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Barriers to Girls' School Enrollment: A Survey-Based Analysis

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Abstract
Economic deprivation is the hurdle to girls' enrolment that respondents named most often: 85.2% endorsed that parents cannot bear the cost of educating their daughters (M=4.25, SD=0.90). This study inspects how far household, community and institutional factors affect girls' enrolment in schools. The data was gathered from 393 respondents (190 males and 203 females), through a semi-structured questionnaire includes demographic details and eleven statement rated on a five-point Likert scale. We report frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations, and also ran one-sample t-tests against the scale midpoint, chi-square goodness-of-fit tests and Cohen's d. Each statement scored significantly above the neutral value of 3 (M range=3.77 to 4.25, all $p < .001$), and the pooled mean across statements was 3.94 (SD=1.04). Parents' inability to provide study materials and clothing came second (M=4.18, SD=0.94). Parental illiteracy, early marriage and social taboos, and the educational backwardness of the community formed a middle group (M=3.95 to 3.97). The lack of women teachers and the need for daughters' help with domestic work was rated lowest, though still clearly positive. Financial constraint is therefore seen as the main obstacle, with cultural expectations and limited access operating alongside it. Policy should give attention on decreasing the costs bear by families, then on making schools accessible and on raising the awareness in the community.

Keywords: Early marriage, Girls' education, Household poverty, Likert survey, parental attitudes, School enrolment

1.Introduction

In India female literacy rose from 8.86% in 1951 to 65.46% in 2011, yet it still lagged behind the male literacy rate of 82.14% (Census of India). The growth has been uneven, and gaps remain across regions, between rural-urban areas, and between different groups. Nuh district of Haryana, formerly part of Mewat, had a female literacy rate of only 36.60% in 2011, against 65.94% for the state as a whole (Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India, 2013). National schemes such as the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act of 2009 (Government of India, 2009), Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and Beti Bachao Beti Padhao have aimed to increase girls' participation, yet enrolment still depends on other factors also. The main factors are the educational cost, parent's perception about their daughter's education, and the family requirement for the girl's time and labour. Previous research in India has identified many interrelated barriers to girls' education.

Nambissan (1995) revealed poverty, caste-based discrimination, patriarchal social norms and uneven access to schooling as the main hurdles, and Dinesha (2017) added the dowry system, parental apathy towards daughter's education, gender-biased roles and poor infrastructure.

Studies from Nuh and nearby districts support these findings. Kumar et., al. (2017) described a male-dominated, social structure, a severe shortage of female educators, and long travel distances that make parents anxious about sending girls to school. Rana (2016) documented early marriage as a significant barrier in Mewat, and Sharma and Kumar (2020) found that parental illiteracy passes educational disadvantage from one generation to the next. Saha (2023) stressed the combined effect of financial instability, low awareness among women, poor transport and a wide gap between policy and practice. Bhardwaj (2019) reported that in Mewat boys' and girls' enrolment is similar at the primary level, but girls' participation falls sharply at higher levels.

Census data and district-level metric show substantial differences but disclose less about which barrier is consider most important by community members. It is important to know which barriers carry most weight in people's own assessments, to utilize limited resources effectively. This study addresses that gap by examining survey responses to questionnaire about the factors behind the low female enrolment.

2. Review of Literature

In India female literacy grow unevenly, as Hoque et., al. (2019) found in the Malda district of West Bengal. They observed that literacy there stayed below the state average, with gender gaps especially wide in rural and marginalized communities, and they attributed to weak infrastructure and a struggling economy. Kumar and Nabi Dar (2023) showed that rural-urban literacy imbalances in Haryana are not uniform and vary considerably between districts and regions. Asadullah and Yeasmin (2022) cautioned that building new schools is not enough unless broader social and economic progress accompanies it.

Within Haryana, Nuh stands out. Devi and Bishnoi (2023) identified it as the only district where both overall and female literacy fell below 60% in 2011. Kavita et., al. (2019) recorded a gap of more than 40 percentage points between Gurgaon (77.98%) and Mewat (36.60%) and point out the social and economic differences. Saini (2015) examined literacy, enrolment, school infrastructure and teacher availability, and placed Mewat among the districts with relatively low female literacy and participation. Yadav (2028) likewise described Mewat as the most educationally backward district in the state.

