



International Seminar on September 16th, 2024
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Empowering Girls Through Education: The Impact of Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya in Haryana

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Abstract

Education is a powerful tool for empowerment, especially for girls from marginalized communities. The Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) scheme was introduced to address gender disparities in education by providing free, residential schooling for girls from disadvantaged backgrounds. In Haryana, where socio-cultural barriers and financial constraints often hinder girls' education, KGBVs play a crucial role in enhancing literacy rates, reducing dropout rates, and promoting self-reliance among young girls. This study examines the impact of KGBVs in Haryana, focusing on their role in improving educational accessibility, academic performance, and life skills development. It explores the challenges faced by these institutions, including infrastructure limitations, teacher shortages, and societal resistance, while also highlighting their success in fostering gender equality through education. The research is based on qualitative analysis, drawing insights from government reports, policy reviews, and case studies. The findings indicate that while KGBVs have significantly contributed to girls' empowerment, further efforts are required to enhance their efficiency and outreach. Strengthening policies, improving infrastructure, and raising community awareness are essential to maximizing the potential of these institutions. This study underscores the importance of sustained educational interventions in fostering gender-inclusive development and shaping a more equitable society.

Introduction

Education is a fundamental tool for empowerment, and for girls, it plays a crucial role in breaking socio-economic barriers and promoting gender equality. In India, several initiatives have been undertaken to improve girls' education, with Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) being one of the most impactful schemes. Launched in 2004 under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), KGBVs aim to provide quality education to girls from marginalized and disadvantaged communities, especially in rural areas where access to formal education remains a challenge. In Haryana, a state known for its gender disparities in literacy and socio-cultural constraints on girls' education, KGBVs have emerged as a beacon of hope. These residential schools offer free education, accommodation, and essential facilities, ensuring that girls, particularly from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, and minority communities, receive an opportunity to learn and grow in a supportive environment.

The impact of KGBVs in Haryana extends beyond academic learning, fostering self-confidence, life skills, and socio-economic independence among young girls. By addressing challenges such as early dropouts, child marriage, and financial constraints, KGBVs contribute to the overall development of girls, encouraging them to pursue higher education and career aspirations. The structured curriculum, along with vocational training, enhances their employability, equipping them with skills to contribute to their families and communities. Despite these significant strides, challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, limited awareness, and cultural resistance continue to hinder the full potential of these institutions. This study explores the role of Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya in transforming girls' education in Haryana, assessing its effectiveness, challenges, and the way forward for improving accessibility and quality in the future. Understanding these aspects is crucial in shaping policies that strengthen educational opportunities for girls and foster gender-inclusive development in the state.



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Education status and systems in Haryana

Haryana has witnessed notable advancements in its education sector, with a focus on improving literacy rates and enhancing the overall quality of education. The state's commitment to education is evident through various government initiatives aimed at upgrading infrastructure, providing scholarships, and creating a conducive learning environment. The school education system in Haryana encompasses primary, secondary, and higher secondary levels, following the national curriculum. Significant universities and colleges, including Maharshi Dayanand University and Kurukshetra University, contribute to the higher education landscape. The state has also prioritised skill development programs to make students more employable. While government institutions play a crucial role, the presence of private educational entities has added diversity to the education ecosystem. Challenges such as gender disparities and the need for improved infrastructure persist, prompting on-going efforts to address these issues. Recent developments likely include policy updates and new initiatives, emphasising the importance of referring to official sources for the latest information on education in Haryana.

Haryana's education landscape reflects a commitment to addressing challenges and ensuring comprehensive development. Efforts to bridge gender disparities and provide equal opportunities for education continue, contributing to the state's overall progress. Challenges related to infrastructure and educational quality are acknowledged, prompting initiatives to enhance facilities and teaching standards. Skill development programs align with the contemporary emphasis on employability, aiming to equip students with practical capabilities. The coexistence of government and private institutions diversifies the education sector, catering to a broad spectrum of students. The state's emphasis on literacy and educational improvements aligns with its broader vision for socio-economic development. Keeping abreast of recent developments, including policy changes and innovations, is crucial to understanding the dynamic nature of education in Haryana. Checking official government sources and educational department updates provides the most current and detailed insights into the state's evolving education system.

Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya's Situation in India

There are currently 3,609 Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya's (KGBVs) spread across India, catering to over 4.5 lakh girls. Initially conceived with a vision comparable to Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya's nationwide, these schools have evolved over time, with their original vision undergoing transformations. Evaluating the potential and challenges faced by these institutions is essential.

The significance of KGBVs lies in their commitment to admitting girls from the most marginalised sections of society. Admission criteria prioritise girls who have dropped out of school, with a focus on those from Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Other Backward Classes (OBC), and Below Poverty Line (BPL) communities. Additional considerations include being an orphan, having a single parent, and the distance of the student's home from the hostel, addressing complex situations. Notably, the majority of the girls attending these schools come from families where guardians are engaged in daily wage labour or small-scale farming.

In the Indian context, the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) program has played a crucial role in addressing the challenges faced by girls in accessing education, particularly those from marginalised communities. Despite strides in various sectors, gender-based educational disparities persist, making initiatives like KGBV instrumental in fostering inclusivity. India's diverse socio-cultural landscape presents unique obstacles to girls' education, including cultural norms favouring male education, economic constraints, and geographical barriers. KGBV introduced by the Government of India, specifically targets girls from socially and economically disadvantaged groups, such as Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Other Backward Classes (OBC), and minority communities.



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The residential nature of KGBV schools addresses the challenges related to commuting, ensuring that enrolled girls have access to a safe and supportive living environment. By offering elementary and secondary education, covering classes 6, 7, and 8, KGBV lays a foundational educational framework, empowering girls during their crucial formative years. Enrolment targets of approximately 100 girls per academic year enable personalised attention and tailored support, contributing to a conducive learning environment. Importantly, KGBV provides free-of-cost facilities, including food, accommodation, daily necessities, and educational materials, eliminating financial barriers that often hinder girls' access to education.

Beyond academic learning, the KGBV program emphasises holistic development, incorporating life skills, vocational training, and awareness programs. This multifaceted approach aims to empower girls with the skills necessary for personal and professional growth. Community involvement is a pivotal aspect of KGBV, encouraging active participation from local communities in the educational process. This collaborative effort enhances the sustainability and success of the initiative, fostering a sense of ownership and engagement.

Government funding, with contributions from both the central and state governments, underscores the commitment to creating an inclusive educational environment. The collaboration with Mahila Samakhya further enriches the initiative by leveraging expertise in empowering women. The Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya program addresses the intricate challenges hindering girls' education in India. By providing a comprehensive support system, fostering community engagement, and emphasising holistic development, KGBV stands as a transformative initiative, contributing to the broader goals of gender equality and inclusive education in the country. On-going efforts and a sustained focus on addressing the nuanced barriers faced by girls will be essential for the continued success and expansion of KGBV in India.

Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya's Situation in Haryana

In Haryana, the state of girls' education has been marked by enduring challenges rooted in socio-cultural norms and economic disparities. The Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) initiative has emerged as a crucial intervention to mitigate these issues. Deep-seated cultural norms that favour male education persist, contributing to early marriages and limiting the educational aspirations of girls. The rural-urban divide exacerbates these challenges, with rural areas facing greater hurdles in providing quality education. KGBV, through its strategic placement in rural pockets, serves as a beacon of hope, addressing the educational divide. Economic constraints often lead families to prioritise the education of male children, perpetuating gender-based discrimination. In this context, KGBV plays a pivotal role by offering residential facilities, focusing enrolment on marginalised girls, and providing holistic education up to the secondary level. By incorporating life skills and vocational training, KGBV empowers girls for a brighter future. Community engagement and government support underscore the commitment to creating an inclusive educational environment. Despite persistent challenges, KGBV in Haryana symbolises a positive stride towards gender parity in education, fostering a more equitable landscape for girls and emphasising the transformative potential of targeted initiatives in addressing socio-cultural and economic disparities. On-going efforts and a sustained focus on community involvement remain critical for the continued success of KGBV in Haryana.

