

# Status of Women Education in Rural Bihar

Rashmi Kumari\*

\*Department of Management, Birla Institute of Technology, Mesra, Ranchi, India 835215

**Abstract** - Education is a key driver for the advancement of society, and it is essential for building the knowledge economies of the 21st century. The paper examines the role of women's education in Bihar, focusing on its impact on social and economic development, especially in rural areas. It highlights the role of gender disparities in educational inclusion and exclusion, and evaluates the effectiveness of government initiatives in promoting equitable opportunities and maintaining quality. Addressing these gaps can lead to social justice and economic progress, highlighting the need for comprehensive and equitable education for women.

**Key Words:** Women education, social transformation, rural-urban disparity, government initiatives, economic development, Bihar education

## 1. INTRODUCTION

*"If you educate a man, you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman, you educate a family (nation)." - Dr. James Emmanuel Kwegyir-Aggrey (1875-1927, Ghana)*

Education plays a pivotal role in fostering empowerment for individuals and communities at large, with a particular emphasis on the transformative impact it has on the lives of women and girls. A society's overall level of progress can be determined by its literacy rate and educational attainment. Achieving prosperity and sustainable development requires gender equality and women's empowerment. India has pursued a wide range of national, social, economic, and political growth pathways and methods since gaining its independence. Women's standing and general circumstances have also improved. Through their contributions at home and in the workplace, educated women are the weapons that have a good impact on Indian society. They are the cause of the nation's better economy and society. A woman with education is capable of managing both her

personal and professional lives. Due to their preference for later marriages compared to uneducated women, they can effectively aid in population control in India.



Figure 1: Area of study

Bihar, located in the northern part of India, stands as one of the most populous states in the country, boasting a significant populace that contributes to its status as a key player in the nation's demographics. Despite its large population, Bihar is identified as a state grappling with developmental challenges, often being labelled as a "backward" region due to the socio-economic hurdles it faces. The state is thought of as a patriarchal culture that has historically been agrarian. Bihar is an underdeveloped state, and women's situation is not very good due to its patriarchal culture and other socioeconomic problems. Education can bring about constructive social improvements in such a situation. Nonetheless, the government is taking a number of actions to ensure gender parity in Bihar's educational system. This study attempts to provide useful recommendations for enhancing women's educational empowerment in Bihar by integrating both qualitative and empirical data. These recommendations may include targeted interventions to improve educational infrastructure and accessibility, community-based initiatives to challenge long-standing gender norms, and legislative changes meant to address systemic injustices.

By advocating for revolutionary change that places women as active participants in social and economic advancement, this study ultimately aims to contribute to the broader discussion on women education. Coordinated efforts and thoughtful policy initiatives can help Bihar achieve its aim of establishing a more fair and inclusive society where all women have the opportunity to maximize their full potential and follow their ambitions.

### 1.1. Contribution of rural women in India

Young women and provincial women, representing a significant quarter of the world's population, hold pivotal positions in the economic landscapes of diverse nations, be they emerging or established. Their contributions span vital sectors such as agriculture, wherein they exhibit remarkable dedication by ensuring the sustenance of their households through the provision of essential resources like food, water, and fuel. Beyond the realms of traditional chores, these women demonstrate admirable versatility by actively participating in agricultural activities involving the cultivation of crops and the caretaking of livestock. Additionally, they use their critical thinking skills while considering children, the elderly, and those with disabilities [1]. Comprising almost a billion smallholder landowners and landless laborers, they constitute a major component of the rural labor force and carry out a significant amount of unpaid consideration work in rural areas.

In India, women have a substantial amount of work power in the horticultural sector. In India, more than 71% of women work in agriculture, and when restricted to what is known as "rural India," that number rises to over 82%. This suggests that the great majority of tasks involving planting, weeding, reaping, transportation, and other tasks are performed by women. They play a crucial role in implementing the revolutionary social, rural, and economic reforms needed to better our general population in a reasonable manner [2]. In contrast to other states, India has seen a significant increase in the support of women in financial activities in the last several years, but workforce participation is still modest (figure 2).

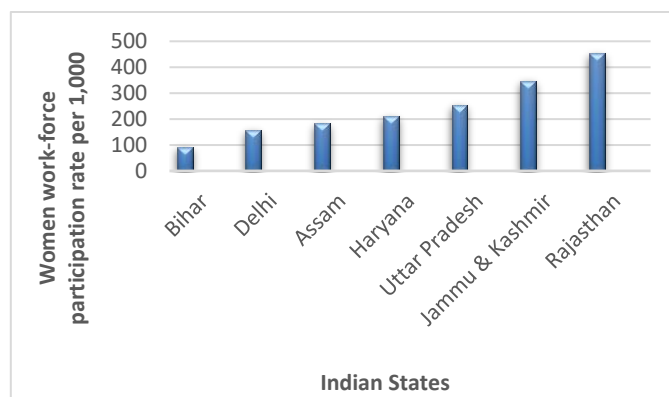


Figure 2: Women work-force participation

Source: Census of India, Office of Registrar General, India.

