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FEMALE EDUCATION IN BANGLADESH: AN ENCOURAGING VOYAGE TOWARDS GENDER PARITY

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ABSTRACT

Female education is measured to be an essential component of empowering them. The accomplished Millennium Development Goals have highlighted the necessity for intensive determinations on gender parity in the education segment, and presently, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) also highlighted gender equivalence from an educational standpoint. The government of Bangladesh has reached a promise in international settings like a wide range of other states. Bangladesh has attained extraordinary development in education throughout the previous decade, particularly in terms of joining more children at junior levels and increasing the number of girls who have joined primary and secondary education. Despite numerous developments in the educational segment, women are far behind in terms of their male complements. This paper mentions three segments of obstacles: sociocultural obstacles, economic obstacles, and institutional obstacles. Ultimately, the researcher stipulated some ways to overcome the difficulties of female education.

KEYWORDS: education, female, secondary, equality, Bangladesh.

INTRODUCTION

Girls' Education has been predicted as a magic potion to sustainable societal advancement throughout the world. As a matter of fact, girls' education is reflected as a crucial component of giving them power. In the writings on gender and advancement, girls' education is acknowledged as the requirement of stable and reasonable socioeconomic progress (Sarker et al., 2014). The previous decades have seen noteworthy development in education all over the world. A majority of kids in developing countries, comprising those with underprivileged conditions, have, at a minimum, some education these days (Xu et al., 2019). Gender equality in the education sector has been a significant consideration for development strategy in contemporary years. It plays a significant role in the socio-economic advancement of every state, where government procedures and suitable actions are crucial for its sustainability. Diverse developing nations in the world, like Bangladesh, are attempting to attain gender equivalence in education with the intention of augmenting socio-economic progress (Talukder, 2011). Gender equality lies on, however, not the similar since attaining gender equality, or women being epitomised in equivalent figures as boys in education, though the latter proposes a 'first stage' extent of advancement concerning gender parity in education. Gender equivalence reveals 'formal'

parity in footings of entrance to, and involvement in, education. ‘Formal’ equivalence can also be identified as parity that is ‘based on the impression of the ‘similarity’ of males and females, where the male performer is considered to be the pattern (Subrahmanian, 2005). The education of both boys and girls is reflected as the key promoter of social capital and financial advancement. Females are intensely liable for the well-being, diet, and education of their kids. Therefore, females' education justifies more consideration because of its constructive consequences on advancing the lives of females themselves and their kids. The paper fundamentally emphasises the present prosperous situation of female students at the secondary level, accompanied by the obstacles on the way to getting an education.

Objectives of the Study

The key objective of this study is to investigate the condition of girls’ educational accomplishments in Bangladesh. Explicitly, the objectives of this study are:

- a) To assess the present status of females in educational attainment in Bangladesh.
- b) To find out the diversified obstacles of females in educational attainment;
- c) To suggest some way out to put an end to the obstacles.

METHODOLOGY

This study mostly consists of qualitative data and some quantitative data. Grounded on data collected from primary and secondary bases, this is an experimental study. Key informant interviews (KII) and semi-structured interviews have been the primary sources of the data. Thus, the data was collected from six randomly chosen schools in Cumilla, Bangladesh, to verify the relevance and feasibility of the study. Conversely, some local government leaders, public officials, school head teachers, associates of the school management committee, and secondary-level pupils have been nominated for both types of data by means of purposeful samples. Both quantitative and qualitative techniques have been applied to the data analysis.

Table 1: Criteria and Number of Respondents

Method of Data Collection	Criteria	Number of Respondents
Semi Structured Interview	Female students (Class IX & X), Guardians	40
Key Informant Interview (KII)	Local Representatives, Government Officials, School Head Teachers and School Managing Committee Members	20
Total	60	

The results from both qualitative and quantitative methods actually helped achieve the study's objective and revealed an image of the apparent level of “Female Education in Bangladesh.”

