



The Unseen Struggle: Unveiling the Socio-cultural And Psychological Challenges Faced by Teenage Girls in India and their Impact on Development

Author Name : Asiya Afroz

¹Designation of Author - M.A., B.Ed., NET Qualified,
Department Of Humanities, (ENGLISH)
City - Bokaro Steel City, Country : India

Abstract: *It's amazing to consider the enormous advancement we have made in almost every sphere of civilization as we joyfully commemorate the 25th year of the twenty-first century. This period has seen incredible developments in social justice, healthcare, education, and technology, creating a more inventive and connected society than ever before.*

However, in the middle of this success, I'm thinking about what freedom really means. As much as we appreciate the freedom we have, I believe that a large part of our freedom as a society is still bound- especially when it comes to women's development. There are still significant obstacles in the way of women's equality and complete empowerment, and it is imperative that we recognize and remove them. Until every women can experience the unbound sense of free will, our celebration of freedom will remain incomplete.

IndexTerms – Struggle, Mental health, Teenage Girls , Stereotype,

1. INTRODUCTION

The socio-cultural and psychological difficulties that Indian adolescent girls experience, as well as how these problems affect their development will be covered in this article. Since the younger generation is our future, it is crucial to consider them. As Ex-president A.P.J.Abdul Kalam stated that the establishment of a civilized nation requires the empowerment of women, as this ensures a stable community. If half of our population experience any kind of developmental setbacks, we as a nation would not be able to fulfill our goal of being a developed, content, and prosperous nation.

In India, the ratio of male and female students in secondary and higher secondary education is still to be improved. Girls account for approx. 47.9% of total enrolled students in secondary education and 48.3% in higher secondary education. According to the UDISE+ 2023-24 data, the transition rate from secondary to higher secondary education in India is 71.5%, meaning that almost 28.5% of students who finish secondary school might not continue to higher secondary education. With a 14.1% national average, secondary school dropout rates are high, Assam (20.3%), Bihar (20.5%), and Meghalaya(22.0%) are among the states with the highest dropout rates. Numerous causes, such as socioeconomic difficulties, restricted access to high quality education, higher education (especially for girls) and cultural hurdles, can be blamed for these dropouts.

To guarantee that every girls and boys pursue higher education and to encourage the girls enrollment in higher education after secondary school, these problems must be resolved.

2. STRUGLES FACED BY TEENAGE GIRLS

2.1 socio-cultural and socio- economic struggles

Numerous socio-culture and socio-economic variables contributed to the many difficulties teenage girls experience, which seriously impede their growth at a critical phase of their lives. Such challenges have a significant negative influence on their self esteem and confidence, which leads to an atmosphere in which they frequently feel undervalued and constrained .

Many of these girls are raised in patriarchal culture that primarily defines their responsibilities as housewives and careers. This often lead to the assumption that women are creatures created only to submit to men , which upholds conventional values that place obedience over individuality, reinforcement traditional ideals that prioritize compliance over self identity. As a result, these young women frequently struggle to find their own voice ,lacking the necessary support to assert themselves and pursue their ambitions.

Furthermore, rather encouraging young girls education and personal development , families usually prepare them for marriage they typically get very little schooling which emphasizes skills considered sufficient for performing household duties rather than

preparing them for careers or fostering their personal growth. This method ignores girls potential for independence and self fulfillment and perpetuates antiquated ideas that women value is derived only from their domestic responsibility.

In simple terms, the structure obstacles that adolescent girls encounter---from a lack of education and career opportunities to deeply embedded social norms --- contribute to a vicious cycle of reliance and low self esteem . to break this pattern, society as a whole must change to value and encourage girls education, independence ,and self expression so they can carve out their own pathways and claim their identities in a world that is changing.

