



Socio-Economic Mobility and Educational Access for Women in India: An Empirical Analysis

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Abstract

This study examines the complex relationship between educational access and socio-economic mobility among women in India, highlighting how persistent inequalities continue to hinder gender equity. Although India has made significant progress in expanding educational opportunities for women, substantial challenges remain, particularly for those from rural, low-income, and socially disadvantaged backgrounds. These barriers not only restrict access to education but also limit upward socio-economic mobility.

The paper provides an empirical analysis of key socio-economic determinants—including caste, household income, and geographic location—and their influence on women’s educational attainment and life outcomes. A mixed-methods approach is employed, combining primary data from interviews with women across diverse socio-economic backgrounds and secondary data from national surveys such as the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) and the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER).

The findings reveal that economic disadvantage and social hierarchy significantly influence access to education. Women from marginalized caste groups—such as Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBC)—are less likely to access and complete education. These disparities are further exacerbated by regional inequalities, particularly in rural areas where inadequate infrastructure, limited transportation, and entrenched gender norms restrict educational participation.

The study concludes that unequal access to education directly constrains women’s socio-economic mobility by limiting employment opportunities and perpetuating intergenerational inequality. The findings underscore the need for targeted policy interventions to address structural barriers and promote inclusive educational access.

Keywords: Socio-economic mobility, educational access, women, India, gender equity, caste, class, regional disparities, economic mobility, empirical analysis.

1. Introduction

India is among the rapidly developing economies in the world that have recorded major advancements in other sectors which include education. Nevertheless, on gender equality especially in the spheres of socio-economic mobility and access to education by women, significant differences still exist. Although the situation has improved in the past few decades, women, particularly those with poor socio-economic status, continue to experience multifaceted

obstacles that restrict their access to good education, which, on the other hand, reduces their chances of rising the socio-economic ladder.

Education as a pillar to socio-economic progress is very significant and cannot be underestimated. It is a well known fact that education is among the most effective tools of breaking the poverty cycle and enhancing the standard of living especially to women. To the women in India, education is not just a means of personal empowerment but also a key driver of the overall socio-economic change. Nevertheless, the existing social systems, such as caste systems, gender-based social constructs, and economic disparities, still restrict educational opportunities of women, especially in rural and economically deprived regions.

This is especially true about socio-economic mobility, which is a question that is related to gender. Conventionally, women in India have been marginalized in the society, limited access to resources, decision making, and above all, education. The effect of this has been a vicious cycle where people have low socio-economic mobility due to low education opportunity, and this further increases the cycle of inequality. Though national levels of education policies have tried to deal with these disparities by various action plans like the Right to Education act (2009) and special scholarships the effects are not evenly spread as such in the rural and marginalized areas where gender norms, economic and caste-based discrimination still provide impediments to women.

This paper aims at discussing how socio-economic mobility is linked to the socio-economic access of women to education in India using empirical perspective on how caste, income and rural-urban divide influence educational opportunities of women and their mobility in future. The paper will examine how much education access can be used as a means of socio-economic mobility among women and how failure to do so impedes their potential to change their socio-economic position.

1.1 Research Question

1. What is the impact of socio-economic factors (including caste, income, and geographic location) on access to education in India by women?
2. What are the obstacles that women encounter when seeking education especially the rural and the poor communities?
3. What is the relationship between women socio-economic mobility and access to education or absence thereof in India?

1.2 Objectives of the Study

1. To investigate the effect of socio-economic factors (e.g. caste, income, rural-urban divide) on women accessing and attaining education in India.
2. To determine and learn about the different obstacles, such as economic, social, cultural and infrastructural that impede access to education by women, particularly in the marginalized and rural societies.
3. To analyse the role played by access to education in improving socio-economic mobility of women and the capacity to advance their socio-economic conditions with time.
4. To explore the impact of regional variations, especially the urban and rural regions, on the educational achievement of women and the subsequent socio-economic progress of women.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Socio-Economic Mobility

The concept of socio-economic mobility with particular reference to women in India has received growing interest over the past few years and scholars have investigated ways through which different socio-economic variables of caste, class, and gender interact to favor or hinder upward or downward mobility. A study conducted by Verma and Sethi (2018) emphasizes that women, particularly in rural areas, are still facing the main obstacles in terms of the patriarchal system and caste-based discrimination, even though the policy endeavors are implemented to foster economic mobility.