Significance of the Study

Bangladesh arose as a sovereign and independent state in 1971. It is one of the largest deltas on earth, with an entire area of 147,570 sq. km. The population of Bangladesh in 2017 was assessed at 162.7 million females, 81.3 million, and 81.4 million males, making it one of the most compactly populated states in the world. Therefore, women comprise half of the entire people. The exertion of the Bangladesh Government is to carry all kids into the education scheme, delivering all kinds of provisions, for example, providing free schoolbooks and instruction, acquiring resources, food, etc., to make primary education available. It is obligatory to acquire each kid in the primary education scheme to confirm the privileges of elementary education for each kid (BBS, 2019). The secondary education level is similarly doing well. However, some developments have been created in female education throughout the years, and the consequences are still disappointing. There are, but, some developments in females' education which have frequently happened because of numerous income-supporting programmes, for example, the financial provision of government for females, free primary level education, immense scholarship plans, and food for education agendas (Islam, 2013). Socio-economic and social issues, in addition to functional issues, are principally reliable for the developments in the education of females. Despite numerous developments in the educational segment, females are far after linked to their male complements. In these settings, the paper is very supportive of exposing the sources of female hindrances in accepting and education accompanied by resolving the matters after the hindrances.

Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study determined the condition of women's Education in Bangladesh. The secondary learners' circumstances have been measured in this respect through diverse participants connected to and well-recognized in this matter. Only one district has been recognised, though these are not completely expressive of Bangladesh. Reflecting the limitations of the study, diverse databases have been employed from the selected extents.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mujeri (2010) inspects Bangladesh's evidence in executing the right to be educated in footings of three extents of policy-making, for instance, the procedure of preparation, the matters, and observing of completion. In the setting of the human rights method in the matter of receiving education, the analysis assesses the whole evidence of development in the education segment, with importance placed on primary level education and literacy rate. The investigation focuses on the probable instructions and guidelines that the Republic of Bangladesh can use to improve the execution of the right and access to education in the state. The study proposes what more necessities to be made so as to rationalise the state's education procedure in keeping with human rights values. The study ends that the rights-centred method, having well-demarcated philosophies of involvement, responsibility, transparency, fairness,

impartiality, universality, and inseparability, can have a noteworthy assessment, adding to the education segment in Bangladesh.

Schurmann (2009) inspected the data exercising the societal segregation outline to elucidate the primary level elimination issues that have retained females from education, including stalking, poverty, and the importance of marriage and childbearing and discovered the level to which the stipend scheme has lessened such obstacles. Although the connection is problematic to determine, data propose that the stipend package has backed the increase in the admission of females in secondary schools. Enquiries persist as to the influence of the stipend package on deferring marriage, emancipation of females and augmenting employment prospects. A detailed evaluation of the effect is essential. The case study recommends that if the package design had absorbed the quality and matter of education and the larger fiscal and societal setting, more prospects might have been generated for the societal and financial involvement of females.

Sperandio (2007) defines the degree to which Bangladeshi females have acquired the benefit of the amplified prospects both to direct and administer educational institutes. The researcher utilised statistics from government and unofficial segment educational institutes and interviews with girls' private school possessors amassed throughout exploration in Bangladesh. Researchers converse the issues that might influence females bearing the benefit of emerging breaks, mostly in the official and private segments of education in Bangladesh. Accepting an analytical feminist viewpoint and a consciousness of sociological study connecting social disparities to educational management, the researchers accomplish this by endorsing approaches of confirming advancement to gender parity in educational management in the public and private sector education in Bangladesh.

Sarkar et al. (2014), in their study, intended to discover sociocultural obstructions to female education in the northern part of rural Bangladesh. Employing a qualitative study standard, all forty-five respondents, comprising five crucial informants, were interrogated individually. Results exposed that outdated gendered customs deter female educational accomplishment. It was discovered that females were less stressed in their families, whereas this was due to educational accomplishments due to male-controlled standards. It was also discovered that financial collapse, religious misapprehension, early marriage and gender unresponsive education schemes create boundaries in female education in rural extents of Bangladesh. A program concentrating on men's thoughts toward women is desired to be promoted. For confirming female education in borderline families, an active consciousness agenda is recommended.