2.2 PSYCHOLOGICAL STRUGGLES

In India ,teenage girls are facing a growing numbers of psychological issues that have a significant impact on their mental health and future development .Distress, social anxiety ,depression are the most significant of these issues, as it has become a major cause of disease and disability in this age range . social isolation family expectation , and the difficulties of navigating identity formation during this crucial developmental stage are some of the factors contributing to the frequency of depression disorders.

A considerable percentage of teenage girls are estimated to suffer from anxiety disorder , which are more common than depression in this demographic.

2.3 MENTAL HEALTH AND YOUTH SUICIDE IN INDIA

According to Mayer, “ India has the second highest suicide rate in the world, with over 123,000 suicide annually. In India, the biggest cause of mortality among rural Indians, particularly women in their early adult years are committing suicide, which occurs nearly every four minute.” To avoid catastrophic consequences, the serious problem of suicide demands careful consideration, research and raised awareness. It is important to look at the particular difficulties that people of all genders have currently, since knowing these issues can help to develop prevention tactics that would be successful.

Our society greatly benefit with their contributions to many facets of community life and development, teenage girls in particular are tremendous assets to our nation and society. In order to provide everyone the chance to succeed, it is crucial that we create an atmosphere that promotes mental health. We can help these delicate minds thrive by fostering a safe and supportive environment, which will eventually lower the frequency of these devastating losses. In addition to helping to prevent suicides, openly and compassionately addressing mental health in an open and caring manner can foster a stronger, more cohesive community.

