

Challenges in Girls' Education at Secondary Level of Education: A Case Study of Koderma District of Jharkhand

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Abstract:

Girls' education is vital to the formation of the future of not only individuals but also the socio-economic development of society. Despite national attempts to enhance access and equity in education, many areas still confront deep-rooted problems that prevent girls from completing their secondary studies. The present study is limited to Jharkhand and deals with the condition of girls education, patterns of dropout and hurdles faced by girls at secondary level of education. This research employs descriptive and analytical methodologies to delve into the issue. So we are looking at the 'what' – the basic patterns, for example – but also at the 'why' – the root reasons of educational issues. This study has used both type of data i.e. primary data (Information acquired directly from people of Koderma district) and secondary data (Official numbers from UDISE) to get the entire picture, information has been collected from 100 people in total including 50 secondary school teachers (To understand challenges from the school system's perspective.), 50 girls who dropped out (To hear their personal stories and experiences.), and the parents of the dropped-out students (To understand the household level factors and obstacles.) The study synthesizes these many perspectives and provides valuable insights on impediments to girls' education at the systemic (school level) and household level.

The study is based on three important research questions-status of girls' secondary level of education in Jharkhand (with special attention on Gross Enrolment Ratio), dropout rate of girls at secondary level and what are the specific problems that force girls to dropout from school. Initial observations indicate that enrolment has improved over the years but dropout rates are a worry due to a range of linked variables. These include economic difficulties, pressure for early marriage, poor school infrastructure, and insufficient knowledge among parents of the need of secondary education for girls. Teachers and parents often cite socio-cultural norms, which often serve as deterrents for continuation of schooling for adolescent girls.

Keywords: Girl's education, dropout, school dropout, secondary level of education, UDISE

1. Introduction

It is commonly accepted that education is a fundamental driver of societal progress, economic growth and individual empowerment. Girls' education is one of the many areas of life that is of great significance, as it has an impact not only on the personal life results but also the welfare of families and communities. Educated girls are more likely to join the work force, make informed health and social choices and contribute to national development. Therefore, in quite a few developing countries like India, one of the chief objectives of education policy has been to promote the education of females, especially at the secondary level of education. India has taken strides in enhancing access to education and narrowing gender gaps through efforts like the Right to Education Act, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, and Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan. These efforts have led to higher enrolment rates, especially at the primary level. But, the retention of girls in school is still a big challenge at the secondary education level. The move from elementary to high school tends to coincide with adolescence, a time when there are new family demands, financial responsibilities and

social pressures. This often leads to a sharp rise in females' dropout rates at this period. As per the UDISE data for 2023-2024, 9.6% of girls dropped out of secondary school.

Jharkhand provides a valuable and unique setting to explore difficulties in girls' secondary education. Most of the population in the region is rural and tribal, there is high incidence of poverty and there is lack of basic schooling facilities in many places. Though the enrollment rates have improved gradually over time, many ladies are not able to complete their basic education. Financial hardship is a major barrier; families struggling to pay for education and may favour the education of boys over girls. Long journeys to secondary schools and lack of transport are other impediments to regular attendance. Sociocultural factors play a vital role in girls' engagement in schooling in Jharkhand. Girls usually have to handle home tasks as is expected from their gender, leaving them with less time and leisure to study. Child marriage remains a serious issue, with many girls leaving school early. Also, the lack of parental awareness about the long-term benefits of secondary school discourages families from investing in their daughters' education. These assumptions keep girls away from higher education and perpetuate gender imbalance.

The issue of dropping out is complicated by the institutional difficulties of schools. Lack of skilled instructors, poor school infrastructure, lack of dedicated sanitary facilities and lack of gender sensitive support systems affect girls' retention. Faculty often have difficulty dealing with the personal, social, and financial problems students have that can lead to poor academic performance and, ultimately, dropping out of school. 2.4% Girls Dropout in Secondary Level of Education (UDISE report 2023-24).