Related work

Ghosh (2023) Study conducted on opportunities and challenges for girl child schooling and education in India reveals a nuanced landscape. Significant strides have been made in expanding access to education for girls, propelled by legislative measures like the Right to Education Act and initiatives such as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. These efforts have led to increased enrolment rates, underscoring the potential for education to empower girls and catalyze social change. Government policies and programs like Kasturba Gandhi Balika



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Vidyalayas and Beti Bachao Beti Padhao further underscore commitment to addressing gender disparities in education. However, persistent challenges persist, rooted in socio-cultural norms, economic barriers, and infrastructural inadequacies. Issues like child marriage, gender-based violence, and discriminatory attitudes continue to impede girls' access to quality education, particularly in rural and marginalized communities. Furthermore, ensuring the quality of education remains paramount, necessitating improvements in infrastructure, teacher training, and curriculum development. Intersectional factors such as poverty, disability, and geographic location further compound these challenges, calling for targeted interventions and inclusive policies. Continuous monitoring and evaluation are essential for assessing progress and refining strategies to overcome barriers to girls' education, ultimately fostering an environment where every girl can thrive academically and realize her full potential. Study reveals progress in girl child education due to legislative measures and initiatives, but challenges persist including socio-cultural norms, economic barriers, and infrastructural inadequacies, requiring targeted interventions and continuous monitoring.

Radhika (2023) analysed on the study women's education in rural Telangana reveals multifaceted challenges and notable progress. Despite improved enrolment rates, socio-economic factors still impede access to quality education for many rural women. Findings indicate that persistent gender norms, limited infrastructure, and insufficient awareness hinder educational advancements. However, positive strides are evident with government initiatives promoting girls' education, like the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas. Community involvement and advocacy play crucial roles in overcoming barriers. The study underscores the need for targeted interventions, such as skill development programs, to empower rural women economically. Bridging educational gaps and fostering an inclusive learning environment are vital for sustainable progress in rural Telangana's women's education.

Kumari and Nagamani (2022) examined a study on perception of women teachers towards quality improvement in KGBV Schools. The aim of the study is to explore the perception of women teachers working in KGBVs and their level of perception towards quality improvement in KGBVs. The study was conducted using survey method. The sample of the study consists of 200 women teachers selected randomly from 25 KGBVs in Vizianagaram District of Andhra Pradesh. The data were collected using an attitude questionnaire. The variables considered for the study include Age, Marital status, Teaching experience and Location of the institution. The data were analysed using Arithmetic Means, Standard Deviations and Critical Ratios. The findings of the study revealed that age, marital status, teaching experience and location of the institution have no influence on the perceptions of women teachers towards quality improvement in KGBVs. The study suggested that the school authorities should provide favourable working conditions for teachers in the school.

Shapyade (2022) conducted a study on the adjustment problems, awareness of health, and study habits in relation to academic achievements among students of Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs) in Karnataka. The study is aimed to identify the influence of adjustment problems along with awareness of Health and study habits in relation to academic achievement among students of KGBV School. The descriptive method is used for the study. The status of different variables is considered for the study. The sample of 600 students is collected by the researcher by using a stratified Random sampling technique. The findings of this study could inform targeted interventions and support mechanisms tailored to the specific needs of KGBV students. It may highlight areas where awareness programs, health initiatives, or adjustments to the learning environment can enhance academic outcomes. By understanding the intricate relationships between adjustment problems, health awareness, study habits, and academic achievement, educators and policymakers can contribute to creating an inclusive and supportive educational environment for girls in KGBVs in Karnataka.

Wadhwa and Anand (2022) Conducted a study on gender budget analysis in adolescent girls'



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education, specifically focusing on evidence from Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalyayas (KGBVs) in Rajasthan, reveals significant insights into the allocation and utilization of resources. The study was conducted in four districts – Jaipur, Udaipur, Jaisalmer and Bharatpur. A multi-stage sampling technique was used to include a total of 18 KGBV's in the selected states. The finding reveals that teachers and wardens are the core of a KGBV's and their role in quality improvement is paramount thus regular training of teachers and wardens are imperative to ensure the quality of Education and resource management at school level infrastructural quality as well as optimum utilization or other factor that play a key role in ensuring involvement and retention of adolescent girls in KGBV's.