Akhter & Hodgkinson (2011) discussed in this document that educated females, through their function as mothers, incidentally provide financial affluence by raising smaller but more fit kids and confirming they obtain advanced levels of education. This role must be acknowledged in the creation of human capital strategy. This analysis examines the unintended paybacks of educating females by examining how diverse altitudes of a mother's learning considerably affect kids' school attendance and nourishing position by exercising domestic-level statistics from Bangladesh. The outcomes obtained from the

econometric simulations display that the mother's learning definitely enhances kids' nourishment; however, both the father's and mother's learning discretely play a noteworthy function in their kids' education.

Huq & Rahman (2008) examined the admission and accomplishment ratio's position in the secondary level educational scheme of Bangladesh accompanied by inner proficiency rates connecting accomplishment rate, retaining or endurance ratio, dropout ratio and gender equality index. Several analyses of hypotheses of similarity were also shown. Amongst the results, greater girls' enrolment rate, lesser girls' accomplishment ratio, greater male accomplishment ratio, endurance proportion, and greater female dropout ratio were supposed to be accompanied by diverse places and kinds of school discrepancies. Some policy suggestions were recommended in response to certain imperfections in the girl's stipend package in Bangladesh.

Mahmud & Amin (2006) express that girls' capability to accomplish education is conceded by poverty difficulty and the tradition of early and child marriage custom in Bangladesh. Though most of the females register in school, dropout rates are excessive among youth. This paper uses a panel survey (2001 and 2003) of approximately 3,000 young females at the rural level in Bangladesh to forecast schooling consequences. The study investigates domestic and societal issues to elucidate institutional admission, dropout, and marriage. Females in low-income families are more expected to leave before going to secondary school. Females in richer families are more expected to drop out late, as of marriage, and possessing more siblings raises this probability.

Present Status and Wave of Change in Female Education at Secondary Level in Bangladesh

The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh identifies education as an essential right of each people (Momen & Ferdous, 2023). It necessitates the State to accept operative actions to confirm entrance to education as an aim in its right and as a resource to enlightening the excellence of life and social well-being. Constitutional Article number 17 declares that it is the liability of the Government to deliver harmonised, mass-concerned and widespread education and to encompass free essential primary education to each of the kids to such phase as might be resolute by the regulation (Mujeri, 2010). Education Aims and Objectives/Paragraph 7 of the National Education Policy 2010 states that the goal is to eradicate gender inequality and socioeconomic bias of any kind, regardless of race, region, or doctrine. It also aims to advance non-collectivism, sociability, global fraternity, fellow-sensitivity, and respect for human rights. In paragraph eight, it is stated that the goal is to create equal and unrestricted opportunities for education for all students based on their aptitudes and abilities, regardless of their social, cultural, or economic background. It also aims to establish a society free from prejudice and to question the practice of using education as a means of achieving personal goals. The strategy also recognized the need for gender issues to be covered in textbooks. In order to ensure that the training programs are more effective and representative, the Policy has pretty correctly focused on the need to reevaluate teachers' training (UNESCO, n.d.). In both the national and international arenas, a large number of people are prepared to support the program of gender parity in education. The accomplished Millennium Development Goals have stressed the necessity for concentrated

determinations on gender parity in the education segment, and presently, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) also highlighted gender equivalence from an educational viewpoint (Ferdous & Uddin, 2021). Beneath the 2030 Program for Sustainable Development, a different education supervising outline has been recognised, superseding the outline established on the basis of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The innovative scheme usages a much better-off agreed-of evidence bases than the one it swapped, forming it is net broader and directing to pair the determination of the SDG aims. Even if it can simply scrape the exterior of the essential education and all-time education queries connected to sustainable progress, the innovative agenda requires a key armament of resources so as to set principles and arrange suitable instruments, particularly in apprehending diverse features of insertion and fairness (UNESCO, 2018). The regime of Bangladesh has prepared promises in international environments like various other states. Concentrated programmatic exertions of both the regime and private societies have shaped an important consequence in the arena of female education in Bangladesh.

