



Mains Practice Question

Q. Indian women have taken a great stride in all fields of activity, yet a lot remains to be achieved. In the light of the statement discuss the need to relook into various issues related to women's education especially higher education. (250 Words)

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Approach

- Start with giving some data about the women's representation in education particularly in higher education.
- Discuss the reasons for high drop out rates of girls and various issues related to women's education especially higher education.
- Suggest a way forward to help increase women participation in higher educational institutes.

Introduction

For the past few decades, Indian women have taken a great stride in all fields of activity. Yet, a lot remains to be achieved. Indian women excelled in the Olympic Games for India. There is no reason for it to be otherwise in any other field, especially education, given the right support.

As a nation, we can not afford to ignore half the potential workforce if we aspire to be an economic powerhouse. As a society, women can be the pivot to bring about critical and lasting social transformation. As individuals, they deserve a shot at being the very best they can.

Body

Reasons for low women representation and issues in higher educational institutions

- **Reasons For Girls Dropping Out:** Girls drop out of school because,
 - Engaged in domestic activities (31.9%)
 - Have financial constraints (18.4%),
 - Not interested in education (15.3%), and
 - Get married (12.4%).
- **Gender Biases and Social Norms:** The problem is not only rooted in poverty and poor quality of school education, but also gender biases and outdated social norms.
- **Low Expenditure on Girls Education:** Deep-rooted gender biases are also reflected in the choice of schools, access to private tuitions and the choice of discipline in higher education.
 - The average annual household expenditure on girls at this level is Rs 2,860 less than that on boys.

Way Forward

- **Community Learning Programme:** As an immediate step, in every locality, a mohalla school or a community learning programme should be started with appropriate Covid norms.

- NITI Aayog, with the help of civil society organisations, had started a community programme led by volunteers called “Saksham Bitiya” in 28 aspirational districts where more than 1.87 lakh girl students were trained in socio-emotional and ethical learning.
- Such initiatives should be replicated to ensure more girls do not drop out of schools during the pandemic.
- **Gender Atlas/Dropout Mapping:** To predict likely drop-outs, a gender atlas comprising indicators that are mapped to key reasons for school drop-outs should be developed.
 - Teachers should also be trained in all the scholarships and schemes available that provide economic support to girls and their families for continuing their education.
- **Behavioural Nudges in Tackling Social Prejudices:** Social prejudice and orthodox cultural norms prevent girls from achieving their innate potential.
 - Behavioural Insights Units (BIU) may be established across states to tackle social issues with the help of ultra-local NGOs/CSOs to reach the last mile.
- To overcome these systemic challenges, the government has taken a number of initiatives in the past such as the National Scheme of Incentives to Girls for Secondary Education (NSIGSE), supernumerary seats in all IITs and the **PRAGATI Scholarship scheme** for girls in technical education.
 - However, in these unprecedented times, we need unprecedented measures to address the issue of girl child school drop-outs and bring more girls in professionally and monetarily rewarding fields of higher education.

Conclusion

However, a positive trend has been recently noticed. The GER for women in 2019-20 is 27.3% as compared to 26.9 per cent for men. This means that more eligible women as compared to men are attending college and university in India. Nearly 49 per cent of the total enrolment in 2019-20 consists of female students.