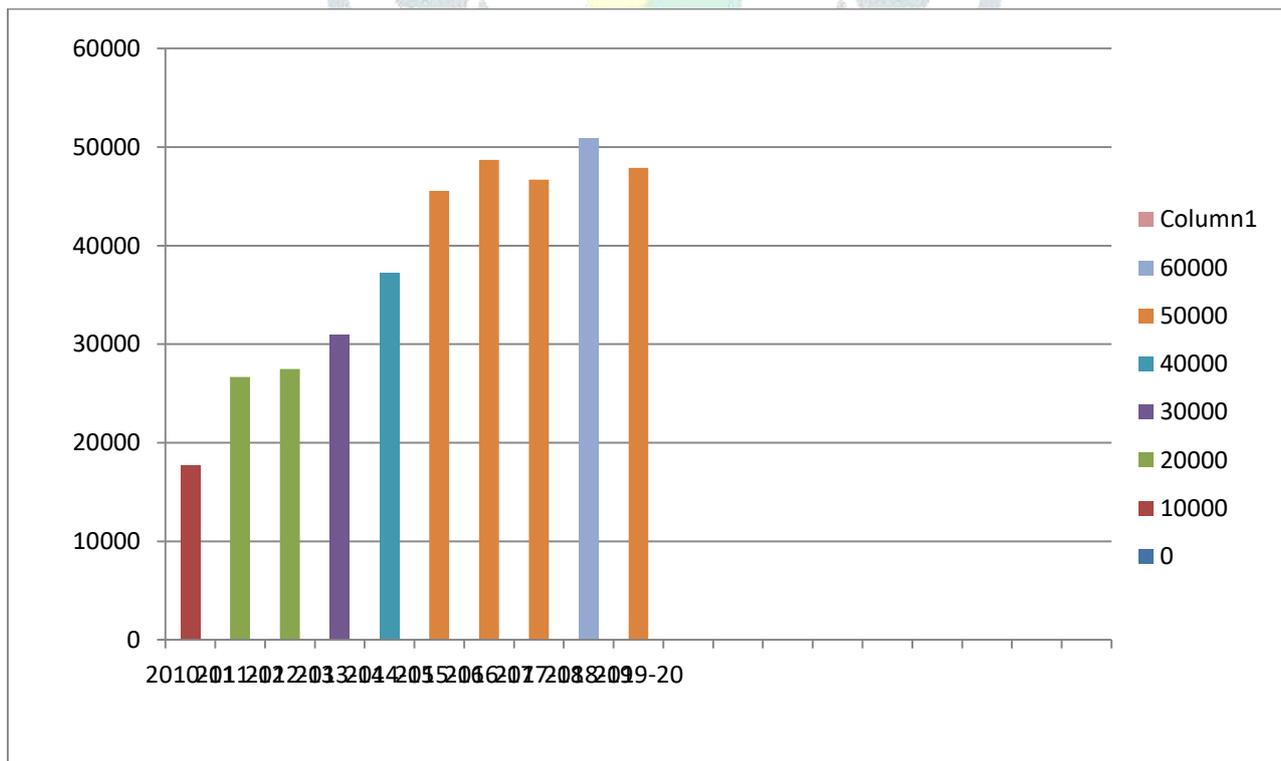


Figure 1 : Number of suicide (6+ age group) in India in last one decade 2010-19 (By HMIS)
(source- <https://www.data.gov.in>.)

2.4 FEAR, SAFETY AND SEXUAL ASSAULT

One of the most alarming topics while discussing the intricacies of adolescent girls is their safety. Most families and parents decide not to compromise their safety. In light of growing number of rape cases and laws in the book, justice is still a long way off; the victim either perishes or is left in a state devoid of identity and self-respect. The suffering of a single incidence like this affects not just the victim but also the adolescent female, girls of every age, and working women, especially these developing girls are more profoundly impacted. Unconsciously, they opt to live in a cell because they are afraid and sometime never strive to make themselves worthy. Their intellectual capacities and abilities continue to be underdeveloped. So, this is not just an issue, it's a great hindrance in the way of teenage girls' development.

According to Open Government Data (OGD) Platform India, these are the cases registered under rape (section 375/376 IPC) from 2016 to 2020.

Sl. No	State/UT	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
1	Andhra Pradesh	994	988	971	1086	1095
2	Arunachal Pradesh	92	59	67	63	60
3	Assam	1779	1772	1648	1773	1657
4	Bihar	1008	605	651	730	806
5	Chhattisgarh	1626	1908	2091	1036	1210
6	Goa	61	76	61	72	60
7	Gujarat	982	477	553	528	486
8	Haryana	1187	1099	1296	1480	1373
9	Himachal Pradesh	252	249	344	359	331
10	Jharkhand	1109	914	1090	1416	1321
11	Karnataka	1655	546	492	505	504
12	Kerala	1656	2003	1945	2023	637
13	Madhya Pradesh	4882	5562	5433	2485	2339
14	Maharashtra	4189	1933	2142	2299	2061
15	Manipur	55	40	52	36	32
16	Meghalaya	190	119	87	102	67
17	Mizoram	23	25	50	42	33
18	Nagaland	26	10	10	8	4
19	Odisha	1983	2070	918	1382	1211
20	Punjab	838	530	831	1002	502
21	Rajasthan	3656	3305	4335	5997	5310
22	Sikkim	92	17	16	11	12
23	Tamil Nadu	319	283	331	362	389
24	Telangana	1278	552	606	873	764
25	Tripura	207	95	97	88	79
26	Uttar Pradesh	4816	4246	3946	3065	2769
27	Uttarakhand	336	374	561	526	487
28	West Bengal	1110	1084	1069	1068	1128
Total State (S)	Total State (S)	36401	30941	31693	30417	26727
29	A&N Islands	30	13	30	13	2
30	Chandigarh	68	65	86	112	60
31	Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu	26	8	10	4	4
32	Delhi	2155	1229	1215	1253	997
33	Jammu and Kashmir	256	296	320	223	243
34	Ladakh	NA	NA	NA	NA	2
35	Lakshadweep	5	0	2	0	3
36	Puducherry	6	7	0	10	8
Total UT(S)	Total UT(S)	2546	1618	1663	1615	1319
Total (All India)	Total (All India)	38947	32559	33356	32032	28046

2.5 SOCIAL PRESSURE

The competitive educational environmental, the constant inspection and comparison, and the high school expectation for behavior and academic performance are just a few of the factors that frequently cause or worsen these illness, the highly competitive educational environment, as well as the constant comparison and scrutiny that social media sites promotes. The psychological environment for these teenage girls is further complicated by the continual exposure to well edited depictions of life on the internet, which can cause feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem and elevated anxiety.