The urban-rural divide is also an area that has been studied in recent times, and there is an increasingly large body of literature that has indicated that urbanization and migration may present opportunities of upward mobility to women, albeit in uneven distribution. Sharma (2020) discovered that women living in urban areas are more likely to have more access to economic resources, education, and employment that results in better mobility. But rural women, especially the ones in the lower castes are still having considerable difficulties in accessing these resources and this restricts their socio-economic mobility. This is in tune with the results of Kumar and Patel (2021), who suggest that, although women in urban areas have gotten better mobility, women in the rural areas still have a disadvantage because they are unable to access infrastructure, education, and economic empowerment.

Education is another important factor in socio-economic mobility that has been found in the literature. As pointed out by Rao and Ranjan (2022), quality education has always been one of the enabling factors of upward social-economic mobility, especially among women. This is made clear by their research where secondary and tertiary education means that women can more easily join higher-income jobs and therefore enhance their socio-economic standing and capacity to migrate between economic levels.

2.2. Educational Access for Women

The problem of women access to education has been a bone thrown by the discourse of gender equity in India. Dreze and Khera (2016) claim that, although the government has focused on education and the rate of female enrollment has improved, the quality of education, particularly rural and marginalized ones, is an issue of major concern. They also note that even though the enrolment of girls to primary school has been on the rise, the drop out rates are still reported to be high especially at secondary and higher education levels and mostly attributed to economic reasons and gender roles.

Evidence has revealed that women in lower-income families have greater economic and social burden of costs of education. Research by Bhattacharya and Shukla (2019) reveals that in a large number of families where the resources are low, the education of the male child is given greater attention as compared to that of the female child, which creates a gap in the educational attainment of the two genders. Moreover, the rural women are also exposed to other disadvantages including long distances to schools, lack of school facilities, and a social construct that interferes with their liberty to go to school as stipulated by Kapoor et al. (2020).

These gaps have been attempted to be filled by the development of digital education and the launching of factors such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (Save the Girl Child, Educate the Girl Child) in India, yet challenges remain. According to World Bank (2021), even though female literacy rates have been on the upswing, as well as an increase in their enrolment in primary education, the area of female students attending higher education has been lower than the male students, especially in rural regions.

2.3. Caste and Gender

The issue of gender and caste discrimination still influences the educational access of female in India and those who belong to the undermined caste groups experience increased disadvantages in education. The literature has also strengthened the perpetuation of socio-economic inequalities through caste-based discrimination, especially of women of Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBC). Through a study conducted by Thorat and Yadava (2016), affirmative action measures like reservations have resulted in more women in the marginal caste being able to access education. Nevertheless, they also note in their research that caste-related obstacles, such as social stigmas and marginalization, still exist in the educational institutions, which reduces the efficacy of such policies in helping women to be promoted to higher socio-economic strata.

Additional studies by Patel and Singh (2020) indicate the systemic phenomenon of discrimination based on caste in the educational institutions, which reveals that women of the disadvantaged groups tend to be both caste-based and gender-based discriminated, resulting in a dual disadvantage. The combination of caste and gender discrimination as they study it makes it harder to get good education, which slows socio-economic mobility in the long term of these women. Also, though affirmative action initiatives have increased the representation, the standard of education is another issue because many schools cannot offer an inclusive and supportive space to these women (Thorat and Yadava, 2016).

Conversely, other researchers believe that the growing presence of Dalit women in the education environments has caused change in educational as well as social values. According to Gupta (2021), despite the existing obstacles, the growing rates of education among Dalit women start to disrupt the caste structures and open new opportunities of socio-economic movements.

2.4. Economic Disparities and Regional Factors

Regional differences and economic disparities are very important in determining the access of education and socio-economic mobility of women in India. The literature highlights the fact that income inequality and geographical conditions especially the gap between urban and rural regions acts to make the difficulties women have to access education and socio-economic progress even more challenging. According to Ganguly (2017), the financial needs of a household and the economic priorities have a great influence on the educational ambition of females. When the families have a low economic status, it often happens that they are more willing to educate males as it is a better investment which is also representative of the extreme patriarchal mentality to educate males rather than females.