In the present environment, the present research has been conducted to study the status of girls' secondary education in Jharkhand in terms of enrolment and dropout rates. An analytical and descriptive method comprising both primary and secondary data was used to seek information that would be useful to policy makers and educators to continue girls' education. The results are expected to lead concrete actions, strengthen institutional support and encourage community participation to ensure inclusive learning environments where every girl can access secondary school in a secure, confident and consistent manner across varied rural contexts.

2. Review of Literature:

Many earlier studies have identified the importance of girls' education and the challenges faced by them at the secondary level of education.

Lack of educational support, lack of resources, and lack of sanitation facilities are important constraints in girls' education, as per (Rebecca Calder, 2013). Apart from this, a study done by (Sahoo, 2016) found that girls' education is in poor condition at the secondary level. The factors responsible are parental attitudes, lack of infrastructure, lack of security, etc. Similarly, (Kakkar, 2020) highlighted that the lack of basic facilities, early marriage, an inadequate number of female teachers in rural areas, parents' priority for boys' education over girls' education, etc., are the main challenges faced by girls, causing them to discontinue their education. A study done by (S. M. Shahidul, 2015) shows that while a number of interconnected social, economic, educational, and cultural factors influence school dropout outcomes independent of the students' gender, some specific factors raise the dropout rate, especially for females. And in a study by (Rosemary, 2015) found that poverty, cultural preference in educating boys, teen pregnancy and early marriages are the main challenges with girls. Similarly, study by (Kumar A. C., 2022), found that early marriage and financial problems are the major issue faced by the girls in their educational period. Beside this, study done by (Acharya, 2024), found that early marriage, gender-based violence, and a lack of knowledge about the advantages of education are the main challenges faced by the girls in Kavre district of Nepal. Challenges to girls are not limited to only early marriage and poverty, as per the study by (Kumar B. , 2013), domestic work, traditional thinking etc. are also important hurdle in girls' education. Apart from this, main causes for the dropout by (Bibi, 2019) were found as work to earn some money for support of family (poverty), moving from one place to another, culture of the village, punishment, teachers' behaviour, long distance from house to school. A study done by (Francis Emson Dakwa, 2014) suggested that Cultural and familial practices should be addressed to afford girl children opportunities to attend school until they meaningfully complete their studies.

3. Objectives:

- a) To know the status of girls' education at the secondary level of education in Jharkhand. (gross enrolment ratio)
- b) To know the girls' dropout status at the secondary level of education in Jharkhand.
- c) To know the specific challenges faced by girls in the secondary level of education in Jharkhand.

4. Research questions:

- a) What is the status of girls' education at the secondary level of education in Jharkhand?
- b) What is the dropout rate of girls at the secondary level of education in Jharkhand?

c) What are the specific challenges faced by girls in secondary level of education in Jharkhand?

5. Research Methodology:

5.1 Type of research – This research is based on descriptive and analytical research.

5.2 Data type- This research is based on secondary data as well as primary data. Secondary data is obtained from UDISE, and primary data is collected from Koderma district of Jharkhand.

5.3 Sample size- A sample size of 100 is taken, comprising 50 teachers of secondary level of education and 50 girls' students who dropped out of school.

5.4 Unit of the study- Units of the study comprise teachers, dropped out girls' students of secondary level of education and their parents.

5.5 Limitations of the study-

Secondary data is purely obtained from UDISE, and primary data is collected from the Koderma district of Jharkhand.

6. Analysis of data:

6.1 Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of Girls at the Secondary Level of Education in India and Jharkhand