By acknowledging the complex interactions between societal influences, personal development, and mental development outcomes, the combination of these elements highlights the needs for a comprehensive understanding of the mental health issues experienced by teenage girls in India. To tackle these problems, all-encompassing approaches are needed, including family, educational institute and community- based supporting interventions.

2.6 STEREOTYPE

According to prevalent societal misconception that girls are typically less proficient in disciplines like Physics, Mathematics, etc. This perception is frequently the result of ingrained cultural narratives and ideas that depict these fields of study as mostly masculine. This mindset becomes especially apparent in secondary and higher secondary education. Despite the fact that girls have the intellectual capacity to succeed in these subjects, many of them suffer from low self-esteem, which has been shaped by societal expectations and the notion that “girls are not good at maths”. The consequences of this mentality is especially noticeable in secondary and upper school education. It is frequently noted that girls’ performance in science and maths is significantly worse than that of boys. When it comes to choosing their areas of study for higher education, many girls decide to avoid certain courses.

Addressing this problem and altering the perception of girls’ aptitude in these areas are imperative. In order to assist girls understand that these subjects are neither intrinsically challenging nor exclusive to boys, we must actively support and encourage them. By creating an atmosphere that encourages self-assurance and a passion for subjects like Physics and Mathematics, we can enable girls to excel in all subjects and fields.

2.7 DROPOUT RATES

Significant concerns for society at large are raised by the continually rising dropout rates among girls in secondary, higher secondary school as well as those in higher education. This problem calls for a comprehensive strategy that includes not only the educational system but also the active involvement of families and teachers. It goes beyond straight forward government regulations. Effectively addressing this issue requires families to create a loving and caring atmosphere that promotes mental, physical and cognitive growth in teenage girls. In order to foster such an atmosphere, teenage girls must be encouraged to pursue academic success.

Moreover, it’s crucial to acknowledge that merely enacting regulations and procedures is not enough to effect significant change. Rather, we need to concentrate on giving them the real opportunity and the flexibility to pursue their passion and skills. By giving them this kind of empowerment, we can help them reach their greatest potential, expand their knowledge, and eventually assist in creating the best future they deserve.

3. SCHEMES AND POLICIES FOR GIRLS

Policies and programs of government for the empowerment of women and girls making sure the next generation is qualified, represented and capable of taking up the responsibilities of growth is crucial to a nation’s future. The government is taking actions to empower, educate, and uplift girls. The following lists the policies and initiatives of the central and state governments aimed at enhancing the lives of Indian girls.

- Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme
 - Mahila Shakti Kendra (MSK)
 - Women Helpline Scheme
 - Working Women Hostel
 - UJJAWALA Scheme
 - SWADHAR Greh Scheme
 - Nari Shakti Puruskar
 - Mahila Police Volunteer
 - One Stop Centre Scheme
- (Source- <https://wcd.nic.in/schemes-listing/2405>)

4. SUGGESTIONS

- First and foremost , we must create a supportive environment for teenage girls to flourish.
- In order to empower them, they must be provided quality education and skills.
- Their safety and mental well-being should be given first priority both at home and in educational institutes.
- Periodic counseling to promote confidence and sense of self – worth.
- Paying more attention on girls from underprivileged backgrounds.

5. CONCLUSION

One of the most significant contributions we as a society can make to it’s future progress is addressing the problems teenage girls encounter that impact their mental, physical and cognitive development. In order to address the difficulties that adolescent girl face, parents, educators, the community and the government must come together. Teenage girls reflects the curiosity to learn and engage with the fast developing world , we just need to help them in believing themselves.

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