

# Need For Human Rights Education For Female Children: A Case Study In Tuticorin District, Tamil Nadu

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## INTRODUCTION

Human Rights Education is an indispensable part of the *Right To Education* and has of late gained larger recognition as a Human Right itself. The knowledge of the rights and freedoms, of oneself as much as of the others, is considered as a fundamental tool to guarantee the respect of all rights for each and every person. The key stone of human rights education is that the education should not only aim at producing trained professional workers, but also inculcating in them a sense of higher purpose. Human rights education aims at providing people and students with the abilities to accomplish and produce societal changes. Education is widely acknowledged and seen as a way to empower people to improve their quality of life and increase their capacity to participate in the decision making process, leading to desired transformation in the social, cultural and economic policies.

Education is a fundamental human right as well as a catalyst for economic growth and human development. Women's education is extremely important intrinsically, as it is their human right and required for the flourishing of many of their capacities. It is, however, noticed that most programmes for education of girls and women in India have reinforced Gender roles, specially motherhood in curriculum as well as impact evaluation. The past three decades have witnessed a steadily increasing awareness of the need to empower women through measures to increase social, economic and political equity, and broader access to fundamental human rights, improvements in nutrition, basic health and education. Empowerment of women is closely related to formal and informal sources of education. Many innovative efforts were accelerated after the NPE. In UP, a renewal process of correcting gender stereotyping was initiated in 1998 looking at textbooks and training, besides infrastructure and community mobilization. There is marked improvement in girl's enrollment and steady decline in dropout rates. The present study has been conducted with an objective to have in-depth insight into the problem of female school dropouts in primary to higher secondary classes in Tuticorin District of Tamil Nadu.

## AIMS OF EDUCATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

The principal aims of education for human rights are:

- ✿ To strengthen respect for human rights and fundamental freedom;
- ✿ To develop fully, the human personality and the sense of its dignity;
- ✿ To develop attitudes and behavior to promote respect for the rights of others;
- ✿ To ensure genuine gender equality and equal opportunities for women in all spheres;
- ✿ To promote understanding and tolerance among diverse national, ethnic, religious, linguistic and other groups;
- ✿ To empower people to participate actively in the life of a free society; and
- ✿ To promote democracy, development, social justice, communal harmony, solidarity and friendship among nations.

## PURPOSE OF EDUCATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Education for human rights should be aimed at full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms and for that purpose, have regards to the following:

- ✿ All human rights are universal, indivisible, interrelated and interdependent, and all are essential for the full development of human personality;
- ✿ While regional and national particularities are to be borne in mind, it is the duty of States, regardless of their political, civil, economic and cultural systems, to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- ✿ Universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms contribute to stability, security and well-being, necessary for socio-economic development;

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- ✿ Human rights, democracy, peace and development are interdependent and mutually reinforcing;
- ✿ Rights of women and girl-child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights;
- ✿ Human rights education should be aimed at the full and equal participation of women in political, civil, economic, social and cultural life. Awareness towards prevention of gender based -violence, sexual harassment and exploitation should be a component of education programmes;
- ✿ Promotion and protection of the rights of the child is a priority and requires dissemination of knowledge of relevant standards. Special efforts are needed to eradicate child labour, child prostitution, and child pornography;
- ✿ Special attention should be paid to the rights of persons belonging to various vulnerable groups - national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, indigenous people, refugees and internally displaced persons, migrant workers, persons with HIV/AIDS and other health problems, disabled, and elderly;
- ✿ Special attention should be also given to the mobilization of the public opinion against major threats and challenges to human rights: terrorism, organized crime, corruption, trafficking of human beings for exploitative purposes, drug trafficking, violence etc.