With 2.8 percent of women in the workforce, Bihar has the lowest rate of any state. Many women have been forced out of the workforce as a result of the FWPR drop, which has been more pronounced in rural than in metropolitan areas. As the number of women in the workforce has decreased, the proportion of women in conventional employment has increased significantly, following the national trend, while the proportion of self-employed women has significantly decreased, outpacing the reduction seen across all of India. Compared to all of India, Bihar's women's self-employment is distinguished by a high percentage of own account job and a low percentage of unpaid labor [3].

### 1.2. Women education status in Bihar

The percentage of young women in rural areas attending school is still increasing; in rural Bihar, the main concerns are access to high-quality education and ignorance. When comparing women's education in India today and in the past, H. Subrahmanyam points out that total school enrollment for girls has improved [4]. The gender gap in educational achievement is one of the major socioeconomic problems that the historically significant and culturally rich state of Bihar has long faced. To comprehend the reasons behind these disparities and the course of programs meant to empower women via education, one must have a solid awareness of the historical context. Bihar has long been a center for academic research and debate thanks to notable institutions like the historic Nalanda and Vikramshila universities. However, the educational landscape underwent major change as colonial power expanded and was followed by

social upheavals, sometimes exacerbating pre-existing imbalances. During colonial rule, education was mostly accessible to the elite, leaving the entire populace—especially women—with few opportunities. The colonial educational system reinforced socioeconomic inequalities and increasingly disregarded indigenous knowledge and systems in order to achieve imperial goals.

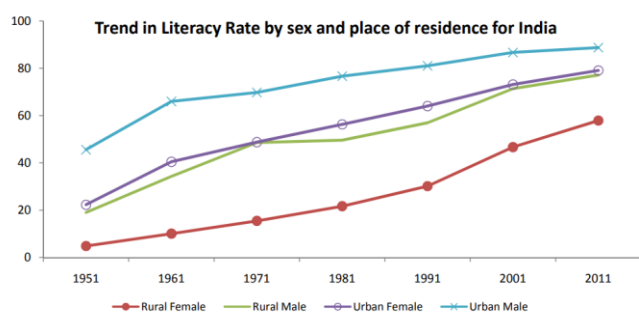


Figure 3: Literacy rate of India

Source: Census of India, Office of Registrar General, India.

Affirmative action laws and the establishment of elementary schools were among the measures implemented after independence to promote social fairness and expand educational opportunities. However, deeply rooted sociocultural barriers continued to impede women's educational progress and sustain disparities in educational quality, enrollment, and retention. Economic advancements brought about by the Green Revolution of the 1960s were not evenly distributed, which increased the gender gap in employment and education and worsened inequality between rural and urban areas. Major barriers to schooling were also posed by enduring sociocultural conventions, such as early marriage and women's limited mobility. Over the past few decades, a significant amount of work has been done to address these disparities through policy changes, grassroots projects, and lobbying campaigns. The objectives of Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao (BBBP) and the implementation of programs like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) aim to increase access to education and promote gender equality. Inadequate infrastructure, a shortage of teachers, and social hurdles persist in spite of these efforts. However, there are positive signs of progress, such as increased awareness, more female enrollment, and grassroots reform movements.

Literacy Rates by Sex for State and District : 2001 and 2011

State/District	Code	State/District	Literacy rate					
			Persons		Males		Females	
			2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
		<b>BIHAR</b>	<b>47.09</b>	<b>63.82</b>	<b>59.68</b>	<b>73.39</b>	<b>33.12</b>	<b>53.33</b>
01	Pashchim Champaran	38.93	58.06	51.08	68.16	25.23	46.79	
02	Purba Champaran	37.54	58.26	49.31	68.02	24.27	47.36	
03	Sheohar	35.27	56.00	45.28	63.72	23.86	47.25	
04	Siwan	38.46	53.53	49.36	62.56	26.13	43.40	
05	Madhubani	41.97	60.90	56.79	72.53	26.25	48.30	
06	Supaul	37.28	59.65	52.42	71.65	20.81	46.63	
07	Araria	35.01	55.10	46.38	64.15	22.37	45.18	
08	Kishanganj	31.09	57.04	42.71	65.56	18.63	47.98	
09	Purnia	35.10	52.49	45.63	61.09	23.42	43.19	
10	Katihar	35.09	53.56	45.31	60.99	23.80	45.37	
11	Madhepura	36.07	53.78	48.80	63.82	22.11	42.75	
12	Saharsa	39.08	54.57	51.66	65.22	25.27	42.73	
13	Darbhanga	44.33	58.26	56.72	68.58	30.78	46.88	
14	Muzaffarpur	47.95	65.68	59.10	73.61	35.81	56.82	
15	Gopalganj	47.48	67.04	62.96	78.38	32.16	56.03	
16	Siwan	51.65	71.59	67.26	82.77	36.88	60.35	
17	Saran	51.80	68.57	67.30	79.71	35.82	56.89	
18	Vaishali	50.49	68.56	63.23	77.00	36.58	59.10	
19	Samastipur	45.13	63.81	57.59	73.09	31.67	53.52	
20	Begusarai	47.98	66.23	59.13	74.36	35.64	57.10	
21	Khagaria	41.35	60.87	51.82	68.51	29.35	52.16	
22	Bhagalpur	49.50	64.96	59.22	72.30	38.13	56.49	
23	Banka	42.73	60.12	55.29	69.76	28.67	49.40	
24	Munger	59.47	73.30	69.89	80.06	47.40	65.53	
25	Lakhisarai	47.96	64.95	60.74	73.98	33.96	54.89	
26	Sheikhpura	48.60	65.96	61.94	76.14	33.92	54.93	
27	Nalanda	53.19	66.41	66.44	77.11	38.58	54.76	
28	Patna	62.92	72.47	73.34	80.28	50.83	63.72	
29	Bhojpur	58.96	72.79	74.29	84.08	41.80	60.20	
30	Buxar	56.80	71.77	71.92	82.78	39.88	59.84	
31	Kaimur (Bhabua)	55.09	71.01	69.64	81.49	38.79	59.56	
32	Rohtas	61.28	75.59	75.29	85.29	45.69	64.95	
33	Aurangabad	57.03	72.77	71.13	82.52	41.90	62.05	
34	Gaya	50.45	66.35	63.27	76.02	36.66	55.90	
35	Nawada	46.83	61.63	60.58	71.40	32.17	51.09	
36	Jamui	42.43	62.16	57.06	73.77	26.32	49.44	
37	Jehanabad	55.22	68.27	69.52	79.30	39.82	56.24	
38	Arwal	55.31	69.54	70.95	81.27	38.66	56.85	

