

# A Study on 'Education of First Generation Girl Students in Senior Intermediate Colleges in Telangana'- Summary of Findings - M V Foundation

## Introduction

Millions of girls in contemporary India grapple with multiple challenges of existing practices of patriarchy, gender discrimination, violence and abuse, impoverishment and hunger and state deficit and yet reach up to the second year of Intermediate college education. This study focuses on such girls studying in Senior Intermediate classes (Second year of Junior College) in the state of Telangana. The focus of the study is on the challenges the girls overcame and the institutional and non-institutional support that enabled them reach up to the final year of Intermediate class.

The study is based on both quantitative and qualitative analysis. The quantitative component of the study was conducted in 20 colleges selected through a random sampling method, of which 11 were government junior colleges, 5 were private colleges and 4 were residential colleges. These colleges were selected from a total of 2,141 colleges (673 government colleges and 1,468 private colleges) in the state of Telangana. 6 government colleges and 111 Private Colleges in the city of Hyderabad and urban Ranga Reddy district were not included as the data could distort the trends since they were urbanized and also influenced entirely by commercialization of education. The schedule of questionnaires was administered to 568 girls - whose parents are illiterates or have some level of literacy - on the following:

- i. Individual level (e.g. past academic success and personal agency)
- ii. Family level (e.g. socio-economic background, familial support for education)
- iii. School experiences (e.g. support structures, discrimination, abuse and violence)
- iv. Infrastructural factors (e.g. distance to school, availability of transport; facilities within the school)

The study also conducted focused group discussions (FGD) with the girls as well as the female lecturers in these institutions.

## Some Issues

- i. 67.1% of girls stated that education was not free even in government schools and that they had to pay school fees at primary school level, 63.2% said they paid fees at upper primary school level, 65.7% said they paid fees at high school level and 74.2% said they paid fees at senior Intermediate college level.
- ii. At the Intermediate level, 62.7% of girls stated that they earned wages through paid work, while 66.3% of them stated that they were involved in agriculture work, 46.2% of them worked at least twice a week, and 11.6% worked every other day.
- iii. 30.2% stated that they ate before going to college 1 to 3 days a week and 25.1% stated that they ate before going to college 4-5 days in a week. 44.6% stated that they do not eat due to lack of time and 33.3% stated that they carry a lunch box.
- iv. 54.8% of girls said that ill health was a cause for irregular attendance at the Intermediate college level.
- v. 20% of girls stated that the issue of marriage was raised when they were 15 years, and 68.8% stated that it was raised between 16 and 17 years.



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- vi. 70.8% of girls stated that their parents would choose their spouse and they would agree. 21.2% of girls stated that they would choose their spouse and parents would give their consent to the same, and 3.7% stated that their parents may not give their consent.
- vii. Several girls stated how their households were full of domestic violence meted out by fathers who have surrendered themselves to alcoholism. While the family is sustained by the hard work of the mother.
- viii. 19.6% of girls stated having experienced unwelcome incidences of a sexual nature, and 37.5% of girls stated that actual or attempted sexual assaults were at a maximum at the primary school level. Eve-teasing and harassment was at a maximum at the upper primary school level, while stalking was at the maximum at Intermediate college level.
- ix. 34.1% of girls stated that they faced sexual abuse of one kind or another at least once a week at the senior Intermediate college level.
- x. Between 10 - 12% of the girls stated that there was gender discrimination by school teachers most of the time at the levels of primary to senior Intermediate college education.
- xi. 98.1% of the girls stated that they were teased or mocked by the teachers on the basis of their caste at least once or twice in a month at the senior Intermediate college level.
- xii. 75.8% of girls stated that they are expected to take permission before going to the market or the shop, and only 5.8% stated that they rarely have to take permission. 63.3% stated that they have to get permission before buying personal items, and only 1.5% stated that they did not need any permission.

## Sexual awareness

- i. 70.5% of girls stated that they received information on sex education from their female teachers, 32.8% from books and magazines, 30.7% from female friends, 24.8% from anganwadi workers, and 24.6% from their mothers.
- ii. 90.5% stated that they did not know whether a woman can get pregnant on the very first time she had an intercourse, and 5.8% stated that it was true.
- iii. 63.2% stated that they did not know, whether pregnancy can occur after kissing or hugging and 34.1% thought it was false.
- iv. 63.7% of girls stated a girl was ruined if she had sex before marriage and 36.3% stated that it might sometimes ruin them.
- v. 59.3% of girls stated that it was all right for the husband to hit his wife, and 40.7% did not approve of the husband beating his wife.

