



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Education

ADDRESSING GIRLS' EDUCATIONAL DISCONTINUATION IN RURAL INDIA THROUGH THE INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM

KEY WORDS: Indian Knowledge System, Girls' Education, Rural India, Educational Discontinuation, Gender Equity, Indigenous Education

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ABSTRACT

Despite multiple governmental interventions, a significant number of girls in rural India discontinue their education due to socio-economic, cultural, and structural barriers. This paper explores how the Indian Knowledge System (IKS)—rooted in indigenous philosophy, ethics, and community practices—can offer sustainable and culturally compatible solutions to this persistent issue. Drawing upon traditional concepts such as Shiksha as Sanskara, Guru-Shishya Parampara, Stri as Shakti, and community-based learning models, the study argues that IKS provides an integrative framework that aligns education with local values, livelihoods, and social responsibilities. The paper concludes that embedding IKS principles into modern educational strategies can significantly enhance girls' retention and participation in rural education.

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is widely recognized as a critical driver of social and economic development. However, in rural India, girls continue to face disproportionately high dropout rates compared to boys. Factors such as poverty, early marriage, household responsibilities, safety concerns, and entrenched gender norms contribute to this challenge. While policy measures and financial incentives have made some progress, many initiatives fail to address the cultural context of rural communities.

The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) offers a holistic perspective on education that integrates moral, social, economic, and spiritual dimensions of life. Rather than viewing education solely as a means of employment, IKS perceives it as a transformative process aimed at personal and societal well-being. This paper examines how principles of IKS can be leveraged to reduce educational discontinuation among rural girls.

2. Conceptual Framework of the Indian Knowledge System

The Indian Knowledge System encompasses indigenous philosophies, pedagogical traditions, and social practices developed over centuries. Central to IKS is the idea that education (Shiksha) is a sanskara—a process of character formation. Knowledge is meant to be practical, ethical, and socially relevant.

Key IKS concepts relevant to girls' education include:

- **Dharma:** Social and moral responsibility
- **Shakti:** Recognition of women as sources of strength and creativity
- **Guru-Shishya Parampara:** Personalized and community-embedded learning
- **Lokavidya:** Local and indigenous knowledge systems

These principles emphasize inclusion, dignity, and community participation.

3. Causes of Educational Discontinuation among Rural Girls

Girls in rural areas discontinue education due to interconnected challenges:

1. Economic constraints forcing families to prioritize immediate income or household labor
2. Cultural beliefs that undervalue girls' education
3. Early marriage and motherhood
4. Limited access to schools and safety concerns
5. Lack of female role models and local relevance in curricula

Addressing these issues requires culturally sensitive solutions rather than externally imposed models.

4. IKS-Based Approaches to Address the Problem

4.1 Education as Moral and Social Duty

IKS regards educating children—especially girls—as a responsibility of the household (Grihastha Dharma). By reviving narratives of learned women such as Gargi and Maitreyi, communities can reframe girls' education as a culturally endorsed value rather than a modern imposition.

4.2 Community-Based Learning Models

The Guru-Shishya tradition promotes localized and flexible learning. Village-level education centers managed by trained local women can reduce safety concerns, travel distance, and rigid schooling schedules, thereby improving retention.

4.3 Recognition of Women as Shakti

Indian philosophical traditions place women at the center of societal strength. Incorporating cultural storytelling, folk traditions, and rituals that celebrate educated girls helps shift community attitudes and restore dignity to female education.

4.4 Integration of Livelihood and Education

IKS does not separate knowledge from livelihood. Integrating traditional skills—such as handicrafts, organic farming, and indigenous medicine—with formal education demonstrates tangible economic value, encouraging families to support continued schooling.

4.5 Empowerment of Mothers through Matru Shiksha

Mothers are considered the first teachers in IKS. Adult education and awareness programs for rural women increase their agency, enabling them to advocate for their daughters' education and resist early marriage practices.

4.6 Ethical Education for Boys and Men

IKS emphasizes social harmony and mutual respect. Teaching boys values of equality and shared responsibility through ethical education can reduce gender discrimination that often leads to girls dropping out.

5. DISCUSSION

Unlike purely economic or policy-driven approaches, the IKS framework works from within the cultural fabric of rural society. By aligning education with indigenous values and local realities, it minimizes resistance and enhances community ownership. The integration of ethical, vocational, and academic learning creates a sustainable model that benefits not only girls but society as a whole.

6. CONCLUSION

Girls' educational discontinuation in rural India is not merely an infrastructural or economic problem but a cultural and social one. The Indian Knowledge System provides a culturally rooted, inclusive, and holistic framework to address

this challenge. By reviving traditional values that honor women, promoting community-based education, and integrating livelihood skills with learning, IKS offers sustainable solutions for ensuring girls' continued education. Policymakers and educators should incorporate IKS principles into modern educational planning to achieve long-term gender equity in rural India.

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