Table 1: Literacy rate of Bihar

Source: Census of India, Office of Registrar General, India.

The main issues in rural Bihar are illiteracy and access to high-quality education, despite the fact that the percentage of rural girls attending schools is continually increasing. According to a recent survey, Bihar's population has increased by 25% during the last ten years. This rate is concerning. Without control, the GDP growth rate and all development efforts will be for nothing. In this regard, education is also essential for population stabilization.

Between 2001 and 2011, Bihar's literacy rate increased by 16.3 percentage points (Census, India). Bihar has witnessed an unparalleled advancement in education during the past ten years. There are indications that the government of Bihar is making progress in expanding access to the state's educational facilities. From 47.0% in 2001 to 61.8% in 2011 to 63.82% in 2015, Bihar's literacy rate has increased. Bihar's 20 percentage point increase in the female literacy rate from 2001 to 2011 was the most significant improvement of any Indian state during that time. Both the number of children who are not in school and the total dropout rate have decreased. Higher education institutions grew in number between 2001 and 20. Even

if rising reading rates are yielding some encouraging outcomes, literacy alone is not a sufficient indicator of an informed society. However, Bihar's education rate is marked by significant disparities between the male and female populations as well as between urban and rural women.

### 1.3.Factors affecting female education of rural Bihar

The substantial association between female education and other aspects of human and social development has long been recognized. According to Mehrotra [5], women's health and nutritional status are greatly impacted by inadequate educational attainment. In India, for example, he observes that the likelihood of contracting malnutrition-related disorders gradually declines as educational attainment rises. Numerous factors influence the education of women.

#### 1.3.1. Deep-rooted features of gender relations

According to Dreze and Saran [6], the poor regard for female education in India is a result of ingrained gender relations characteristics. In accordance with Kabeer and Subrahmanian [7], the ideologies that influence the identities of men and women in Indian society reinforce each other in institutions like the home, workplace, and community, creating vicious cycles of underinvestment in women. Alternative socialization can be facilitated by education, which can also challenge traditional gender ideologies, level the playing field for men and women in terms of qualifications, skills, and credentials, and enable women to use knowledge to empower themselves in a variety of ways.

#### 1.3.2. Gender division of labour

Women are still paid less in the workplace due to the gender division of labor, Kingdon [8]. This has led to comparatively lower levels of education and employment among women, which reflects the ideological bias against women being considered the breadwinners of the household. A long-standing cultural link of women with marriage and family institutions has resulted from the low market value of female labor and it's associated with carrying out domestic duties, including raising children.

The majority of communities still underinvest in female education compared to male education, despite compelling social and economic evidence of the high

benefits of female education. Discrimination against females in secondary and postsecondary education persists despite rising school completion standards and notably closing gender gaps in basic education. Gendered patterns of access are also influenced by economic and social privileges; girls in secondary and higher education are mostly attracted from socioeconomic groups with greater incomes and social standing.

#### 1.3.3. Early Marriage

According to Jha and Jhingran's [9] thorough analysis of education in communities across ten Indian districts, "Gender Equity in Education: A Review of Trends and Factors," there is still a belief in the value of early marriage for girls and the maintenance of educational attainment gaps between men and women as a sign of comparatively higher male social standing. Bihar loses the equivalent potential in childbearing and household chores since it has the highest rates of child marriage (40%) [10].

Additionally, according to NFHS 5 data, girls between the ages of 15 and 19 who need to be in school are married and have children at that age [11]. In general, 11% of adolescent pregnancies are reported in Bihar, which is higher than the 6.8% national average and is strongly linked to girls quitting school [12]. Similar to Bihar, it is commonly accepted that the younger girl will receive a smaller dowry because the family has more negotiating power when the girl is younger [13]. Additionally, there is a negative correlation between girls' educational attainment and marriage proposals, which makes it difficult for them to pursue higher education [14].