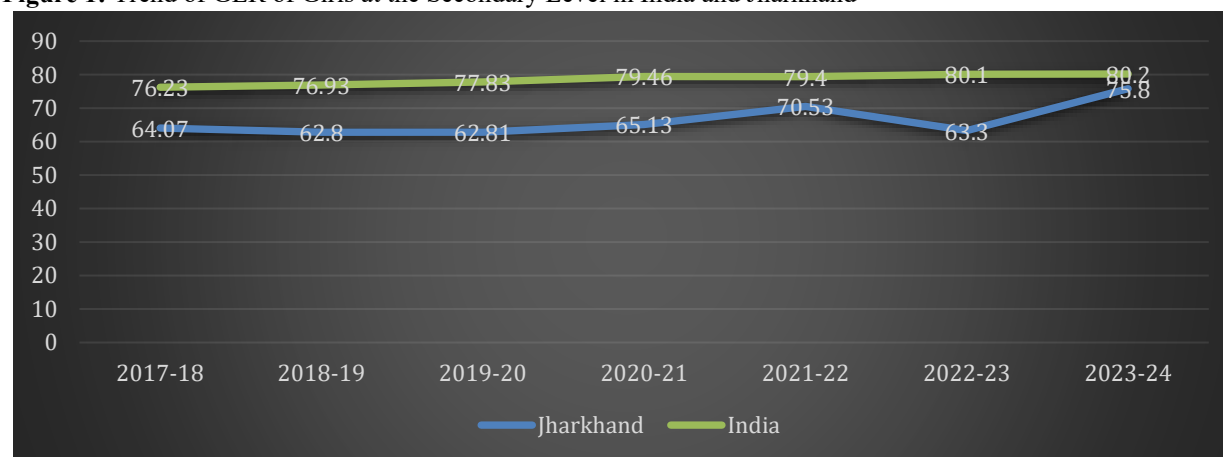
Table 1: Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of Girls at the Secondary Level of Education in India and Jharkhand (2017–18 to 2023–24

Year	Jharkhand	India
2017–18	64.07	76.23
2018–19	62.80	76.93
2019–20	62.81	77.83
2020–21	65.13	79.46
2021–22	70.53	79.40
2022–23	63.30	80.10
2023–24	75.80	80.20

Source: UDISE+ Report

Table 1: Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of Secondary school girls, Jharkhand & India, 2017-18 to 2023-24. The data reveals that during the research period the GER of females in Jharkhand generally showed increasing tendency but with occasional volatility. The GER in 2017–18 was 64.07, in 2023–2024 it was 75.80. But Jharkhand was lagging below the national average at that time. The national GER of females has been progressively rising from 76.23 in 2017-18 to 80.20 in 2023-24, indicating the continued growth of girls' secondary education participation at the national level. The gap between Jharkhand and the national average indicates the existence of educational disparities and socioeconomic hurdles in the state despite Jharkhand's progress resulting from government efforts and increasing awareness of girls' education.

Figure 1: Trend of GER of Girls at the Secondary Level in India and Jharkhand



Source: UDISE+ Report

6.2 Analysis of Dropout Rate of Girls at the Secondary Level of Education

Table 2: Dropout Rate of Girls at the Secondary Level of Education in India and Jharkhand (2017–18 to 2023–24)

Year	India	Jharkhand
2017–18	18.66	10.73

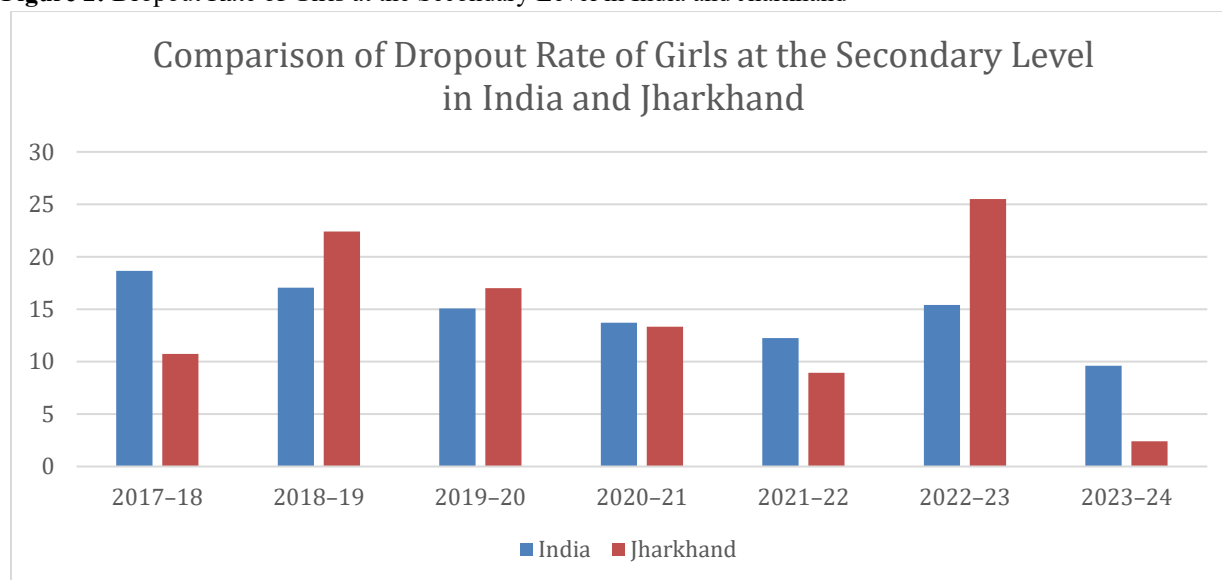
2018–19	17.05	22.41
2019–20	15.07	17.00
2020–21	13.71	13.33
2021–22	12.25	8.94
2022–23	15.40	25.50
2023–24	9.60	2.40