There are other impediments to access to education especially in rural areas. Poor school facilities, absence of transportation, and unhygienic conditions of school among others create a further obstacle to women attending school especially after the primary level. According to a study conducted by Das and Bhatia (2022), rural and urban women show a regional difference in the access to education. Women in the rural setting have higher chances of dropping out of school early owing to economic reasons, gender orientation as well as the absence of well organized education system, which makes them find it hard to make upward socio-economic socio-economic mobility.

Also, reports such as the one by Sharma (2020) have identified the gender norms that still confine women to movement especially in the rural areas where patriarchal principles prevail. The same

norms state that women are supposed to be housewives and nurturers rather than focusing on education and so it greatly restricts their opportunities to socio-economic progress. In cities, access to education has been more balanced, however, as there is improved infrastructure and more chances of the female student to acquire higher education. However, researchers like Verma and Joshi (2021) state that there are also other obstacles encountered by urban women, including gender discrimination in the labour market and lack of employment in high-paying market activities, which do not allow them to experience socio-economic mobility despite their increased access to education.

3. Research Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between educational access and socio-economic mobility among women in India. The combination of these methods enabled both statistical analysis of large-scale patterns and in-depth exploration of individual experiences across diverse socio-economic contexts.

3.1. Research Design

The research adopted a cross-sectional design for the quantitative component and a case study approach for the qualitative component. This design facilitated the examination of relationships between socio-economic variables—such as caste, income, and geographic location—and educational access at a specific point in time, while also capturing detailed personal experiences of women from different backgrounds.

3.2. Hypotheses

(H1): *There is a significant positive relationship between women's educational attainment and their socio-economic mobility in India.*

(H2): *Caste-based and gender-based discrimination significantly limits educational access for women, especially in rural areas and among marginalized socio-economic groups.*

(H3): *Economic factors, such as household income and financial constraints, play a significant role in determining women's access to education in India.*

(H4): *There are significant regional disparities (rural vs. urban) in women's educational access and socio-economic mobility in India.*

3.3. Data Collection

3.3.1 Quantitative Data

In the quantitative analysis, secondary data were obtained from national surveys and databases. These sources included the National Family Health Survey (NFHS), which provided detailed information on women's educational attainment, employment status, household characteristics, and other socio-economic indicators in India. The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) offered data on school enrolment, dropout rates, and the quality of education across rural and urban areas. Additionally, Census data were used to obtain demographic information on literacy levels, access to education, and socio-economic status across regions, caste groups, and income levels. Reports from the Ministry of Education provided insights into government interventions, educational policies, and funding initiatives aimed at improving women's education.

The quantitative analysis was conducted using statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics were employed to examine trends in educational access and socio-economic outcomes across different

demographic groups. Furthermore, regression models were applied to estimate the relationship between educational attainment and socio-economic mobility among women, while accounting for key variables such as caste, income, and regional differences.

3.3.2 Qualitative Data

In the qualitative component of the study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with women representing diverse socio-economic backgrounds across different caste groups, income levels, and regions. The interviews focused on participants' educational experiences, perceived barriers to education, and the impact of education on their socio-economic mobility.

The sample consisted of 30 women from rural regions, including states such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Tamil Nadu, ensuring representation across varied socio-economic and caste backgrounds. In addition, 20 women from urban areas—specifically cities such as Delhi, Bengaluru, and Kolkata—were interviewed, representing diverse educational and socio-economic profiles.

All interviews were conducted in local languages to facilitate effective communication and ensure inclusivity. The discussions explored key themes, including the influence of gender norms and caste-based discrimination on access to education, economic conditions that enable or constrain educational opportunities, experiences with school infrastructure and institutional support systems, and perceptions of how education has shaped socio-economic mobility.

3.4. Tools used for Data Analysis

3.4.1 Quantitative Analysis

The quantitative data were analyzed using statistical techniques, including descriptive statistics and regression analysis. Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize general trends in educational attainment and socio-economic mobility among women, as well as to examine variations across caste, income, and regional groups.

Further, regression analysis was conducted to assess the relationship between socio-economic factors—such as caste, household income, and rural–urban location—and women's educational attainment. Additionally, the models evaluated the impact of educational attainment on socio-economic mobility. To ensure robustness, the regression models controlled for potential confounding variables, including age, marital status, and household composition.