## Government and Institutional Support

- i. Only 25.6% of girls stated that they got school uniforms at the primary school level, and only 34.8% at the upper primary school level.
- ii. 12.2% received scholarships through the government at Intermediate level.
- iii. 57.4% of girls at the senior Intermediate level borrowed textbooks from the library.
- iv. 21.6% stated that there were no toilets in Intermediate level, and 27.2% stated that even if there were toilets, they were unusable, unclean and had no privacy in senior Intermediate colleges.
- v. 80% of them stated there was drinking water, and more than 90% said they had a blackboard.
- vi. 16.6% stayed in the hostels while studying at the Intermediate college level. Most girls stated that they could do better in studies if they had hostel facilities at Intermediate level.
- vii. 50% of girls stated that male teachers did not make any derogatory gestures, stalk, or exercise unwelcome touch.
- viii. 73.5% of girls stated that teachers were very supportive and helpful in the pursuit of education goals.

### Manjula says

*"I am a good student but I am disturbed by the circumstances in my house. We are surviving on my mother's earnings. We join our mother and go to work on weekends, during peak harvesting season and on vacations to support our education. My father is an alcoholic and gets very violent with my mother and constantly harasses her. When my sister and I resist him, we are also subject to his abuse and beatings. Unable to witness this, I have threatened my father several times and told him to stop this violence, or all of us will walk out on him and he will lose any standing and respect from the village. I live in hope that my father will change. I need to shift to a hostel as I cannot take this anymore."*

## Non-Institutional Support

- i. 82.7% of girls got information regarding colleges to apply to from friends and senior students, 39.6% from siblings, 27.3% from teachers and 22.9% from parents.
- ii. 74.5% of girls stated that their parents paid their fees at senior Intermediate college level, while 6.6% of the girls earned and paid their own fees.
- iii. 94.4% of girls stated that the family meets all other the expenditure towards their education
- iv. 10.5% of girls paid for their education through their own earnings.
- v. 68.4% of the girls stated that the parents had to make economic sacrifices for their education, and 62.8% of the girls stated that family had to take loans to support their education.
- vi. 73.7% of girls mentioned that their mothers were extremely supportive of their education. 68.8 % of girls stated that their fathers were extremely supportive of them pursuing education. 56.7 % of girls mentioned that their brothers were very supportive, 50.1% of girls stated that their sisters were extremely supportive whilst, 46.8% of girls stated that their grandparents were very supportive.

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## Recommendations for Girls Education in Junior Colleges

- i. Greater investments in government colleges and their physical infrastructure such as classrooms, furniture, libraries, labs, drinking water and toilets, as well as faculty .
- ii. Provision of free education and education material, waiver of school/college and examination fees.
- iii. Provision of free bus passes and transportation facilities.
- iv. Provision of hostel facilities and scholarships for girls from SC, ST, minorities and EWS categories.
- v. Educating boys about the fatal consequences of their actions on girls and their lives due to their eve teasing, stalking and other forms of sexual abuse; sensitizing them to look at girls as equals. Boys will also have to be given exposure to healthier relationships with girls.
- vi. Building awareness on Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, (POCSO) in all government functionaries and gram panchayats.
- vii. Inclusion of issues relating to gender equality in the school curriculum from primary school onwards in all classes.
- viii. Girls are to be given information and knowledge on reproductive and sexual healthcare. Sustained campaign in all colleges, hostels and educational institutions has to be carried out for girls' education.
- ix. Provision of shelter and counseling for those girls under risk of violence.

*“Despite many difficulties, my parents have been investing in our education. They have taken huge loans and the money lenders prowl around our house. At the moment, they have no money to take care of us yet they insist that my 2 younger sisters, my brother and I must study. We have not dropped out of school at any time even though we never had money for food, rent, education material, etc. I feel sad that my friends dropped out of school and even college and became victims of early marriage due to eve-teasing and stalking by boys. These challenges could be true of so many families, but I’m sure that nobody would have encouraged studies as much as my parents. Girls must study and take society forward just one step to pave the way for one thousand steps.”*

*(Kavita)*

## In Conclusion

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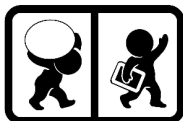
*It is universal knowledge that most girls enter into a hostile environment from the time of their conception. In the face of this the girls in this study through their everyday acts of defiance showed determination to extricate themselves from the quagmire of all forms of discrimination. With their firm conviction that education alone would help them break away from injustice, they have exercised agency to reconstruct their lives. Their voices must be heard. What is needed is an enabling societal environment and wholehearted governmental support for their education, against patriarchy and gender discrimination to end violence against them and give them dignity.*

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*“I work hard to earn for my college education and my mother, too, works without respite and makes enormous sacrifices as she says, ‘I do not want my children to live a life like me’. Yet, unmindful of our conditions of living and our endeavor to study, the government has not even given our college a building of its own; we have no library, science lab, toilets, water or desks. We pay all kinds of fees- admission fees, annual fees, and examination fees - and have to spend on textbooks, notebooks, stationery, and decent clothes. How I wish we had uniforms. Once or twice, we were given sanitary napkins, but then it stopped. I travel a long distance, about 30 kms, every day to college and cannot afford a bus pass. I feel that if girls are to feel secure and have a good atmosphere to study, boys will have to be punished for teasing girls.”(Ravali)*