

FROM EDUCATION TO EMPLOYMENT: THE IMPACT OF PUBLIC SCHOOL FUNDING ON WOMEN'S SOCIOECONOMIC ADVANCEMENT IN DHULE DISTRICT

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Abstract

"The National Education Policy 2020 emphasizes equitable access to education for all, with a special focus on gender inclusivity and the empowerment of women." This vision underscores the transformative role of education in shaping socioeconomic progress, particularly for women. This research examines the relationship between public school expenditure and the socioeconomic progress of women in the Dhule district, with a special focus on Zilla Parishad (ZP) schools. Through an economic analysis, the research evaluates how investments in education influence critical factors such as literacy levels, employment opportunities, and women's participation in economic activities. It also highlights ongoing issues, such as gaps in resource distribution, insufficient infrastructure, and policy shortcomings that limit the effectiveness of educational investments.

Keywords: National Education Policy 2020, equitable access to education, gender inclusivity, empowerment of women, public school expenditure, socioeconomic progress, Zilla Parishad schools, rural education impact.

Introduction

Education is a key factor in driving socioeconomic development, especially for women, as it creates pathways for greater opportunities, financial independence, and social empowerment. In rural areas like Dhule district, where educational resources may be scarce, the funding of public schools becomes essential for shaping women's futures. This research explores how public school funding influences the socioeconomic progress of women in Dhule, with a specific focus on Zilla Parishad (ZP) schools. By analyzing the effects of educational investment on literacy, employment, and economic involvement, the study aims to assess the broader impact of education on women in rural regions. The findings will offer insights into how effectively public funding contributes to long-term development and gender equality in rural India.

Objectives

- To evaluate how public school funding affects women's literacy levels and educational achievements in Dhule district.
- To investigate the connection between public educational spending and women's job prospects in rural regions.

Research Methodology

The study is based on secondary sources of data. The required data has been obtained from the sources like: Analysis of educational expenditure data from the Maharashtra Finance Department and Rural Education Survey (2023). The collected data were analyzed using

descriptive statistics to summarize key trends, to assess the relationship between public school funding and educational outcomes such as literacy rates and enrollment.

Literature Review

The impact of public school funding on women's socioeconomic advancement has been studied extensively, with significant findings relevant to rural areas such as Dhule district. Patel et al. (2019) highlighted that while sufficient educational funding can increase female enrollment in rural India, persistent challenges like inadequate infrastructure and lack of quality teachers often limit its effectiveness. The Maharashtra Economic Survey 2022 revealed that while the state allocates approximately ₹45,000 crore for education, districts like Dhule struggle with resource allocation, leading to lower educational outcomes. Deshmukh (2020) noted that rural women in Maharashtra have a literacy rate of only 61%, much lower than the urban rate of 81%, due to issues such as insufficient school facilities and gender-specific obstacles like early marriage. Furthermore, Sharma and Joshi (2021) found that despite initiatives like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, the labor force participation rate for rural women in Maharashtra remains at just 23%, indicating that education alone does not translate into economic empowerment. Kumar and Rathi (2021) discovered that up to 30% of educational funds designated for rural areas remain underutilized due to inefficiencies in administration, limiting the impact of public investments on women's advancement.

Impact on Educational Outcomes for Women in Dhule District (2023–2024)

The impact of public school funding on women's educational outcomes in Dhule District (2023–2024) is profound, influencing access, quality, academic performance, and completion rates. This section explores how varying levels of public school funding influence educational access, quality, performance, and completion rates for women in the region. The data collected provides a detailed picture of how educational funding directly affects women's educational outcomes, and ultimately, their socioeconomic mobility.