**Table 1 : Percentage Of Dropouts During The Year 2005-2006**

| Dropout Rate  |                    | ALL  |       |       | SC   |       |       | ST    |       |       |
|---------------|--------------------|------|-------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
|               |                    | Boys | Girls | Total | Boys | Girls | Total | Boys  | Girls | Total |
| Primary       | Tuticorin District | 3.64 | 3.00  | 3.33  | 2.90 | 1.99  | 2.45  | 0.00  | 4.26  | 2.50  |
|               | Total Tamil Nadu   | 3.85 | 3.77  | 3.81  | 3.73 | 3.74  | 3.73  | 10.66 | 11.37 | 11.14 |
| Upper Primary | Tuticorin District | 8.80 | 6.55  | 7.70  | 9.73 | 8.55  | 9.16  | 5.41  | 9.38  | 7.25  |
|               | Total Tamil Nadu   | 8.05 | 7.07  | 7.58  | 8.99 | 8.38  | 8.69  | 15.02 | 10.95 | 13.53 |

Source: Cohort Study

The State-level Primary Dropout Rate (DR) of all Tamil Nadu was at 3.81% and Tuticorin District was at 3.33%. The Dropout Rate (DR) at the Upper Primary level of the State was at 7.58% and Tuticorin District was at 7.70%.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The Objectives of the present study are:

- ✿ To study the socio-economic conditions of population brought under female dropout in Tuticorin District, Tamil Nadu.
- ✿ To study the reasons for dropping out from the school.
- ✿ To make recommendations for empowering human rights education and reducing the chances of high dropout.

## METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Tuticorin District of Tamil Nadu. Both primary and secondary data are used for the study. The data relates to the month of December 2009. A sample of 360 female respondents in the age group of 6 to 18 had been identified and selected for the study. The reasons for dropouts were judged by interviewing the dropout girls and their parents and teachers through home and school visits. Girls and their parents and teachers were interviewed using a self-structured schedule that comprised of information regarding school and home atmosphere and background information. Opinions of parents and teachers about causes behind dropouts of girls were also sought. The data has been presented in the form of tables for easy understanding and analysis. Commensurate with the set objectives, various analytical tools were employed for the analysis and interpretation of the data.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Human Rights equity makes education fair. If every child could make appropriate academic growth each year, human rights equity could be achieved and can reflect into equality of simple group averages across various demographic subgroups. The following Table 2 gives a picture of the educational background of the samples. The present study found that one third of the parents were illiterates and 20% had been educated upto primary level. The study also revealed that in 360 families, both the parents were illiterates, only 2 of the fathers were graduates and 1 of the mother

**Table 2 : Education Of The Parents**

| Level of Education | Father     | Percentage | Mother     | Percentage |
|--------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Illiterate         | 193        | 53.6       | 135        | 37.5       |
| Primary            | 72         | 20.0       | 79         | 21.9       |
| Middle             | 64         | 17.8       | 103        | 28.6       |
| Secondary          | 27         | 7.5        | 40         | 11.1       |
| Higher Secondary   | 4          | 1.1        | 2          | 0.5        |
| Graduation         | 2          | 0.5        | 1          | 0.3        |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>360</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>360</b> | <b>100</b> |

Source: Primary Data

(t=0.0091; d.f=10, P=0.9929; standard error of difference = 36.750)

was a graduate. As most of the parents had low educational status, they did not have an aptitude to encourage their children to go for higher education, which was statistically not significant (P=0.9929).

**Table 3 : Type of Family**

| Type of Family | Families   | Percentage |
|----------------|------------|------------|
| Joint          | 283        | 78.6       |
| Nuclear        | 77         | 21.4       |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>360</b> | <b>100</b> |

Source: Primary Data

Mean: 180; Standard deviation: 145.664; Variance: 21218

The Table 3 reveals that majority of the respondents (79%) belonged to joint families and standard deviation was about 146.

**Table 4 : Occupations Of Parents**

| Occupation of Parents | Families   | Percentage |
|-----------------------|------------|------------|
| Farmers               | 81         | 22.5       |
| Laborers              | 194        | 53.9       |
| Fishermen             | 67         | 18.6       |
| Business              | 13         | 3.6        |
| Miscellaneous         | 5          | 1.4        |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>360</b> | <b>100</b> |

Source: Primary Data

Mean: 72; Standard deviation: 75.76279; Variance: 5740

When Table 4 was analyzed, it was found that 54% of their parents were primarily laborers and 23% were farmers and standard deviation was about 76.