Source: UDISE report

This table shows the dropout rate of girls in secondary school for Jharkhand and India. Data shows that India's dropout rate has usually gone down over time, going from 18.66 per cent in 2017-18 to 9.60 per cent in 2023-24. This shows that there is an improvement in the retention and continuation of girls in secondary education.

Jharkhand dropout statistics showed a wide variation during the research" The dropout rate soared to 22.41 percent in 2018-19 and 25.50 percent in 2022-2023, indicating that girls' retention in school is not constant. But in 2023–2024, the dropout rate was dramatically lowered to 2.40 percent.

Figure 2: Dropout Rate of Girls at the Secondary Level in India and Jharkhand



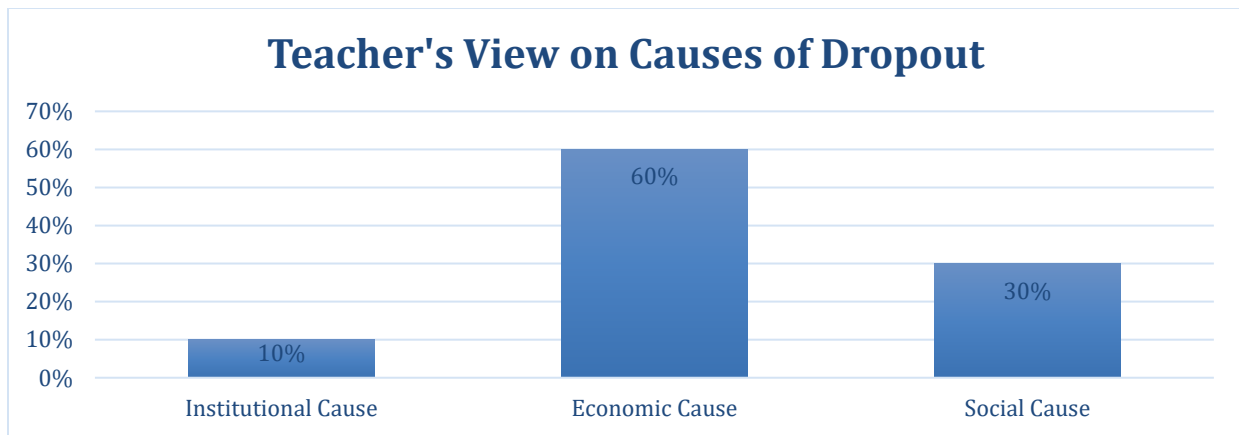
6.3 Analysis of Causes of Girls' School Dropout

The present study collected primary data from teachers, dropout girls, and parents in Koderma district of Jharkhand to identify the major causes responsible for girls discontinuing secondary education. The responses were classified into three major categories: institutional causes, economic causes, and social causes.