Arora (2020) showed that private schools offer better infrastructure and more modern teaching, but their high fees lead low-income households, which are short of money, to give preference to boys' education. Chowdhury (2021) observed that private schools in rural areas can meet parents' demand and support gender parity, under strict government watch and household tuition affordability. Sharma and Tripathi (2016) reported that widespread teacher shortages and poor facilities keep parents away from government elementary schools. Sangwan (2022) found the same trend, that more students moving to private schools in Haryana and public schools left mostly with children from poorer families.

Existing research shows where girls fall behind and why, but it seldom asks respondents to compare these obstacles directly. The present survey addresses this by assessing eleven specific barriers that the literature has identified.

3. Objectives

The study set out to:

1. describe the participants by gender, age, educational level and monthly household income;
2. measure the extent of agreement with economic, domestic, attitudinal, community and institutional reasons for low-enrolment of girls;

3. test whether agreement with each statement differs significantly from a neutral position; and
4. rank the perceived barriers by strength and identify the theme that dominates respondents' views.

4.Research Questions

. RQ 1. Which obstacle do participants agree with most, and which least?
. RQ 2. Is agreement with each barrier significantly different from neutrality?
. RQ 3. Do economic barriers carry weight than social and institutional ones?

5. Methodology

5.1 Research Design

This research used a cross- sectional descriptive survey. A structured questionnaire was given to each participant once, and the data were analysed quantitively. This design suits the aim of the study, which was to measure how far respondents endorse a set of stated barriers, not to follow changes in their views over time.

The survey was conducted in Nuh district, Haryana, and included 393 respondents; 190 males (48.4%) and 203 females (51.6%). Nuh covers 1,507 square kilometres and had a population of 1.09 million in 2011, of whom 52.45% were male and 47.54% female (Census 2011). A convenience sampling method was used to choose sample. Along with demographic details (age, educational level and monthly household income), participants gave their ratings of the statements; Table 1 shows how these variables were distributed.

5.2 Research Instrument

The questionnaire gathered demographic details and presented eleven statements giving reasons for the low enrolment of girls. The statements fell into four groups: economic constraints (Questions 1,2 and 4), domestic labour (Questions 3 and 5), attitudes of parents and the community (Questions 6,7,8 and 11), and the location and staffing of schools (Questions 9 and 10). Respondents rated each statement on a five-point Likert scale (Likert, 1932), where 1 meant Strongly Disagree, 2 Disagree, 3 Neutral, 4 Agree and 5 Strongly Agree. A mean above 3 therefore indicates that, on balance, respondents see the factor as contributing to low enrolment.

5.3 Data Analysis

This chapter include the data analysis based on the data collected through questionnaire. First, demographic details are described through frequencies and percentages. After that mean and sample standard deviation are calculated for eleven statements, that are barriers to girls' non-enrolment. Third, a one-sample t-test (df=392) checked whether each mean differed from the neutral midpoint of 3. We added Cohen's d, the mean difference divided by the standard deviation, and read it using Cohen's (1988) conventions, where values near 0.2, 0.5 and 0.8 are small, medium and large. Fourth, a chi-square goodness-of-fit test with four degrees of freedom checked whether responses were spread evenly across the five options. A significance level of 0.5 was used throughout. The statements were then grouped into four themes (economic, household labour, attitudinal and access-related), and the pooled responses within each theme were summarized to compare their weight. We did not run a multiple linear regression of enrolment on the eleven factors, because the data consisted only of aggregated response counts and had no respondent level enrolment information; Section 8 returns to this limitation.

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6.Results

6.1 Profile of Respondents

As Table 1 shows, the sample was nearly evenly split by gender and mostly young, with most participants having at least a senior secondary education. Respondents aged 10 to 20 made up 61.6% of the sample, 74.6% had senior secondary education or higher level, and only 5.1% reported no formal schooling. Household incomes were concentrated in the lower hands, with 70% of participants reporting monthly earnings below ₹40,000.