**Table 5 : Distance From Home To School (In Kms)**

| Distance from Home to School (in kms) | No. of Families | Percentage |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|------------|
| 0 -0.5                                | 41              | 11.4       |
| 0.5 - 1.0                             | 162             | 45.0       |
| 1.0 - 1.5                             | 22              | 6.1        |
| 1.5 - 2.0                             | 135             | 37.5       |
| <b>Total</b>                          | <b>360</b>      | <b>100</b> |

Source: Primary Data

Mean: 90; Standard deviation: 68.88154; Variance: 4744.66667

Table 5 reveals that 56 per cent had primary, middle and higher secondary schools up to one kilometer distance, and

the rest 44 per cent had facilities upto two kilometers. Efforts have been made to provide primary schooling facilities within easy walking distance from the home of every child and standard deviation was about 69.

**Table 6 : Female Dropouts**

| Dropout Stage    | No. of families | Percentage |
|------------------|-----------------|------------|
| Primary          | 274             | 76.1       |
| Middle           | 51              | 14.2       |
| Secondary        | 22              | 6.1        |
| Higher Secondary | 13              | 3.6        |
| <b>Total</b>     | <b>360</b>      | <b>100</b> |

Source: Primary Data

Mean: 90; Standard deviation: 123.73358; Variance: 15310

From Table 6, it can be inferred that the dropouts at the primary level were 76 percent and 14 percent dropped out at middle level, 6 percent at secondary level and 4 percent at higher secondary level. The dropout rate was high at primary level and standard deviation was about 124.

**Table 7 : Causes Of Dropouts - School Factors**

| School Factors                      | No. of Teachers | Percentage | No of Students | Percentage |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|------------|----------------|------------|
| Absence of female teachers          | 24              | 6.7        | 54             | 15.0       |
| Discriminating behavior of teachers | 12              | 3.3        | 49             | 13.6       |
| Unsuitable school curriculum        | 17              | 4.7        | 23             | 6.4        |
| Rude behavior of teachers           | 26              | 7.2        | 62             | 17.2       |
| Insecure school environment         | 14              | 3.9        | 8              | 2.2        |
| Poor primary education              | 8               | 2.2        | 90             | 25.0       |
| Shortage of teachers                | 259             | 71.9       | 74             | 20.6       |
| <b>Total</b>                        | <b>360</b>      | <b>100</b> | <b>360</b>     | <b>100</b> |

Source: Primary Data

Spearman's rank correlation coefficient: 0.142857; P-value: 0.726400.

The Spearman's rank correlation was 0.142857 in the context of teacher-student opinion. This being non-significant indicates that regarding the academic reasons for dropout as expressed by teachers and the students did differ from each other. The Spearman's correlation coefficient of 0.142857 is weak to explain any agreement between the opinion of the teachers and the students for economic causes of dropout. As a matter of fact, in all factors where blame falls on teachers for the dropout, they were hesitant to accept it.

**Table 8 : Causes Of Dropouts - Personal Factors**

| Personal Factors         | No. of Teachers | Percentage | No. of Students | Percentage |
|--------------------------|-----------------|------------|-----------------|------------|
| Lack of child's interest | 96              | 26.7       | 85              | 23.6       |
| Low grade of child       | 31              | 8.6        | 26              | 7.2        |
| Teasing by classmates    | 62              | 17.2       | 13              | 3.6        |
| Bad health of students   | 171             | 47.5       | 236             | 65.6       |
| <b>Total</b>             | <b>360</b>      | <b>100</b> | <b>360</b>      | <b>100</b> |

Source: Primary Data

Spearman's rank correlation coefficient: 0.800000; P-value: 0.164600.

The Table 8 shows the personal reasons for girls' dropout. It shows that as many as 66% students left the schools due to their bad health and was 48% in teachers' point of view. Relatively, a larger correlation coefficient was observed among the opinions of the teachers and the students. Statistically, this coefficient is non-significant for small number of categories.