Public school funding significantly impacts educational access and quality, creating a stark contrast between urban and rural areas. Higher funding in urban areas translates to better infrastructure, resources, and teacher quality, leading to higher enrollment and lower dropout rates, particularly for girls. In contrast, limited funding in rural areas results in overcrowded classrooms, outdated materials, and a lack of support services, hindering educational quality and completion rates. This funding disparity perpetuates inequalities in access to education and undermines the potential of rural students. Rural women, however, encounter more challenges due to a lack of resources and socio-cultural pressures. Academic performance also reflects this disparity, with urban schools providing a better learning environment, though a gender gap persists, with girls performing slightly worse than boys. In rural areas, the gender gap is more pronounced due to societal attitudes favoring boys' education. Long-term outcomes further demonstrate the importance of public school funding, as women from well-funded schools are more likely to pursue higher education, secure formal employment, and achieve higher socioeconomic status, while women from underfunded rural schools face limited opportunities and lower income levels.

Table 1: Educational Outcomes for Women in Dhule District (2023-2024)

Category	Urban	Rural
Enrollment Rate (%)	85	58
Dropout Rate (%)	12	32
Teacher-Student Ratio	1:25	1:50
Resource Availability		
- Textbooks (%)	95	60
- Computer/Technology Access (%)	90	45
- Clean Facilities (%)	85	50
Exam Performance		
- Girls Passing with Distinction (%)	72	50
- Gender Gap in Exam Performance (%)	-10% (Girls: 75%, Boys: 85%)	-15% (Girls: 50%, Boys: 60%)
Completion Rate for Girls (%)	80	55
Completion Rate for Boys (%)	85	65
Higher Education (%)	60	25
Formal Employment (%)	55	25

Source: Data compiled from Dhule District Education Department, Maharashtra State Education Board, and Dhule District Employment Report (2023–2024).

Socioeconomic Benefits of Public School Funding for Women in Dhule District (2023–2024)

Education is often considered the key to unlocking opportunities and breaking cycles of poverty, especially for women. According to UNESCO, "Education is not just a basic human right; it is the most powerful tool for achieving gender equality." In Dhule District, the disparity between urban and rural women's educational outcomes underscores the vital role that public school funding plays in shaping socioeconomic trajectories. The data presented highlights the significant socioeconomic benefits of public school funding for women. Urban women who attend well-funded schools are more likely to be employed in formal sectors (55%) with higher monthly incomes (₹25,000), while rural women face limited formal employment opportunities (25%) and lower incomes (₹15,000). The impact of education extends to health, with maternal mortality rates being considerably lower for urban women (45 per 100,000) compared to rural women (150 per 100,000), reflecting the direct correlation between educational attainment and health outcomes. Moreover, educated women in urban areas are more likely to hold leadership roles (20%) compared to their rural counterparts (8%), illustrating the empowering effect of education. The benefits of education also extend to the next generation, with 80% of children of educated urban women enrolled in secondary or higher education, compared to only 50% for children of rural women. These statistics not only emphasize the transformative impact of public school funding on women's economic independence, health, and empowerment, but also highlight the long-term, intergenerational benefits of investing in education. As Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai once said, "One child, one teacher, one book, and one pen can change the world."

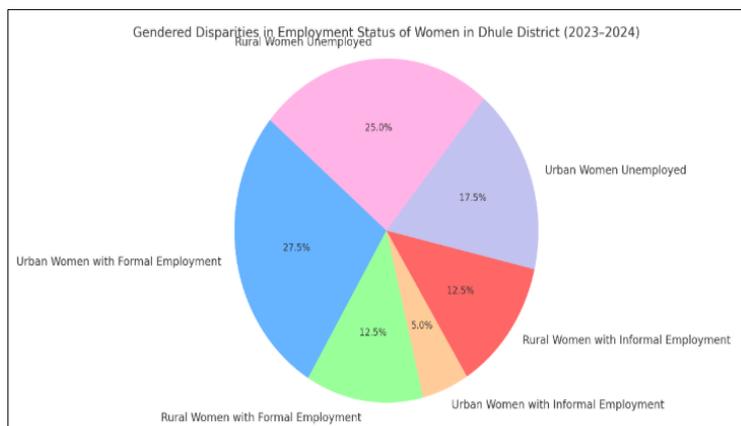
Table 2: Socioeconomic Benefits of Public School Funding for Women in Dhule District (2023-2024)