Table 1: *Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 393)*

Variable	Category	f	%
Gender	Male	190	48.4
	Female	203	51.6
Age (years)	10–20	242	61.6
	21–30	90	22.9
	31–40	26	6.6
	41–50	25	6.4
	Above 50	10	2.5
Educational level	No schooling	20	5.1
	Primary	9	2.3
	Middle	11	2.8
	Secondary	60	15.3
	Senior secondary	163	41.5
	Graduate and above	130	33.1
Monthly household income	₹10,000–20,000	130	33.1
	₹20,000–40,000	145	36.9
	₹40,000–60,000	60	15.3
	Above ₹60,000	58	14.8

6.2 Descriptive Statistics for the Statements

All eleven statements had scores above the neutral value of 3, ranging from 3.77 to 4.25 (Table 2). Across all 4,323 responses the mean was 3.94 (SD=1.04), and 74.4% of responses were “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”. Statement 1, that parents cannot meet the costs of girls’ education, had the highest mean at 4.25 (SD=0.90). Statement 4, that parents cannot provide study materials and clothing, followed at 4.18 (SD=0.94). The lowest means were for the need for a daughter’s help with domestic duties (Statement 3; M=3.77, SD=1.12) and the scarcity of female teachers (Statement 10; M=3.77, SD=1.03).

Table 2: *Descriptive Statistics and One-Sample t-Tests Against the Neutral Value of 3 (N = 393)*

No.	Statement	M	SD	% Agree	t (392)	d
1	Parents unable to meet expenditure on girls' education	4.25	0.90	85.2	27.43	1.38
2	Parents want wards to supplement family income	3.87	1.07	72.0	16.03	0.81
3	Parents need daughter's help in domestic	3.77	1.12	71.0	13.52	0.68

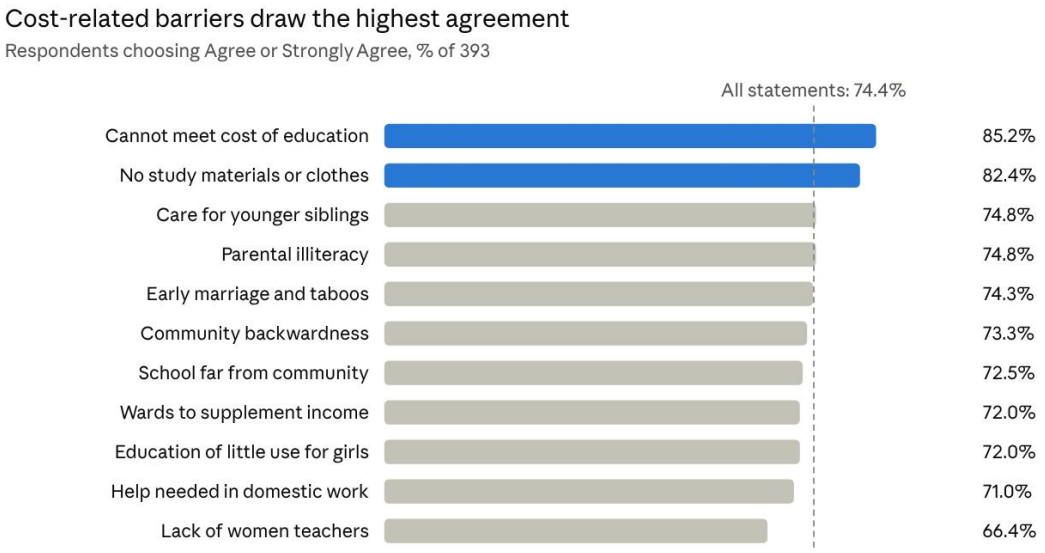
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No.	Statement	M	SD	% Agree	t (392)	d
	work					
4	Parents cannot provide study materials and clothes	4.18	0.94	82.4	24.87	1.25
5	Parents need daughters to care for younger siblings	3.92	1.07	74.8	17.01	0.86
6	Parents feel education is of little use for girls	3.88	1.05	72.0	16.54	0.83
7	Parental illiteracy is a negative factor	3.97	1.03	74.8	18.55	0.94
8	Educational backwardness of the community	3.95	1.02	73.3	18.51	0.93
9	Schools located far from the community	3.87	1.05	72.5	16.34	0.82
10	Lack of women teachers discourages admission	3.77	1.03	66.4	14.88	0.75
11	Early marriage and social taboos	3.97	1.00	74.3	19.28	0.97