**Table 9 : Causes Of Dropouts- Societal And Economic Factors**

| Societal and economic Factors             | No of Teachers | Percentage | No of Students | Percentage |
|-------------------------------------------|----------------|------------|----------------|------------|
| Financial strain                          | 94             | 26.1       | 76             | 21.1       |
| Trend of not educating girls in community | 40             | 11.1       | 19             | 5.3        |
| System of early marriages                 | 35             | 9.7        | 23             | 6.4        |
| Support from child's earning              | 40             | 11.1       | 28             | 7.8        |
| Bad company                               | 17             | 4.7        | 31             | 8.6        |
| Children coming from far away             | 27             | 7.5        | 76             | 21.1       |
| Training in Household work                | 94             | 26.1       | 89             | 24.7       |
| Problem of adjustment                     | 13             | 3.6        | 18             | 5.0        |
| <b>Total</b>                              | <b>360</b>     | <b>100</b> | <b>360</b>     | <b>100</b> |

Source: Primary Data

Spearman's rank correlation coefficient: 0.547619; P-value: 0.147000.

The Table 9 shows economic and social causes for girls' early dropout from school. As far as social and economic causes are concerned, 26% of the teachers indicated that there existed financial strain and training in household work of the students. Also, 21% considered Children coming from far away as the key factor for dropout. The Spearman's correlation coefficient of 0.547619 is a medium to explain any agreement between the opinion of the teachers and the students for economic and social causes of dropout. Among the other factors related to societal and economic causes of dropout, majority of the teachers agreed that trend of not educating girls and support from child's earning (11%), system of early marriages (10%), bad Company (5%) and problem of adjustment (4%) were responsible for the dropout of their girls.

**Table 10 : Causes Of Dropouts -Familial Factors**

| Familial Factors                | No of Teachers | Percentage | No of Students | Percentage |
|---------------------------------|----------------|------------|----------------|------------|
| Conflicts at home               | 39             | 10.8       | 30             | 8.3        |
| Involvement in Household chores | 81             | 22.5       | 72             | 20.1       |
| Prolonged illness in family     | 14             | 3.9        | 8              | 2.2        |
| Uneducated parents              | 39             | 10.8       | 106            | 29.4       |
| Parent- teacher relationship    | 187            | 51.9       | 144            | 40.0       |
| <b>Total</b>                    | <b>360</b>     | <b>100</b> | <b>360</b>     | <b>100</b> |

Source: Primary Data

Spearman's rank correlation coefficient: 0.825000; P-value: 0.097000

According to the Table 10, the major factor in the family causes for dropout was the parent- teacher relationship, because a large majority of the teachers and students i.e. 52% and 40%, respectively counted this as a main factor. The lack of the communication between the parents and the teachers leads to loss of confidence among students. Thus, they fail to seek guidance from their parents to keep up their schooling in a befitting manner. Relatively a larger correlation coefficient was observed among the opinions of the teachers and the students. Statistically, this coefficient is non-significant for small number of categories.

**Table 11 : Monthly Incomes Of The Family And Female Dropouts**

| Monthly income in ₹ | No. of Families | Percentage |
|---------------------|-----------------|------------|
| ₹ 500-700           | 234             | 65.0       |
| ₹ 700-900           | 23              | 6.4        |
| ₹ 900-1100          | 49              | 13.6       |
| ₹ 1100-1300         | 40              | 11.1       |
| ₹ 1300-1500         | 14              | 3.9        |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>360</b>      | <b>100</b> |

Source: Primary Data  
Mean: 72; Standard deviation: 91.59967; Variance: 8390.5

The Table 11 reveals that 77 percent of families get ₹1000/- as income, which is very low. Income of ₹ 1500/- and above compels girls to drop out of school and work to supplement the family income. The average monthly income of the family is ₹ 765/-. So if the income of the families increases, there are chances for girls to continue their studies and standard deviation was about 91.59967.

## IMPACT OF MID-DAY MEAL SCHEME ON SCHOOL GOING CHILDREN IN TAMIL NADU

In the primary classes, the Net Enrolment Rate (NER) increased to 99.29% and in the upper primary classes; the NER increased to 98.25%. The interventions of nutritious meal reduced the dropout rate at primary level to 1.91% as against the dropout rate of 3.81% during 2005-06. The dropout rate at the upper primary level declined to 4.08% as against 7.58% as recorded in Tamil Nadu.

