



## Female Participation in Higher Education: A Call for Sustainable Development.

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### Abstract

Equality in education is a precondition to the sustainable development of the nation. Quality education and gender equalities are the 4th and 5th sustainable development goals that focused on learning outcomes for the full life cycle, especially for women, girls and marginalized people and to end all forms of discrimination against women respectively. The gender gap in education expressly high in backward, conventional, and underdeveloped areas. Unless women are educated and given equal status in society country cannot flourish. In developing countries to conquer inequality, poverty and to accelerate socio-economic development female higher education must be encouraged. Higher education ensures percipience, knowledge, and enhances the productivity of an individual. So, this descriptive paper focuses on the growth of the higher education system, women participation in higher education, challenges faced by them, government measures and recommendations to improve women's higher education in India concerning to attain sustainable development.

**Keywords:** Higher education, Women empowerment, Sustainable development.

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### I. Introduction

“Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. Education is the premise of progress, In every society, in every family”.

Kofi Annan(The Former Secretary-General of the United Nations)

Education is one of the indispensable constituents offering to the human resource development of the country. In the knowledge economy, qualified human resources improve economic prosperity, social well-being and political resistance of the country. According to Prof. Meier "Persons who have skills, education and experience are critical for the economic and political development of the country". Thus, education is an exclusive channel that can bring exhilarating change in society. Education enhances analytical reasoning capacity, communication abilities and productivity of an individual. It bolsters self-confidence, broad-mindedness, and proficiency in an individual. Education magnifies an individual's temperament and educated individuals create powerful nations. Martin Luther King has justly said that “the function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to act critically. Intelligence plus character – that is the good of true education”.

However, in the dynamic world quality primary and secondary education is insufficient to sustain the increasing competition. Accordingly, higher education is essential for developing countries like India as it intensifies human resource development. Higher Education aims at transforming human minds by providing percipience and knowledge. higher education imparts human values and life skills which are crucial for peaceful living. The National Policy on Education (1986) "Higher education provides people with an opportunity to reflect on the critical, social, economic, cultural, moral, and spiritual issues facing humanity. it contributes to national development through the dissemination of specialized knowledge and skills. Being at the apex of the educational pyramid, it also has a key role in producing teachers for the education system.

Women's empowerment can be defined as a change in the context of a women's life, which enables her increased capacity for leading a fulfilling human life. It gets reflected both in external qualities (viz. health,

mobility, education and awareness, status in the family, participation in decision making, and also at the level of material security) and internal qualities (viz. self-awareness and self-confidence) [Human Development in South Asia (2000) as quoted by Mathew (2003)]. In the conventional male-dominated Indian society women were treated as subordinate and inferior to men. They were subjugated to discrimination, injustice in all the phases of life, education was not exceptional to this. After independence, the status of women has experienced positive changes in India. According to the Census of India (2011), the gender gap in literacy which was 26.6 percent in 1981 has declined to 16.6 percent in 2011, with 65.5 percent of the female literacy rate. Women's Education is important to achieve social justice and accelerate social transformation.

Approximately 48.0 percent of the Indian population constitute women. They contribute to the socio-economic development of the country. Unless women are empowered country cannot flourish. Higher education helps women to be independent, efficient and empowered. It provides better career opportunities, enhances self-dignity, enlarges participation in political activities, increases the standard of living and promotes family welfare. Thus, higher education is fundamental for woman's personal development and also for the development of the whole country.

## **II. Review Of Literature:**

**Panchami (2017)** argued literacy alone cannot help women in self-dependence but higher education helps women to become more capable. The author further highlighted that higher Education is one of the most important means of empowering women with the knowledge, skills, and self-confidence. The descriptive study collected data from the secondary sources and listed out the challenges faced by women in pursuing a higher level of education. Further, the author suggested widening the scope of higher education. Universities and colleges have to offer add-on courses together with degree courses to enhance the employability of women students. Moreover, the author suggested the proper implementations of government policies and different programs of government of India regarding women empowerment and higher education. the author recommended universities to play the role of empowering agents of higher education.