A great effort to address the poor rates of schoolgirls' enrollment, completion, and retention is the female stipend agenda. Notwithstanding the importance of education in the state's advancement approach, later independence in 1971, to cope with the difficulties of admission, parity, and excellence at all heights, the development of attaining these objectives has been sluggish. Bangladesh has attained significant development in education throughout the previous decade (Ferdous & Foyjul-Islam, 2019), particularly in the footings of enrolling more kids at lower stages and in the growth of the percentage of schoolgirls who joined in primary and secondary levels of education (World Bank, 2000). However, Khandker et al. (2003) reveal that the secondary school admission proportions in developing states are commonly lesser for females than males, particularly in rural extents. A female school stipend package was announced in the middle of the 1990s to sponsor female secondary level education in rural areas of Bangladesh. Though every part of rural Bangladesh was ultimately included in this package, it was not familiarised to all extents and with each class associate. This disparity in programming is the basis of the issue documentation under scrutiny. Operating two diverse datasets and school/community-level static consequences, it assessed the consequences of this stipend package on school admissions. The investigation centred on two cross-sectional domestic reviews, including a common collection of villages located where the female stipend package amplified female's secondary level education considerably, however, had no noticeable consequence on the educating of schoolboys. The study, which was accomplished with a yearly section of school-level statistics, also located a noteworthy consequence of the stipend package on female admission and condensed the admission of schoolboys in coeducational secondary-level schools.

On the other hand, Raynor et al. (2006) reveal that the Female Stipend Program (FSP) was generated in Bangladesh in 1982 to aid in intensifying the admission and retaining of females in secondary-level schools. Executed originally in six extents simply, the package was so popular that it was extensive in 1994. This paper, grounded on a desk analysis of the female stipend package for the Bangladesh organisation of the "Department for International Development" to assess the agenda's consequences,

is predominantly relevant for other developing states seeking to reinforce female education as an element of the attempt to encounter “education for all”. Sustainability is connected very thoroughly to poverty matters. A program, for example, the stipend program for females, is high-priced and virtually positively arises at the expenditure of other required development aims, such as poverty reduction. This is not essentially to express that the currency has been worthless; it appears to have been very beneficial in substantial parentages, and it is a noble thing to retain their girl child in school. However, there are signs that the essentials for economic sustenance might be deteriorating, as results propose that lots of parents will continue to direct their learners to school if there is no stipend. These outcomes demand such a big-scale stipend package into question and propose a closer pointing of those in actual fiscal necessity that might direct to a more cost-efficient and sustainable form of package.

Table 2: Year wise Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), Net Enrolment Rate (NER) and Cycle Dropout Rate in Secondary level 2008-2023

Sl. No.	Yearly Representation	Net Enrolment Rate (NER)		Gross Enrollment Rate (GER)		Dropout Rate (DR)	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1	2014	57.04	67.74	62.94	75.88	34.52	47.67
2	2015	62.16	71.85	67.75	77.84	33.72	45.92
3	2016	63.85	73.10	67.11	81.74	33.88	42.19
4	2017	63.59	74.38	68.60	81.90	33.43	41.52
5	2018	64.47	74.68	69.56	82.50	36.01	40.19
6	2019	60.11	74.47	67.83	83.36	35.52	37.67
7	2020	62.89	80.62	67.13	85.19	36.80	34.86
8	2021	63.29	79.09	66.40	83.15	32.50	40.29
9	2022	67.60	80.02	69.10	83.20	33.25	40.78
10	2023	64.37	80.62	66.55	83.70	30.46	34.87

Source: BBS, 2023.