**Table 12 : Number Of Children Who Participated In The Mid Day Meals In Tamil Nadu (2008-09)**

| Category     | Primary and upper Primary 1-8'th Std |                  |
|--------------|--------------------------------------|------------------|
|              | Boys                                 | Girls            |
| SC           | 754658                               | 668955           |
| ST           | 39364                                | 33385            |
| OBC          | 1527972                              | 13,61,136        |
| Minorities   | 196156                               | 1,68,565         |
| Others       | 149000                               | 1,22,839         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>2667150</b>                       | <b>23,54,880</b> |

Source: MDM Programme Annual Work Plan and Budget 2009-10  
(t=0.6856; d.f=6, P=0.5186; standard error of difference = 784547.934)

**Table 13 : Total No. of Beneficiaries In Mid-day Meal Scheme In Tamil Nadu (2009-10)**

|                     |                  |
|---------------------|------------------|
| Classes 1 to 5 Std  | 31,61,496        |
| Classes 6 to 8 Std  | 18,60,534        |
| Classes 9 to 10 Std | 7,11,579         |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>57,33,609</b> |

Source: MDM Programme Annual Work Plan and Budget 2009-10  
Mean: 2866804.5; Standard deviation: 2157389.50249; Variance: 4654329465471

The average number of the beneficiaries in Mid-Day Meal Scheme in Tamil Nadu was about 2866804.5 members and standard deviation was about 2157389.50249. The effect of Mid-Day Meal Scheme reduced the dropout rate at primary level in Tamil Nadu and the difference is statistically not significant (P=0.5186).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✿ Legislation for free and compulsory primary, middle and higher secondary education.
- ✿ Provision of schooling facilities within easy walking distance from the homes of children.
- ✿ Creation of necessary infrastructure of facilities in schools.
- ✿ Incentive schemes for students.
- ✿ Introduction of '*no detention policy*' at the primary stage.
- ✿ Improvement of curricula and learning materials.
- ✿ Experimental projects on the ungraded school system.
- ✿ Programmes for enhancing the competence of teachers.
- ✿ Programmes for non-formal and part-time education.
- ✿ Experimental/operational projects for developing alternative approaches to non-formal and part-time education of out-of-school children.

## CONCLUSION

The survey indicates that prevailing intra-household discrimination in educational matters for girls and women persists. Therefore, a strong message needs to be conveyed in support of education and economic empowerment as equally important for both the sexes. Education emerges as the single most important parameter empowering women. Education builds the way for economic empowerment and uplifts the status of women. Reducing the gender gap in secondary and higher education should be the focus area of Tuticorin District. The effect of Mid-Day Meal Scheme is that the drop-out rate among primary school children in Tuticorin District, Tamil Nadu decreased.

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### (Contd. From Page 11)

<sup>10</sup>Singapore's Mr Buffett', *Australian Financial Review*, May 24, 2002 (extracted from <http://www.singapore-window.org>). EVA™ is a more reflective indicator of a firm's long-term performance. Reviewing the performance of Enron, Global Crossing and WorldCom, MacAvoy and Millstein (2003) showed how share price could misjudge the company true performance while EVA™ did not. For example, it was noted that all three corporations recorded negative EVA™ as early as 1999 despite share price exceeding US\$60 in 1999.

<sup>11</sup>A tripartite framework involving the employers, trade union and the government has been designed to manage industrial relations in Singapore. The National Wage Council (NWC) was initiated by the tripartite in 1972 to formulate wage guidelines, including the use of monthly variable component in line with the flexible wage system pursued by the NWC since 1986. Under the flexible wage system, year-end bonuses that are tied to company's profit are paid, allowing the salary increment to reduce to 2-3% as compared to 8-9% in the past. NWC guidelines are not mandatory, but they were widely implemented by firms in Singapore, both in the public and private sector. See Chew and Chew (2001) for a historical account of the wage system in Singapore.