**Singh.et.al (2018)** analysed the role of higher education to empower the marginalized sections of the society as women. Higher education aims to generate knowledge, encouraging critical thinking and imparting skills relevant to the society determined by its needs. The authors highlighted the situation of Indian women who were restricted to go take part in the employment market. Though the scenario is changing, access to higher education is often restricted to women who live in rural areas or towns without colleges or universities. The study is descriptive and based on the secondary data collected from various government reports, magazines and journals. The study suggested numerous measures like providing scholarships for girls, promoting interaction of universities with girl's school, starting short term courses for women, developing a relationship with industries, introducing new professional courses for women, etc to promote the participation of women in higher education.

**Halakerimath& Danappagoudra (2018)** studied the empowerment of women through education in the area of Hubli-Dharwad. The sample size was 50 women. The data collected were tabulated, analysed by using percentage, index and correlation methods. The findings of the study concluded that higher education improves the social participation of women in society. Further, it enhances the decision making and resource management skills of women.

### **Objectives**

- To analyse the growth of higher education institutions.
- To investigate gender disparity in higher education.
- To recommend suggestions for the enhancement of women's higher education.

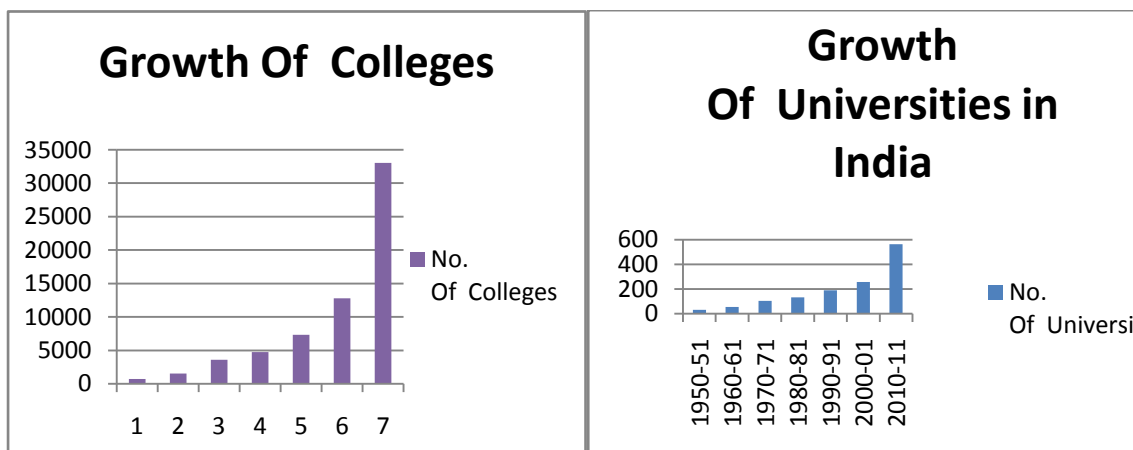
## **III. Methodology**

The prepared paper is a descriptive study in nature, based on secondary data which is collected from the reports of AISHE, UGC, MHRD, Newspapers, Periodicals, Journals, conference papers, Published books and websites.