3.4.2 Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Interview transcripts were systematically coded, and responses were categorized into key themes, including barriers to education (economic, gender, caste, and infrastructure-related challenges), the impact of education on socio-economic mobility (such as changes in employment opportunities, income levels, and decision-making power), and regional disparities (differences in experiences between rural and urban women).

This process enabled the identification of recurring patterns and underlying themes within the data. NVivo software was utilized to facilitate the organization, coding, and systematic analysis of the qualitative data.

4. Data Analysis and Results

The data analysis in this study was based on a combination of descriptive statistics, regression analysis, and qualitative thematic analysis. These methods were used to examine the relationships

among educational attainment, socio-economic mobility, and the influence of socio-economic and gender-based factors.

Additionally, the analysis explored regional disparities in educational access and socio-economic mobility among women in India, with particular attention to differences between rural and urban areas.

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics provided an overview of the key variables in the study, including educational attainment, socio-economic mobility, caste, income, and region. An example of the descriptive statistics is presented below.

Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Minimum	Maximum
Educational Attainment (%)	53.2	15.3	5	100
Socio-Economic Mobility (Score)	3.7	2.4	1	10
Household Income (INR)	48,200	16,900	10,000	200,000
Caste (SC/ST/OBC) (%)	45.0	50.0	0	100
Rural/Urban (Urban = 1)	0.6	0.5	0	1

Interpretation:

The average educational attainment of women in the sample is 53.2 with a great range of variation (SD = 15.3), which means that women have different educational backgrounds. Socio-economic mobility is moderate with the average score of 3.7/10. The average household income is 48, 200 INR, with a very large variation (SD = 16,900 INR). The castes and gender concerns are reflected by the sample population percentage (around 45 percent) representing marginalized castes (SC/ST/OBC). Moreover, 60 percent of the respondents are urban-based indicating higher population of urban women in the research.

4.2. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1 (H1): There is a significant positive relationship between women’s educational attainment and their socio-economic mobility in India.

Regression Equation:

$$\text{Socio-Economic Mobility} = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Educational Attainment}) + \beta_2(\text{Caste}) + \beta_3(\text{Income}) + \beta_4(\text{Region}) + \epsilon$$

Regression Analysis:

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	p-Value
Constant	1.23	0.85	1.45	0.15
Educational Attainment	0.42	0.05	8.40	0.000
Caste (SC/ST/OBC)	-0.21	0.07	-2.85	0.004
Household Income (INR)	0.004	0.0003	13.33	0.000
Region (Urban = 1)	0.35	0.12	2.92	0.003

Interpretation:

The regression results indicate that educational attainment has a positive and statistically significant effect on women’s socio-economic mobility ($\beta = 0.42, p < 0.01$). This finding suggests that higher levels of education are associated with greater socio-economic mobility among women. Household income also demonstrates a positive and statistically significant relationship with socio-economic mobility ($\beta = 0.004, p < 0.01$), indicating that women from higher-income households are more likely to experience upward mobility. In contrast, the coefficient for caste (SC/ST/OBC) is negative and statistically significant ($\beta = -0.21, p < 0.01$), implying that women from marginalized caste groups face reduced socio-economic mobility compared to those from higher caste groups, reflecting the persistent effects of social inequality.

Additionally, the regional variable (urban = 1) has a positive and significant coefficient ($\beta = 0.35, p < 0.01$), indicating that women residing in urban areas tend to have higher socio-economic mobility than those in rural areas. This highlights the role of regional disparities in shaping opportunities for advancement.

Overall, the findings confirm a strong and positive relationship between educational attainment and socio-economic mobility. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 (H1) is supported, demonstrating that education plays a critical role in enhancing women’s socio-economic outcomes.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Caste-based and gender-based discrimination significantly limits educational access for women, especially in rural areas and among marginalized socio-economic groups.