#### 1.3.4. Dowry System

Dowry is quite common in Bihar's traditional civilization. Additionally, it is among the factors that limit women's access to education, particularly higher education. Parents typically save money for their marriage rather than their daughters' schooling. The durable items, money, and real or mobile property that the bride's family delivers to the bridegroom, his parents, or other family members as a requirement of the marriage are referred to as the "dowry" in rural Bihar. The bride's family is believed to be severely financially burdened by the dowry system. The dowry system and other societal norms are major contributors to the neglect of girls and the discrimination against them,

which includes denying them the opportunity to receive an education. The dowry system can sometimes result in crimes against women, including as emotional abuse, physical harm, and even fatalities.

#### 1.3.5. *Concept of paraya dhan*

Daughters are considered paraya dhan in traditional Bihari society, meaning that following marriage, they must move in with their in-laws in compliance with Hindu customs. This is well expressed by a Telegu saying: "Rescuing a daughter is like watering a plant in someone else's courtyard." Therefore, it is not profitable for their parents to directly invest in their daughters' education. Because of this, a lot of low-income parents save this money for their daughters' weddings. Even while parents' attitudes about girls' education are changing, the percentage is still quite low.

#### 1.3.6. *Sexual harassment and violence*

Another significant barrier preventing parents from sending their daughters to school freely is sexual harassment and violence. In India, public areas are still generally inhospitable to women's presence and hardly ever serve to provide them a sense of security and self-assurance. A crucial policy issue that has gotten little attention is the safe transportation of girls to and from school, particularly in cases when secondary schools and colleges are located far from their homes. Thus, these are a few of the things that prevent gender parity in education.

#### 1.3.7. *Inadequate access to Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM)*

In Bihar, female literacy is hindered by the lack of access to proper toilets, the high cost of sanitary items, and a lack of knowledge. Only 59% of the women in Bihar, according to NFHS-5, adopt hygienic menstrual practices, which restricts the options available to them [15]. When looking at areas such as Bihar and Jharkhand, where knowledge and practices regarding menstrual hygiene are relatively limited, statistics clearly point to a stark contrast with regions like Kerala and Karnataka. In these southern states, women enjoy far better facilities and resources when it comes to managing their periods hygienically. This distinction plays a significant role in the educational achievements of women in these areas, as the availability of sanitation products and menstrual hygiene education enables them to focus on their studies more effectively. As a result,

women in states like Kerala and Karnataka are more likely to have completed more than 12 years of schooling compared to their counterparts in regions with lower menstrual hygiene awareness. Thus, there is an intriguing link between using sanitary protection techniques and staying in school longer [16].

#### 1.3.8. *Poverty*

When compared to other states with relatively greater resources, Bihar is the poorest state in India [17]. People find it challenging to prioritize necessities like food, healthcare, and education because multifaceted poverty is so common. For low-income households, education becomes the least important necessity due to its high cost. Consequently, families are more likely to send boys than girls to school if they cannot pay the tuition. As a result, it becomes the primary determinant of a girl's access to school, a situation that is particularly evident in states like Bihar. A significant body of research has consistently highlighted a disparity in educational outcomes, revealing that girls hailing from low-income households exhibit a dropout rate that is twice as high as their peers from more affluent backgrounds. This troubling trend not only underscores the challenges faced by disadvantaged girls in accessing quality education but also sheds light on the systemic barriers that hinder academic success among individuals from economically marginalized communities [18].

#### 1.3.9. *Caste disparities*

Severe caste disparities exist prominently within the societal structure of Bihar, especially in its rural regions where caste discrimination is heightened. This discrimination, particularly against lower castes, has proven detrimental to educational outcomes, leading to alarming rates of both dropout and low enrolment. The pervasive nature of this issue not only affects the individual aspirations of those marginalized by the caste system but also hampers the overall socio-economic progress of the region. The entrenched biases and unequal opportunities faced by lower castes create barriers to accessing quality education and thus perpetuate cycles of poverty and underdevelopment.

Together, all these elements restrict women's autonomy, making them the victims of the long-standing, established system. Government support in the form of policy intervention and civil society support in the form of awareness-raising are required to enable them to overcome the obstacles.

#### 1.4. Incentive Schemes by the Government of Bihar (GoB)

Numerous governments and organizations have taken up the cause of female education, and various projects have demonstrated the value of financial incentives, informal training, employing women in the education sector, and community involvement. Financial incentives have been utilized to both entice teachers to work in the field of girls' education and, in particular, to allow rural girls to participate in the main stream of development.