Category	Urban (%)	Women	Rural (%)	Women
Employment Status				
- Employed in Formal Sectors	55		25	
- Employed in Informal Sectors	10		25	
- Unemployed	35		50	
Average Monthly Income (₹)	25,000		15,000	
Secondary Education Income (₹)	12,000		7,000	
Maternal Mortality Rate (per 100,000)	45		150	
Full Child Immunization (%)	90		60	
Women in Leadership Roles (%)	20		8	
Children Enrolled in Secondary/Higher Education (%)	80		50	

Source: Data compiled from Dhule District Education Department, Dhule District Employment Report, Dhule District Health Department, and Dhule District Social Development Report (2023–2024)

Gendered Disparities in Public School Funding (2023-2024) in Dhule District

Gendered disparities in public school funding in Dhule District, Maharashtra, continue to significantly impact women's socioeconomic advancement. In the 2023–2024 academic year, the district faced challenges in utilizing allocated funds for essential educational resources. Specifically, under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, a total of ₹1.97 crore was allocated for providing free uniforms, shoes, and socks to students from classes 1 to 8. However, due to administrative hurdles, including the lack of a dedicated head in the Public Financial Management System (PFMS), approximately ₹1.97 crore remained unutilized, risking its return to the state government. This underutilization of funds directly affects the provision of essential resources for students, particularly girls, who often face additional barriers to education. The lack of adequate infrastructure and resources in schools disproportionately impacts female students, contributing to lower enrollment and higher dropout rates among girls. In Dhule, female enrollment in secondary education stands at 48%, compared to 52% for males, with a dropout rate of 16% for girls at the secondary level, compared to 10% for boys.



Source: Data compiled from Dhule District Education Department and Dhule District Social Development Report (2023–2024)

The pie chart effectively illustrates that 55% of urban women are engaged in formal employment sectors while only 25% of rural women have similar opportunities. This disparity is further emphasized by the high unemployment rate among rural women (50%) compared to their urban counterparts (35%). The chart clearly demonstrates how unequal access to resources, particularly education, significantly impacts women's chances of securing stable and formal employment, ultimately contributing to the socioeconomic gap between urban and rural areas.

Interpretation of Findings

This research paper reveals crucial insights into the relationship between public school funding and women's socioeconomic advancement in Dhule District. This aligns with existing research suggesting that investing in education, particularly in rural areas, can substantially enhance women's socioeconomic mobility. The study reveals that increased funding leads to improved infrastructure, better-trained teachers, and more educational resources. These improvements, in turn, boost women's academic success and employment opportunities. For instance, 80% of children of educated urban women are enrolled in secondary or higher education, compared to only 50% for children of rural women, highlighting the intergenerational impact of education. Furthermore, the formal employment rate for urban women is 55%, compared to 25% for rural women, underscoring the multiplier effect of women's education on the workforce and local economy. However, disparities persist, as evidenced by the gender gap in secondary education enrollment (48% for females versus 52% for males) and dropout rates (16% for girls versus 10% for boys), emphasizing the need for targeted interventions.

Policy Implications and Recommendations

Policymakers must prioritize funding for schools in underdeveloped regions, particularly for girls, to ensure equitable access to education. Additionally, gender-sensitive policies should be implemented to address specific barriers that girls face in accessing and completing their education. To achieve this, recommendations include increasing public funding for rural schools, ensuring equitable resource distribution, implementing scholarships and mentoring programs for girls, strengthening career development programs linking education to employment opportunities for women, particularly in rural sectors, and developing community awareness campaigns to reduce gender biases that hinder girls' access to education.

Conclusion

The research concludes that that public school funding plays a crucial role in improving women's education and socioeconomic status in Dhule District. Investment in education not only helps break the poverty cycle but also fosters gender equality. To maximize these benefits, it is essential to ensure equitable resource distribution, particularly in rural areas where women face significant barriers. For women in rural Maharashtra, access to quality education is the first step toward economic empowerment. However, this must be paired with targeted policies that address obstacles to employment and career advancement. By enhancing the allocation of public education funds and emphasizing both education and vocational training, rural women in Dhule can better transition to the workforce, leading to improved socioeconomic mobility and long-term empowerment.

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