Spandana et al., (2022) A Study proved on girl child education in rural and tribal areas of Telangana state reflects a complex landscape shaped by various factors. In rural regions, challenges such as limited accessibility to schools, economic constraints, and societal norms contribute to lower enrolment and higher dropout rates among girls. Efforts to address these issues involve initiatives like the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalyayas (KGBVs), aiming to create a conducive learning environment for girls. In tribal areas, additional hurdles include geographical remoteness, cultural disparities, and linguistic diversity. The government has implemented programs focusing on tribal education to bridge these gaps. Persistent issues like child labour, early marriages and a lack of awareness about the importance of education pose significant challenges. Initiatives tailored to the specific needs of these regions, coupled with community engagement and awareness campaigns, are essential to improving the status of girl child education. Evaluating and understanding the nuanced challenges in both rural and tribal areas is crucial for formulating targeted policies and interventions that uplift the educational opportunities for girls in Telangana, fostering empowerment and breaking the cycle of educational deprivation in these communities.

Parihar and Khan (2021) studied the Education Policies & Impact of KGBV on Girl Child Education. The author examines the difficulties and possibilities that females confront, as well as the influence that RTE has on their ability to obtain an education. When women are educated, they are better prepared for leadership positions at both the local and national levels. For women with a higher level of education, they're more inclined to participate in organisations that influence their lives and the lives of people around them. Inequities based on gender and social background can be eliminated and justice attained via education. As a result of their gender, girls face a variety of challenges. Students' lives are shaped by a complex network of social and economic relationships that must be reflected in curriculum, textbooks, and pedagogical methods. Teachers need to be made more aware of the need of ensuring that all students have equal access to quality education. Efforts to improve gender equality, such as gender training, need to be stepped up. Investing in a girl child's education is essential if society is to thrive. Countries in the poor world have different levels of education. When we educate a girl, we give her a voice in the decisions she makes in her life. The more educated a person is, the more able they are to defend themselves, their rights, and seek justice when they are harmed. Finding reveals that when women's are educated a good society would be created.

Description of KGBV Scheme

The Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalyaya (KGBV) scheme is a pioneering initiative by the Government of India to address the gender gap in education, particularly focusing on girls from marginalised and disadvantaged communities. Launched in 2004 under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, the KGBV scheme aims to provide quality education to girls from economically weaker sections, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and other marginalised groups, especially those living in rural and remote areas.

The primary objective of the KGBV scheme is to ensure that girls receive education up to the secondary level and acquire essential life skills. One of its distinctive features is the establishment of residential schools exclusively for girls. These schools cater to the educational



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needs of girls who face challenges such as poverty, social discrimination, and limited access to schooling facilities.

Key components of the KGBV scheme include:

1. **Residential Schools:** KGBVs are residential schools designed to provide a safe and conducive learning environment for girls. They offer facilities like dormitories, classrooms, libraries, and playgrounds.
2. **Curriculum and Pedagogy:** The curriculum is tailored to meet the specific needs of girls, focusing not only on academic subjects but also on life skills and vocational training. Special attention is given to bridging learning gaps and enhancing the overall development of students.
3. **Empowerment Initiatives:** The scheme emphasises the empowerment of girls through various initiatives, including health check-ups, awareness programs, and life skill education. Efforts are made to instil confidence, leadership skills, and a sense of equality among the students.
4. **Community Involvement:** KGBVs actively involve local communities in the education process. Community participation is encouraged to create a sense of ownership and ensure the sustained success of the program.
5. **Bridge Courses:** For girls who have dropped out or never attended school, KGBVs provide bridge courses to bring them up to the appropriate educational level.
6. **Inclusive Approach:** The scheme is inclusive, ensuring that girls from various backgrounds, including those with special needs, are accommodated and provided with equal opportunities.

By addressing the unique challenges faced by girls in marginalised communities, the KGBV scheme plays a pivotal role in promoting inclusive and equitable education. It not only facilitates access to education but also strives to create an environment where girls can thrive academically, socially, and personally, breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty and empowering them to contribute meaningfully to society.

The Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Scheme, initiated by the Government of India, aims to establish 750 residential schools, complete with accommodation facilities, at the elementary level. These schools are specifically designed for girls hailing from SC/ST/OBC/minority communities residing in remote areas across the nation. Falling under the purview of the Department of Elementary Education and Literacy, this innovative scheme operates in conjunction with existing initiatives such as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and the National Program for Girls' Education at Elementary Level. Additionally, it collaborates with Mahila Samakhya to enhance its impact and effectiveness.

This progressive scheme signifies a concerted effort by the government to address educational disparities and uplift girls from marginalised communities, particularly those facing geographical isolation. By providing not only academic education but also residential facilities, the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Scheme seeks to create a conducive and secure environment for girls, ensuring their holistic development. The collaborative approach with Mahila Samakhya underscores the commitment to leveraging existing frameworks and expertise to maximise the scheme's positive outcomes. Through these concerted efforts, the initiative aims to contribute significantly to the broader goals of universal education and gender equality, particularly focusing on empowering girls in remote and marginalised regions of the country. Government of India's dedication to universal education, the country grapples with the lowest female literacy rate in Asia. As per the 2001 census (India 2006, Government of India), only 53.67 percent of India's female population, which stands at 49.46 crore, was literate. This alarming statistic translates to approximately 22.91 crore illiterate women in the country. This pervasive illiteracy not only impacts the well-being of women but also hampers the economic development of families and the nation as a whole. Studies highlight the adverse effects of



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female illiteracy, revealing a correlation with high maternal mortality, low nutritional status, limited income-earning capacity, and restricted autonomy within families. Moreover, the lack of education among women adversely affects the health and prosperity of their children, as evidenced by the connection between infant mortality and maternal educational status. This educational gap impedes the economic progress of the nation.

Research problem

Girls' education remains a critical issue in many parts of India, particularly in states like Haryana, where deep-rooted gender disparities and socio-cultural barriers hinder access to education. Despite various government initiatives, many girls from marginalized communities continue to face challenges such as early dropouts, financial constraints, child marriage, and lack of educational infrastructure. To address these issues, the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) scheme was introduced to provide free and quality education to girls from disadvantaged backgrounds. While KGBVs have made a significant impact in promoting girls' education, their effectiveness in ensuring long-term educational attainment, skill development, and socio-economic empowerment remains a subject of study. Many schools still struggle with inadequate infrastructure, lack of trained teachers, and limited community awareness about the importance of girls' education. Additionally, societal norms and resistance from families often prevent girls from enrolling or continuing their studies. This research aims to assess the impact of KGBVs in Haryana, examining their role in improving literacy rates, fostering self-reliance, and reducing dropout rates among girls. It also seeks to identify the challenges these institutions face and propose strategies to enhance their effectiveness. By analyzing the success and limitations of KGBVs, this study contributes to the broader discussion on gender equality and the need for sustained efforts to empower girls through education.

Conclusion

The Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) initiative has played a crucial role in transforming girls' education in Haryana, particularly for those from marginalized and economically weaker sections of society. By providing free residential education, academic support, and skill development programs, KGBVs have helped bridge the gender gap in education, empowering girls with knowledge and confidence. These institutions have contributed significantly to reducing dropout rates, increasing literacy levels, and encouraging girls to pursue higher education and career opportunities. Beyond academics, KGBVs have also fostered self-reliance, social awareness, and leadership skills, enabling girls to break traditional barriers and contribute meaningfully to society.

However, despite these achievements, several challenges persist, including infrastructure limitations, teacher shortages, cultural resistance, and lack of awareness about the program. Addressing these issues requires strengthened policies, increased funding, and active community participation to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of KGBVs. Additionally, there is a need for continuous monitoring and evaluation of these schools to enhance their impact. Empowering girls through education is not just a step towards gender equality but also a means to drive overall social and economic progress. Strengthening the KGBV model in Haryana will help create a more inclusive and educated society, ensuring that every girl gets the opportunity to learn, grow, and shape her future.

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