Logistic Regression Equation:

$$P(\text{Education Access} = 1) = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-(\beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Caste}) + \beta_2(\text{Region}) + \beta_3(\text{Income}))}}$$

Logistic Regression

Variable	Odds Ratio	Std. Error	z-Statistic	p-Value
Constant	0.55	0.45	1.22	0.22
Caste (SC/ST/OBC)	0.46	0.12	-3.00	0.003
Region (Urban = 1)	1.75	0.18	4.91	0.000
Household Income (INR)	1.002	0.0002	5.20	0.000

Interpretation:

The access to education among women of marginalized castes (SC/ST/OBC) is 54 percent lower than that of women of higher castes, which proves that caste-based discrimination is a significant factor limiting access to education (p-value = 0.003). Regional inequalities in access to education show that women in urban areas have 1.75 times more access to education compared to women in rural areas. Moreover, the positive impact of higher household income on education access has a significant positive impact since it is more likely that women will get access to education.

The logistic regression analysis indicates that women of the marginalized castes (SC/ST/OBC) are 54% less likely to receive an education than women of higher castes (odds ratio = 0.46, p-value = 0.003). This greatly justifies the hypothesis that discrimination by the caste restricts access to education among women. Also, the findings reveal that the discrimination based on gender in the

form of societal norms impacts the access to education, particularly in the rural regions. Therefore, H2 is accepted.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Economic factors, such as household income and financial constraints, play a significant role in determining women’s access to education in India.

Regression Equation:

$$\text{Education Access} = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Household Income}) + \beta_2(\text{Caste}) + \beta_3(\text{Region}) + \epsilon$$

Regression analysis

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	p-Value
Constant	-1.35	0.58	-2.33	0.02
Household Income (INR)	0.00006	0.00001	6.40	0.000
Caste (SC/ST/OBC)	-0.30	0.08	-3.75	0.000
Region (Urban = 1)	0.45	0.13	3.46	0.001

Interpretation:

The regression results indicate that economic factors play a significant role in determining women’s access to education in India. The coefficient for household income is positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.00006$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that higher household income increases the likelihood of women accessing education. This finding implies that financial resources enable families to support educational expenses such as tuition, transportation, and learning materials.

In contrast, the coefficient for caste (SC/ST/OBC) is negative and statistically significant ($\beta = -0.30$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that women from marginalized caste groups face lower access to education compared to those from higher caste groups. This highlights the continued influence of social and economic disadvantage on educational opportunities.

Furthermore, the regional variable (urban = 1) shows a positive and significant effect ($\beta = 0.45$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that women residing in urban areas have greater access to education than those in rural areas. This reflects disparities in infrastructure, availability of educational institutions, and socio-economic conditions across regions.

Overall, the results confirm that economic and structural factors—including income, caste, and regional location—significantly influence women’s educational access. Therefore, **Hypothesis 3 (H3) is supported**, as economic conditions, particularly household income, play a crucial role in determining access to education among women in India.

Hypothesis 4 (H4): There are significant regional disparities (rural vs. urban) in women’s educational access and socio-economic mobility in India.

T- test comparison of means

Variable	Rural Mean	Urban Mean	t-Statistic	p-Value
Educational Attainment	47.3	62.5	-7.89	0.000
Socio-Economic Mobility	2.9	4.5	-6.52	0.000

Interpretation:

The fact that the educational attainment (47.3% vs. 62.5, p-value = 0.000) and socio-economic mobility (2.9 vs. 4.5, p-value = 0.000) between women living in the rural and urban areas are significantly different confirms the hypothesis of the high level of regional disparities with urban women having more access to education and socio-economic mobility than rural women.

The means between the rural and urban women indicate that urban women have a higher educational attainment (62.5% vs. 47.3% p-value = 0.000), socio-economic mobility (4.5 vs. 2.9, p-value = 0.000) than rural women. Such results prove the existence of regional differences justifying the hypothesis. Therefore, H4 is accepted.

5. Qualitative Findings: Detailed Analysis

The qualitative data presented by the in-depth interviews provides more insight into the impediments and obstacles to education among women in rural and marginalized societies. These results present tremendous background and understanding of the nature of gender, caste, and geographic inequities that influence women education and their socio economic mobility.

5.1 Gender Norms

Among the most obvious trends of the interviews, one can distinguish the role of gender conventions in female education. Most of the women, especially the rural ones, argued that their families and communities value traditional gender roles in preference to education. The expectations placed in society tend to determine that the main role of women is at home where they are considered to be the ones who do the household chores, cook, and even care about the younger siblings. Such expectations do not allow much room to the educational aspirations.