Note. % Agree = Agree plus Strongly Agree. All t-tests were significant at $p < .001$.

Figure 1

Percentage of Respondents Agreeing with Each Statement



Survey data of 11 statements, (N = 393); percentages computed from reported response counts

6.3 Test of Significance

Every mean differed significantly from the neutral value, with all p-value below .001. The t-statistics ranged from 13.52 for statement 3 to 27.43 for Statement 1. Out of eleven statements, the Cohen's d was above 0.80 for nine statements, a large effect by conventional standards. Statements 3 and 10, had effect sizes of 0.68 and 0.75, which are medium to large. The chi-square goodness-of-fit tests rejected the hypothesis of equal use of the five response categories for every statement, wit X^2 (4) ranging from 176.5 (Statement 10) to 348.9 (Statement 1), all $p < .001$. Responses were thus concentrated in the Agree and Strongly Agree options and not spread evenly across the scale.

6.4 Comparison Across Themes

When the statements are grouped by theme (Table 3), economic barriers come first, with the highest pooled mean (M=4.10, SD=0.99) and the largest share of agreement at 79.9%. Attitudinal and social factors follow (M=3.94), then household labour (M=3.84) and access-related factors (M=3.82). The economic theme thus leads the other three by between 0.16 and 0.28 scale points, and it does so in all three comparisons.

Table 3: *Pooled Responses by Theme*

Theme	Statements	Responses	M	SD	% Agree
Economic	1, 2, 4	1,179	4.10	0.99	79.9
Attitudinal and social	6, 7, 8, 11	1,572	3.94	1.03	73.6
Household labour	3, 5	786	3.84	1.10	72.9
Access and institutional	9, 10	786	3.82	1.04	69.5

Note. Means and standard deviations were computed over pooled responses and are descriptive only; the same respondents contribute to every statement.

7. Discussion

Participants saw the financial burden of schooling as the main obstacle to girls' enrolment. Statements 1 (M=4.25) and 4 (M=4.18) were the only items that more than eighty percent of participants agreed with, and the economic theme was well ahead of all the others. Previous studies from Haryana also support that money is the key barrier in educational access. Saha (2023) identified financial strain as a crucial obstacle to female education, and Arora (2020) observed that parents with limited resources often put boys' schooling ahead of girls'. Bano (2017) likewise documented that poorer households are more likely to enroll sons than daughters. Kumari (2922) linked regional prosperity to literacy rates and noted that the industrialized parts of Haryana are far ahead of Mewat. The sample composition of our study is consistent with this, since 70% of respondents lived in households earning less than ₹ 40,000 a month, although the survey materials and clothing show that costs beyond tuition also matter a great deal. Saha and Datta (2020) noted that poor households are often shut out of private education by its cost, and Arora (2020) pointed to fees as the main obstacle to private schooling and called for state support for disadvantaged children. Our findings suggest that the small, recurring costs of attending school every day are also a serious barrier for many families. This bears on the wider question of whether private schools can improve access for girls in districts such as Nuh, because affordability ultimately decides who benefits.

Parental illiteracy (M=3.97), early marriage and social taboos (M=3.97), and the educational backwardness of the community (M=3.95) received almost identical scores, which suggests that respondents see them as parts of one socio- cultural setting and not as separate problems. Jangra and Kaushik (2016) linked low literacy in Nuh and neighbouring tehsils to broader social conservatism, and Rana (2016) identified early marriage as a direct obstacle to educational attainment. Sharma and Kumar (2020) showed how illiteracy passes from parents to children across generations. Grewal (2015) argued that deeply held beliefs favouring boys' education lead many households to treat girls' schooling as an afterthought. In our sample, 72.0% agreed that parents see little values in educating girls, while only 12.5% disagreed, so a minority of respondents do not share this view.