##### 1.4.1. Mukhyamantri Kanya Uthhan Yojana (MKUY)

Launched in April 2018, the program has broad reach and has the ability to enhance the lives of women. The government's unwavering dedication to improving opportunities for women in the workforce and boosting overall development metrics is clearly outlined through the implementation of the seven resolves. These key initiatives serve as the central point of focus, highlighting the government's strategic approach to addressing gender disparities and fostering economic growth [19]. It is a revolutionary scheme that is universal and incorporates the life cycle approach. The scheme's distinctive features include:

- *The holistic approach:* The all-encompassing strategy: The program seeks to offer Rs. 54,100 in financial aid from the female child's birth till her graduation. After completing the intermediate level, the girl child would receive a financial aid of Rs 10,000 to encourage her to enrol in graduation. She will then receive a reward of Rs. 25,000 after completing her diploma. Financial aid in various instalments throughout her life stages will effectively act as a deterrent against the likelihood that she will drop out because of the expense of education.
- *Inclusive approach:* Since it is not based on caste, income, or even religion, the program is inclusive and has no restrictions. As a result, unlike other programs that only target marginalized pupils, the program is really universal.
- *Menstrual health:* MKUY was the first program to address the problem of managing menstrual health in the classroom. In addition to addressing it, it takes a proactive measure to guarantee it. Each girl kid in classes 7 through 12 receives Rs 300 annually under the plan to help with hygiene during menstruation.

Overall, the scheme's intrinsic potential highlights the vital importance of ensuring that girls have access to adult education. This initiative serves as a crucial preventive measure to address the widespread issue of dropouts among young females, which is often triggered by socio-economic challenges such as poverty, early marriages, and inadequate menstrual hygiene management. By incorporating elements such as cash transfers, incentives for remaining unmarried until completion of their 12th year of schooling, and provision of financial support for essential sanitary napkins, the program strives to create a supportive environment where girls can pursue education without facing obstacles that may force them to leave school prematurely. Through these strategic interventions, the scheme aims to empower girls, promote gender equality, and break the cycle of generational poverty by equipping them with the tools and resources they need to succeed academically and realize their full potential in both their personal and professional lives.

##### 1.4.2. Mukhyamantri Balika Cycle Yojana

According to the Mukhyamantri Balika Cycle Yojana introduced by the State Government, a beneficial provision states that all female students upon entering Class IX are entitled to receive free bicycles. As a part of this initiative, a monetary transfer of Rs. 2,500 is allocated for the purchase of a bicycle for each girl within a specified timeframe, facilitating their commuting to school, particularly for those residing at considerable distances. This measure has significantly eased the transportation challenges faced by girls, giving them increased access to education. Notably, the scheme has evolved to become universally applicable, encompassing all students and promoting inclusivity within the education system. Statistics from 2013–14 reveal a noteworthy participation rate, with 68.95 percent of students benefiting from the Cycle Poshak Yojana. Moreover, female students represent a substantial majority at 71.36 percent among the recipients of this program. To ensure ongoing support and engagement, a key stipulation mandates a minimum attendance threshold of 75 percent for students to remain eligible for these incentives. This attendance criterion is strategically designed to foster a culture of regular school attendance, reinforcing the importance of consistent classroom engagement among students while enhancing the overall academic environment.

#### 1.4.3. *Balika Poshak Yojana*

The scheme for the provision of school uniforms to girls in middle school has been implemented to ensure that students are well-equipped with necessary attire. Initially limited to specific classes, the scheme now includes all students, emphasizing the importance of equal opportunities in education. Under this initiative, girl students from Class VI to VIII receive Rs. 700 each annually, enabling them to purchase two pairs of uniforms. Similarly, those from Class IX to XII are provided Rs. 1000 each year for the same purpose. This extension of the scheme showcases a commitment to promoting inclusivity and addressing the needs of all students, regardless of their grade level. By offering financial support for uniforms, the initiative aims to alleviate the burden on families and foster a conducive learning environment. This expansion signifies a step towards creating a more equitable educational system that values the well-being and dignity of every student.

#### 1.4.4. *Mukhyamantri Balika Protsahan Yojana*

Under this scheme initiated in 2009, female students who achieve the remarkable feat of securing the first division in the Bihar board examination are deservedly rewarded with a generous sum of Rs. 10,000. This thoughtful initiative not only aims to provide a tangible incentive for academic excellence but also plays a pivotal role in empowering and motivating young girls to pursue higher education. By acknowledging and celebrating the academic achievements of these talented individuals, the scheme effectively promotes a culture of learning and ambition among female students in Bihar. Through this program, girls are encouraged to strive for academic success and to unlock their full potential, reinforcing the importance of education and knowledge in shaping a brighter future. This well-conceived scheme not only recognizes merit but also serves as a symbolic gesture of appreciation for the hard work and dedication shown by these young scholars. In essence, the scheme serves as a beacon of hope and opportunity for girls in Bihar, inspiring them to dream big, work hard, and reach for the stars in their educational journey.