Table 2 show year-wise data on Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), Net Enrolment Rate (NER), and Cycle Dropout Rate (DR) for male and female students at the secondary level from 2014 to 2023. In 2014,

male and female NERs were 57.04% and 67.74%, respectively, while GERs were 62.94% (male) and 75.88% (female). Dropout rates showed a downward trend, with male rates dropping from 34.52% in 2014 to 30.46% in 2023, and female rates decreasing from 47.67% to 34.87% in the same period (BBS, 2023). A tacit transformation is happening in the state's secondary-level education. Nevertheless, two to three decades before, the number of females in schools was not yet near to their male complements, mostly because of societal and monetary difficulties. In return, then, various parentages, particularly those in rural extents with inadequate or no income, measured female education as non-essential or yet a complete waste. A crucial cause after this transformation is authority and donor-supported stipends in two endeavours that intend to get more females to schools and avert their dropouts. Now, about 18 lakh students are receiving Tk 315 crore each year through two projects, namely, the Secondary Education Stipend Project (SESP) and the Secondary Education Sector Investment Programme (SESIP) (Habib & Alamgir, 2019).

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Obviously, education is an essential human right; however, for a progressing state like Bangladesh, consideration is required for women's education especially. It is a widespread practice in countryside families not to send their little girls to school because they think women are born to run families (Amin & Nuzhat, 2016). Disparity between males and females in Bangladesh continues from the very initiation of the culture, and the disparity is located in each segment of living. Most individuals trust that females do not justify actions that are equivalent to those of males. From the initial of the early years, daughters are mistreated in society.

Furthermore, the birth of a baby boy is appreciated instead of that of a girl child, which is measured as a misfortune. Girls are measured as the liability of society because of misconceptions, religious sentimentality, societal traditions, etc. Besides, they are measured as the re-productive instrument of society and stimulated to retain themselves active with domestic doings. They are being ordered by a male-controlled relationship scheme, which largely reveals their subservience and imbalanced position in society. On these occasions, females are required to trust men throughout their lives (Akter, 2018). Gender disparities arise from the inadequate power affairs concerning females and males, and henceforth, evaluations of gender parity are essential to apprehend the interpersonal magnitudes of gender disparity. Formal parity deals with statistical 'gaps' concerning consequences for women and men. Yet, for parity to be attained, we require a meaning that distinguishes females and menfolk turn from diverse situations of benefit and are forced into diverse techniques (Subrahmanian, 2005). The key outcomes are conversed here permitting to the purposes of this study. This segment is epitomised in three sections: sociocultural obstacles, economic obstacles and institutional obstacles (Table 3).

Table 3: Socio-Cultural, Economic and Institutional Obstacles.

Categories	Responses	Percentage
Socio-Cultural Obstacles	Priority of the male child	60%
	Parents lack of consciousness	45%
	Parents unwillingness	25%
	Parents illiteracy	35%
	Religious misinterpretation	45%
	Absence of suitable environment for female	65%
	Early Marriage	50%
	Security Problems	70%
	Eve teasing	55%
	Involvement in household chores	40%
Economic Obstacles	Financial crisis and unaffordability of cost	75%
	High indirect cost of education	45%
	Involvement in earning to support family	60%
Institutional Obstacles	Teachers discriminatory attitude and non-cooperation	45%
	Lack of separate toilet	40%
	Lack of common room	45%
	Distant location of school from house	35%
	Unavailability of school	20%

Source: Field Survey, 2021.

N. B.: Multiple answers recorded.

The data collection was conducted on the existing obstacles that are responsible for the low levels of women's education. Socio-cultural, economic, and institutional matters were found to be obstacles after the study. Table 3 shows those problems at a glance, and the scenario of obstacles is as follows:

a) The Socio-Cultural Obstacles:

After the study, it was seen that almost the majority of the obstacles were related to socio-cultural matters. Giving priority to male children, lack of consciousness of parents about their children's education, parents' unwillingness to support their children's education, giving early marriage & such other problems hamper an acquit level to the female children to attain and to make longer their education. However, the data reveals that, among all the obstacles, "Security" problems and "absence of a suitable environment" are the most harmful obstacles. 70% of the total respondents spoke about insecurity, and 65% expressed the absence of a suitable environment. According to them, because of feeling insecure about their girl's physical and mental protection in the institutions and social surroundings, they do not want to make longer their children's education. Besides, the parent's attitude is also found to be a very harmful obstacle which causes giving priority to male children and neglecting females as unproductive for the family, giving early marriage because of thinking a Burden for them, and failing to realise the welfare of education for their children etc. are most detrimentally existed. The percentage of those obstacles is revealed in the above table.