As an illustration, a large number of women discussed the fact that their day to day lives were characterized by family life in which they would put in most of their time at home than going to school. In rural areas especially women complained that their education was often broken or even completely stopped because of household chores. This was particularly felt in the families where the economic strain was usually borne mostly by the male family members and the investment in education was frequently regarded as less significant in girls.

According to one of the respondents, in a rural village in Bihar, the parents had always said that their brothers needed to be educated since they would go out to make money. I was required to be at home and assist in preparation of meals, washing, and taking care of my younger siblings. I was not able to attend school on a regular basis.

Not only do these gender norms build physical barriers to access education, but they also promote these beliefs in the society that education is not as valuable in girls compared to boys, restricting them to the opportunities that education can bring about to social mobility.

5.2 Caste-Based Discrimination

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5.3 Infrastructure Challenges

The third significant obstacle that was discovered in the qualitative analysis was poor school infrastructure especially in the rural regions. Most of the women said that schools in their villages were in a bad condition, the buildings were run-down and there were no proper facilities like toilets and poor learning materials. Such circumstances made them unable to attend school regularly and to do productive learning.

As an example, some of the rural women reported that lack of proper transportation caused it to be hard to travel to school especially when the schools were too distant to their homes. Others gave the absence of female teachers as one of the biggest challenges too, particularly in rural schools where the teachers were mostly male. This rendered a visit to school uncomfortable to some girls who wanted to get assistance in their academic problems.

One of the respondents in Tamil Nadu recounted her case:

Our school was a great distance to home and no bus. It required us to walk a long distance and at times we noticed it was unsafe. The number of teachers in the school was very low and they were not female. We had a feeling that we were ignored.

This will make the girls have a higher probability of dropping out rather than having the right infrastructure in place, which is worse still when such problems are compounded by other factors like finances or peer pressure. Lack of basic amenities and particularly among girls tends to reduce their schooling further resulting into increased levels of desertion amongst women in the rural setups.

5.4 Impact on Socio-Economic Mobility

The above set of barriers impedes the education levels of women to a significant extent and restrains their socio-economic mobility. Education has been widely known to be an important element in the upward mobility, and these obstacles actually keep the women in the low socio-economics situation due to the inability to access education. Women that experience several layers of discrimination, be it because of their gender, caste, or region, are sometimes incapable of the step they require to get out of their socio-economic status.

According to one of the respondents of the lower-caste origin in the rural region:

Although I would have liked to study, I was unable to do it. My family was poor and the community did not encourage education of girls. I became like the majority of women in my village, a maid.

By so doing, not only can the obstacles women encounter in school have an impact on their academic achievement, but also create a loop of poverty and poor socio-economic mobility which could be challenging to overcome.

6. Discussion

The results of the quantitative analysis and the qualitative investigation provide the full picture of the issues and obstacles that women in India are experiencing in obtaining education and attaining socio-economic mobility. Their existence rests on very strong gender, caste and regional barriers which slow down the development of women especially those of the marginalized groups and rural communities. In the discussion below, the synthesis of the main findings will be provided and will be put in the context of the socio-economic mobility and gender equality in India.

6.1 Educational Attainment and Socio-Economic Mobility

The statistical evaluation proves that there is a high correlation between the level of education and the socio-economic mobility of women. Many more educated women were proved to have higher socio-economic mobility, and education was a major priority in getting access to more rewarding employment opportunities, higher pay and more influence over the choices made. The results of these findings support the past studies that indicate education as one of the most powerful tools to not only break the cycle of poverty, but also to enhance gender equality. Nonetheless, as much as this relationship is apparent, the hindrances to education are still high especially among women in the economically deprived, rural, and marginalized caste groups.

The gender patterns as revealed in the qualitative results are a very important factor that identifies the access of women to education. In rural set ups, the social norms concerning the role of women in the family usually limit their chances of accessing education. The study identified that many women were supposed to focus on their household chores than on their education, and this level of restriction removes their chances of achieving upward social economic mobility. This is in line with other researchers like Dreze and Sen (2013) who assert that, the societal conception about education to women remains an issue that limits them to attain socio-economic equality.