### **Data Analysis:**

#### Growth of universities in India:

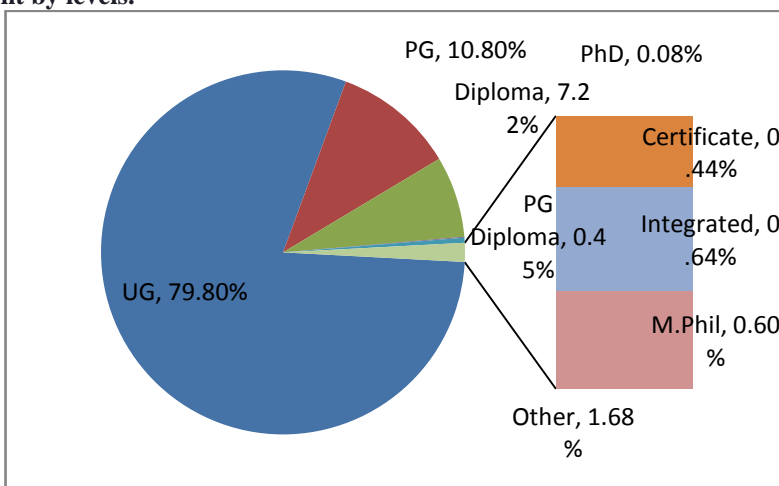
According to UGC Report (2012) the growth of higher education institutions (Universities and Colleges) in India for the period 1950-51 2010-11. In the year 1950-51, the number of Universities was 30 which went up to 564 in the year 2010-11. In the year 1950-51, the number of colleges was 695 which increased to 33023 in the year 2010-11. This growth in the Universities and Colleges was due to massive efforts and policy decisions were taken by the central government and the state government.



(Source: University Grants Commission, New Delhi, 2012)

All India Survey of Higher Education (2018-19) covered all institutions of Higher Education in the country, registered with AISHE code in the AISHE portal [www.aishe.gov.in](http://www.aishe.gov.in). Institutions are categorized in 3 broad categories; University, College and Stand-alone Institutions. There are 993 Universities, 39931 Colleges, and 10725 Stand Alone Institutions listed on the AISHE web portal and out of the 962 Universities, 38179 Colleges and 9190 Stand Alone Institutions have responded during the survey. 298 Universities are affiliating i.e. having Colleges. 385 Universities are privately managed. 394 Universities are located in a rural area. 16 Universities are exclusively for women, 3 in Rajasthan, 2 in Tamil Nadu & 1 each in Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Odisha, Uttarakhand, and West Bengal. In addition to 1 Central Open University, 14 State Open Universities, and 1 State Private Open University, there are 110 Dual-mode Universities, which offer education through distance mode also. There are 548 General, 142 Technical, 63 Agriculture and Allied, 58 Medical, 23 Law, 13 Sanskrit, and 9 Language Universities and rest 106 Universities are of other categories.

#### Students enrolment by levels.



(Source: AISHE Report 2018-19)

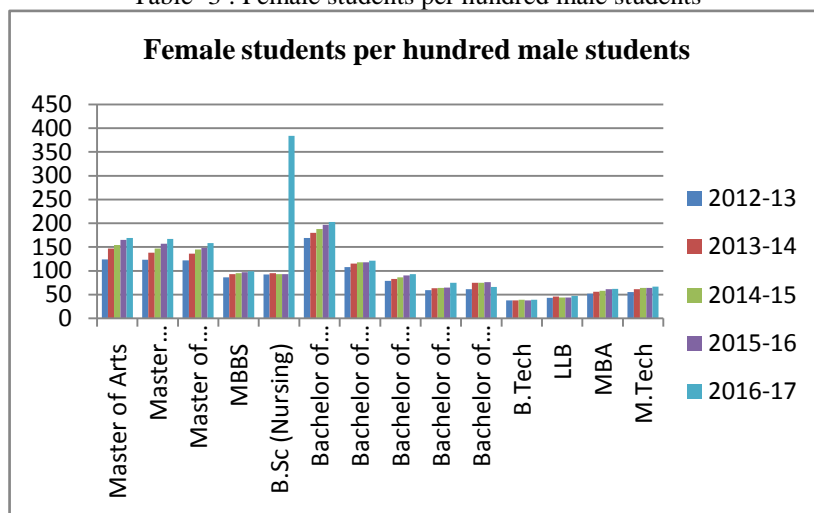
The AISHE report of 2018-19 has identified 993 number of universities in the country. The report has shown the growth of higher education in India in terms of gross enrolment ratio and growth of higher education institutions. Further, it also underlined the areas where the policymakers should give attention to make Indian higher education accessible to all the sections of the society.