6.3.1 Teachers' Perception Regarding Causes of Dropout

Table 3: Teachers' response on Causes of Girls' Dropout

Causes of Dropout	Percentage
Institutional Causes	10%
Economic Causes	60%
Social Causes	30%

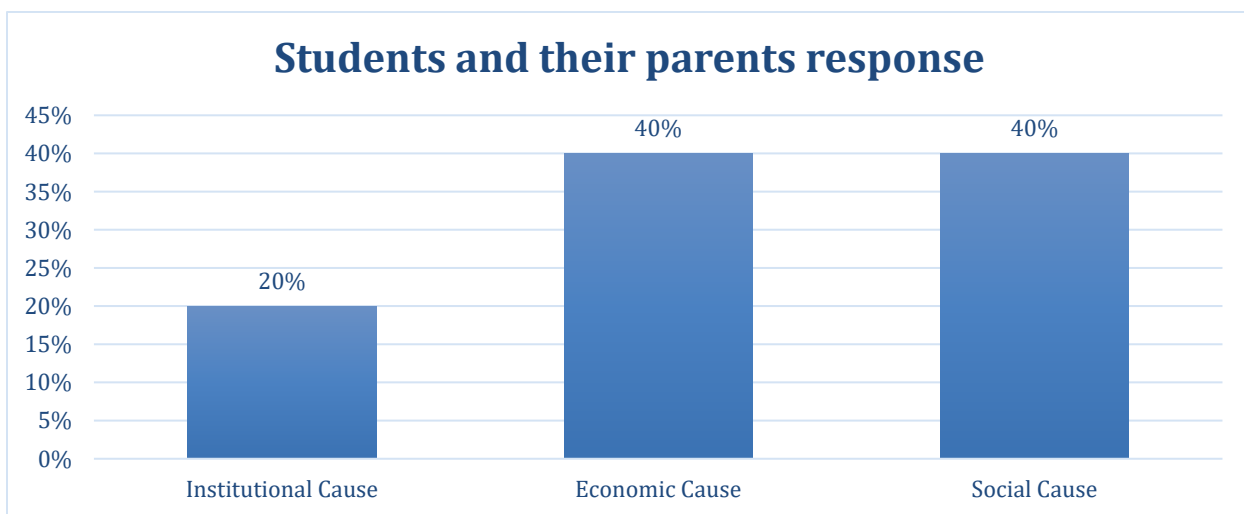


As seen in table 3, teachers attribute 60 per cent of secondary school dropout rates among girls to economic factors. Teachers cited poverty, the inability to afford education, and the financial prioritizing of boys' education as the most hurdles to females' education. Thirty percent of the comments are societal causes. Major sociocultural barriers to girls' education identified by educators include socio-cultural factors such as early marriage, domestic chores, gender discrimination and family beliefs. Institutional issues such as poor educational facilities, absence of female educators, lack of support networks and therapy, account for 10 per cent of respondents.

6.3.2 Students' and Parents' Perception Regarding Causes of Dropout

Table 4: Students' and Parents' Responses Regarding Causes of Girls' Dropout

Causes of Dropout	Percentage
Institutional Causes	20%
Economic Causes	40%
Social Causes	40%



Students and parents say that 40% of the reasons girls drop out are social and economic concerns, as seen in Table 4. The major barriers to continuing education were determined to be economic problems like poverty, high cost of education and lack of funds. Similarly, social variables such as early marriage, household chores, safety issues, and parents' lack of awareness about the importance of girls' education had a strong impact on school dropout. Institutional variables account for 20% of the responses. This means that poor school facilities, poor sanitation and poor educational support systems are also factors affecting female participation in secondary education.

6.4 Comparative Analysis of Stakeholders' Responses

Table 5: Comparative Analysis of Causes of Girls' Dropout

Causes	Teachers (%)	Students & Parents (%)
Institutional Causes	10	20

Economic Causes	60	40
Social Causes	30	40

Table 5 compares the statements of teachers, students and parents about reasons for girls leaving. On their part parents and kids considered social and economic reasons as equally essential whereas teachers felt economic issues as the primary reason for school dropout. The findings revealed that the complex problem of female school dropout was influenced by poverty, cultural practices, parental attitudes, inadequate infrastructure and institutional limitations. Hence, there is a need for initiatives involving schools, families, communities, and government agencies in a coordinated manner to reduce the dropout rate for girls.