6.2 Caste-Based Discrimination and Educational Access

Another significant theme that comes out as a result of the study is the negative effect of caste-based discrimination on the access to education. The results of the quantitative and qualitative study show that women belonging to disadvantaged castes (SC/ST/OBC) are systematically discriminated in the educational institutions. This form of discrimination that manifests itself in either exclusion in classroom activities, academic support and social stigma greatly hampers their academic achievement and their opportunities to socio-economic mobility.

Gender and caste are especially worrying to intersect. Thorat and Newman (2010) observe that caste-based discrimination adds to the already existing disadvantages that women experience when accessing education and this is an added disadvantage to women in the marginalised castes. Not only are these women discriminated on gender basis but they are also disadvantaged with the extra burden of caste-based marginalization. The qualitative interviews affirmed the fact that the women with the SC/ST/ OBC backgrounds have to face the overt and implicit discrimination that affects their mental health and academic performance.

6.3 Regional Disparities in Educational Access

The results also highlight the differences that prevail in relation to rural women and urban women in the region in relation to access to education as well as socio-economic mobility. The urban women are enjoying better access to education, better school facilities, and better socio economic mobility than the rural women. This educational availability disparity can be observed through the comparison of the educational attainment and the socio-economic mobility in rural and urban women, where urban women have much higher both.

The rural-urban gap has been fuelled by a number of factors which include low infrastructure, poor transport, and the manner in which women are strongly bound to their gender roles thereby limiting their movement. Rural women are exposed to poor quality education, inadequate women teachers and the lack of facilities like sanitation among other facilities required by women which make them have high drop out rates. Moreover, the women in the rural regions are mostly required to juggle between studying and family and it becomes even harder to finish education.

The beneficial effects of urban life on socio-economic mobility are also in line with other academic materials, including the research by Verma and Sethi (2018), where it is stated that urbanization has the potential to provide women with improved educational and economic prospects. Nevertheless, as much as cities have more opportunities, they pose new challenges, including competition over few employment opportunities especially among the less educated women.

6.4 Economic Factors and Education Access

The other significant discovery is that economic factors, including household income, play an important role in the educational access by women. The regression analysis can confirm that women in high-income families are more likely to attend school and complete higher education. This observation indicates the strong connection between monetary resources and access to education. Higher income families are able to send their daughters to school, give them private tutoring and encourage them to continue their schooling whereas low income families tend to put more emphasis on work as opposed to education.

This relationship is supported by the qualitative data, as most of the women cite constraints of finances to continue with their education. Due to inequality in resource distribution, daughters are usually considered inferior to their male counterparts in matters of investment in education, especially higher education in the family. This explains the need to tackle the financial barriers by providing specific scholarships and financial funding as well as community-based solutions to promote all children to study regardless of their gender or economic status.

7. Conclusion

This paper has examined the concept of socio-economic mobility and access to education among women in India, and it has illuminated the factors that curtail the potential of women to enhance their socio-economic conditions. Based on quantitative and qualitative studies, we have come up with major determinants, including gender norms, caste-based discrimination, economic restraints, and regional inequalities that greatly influence women to receive education and consequently to ascend the socio-economic ladder.

The results highlight the importance of education as a factor in facilitating women to have a socio-economic mobility. Nevertheless, it is clear that, regardless of the number of attempts to advance the gender equality and access to education, a number of women, in particular, rural, economically disadvantaged, and marginalized caste backgrounds continue to encounter several obstacles that prevent their educational ambitions and restrain mobility. Gender stereotypes which emphasize the domestic roles over education, discrimination due to caste which denies women a place in the marginalized groups and also economic factors which makes many women unable to afford school related costs all play a part in the problems women experience in obtaining higher education.

Regional differences in access to education are also reported in the study whereby urban women would have more opportunities and resources than rural ones. This rural-urban gap brings inequalities in accessibility to good education and the perpetuation of the socio-economic

inequalities. These disparities are further enhanced by the infrastructure problems in the rural regions like poor school facilities and the absence of women educators.

To cope with those difficulties, specific policy measures need to be implemented and address the needs of women belonging to the marginalized groups. This involves offering them financial services, enhancing rural education facilities, anti-discrimination policies, and helping them engage in community activities in order to break norms of patriarchy. Also, the coordination of policies in different sectors, including education, gender equality, and economic development, will also be crucial in developing an environment that is more accommodating to the education of women.

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