All India Survey on Higher Education (2018) found that gender gaps in Indian Institutes of higher studies have reduced by nine lakhs in the last five years with girl students outnumbering men in eight disciplines in the 2016-17 academic year. In Master's of Arts degree, there are 160 women for 100 men, in B.Sc (Nursing) has 384 women for 100 men. Even in the postgraduate classes of science and commerce women have outnumbered men with 167 and 158 respectively per 100 males. However, in undergraduate and technical and professional courses like B.Tech, Law or Management the enrolment is skewed in favor of males and the gender

gap is significant. Women enrolment is more than Bachelor's of Arts and Education. in MBBS there are 99 females for 100 males and in B.Com 93 females for 100 males.

Table 3 shows the female per hundred male Students in important programs at UG and PG level at the regular mode of education as per All India Survey on Higher Education 2017-18:

Table- 3 : Female students per hundred male students



(Source: AISHE Report 2017-18)

Though women participation ratio is improving in India it's not component yet. There are several factors which hinder the participation of women in higher education.

**How does higher education for women promote sustainable development?**

Higher education helps every individual to obtain the acquaintance, life skills and excellence inevitable to shape a sustainable and more satisfying future.

It also requires a participatory and developing society, economy and environment for sustainable development. women constitute 48.50 percent of the Indian population. they play a dynamic role in the socio-economic development of the country. unless women have well educated a country cannot achieve sustainable development. higher education of women enhances sustainable development in the following ways:

- higher education improves employment opportunities and increases the income earning capacity of women.
- enhances economic independence and political participation of women.
- creates awareness among women about their rights and duties.
- improves critical thinking capacity and broadens the mindset.
- improves the self-confidence of women to fight against the atrocities.
- empowers women to make decisions in the family as well as society.
- intensifies social mobility.
- contributes to eradicating gender discrimination.

**Suggestions to Improve Women's Participation in Higher Education.**

The government should establish a commission on women and higher education to monitor the availability, access, and participation of women in higher education. Universities, colleges, and NGOs should actively try to create awareness in society about the importance of higher education. Actions must be initiated to promote gender equity in higher education institutions. Equal employment opportunities for men and women must be created to boost up the confidence level of women. The government should launch job-oriented courses. Stipends, scholarships, loans must be provided by the government to encourage women participation in higher education. Infrastructural facilities like transportation, library and health care centres must be improved. Psychological and social barriers must be removed especially in rural India where enrolment ratio is low. Hostel, health care centres, and women development cells must be improved in every university and college. The government should take up special initiatives to reduce the level of female dropouts. Mid-day meal scheme can also be expanded to UG and PG students. Career Guidance cell can be created especially for female students. Universities and colleges along with NGOs can provide counselling to the family members regarding the importance of higher education. The government can start more women universities and universities in rural

areas. Quality education must be provided in all higher education institutions to enable students to be competitive enough. Life skill education needs to be imparted to make women confident to face the challenges of life.

Thus family, NGO, government and society must encourage women to participate in higher education to make them independent, efficient and empowered.

#### **IV. Conclusion.**

Quality education and gender equality are the decisive sustainable development goals among 15 others which was set in 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly and expected to be accomplished by 2030. The socio-economic development of the country lies in the advancement of its human resources. Higher education strengthens human resources thus contributes to the overall progress of the country. Higher education is one of the most pre-eminent players in transforming society into a more sustainable one. To eradicate inequality, discrimination and exploitation against women higher education must be ensured to them which empowers women with knowledge, critical thinking capacity, skills, and confidence. In the knowledge society, equal education is vital to attain sustainable development. An educated woman is productive, innovative, dynamic and can create a better life for herself and also for society.

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