#### 1.4.5. *Mukhya Mantri Akshar Anchal Yojana*

The adult literacy programme, which was initiated by the government of Bihar in September 2009 with the aim of tackling the prevalent issue of high illiteracy rates among women, was designed to empower and uplift the lives of 40 lakh illiterate women in the age bracket of 15-35 years. This ambitious project, with a substantial

budget allocation of Rs. 52.6 crores, strove to provide these women with the essential tools and resources required to enhance their literacy skills and knowledge base within a relatively short span of six months. By offering structured educational initiatives and support systems, the programme aspired to bridge the literacy gap and equip these women with the necessary capabilities to participate more actively in societal and economic spheres. Through targeted interventions and tailored educational strategies, the government of Bihar sought to create a conducive learning environment that would foster the holistic development and empowerment of these women, enabling them to overcome barriers and transform their lives positively. In prioritizing female literacy, this initiative aimed not only to enhance individual well-being and self-sufficiency but also to contribute towards the broader goal of advancing gender equality and social progress in the region. Ultimately, the programme's overarching mission was to promote education as a fundamental right and key enabler of empowerment, enabling women to unlock their fullest potential and actively engage in the socio-economic fabric of the society.

#### 1.4.6. *Mid-day Meal*

The Mid-day meal scheme, a commendable initiative launched in January 2005 for students ranging from Standard I to Standard V, saw its reach expand in the academic year 2010-2011 to encompass those in Standard VI to Standard VIII. This program, which aims to tackle both educational and nutritional needs, involves the provision of wholesome meals by the school during the midday break to all enrolled students. By offering nutritious sustenance during school hours, the scheme not only works to enhance student enrolment rates but also plays a crucial role in fostering a healthier student body.

#### 1.4.7. *Educational Tour*

In Bihar, each school receives an annual budget of Rs.10,000 specifically allocated for facilitating educational tours to historically and geographically significant sites. This financial assistance enables schools to enrich the academic experience of their students by exposing them to diverse cultural and natural landmarks within and outside the state. By offering this funding, the government of Bihar aims to promote a deeper understanding and appreciation of the rich historical and geographical heritage of the region among the student population. The educational tours

sponsored by this allocation serve as opportunities for students to learn outside the traditional classroom setting, fostering hands-on exploration and interactive learning experiences.

#### 1.4.8. *Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV)*

The initiative introduced by the Government of India under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in August 2004 had a specific focus on providing educational opportunities for girls from marginalized communities, including those belonging to Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Other Backward Classes (OBC), and minority groups, as well as families living below the poverty line (BPL) in Educationally Backward Blocks. Initially launched as an independent scheme, it was later integrated into the SSA programme starting from April 1, 2007. The implementation of the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) component within the SSA framework was aligned with the provisions of the Right to Education Act (RTE Act) that was enacted on April 1, 2010. This integration of the KGBV initiative with the RTE Act signified a commitment to advancing child rights and entitlements, ensuring that education for girls from disadvantaged backgrounds was in concordance with the spirit and regulations of the legislation. The revised implementation strategy of SSA, in accordance with the RTE Act, further emphasized the importance of educational access and quality for all children, particularly those historically underserved, ultimately aiming to create a more inclusive and equitable educational landscape in India.

### 1.5. Impact of government schemes

These programs have undoubtedly contributed to the increase of female enrollment, the reduction of female student dropout rates, and the improvement of student attendance. Many of these programs require a minimum attendance rate of 75 percent in order to get benefits. Numerous programs are operating in a one-way fashion to boost student involvement in the classroom. The midday meal, for example, is a great way to encourage people to go to school and obtain some food, especially those who are poor and have little to eat. In addition to addressing hunger and malnutrition, this program promotes education, enrollment, and retention. As a first step in reducing malnutrition to some degree, wholesome food is served as part of a new menu every day.

In a state like Bihar, where poverty is so prevalent, the Balika Poshak Yojana is extremely important since it guarantees students wear appropriate school attire. By the way, these schoolchildren in uniform are frequently seen at home in rural areas. It is evident that the Mid-day Meal Scheme and the Balika Poshak Yojana are at least partially meeting the basic needs of clothing and food while encouraging children to attend school as part of a targeted literacy effort. Similarly, the Mukhyamantri Balika Cycle Yojana has made it easier for pupils to attend schools that are far away. Parents' reluctance to bring their daughters to school by public transportation due to concerns about sexual harassment and violence makes distant schools a significant barrier. This problem has been successfully resolved by giving girls pupils individual ways to get to school, and as a result, it is now typical to see groups of girls riding bicycles to faraway schools. Due to their increased school attendance, girls are now expected to spend more time in school, which limits their exposure to home duties that they used to perform throughout the day. It is a truth, nevertheless, that gendered division of labor still exists in Bihar families, with boys benefiting more from it than girls. Girls are becoming more literate and have more negotiating power in their marriages as a result of rising enrollment and falling dropout rates. Nonetheless, both nationally and in Bihar, the marriageable age of girls is still low. Regarding the dowry system, it is well established in Bihar. Due to the existence of all these programs run by the federal and state governments, the cost of education up to the upper secondary level is minimal, which means that parents are now willing to send their children to schools.