The thematic analysis:

The thematic analysis of the comments collected from the parents, instructors and students brings out several recurring issues that affect the secondary education for girls in Jharkhand.

Theme 1: Poverty and Financial Constraints

The majority of respondents believe that financial problems is one of the greatest hurdles to the education of females. Low-income families often prioritize boys' education above girls' education. The cost of tuition, books, uniforms and transportation deters families from continuing their daughters' education.

Theme 2: Early marriage and domestic chores

Many females drop out of school due to early marriage and increased home responsibilities. Adolescent girls are often barred from educational opportunities by traditional societal norms, as they are expected to contribute to household work, childcare and family responsibilities.

Theme 3: Absence of Education Facilities

Respondents identified key institutional barriers affecting school attendance and retention as poor school infrastructure, shortage of female teachers, lack of transportation and absence of separate restrooms for girls.

Theme 4: Social Problems, Safety

Parents raised concerns about the security and safety of daughters walking long distances to school. Social instability and fear of harassment similarly affect the dropout rates of girls from secondary schools.

Theme 5: Girls' Education is Unknown

It was found that many parents especially in the rural areas had very little knowledge of the long-term benefits of secondary education for girls. Girls are still barred from higher education by traditional gender stereotypes.

7. Findings:

The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of girls at the secondary level of education has improved over time in Jharkhand owing to government measures and higher level of awareness among parents, this study reveals. But the increasing enrolment has not resulted in the completion of secondary level of school since many females drop out their studies before completion. The government has tried to intervene, but the dropout rate for girls in secondary school remains high. The most frequent causes of girls dropping out are poverty and lack of money. Families sometimes find it difficult to pay for school and tend to give priority to boys' education over girls', especially at secondary level.

The survey said early marriage, household chores and lack of parental engagement in girls' education have greatly disturbed girls' education. Also, the shortage of educated teachers, lack of counselling services and absence of adequate academic support systems contribute to low academic performance and disengagement leading to dropout.

8. Suggestions:

- **Financial Support for Girls' Education** Targeted financial assistance, such as scholarships, free uniforms, textbooks, and transportation facilities, should be provided to girls.
- **Improvement of School Infrastructure and Safety** Particularly in rural areas of Jharkhand, Schools should be equipped with adequate classrooms, bus facilities and secure school environments. Improved infrastructure can enhance attendance and ensure dignity and safety for adolescent girls.
- **Parents' Awareness** Awareness programmes should be conducted at the community level to educate parents about the long-term social and economic benefits of girls' education.
- **Measures to Prevent Early Marriage and Social Barriers** Strong coordination between schools, local administration, and child protection agencies is required to prevent early marriage and other social practices that interrupt girls' education. Schools should actively track at-risk students and provide counselling and support to girls during adolescence.

- **Enhanced Role of Teachers and School Support Systems** Teachers should be trained to identify academic and socio-emotional challenges faced by girls and provide timely guidance and mentoring. Establishing counselling services, remedial classes, and regular teacher–parent interaction can improve retention and encourage girls to complete secondary education.

9. Conclusion:

Girls' education at the secondary level is critical to social and economic development. This study demonstrates that many girls in Jharkhand do not complete secondary education because of issues like poverty, early marriage, household duties, safety concerns and poor school infrastructure. Despite government efforts, enrolment is low and dropout rates are high, especially in rural areas.

The results demonstrate that girls' education is significantly influenced by socio-economic conditions and cultural norms. There is a need to improve financial assistance, school infrastructure, safety, teacher involvement and community awareness to reduce dropouts. A collaborative effort between schools, families, communities and government agencies may assist ensure more girls stay on and finish secondary education, contributing to inclusive and sustainable development.

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