b) Economic Obstacles:

According to 75% of females, being unaffordable or having a financial crisis in the family is the main obstacle. Besides, 60% of the respondents expressed that they have to be involved in any activity like garment work or others to run the family financially; therefore, they cannot make the study longer; 45% expressed that because of the huge indirect cost of education, they cannot continue their education process.

c) Institutional Obstacles:

There is no suitable environment for women in educational institutions, which is found in many cases of those areas. Various existing institutional obstacles discourage females from going there.

As per the 45% of respondent's view teacher's discriminatory behaviour is most liable things in this way, then lack of separate toilette is another problem according to 40% of respondents, having no common rooms also a problem which was expressed by 45% of total, being distance location of educational institutions from home and lack of availability of those institutions exist which play a role as obstacles according to a considerable number of respondents. All those things exist as harmful barriers or obstacles in the institutions which hamper female participation in education.

Way to Move Forward

To recover the condition of girls' secondary education it needs to do the following things:

- Functioning and organisational improvement should include the recipients of women's education in the management of school events.

- Strategies must be directed to underprivileged children, particularly girls, for better admission. Educational spending must be cut, and the poor colonist managerial form must be abolished.
- The secondary schools could develop plans for developing public consciousness to confirm female secondary-level education within their domains.
- Local government organisations accompanied by local government agents could step forward through the educational institutes accessible in the particular zones.
- Marriage should be blocked by societal consciousness developing, organising meetings and other societal efforts or events.
- The societal consciousness programmes must be strengthened, aiming at eve teasing in the local society.
- The religious front-runners of each religious conviction can be included in diverse consciousness agendas for raising consciousness in the local area, particularly in rural areas.
- The authority of the secondary school must take the lead to confirm the common room services, distinct sanitation amenities, and indoor games and sports services for the schoolgirls, so that they can practice those services when needed.
- Gender inequity, whether perpetrated by teachers or students, must not be permissible in schools. The school authority might take steps to eliminate this kind of inequality by developing consciousness amongst teachers and students.
- Encouraging awareness of parents first concerning the female education movement through print and electronic channels can be more effective.
- Confirming girls' safety in educational institutes is a serious goal. The government must take greater action to review and recommence prevailing policies. Otherwise, the objective of attaining the preferred objectives of female education may be abstract.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

There is no complementary to 'Education for All' in the state's socio-economic and administrative progress. There is an absolute link between the literacy effort and financial and societal progress, as well as between atmosphere and representative ethos. This is why the contemporary Regime has rendered the utmost importance to education. The contemporary regime has received literacy determination as a societal drive. Creation of new institutes, increasing physical structure, adjusting the education scheme, executing teachers' training series, and circulating free textbooks are all necessary to commence.

Furthermore, monitoring events must be marched up; pioneering actions must be appropriated to create a school that is a pleasing place to confirm students, sustain attendance, and stop dropouts. This will confirm a rise in the number of school-going kids and progress in the excellence of education. Forthcoming citizenries will come to be trustworthy, sacrificing, careful and loyal. The country will be educated and enlightened, and the state will be financially and technically strong. Culture, standards and representative ethos will increase (Hasina, 1997). For a variety of social, economic, and cultural

reasons, a sizable portion of Bangladesh's female population faces educational disadvantages. Due to their subordinate status within the group and heavy involvement in propagation duties, women have fewer opportunities to pursue an education and develop the knowledge and skills necessary to make meaningful contributions to the advancement of society, the economy, culture, and politics. A lack of education reduces their chances of developing the awareness, skills, and self-assurance necessary to take courageous actions to uphold human rights and prevent violence against women and girls (VAW/G). It is necessary to change the way women now play a passive role in the advancement of the state. In order to liberate women and enable them to make rational contributions to the advancement of society, it is crucial to implement appropriate, need-based, and structured educational interventions for them that include net enrollment, holding, and accomplishment.

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