## 2. CONCLUSION

Based on the facts presented, it can be inferred that Bihar's education system is on the right track, with some encouraging developments occurring after a prolonged period of stagnation. Regarding gender parity in education, the government has implemented a number of initiatives that have undoubtedly produced positive outcomes. However, statistics show that just 35% of all pupils enrolled in Standard I finish secondary school, and only 30% finish higher secondary, showing substantial dropout rates as they advance to these higher education levels. In addition, there has been a downward trend in the dropout rates among girls. Despite the fact that this is a great development, we must also determine why. Government programs have undoubtedly had a

good effect, but we also need to take into account the level of society where parents choose to send their male children to private school if they can afford it. Unfortunately, in Bihar's traditional society, these benefits are still viewed as secondary, leaving girls with no choice except to enroll in government institutions if their parents are interested in their education. Government incentives have undoubtedly increased the number of girls attending school. To ensure that all segments of society have equitable access to the labor market, attention must be paid to the quality of education in our public schools, which is still a gray area.

Although the Bihar government is concentrating on student enrollment, the hiring of contract instructors has also taken place, despite the fact that the caliber of education in teacher selection is being disregarded. Even if more students are enrolled in schools, surveys have shown that there is a sizable attendance gap in these institutions. There are concerns about the quality of education as well. Even if a lot of teachers have been hired on a contract basis, additional teachers are still needed. When hiring a teacher, quality should be the primary consideration. Many generations' careers are ruined by an ineligible teacher. Teachers' ought to focus solely on their work as educators. In Bihar, the state government is solely responsible for at least seven other programs pertaining to uniforms, free cycles, free books, and financial aid, aside from the midday meal and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, which are administered by the national government in collaboration with the state governments. Teachers are in charge of implementing, recording, and reporting these programs to the government rather than having separate staff handle this task. As needed by the district administration, they have also taken up other responsibilities, such as organizing awareness rallies, distributing Below Poverty Line (BPL) cards, conducting elections, and doing other administrative tasks. The government should acknowledge this and prioritize improving educational quality in addition to implementing other programs for gender parity.

### 3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Evaluation:** To comprehensively assess the impact and efficiency of government schemes and offer informed recommendations for enhancement, it is imperative to subject the schemes to rigorous evaluation processes. In Bihar, there remains a

notable deficiency in the thorough evaluation of state initiatives, particularly evident in the case of the Mukhyamantri Kanya Utthan Yojana. As a result of this lack of evaluation, there exists a substantial gap in understanding the actual effectiveness and outcomes of these schemes. The state authorities should, therefore, prioritize the implementation of comprehensive evaluations to gain valuable insights into the performance and benefits of the schemes. By conducting detailed and systematic evaluations, the state can gather crucial data and feedback to facilitate evidence-based decision-making and policy adjustments. Through these evaluations, policymakers can identify key areas of success and potential weaknesses within the schemes, enabling them to fine-tune strategies and improve the overall impact on the target beneficiaries. Additionally, robust evaluations will aid in promoting transparency and accountability in the implementation of state programs, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and ensuring that resources are effectively utilized for the betterment of society. In essence, the rigorous evaluation of state schemes, such as the Mukhyamantri Kanya Utthan Yojana, is essential for optimizing their effectiveness, enhancing accountability, and ultimately achieving meaningful socio-economic development in Bihar.

- **Behavioural Intervention:** The issue of female literacy tends to face significant challenges due to the prevalence of rigid gender attitudes that perpetuate stereotypical roles for girls, consequently placing constraints on their opportunities for personal and professional growth. It is imperative that concerted efforts be made by governmental bodies and civil society organizations to cultivate a heightened sense of consciousness within the public sphere regarding the importance of investing in and empowering girls. By advocating for a societal paradigm shift that seeks to alleviate the social norms limiting girls' potential, it becomes possible to create a more conducive environment that fosters their educational and career advancement. This transformative approach aims to dismantle existing barriers and facilitate the establishment of equal footing for females in all aspects of life, thus ensuring that they are equipped to pursue their aspirations independently and contribute meaningfully to society. Through collaborative initiatives and holistic interventions, it is feasible to

challenge the status quo and champion the cause of gender equality, enabling girls to thrive and excel in diverse spheres of activity with confidence and competence.

- **Collaborations:** The government of Bihar should actively seek partnerships and engage in robust collaborations with reputable international organizations such as the World Bank, UNICEF, and other relevant bodies to further enhance female literacy initiatives like the Mukhyamantri Kanya Utthan Yojana. This approach, similar to the effective collaboration demonstrated in the Jeevika scheme, can prove instrumental in not only garnering crucial support but also in tapping into additional resources and expertise required for the successful implementation and expansion of educational programs aimed at empowering women in the region. By forging strategic alliances with globally recognized entities, Bihar can access a wider network of knowledge, best practices, and financial support, thereby creating a sustainable framework that fosters the advancement of female literacy at a faster pace. Through such coordinated efforts, the government can effectively leverage external resources while simultaneously ensuring that local priorities and needs are effectively addressed, leading to a more comprehensive and impactful approach towards promoting literacy among girls and women in Bihar. This synergistic collaboration will not only bolster the momentum behind female literacy schemes but also serve as a testament to Bihar's commitment to enhancing educational opportunities and gender equality within its borders.

