarely, N- Never

Pearson coefficient correlation was used to know how socioeconomic status associates with discrimination

Table 2: Relationship of independent variables with girl child discrimination

Serial no.	Variables	Pearson Correlation (r)
1	Age	0.113
2	Caste	-0.055
3	Family type	0.137
4	Family size	-0.078
5	Housing	0.000
6	Education	0.234*
7	Fathers Occupation	0.570**
8	Mothers Occupation	0.254**
9	Family income	0.664**
10	Mass media exposure	0.768**

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

From the above table, it was disclosed that education was positively and significantly correlated with discrimination at 5% level which indicates that discrimination against girls decreases when the level of education among family increases and vice versa. It was also found that the fathers' occupation was positively and significantly correlated at 1% level with discrimination which implies that the discrimination against girls decreases when the occupation of fathers increases and vice versa. Mothers' occupation was positively and significantly correlated with discrimination which showed that discrimination against girls decreases when the occupation of mothers increases and vice versa because when the occupation level of both parents increases it reduces the scarcity of distribution of resources among siblings of the families. It was also reported that family income was positively and significantly correlated at 1% level with discrimination which implies that discrimination against girls decreases when the annual income of families increases and it overall cleared that the occupation of parents was somehow related to the total income of the family. Exposure to mass media was positively and significantly correlated with discrimination at 1% level which indicates that discrimination against girls decreases when the exposure to mass media increases because it could help them to aware of various matters and could make their minds more flexible and border to know the difference between right and wrong. However, some variables such as age, caste, family size, family type, and housing pattern are non-significant with discrimination.

Table 3: Relationship of girl child discrimination with selected parameters

Serial no.	Variables	Pearson Correlation (r)
1	Educational opportunities	1.000**
2	Nutrition	-1.000**
3	Health	1.000**
4	Resource allocation	-1.000**
5	Socialization and Social Recognition	-1.000**

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

From the table it was revealed that educational opportunities were positively and significantly correlated with decision-making at the 1% level, implying that girls who received good educational opportunities had more clear decision-making abilities and vice versa. It was also discovered that nutrition was negatively and significantly correlated with decision-making at the 1% level, implying that the girls did not have the power to decide to eat the food of their desired choices. The more they participate in taking the decisions to choose the correct food for themselves the more nutritious food they will be able to obtain. It showed that health was positively and significantly correlated with decision-making at 1% level which indicates that girls who had good decision-making

ability could take the right decisions about health-related matters and vice versa. Resource allocation was negatively and significantly correlated with decision making at 1% level which revealed that most of the girls had not that much power to take the decisions about their basic requirements like devoid of a bicycle for went to school, no personal bank accounts, voter id, ATM cards, not having different kinds of books for higher study, got less new garments on various occasion and so on. So, it was implied that when the girls should raise their voices to take the decision on their basic needs the more will they get closer to equality in resource allocation with boys in society. It was also found that socialization and social recognition were negatively and significantly correlated with decision-making at 1% level which implies that girls got discriminated for not having the right to take decisions about their freedom toward righteous things in society like (making friendships with the opposite sex, outing with friends, went to outer state for studies, staying in the hostel for studies and so on). At last, it was indicated that the more will they involved in taking decisions about their freedom the more will they become flexible and confident to expose their abilities in both families and societies.

Conclusion

Discrimination is omnipresent so it is essential for us to detect the problem, understand the situation and try to work for effective changes in order to eradicate discrimination from the world. Every individual should have internal reflection and be willing to start the change from within in order to reduce discrimination. Providing proper educational facilities, good quality medication and medical care, legal protection, equal opportunity for decision making, the right implication of programmes and policies, proper use of mass media, and awareness campaigns so these are some ways by which we can eradicate discrimination from our society. Discrimination will not be completely removed through a simple approach due to this reason resources are mostly focused on privileged groups. Priority should be given to those who are most marginalized and at risk. Overall, it was concluded that discrimination can be reduced in various ways, but it can be completely eliminated from the world by changing our attitude toward discrimination, which should begin with ourselves.

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