Agreement on household labour was somewhat lower, with a mean of 3.92 for sibling care and 3.77 for domestic duties. The data suggest that respondents give more weight to the cost of schooling than to the need for girls' time. This could mean that labour demands matter mainly when households are under severe financial pressure, but our data cannot confirm this, so it remains a hypothesis for further study.

Access- related factors received the least support of the groups examined. The scarcity of female teachers had the lowest agreement (66.4%) and the largest share of neutral responses (22.4%), which points to some uncertainty about its importance, even though earlier studies, including Kumar et., al. (2017) and Saha (2023), identify the lack of women teachers in rural areas as a major barrier. Distance to school, by contrast, was seen as important by 72.5% of participants (M=3.87). Kumar et., al. (2017), agreed in their study that long distance and lack of transport facilities make parents anxious about enrolling daughters, and with Sangwan's (2022) account of how school consolidation in Haryana has reduced access for girls whose mobility is restricted. These findings may help explain a trend already documented in the district. Bhardwaj (2019) observed that girls' enrolment in Mewat falls as the level of education rises, and Wanti (2019) reported that only 4.5% of girls in Nuh had reached upper secondary education. It is reasonable to suppose that the main barriers our respondents identified, financial constraints and early marriage, matter more as schooling continues. However, the survey did not collect enrolment data by grade, so this cannot be confirmed and remains a hypothesis, not an established result.
Two caveats apply to these findings. First, apart from the two statements, the mean fall within a narrow range of 3.77 to 3.97, so the relative order of the middle statements should not be given too mush weight. Second, the ratings capture what respondents believe the causes to be, and are not evidence of what actually drives low enrolment.
The findings point to three priorities; Measures that reduce direct and indirect costs, such as free textbooks, uniforms and scholarships, match most closely what respondents said mattered. To mitigate the cultural resistance parent's awareness drives are needed. Enhancing school accessibility, safe transit options and gender inclusive staffing would help with access, even though these ranked lower among respondents' priorities.

8. Limitations, Implications and Conclusion

8.1 Limitations

This study has some limitations also. First, its cross-sectional design subject to self-report bias. It indicates what participants view about the obstacles but cannot validate a strong association between any barrier and low enrolment. Second, the analysis used only combined survey responses, so unable to conduct multiple linear regression, to analyse the effect of the eleven factors on girl's enrolment, nor compare responses by gender, age, education or income. Third, the composite reliability of the eleven-statement scale, usually measured with Cronbach's alpha, cannot be computed from frequency distributions alone and should be reported once the raw data are available. Fourth, the theme-level analysis treats pooled responses as independent even though the same respondents answered every question, so these results are descriptive only and do not support inference.

8.2 Suggestions for Further Analysis

In future the available enrolment data for each participant or household, such as the number of girls enrolled within the school-age group, multiple linear regression would be the suitable approach for measuring the effect of individual variables. The eleven statements or the construct scores developed for them would be the independent variable and the enrolment would be the dependent. Variable. Variance inflation factors should be checked first to detect multicollinearity, since statements on related topics are likely to be strongly correlated. Independent samples t-tests and one-way ANOVA could then compare ratings across gender, age groups, education levels and income bands, to see whether the agreement on cost holds across the whole sample.

8.3 Conclusion

The present study examined the barriers to girls' enrolment through eleven statements. All participants agreed that all eleven factors affect girls' enrolment, but most of them consider financial constraints as the main obstacle. The largest share of respondents (85.2%) agreed on parents' inability to fulfill the educational expenses, followed closely by the struggle to provide study materials and clothing (82.4%). Social attitudes, domestic labour and access to schools formed a closely grouped second tier. Therefore, policies should give priorities in reducing the financial burden of keeping a girl in school, with community awareness campaigns and better access to schools.

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