Government of Bihar has made significant strides in enhancing female literacy by focusing its efforts on this crucial issue. The ASER Report 2022 indicates a remarkable progress, with only 6.7% of 15-16-year-old girls not being enrolled in schools in 2022 compared to a staggering 28.2% in 2006. Despite this progress, there remains a substantial distance to cover in order to achieve a satisfactory level of female literacy. The unique socioeconomic landscape of Bihar necessitates a multifaceted strategy involving both policy implementations and behavioral interventions. To truly bring about impactful change, the government must address key issues such as poverty, early marriages, and menstruation as these significantly impact women's empowerment in the region.

It is paramount for Bihar Government to devise a comprehensive approach that targets these specific challenges, aligning its policies and interventions towards overcoming obstacles that hinder female literacy. By tackling the root causes of low literacy rates among girls, Bihar can pave the way for a brighter and more equitable future for its female population. It is imperative to break away from traditional gender norms and embrace a more inclusive approach that harnesses the potential of every individual, irrespective of gender, to drive the collective progress towards a developed and prosperous India. This concerted effort to dismantle gender barriers and empower women will not only benefit the individual lives of women but also contribute to the overall growth and advancement of society as a whole.

### Declaration of Conflicting Interests

With regard to the research, writing, and publishing of this paper, the author has disclosed no possible conflicts of interest.

### Funding

For the purpose of conducting the research, writing, and/or publishing this paper, the author received no funding.

### REFERENCES

1. R. N. Kadam, "Empowerment of women in India- An attempt to fill the gender gap", *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, vol. 2, no. 6, pp.11-13, 2012.
2. E. C. Lagemann, "A generation of women: education in the lives of progressive reformers". *Cambridge*, 1979. MA: Harvard University Press
3. Labor force participation rate (LFPR) among females in India in 2015, by state and union territory (in percent) [Graph], *Labour Bureau India*, September 15, 2016. [Online]. Available: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/654242/female-labor-force-participation-rate-india-by-state/>
4. Subrahmanyam, H. (2011). Women Education in India Facts and Factors. *Asian Entrepreneur*, 61-71.
5. Mehrotra, Santosh (2014): India's Skills Challenge Reforming Vocational Education and Training to Harness the Demographic Dividend, *Oxford University Press*, New Delhi, pp.297, Price: Rs.995/-, ISBN: 0-19-9452776.
6. Drèze, J. and M. Saran (1993): "Primary Education and Economic Development in China and India: Overview and Two Case Studies", Discussion Paper, *Development*

*Economics Research Programme*, London School of Economics.

7. Kabeer, N. and R. Subrahmanian (1999): *Institutions, Relations and Outcomes. A Framework and Case Studies for Gender-aware Planning*, New Delhi: Zubaan.
8. Kingdon, G.G. (1998b): Does the Labour Market Explain Lower Female Schooling in India? *Journal of Development Studies*, 35(1): pp. 39-65.
9. Jha, J. and D. Jhingran (2002): *Elementary Education for the Poorest and other Deprived Groups: The Real Challenge of Universalisation*, New Delhi: Centre for Policy Research.
10. (2021). *National Family Health Survey-5*. Ministry of Health and Family welfare.
11. (2019-20). *National Family Health Survey*. Ministry of Family and Health Welfare.
12. Pandit, A. (2022, June 14). *Girls drop out of school due to early marriage, house work*. Retrieved from The Times of India: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/girls-drop-out-of-schools-due-to-early-marriage-house-work/articleshow/92195487.cms>
13. *Child Marriage*. (2015, October 29). Retrieved from DNA: <https://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-bihar-has-highest-rate-of-child-marriage-in-india-says-report-2139798>
14. Ghosh, S., Singh, D., Priyadarshini, A., & Joshi, M. (2022, April 19). Here's Why Bihar Finds It Difficult to Overcome Child Marriage. Retrieved from The Wire: <https://thewire.in/rights/heres-why-bihar-finds-it-difficult-to-overcome-child-marriage>
15. *Vital Stats*. (n.d.). Retrieved from PRS Legislative: <https://prsindia.org/policy/vital-stats/national-family-health-survey-5>
16. Ganguli, B. (2021). Menstrual Hygiene Management: Linking with Education and Development. *ANTYAJAA: Indian Journal of Women and Social Change*, 6(1-2), 47-60. <https://doi.org/10.1177/24556327211068298>
17. NITI AAYOG. (2021, September 20). Retrieved from NITI AAYOG MPI: [https://www.niti.gov.in/sites/default/files/2021-11/National\\_MPI\\_India\\_11242021.pdf](https://www.niti.gov.in/sites/default/files/2021-11/National_MPI_India_11242021.pdf)
18. Jennifer McCleary-Sills, Lucia Hanmer, Jennifer Parsons & Jeni Klugman (2015) Child Marriage: A Critical Barrier to Girls' Schooling and Gender Equality in Education, *The Review of Faith & International Affairs*, 13:3, 69-80, DOI: 10.1080/15570274.2015.1075755
19. 7 *Nischay*. (2023, April 15). Retrieved from Bihar Government: <https://state.bihar.gov.in/main/DashBoard.html>
20. Tewary, A. (2023, Jan 19). *The Hindu*. Retrieved from Low attendance, lack of toilets for girl students in Bihar government schools, says ASER report
21. Census 2011. (2011). Retrieved from Census 2011: <https://www.census2011.co.in>