

**ROLE OF NGOS IN ENHANCING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR GIRLS
IN WEST BENGAL****Rimmi Datta¹ & Jayanta Mete²**Research Scholar¹, Professor², Department of Education,
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to explain the role of NGOs in enhancing the education of girls in West Bengal with special emphasis on rural and other deprived areas where the disparity of education enrolment is observed. But because of government policies such as the Right to Education Act (2009), there are still gender differences in education and many difficulties are faced by girls in order to gain education. These gaps have been in some ways filled by NGOs through specific focused activities such as basic literacy, scholarships, vocational training and computer-based learning. They have been most successful in the areas of enrolment, performance and dropout rates especially for girls. The study used descriptive survey research technique and data was collected through questionnaires from the several NGOs, beneficiaries and their families. The paper also shows that NGO interventions are positively effective with an average improvement of 20 percentage point in education performance and enrolment figures. However, the paper also looks at some of the challenges that NGOs face for instance lack of funds, social resistance and challenges in reaching out to the hard-to-reach populations. Therefore, the study concludes that NGOs do have a role in the process of educating girls in West Bengal but they should be backed by strong polices and supported by the community for long term.

Keywords:

NGOs, Girls' Education, West Bengal, Educational Disparities, Rural Education.

1. INTRODUCTION

The issue of gender equity in education is still a burning one in West Bengal especially for girls in rural and other deprived regions. To some extent, these disparities are mitigated by NGOs, which offer special services that are designed to improve the schooling experience of this disadvantaged group. This article provides a detailed description of the functions of these organizations in ensuring that girls get access to education and concentrates on the scope of their activities.

Gender discrimination is deeply rooted in West Bengal education system compounded by socio-economic and cultural factors that negatively impact on the girl child. Several measures have been taken by the government of India like Right to Education Act (2009) that provides free and compulsory education to the children of the age group of 6-14 years but there are still loopholes especially in the rural areas where traditional gender roles are provided to the boys and girls (UNICEF, 2014). This gap increases even more when it comes to the enrollment in higher education where female literacy and school attendance are much lower than that of male students (Census of India, 2011).

These disparities have been filled by NGOs that have come up with different programs that are meant to support young girls. These include the simple literacy classes to the more complex ones that provide scholarships, vocational training as well as after school academic assistance. One of them is the delivery of digital resources and learning platforms which has become significant due to the COVID-19 pandemic affecting the conventional learning systems. Such digital interventions do not only fill the gap in the content delivered to the girls in terms of education but also in the technological advancement in order to prepare them for a more digital world (Kumar and Rustagi, 2020).

These NGO interventions are not just hearsay; questionnaires that were set and answered by the stakeholders of the NGOs as well as beneficiary surveys show improvement. For example, enrollment ratios of girls in these programs have increased and this has been accompanied by a reduction in drop out ratios. The findings of the

pre and post intervention questionnaires show that the average academic performance has increased by up to 20 points thus supporting the use of such measures in enhancing learning achievements (Author's own, 2023). However, such efforts are not without some difficulties. There are also issues of funding, social acceptance and practicality especially in the rural areas which are major challenges to the expansion and continuation of these programs. Furthermore, as NGOs try to step in the gaps created by government policies, they need to be supported by more effective policies and active participation of the community for sustainability. Therefore, it can be stated that NGOs have a considerable and wide-ranging impact on enhancing the educational prospects of girls in West Bengal. These organisations not only ensure that girls get access to education as and when they need it through the provision of education programmes but also ensure that barriers to girls' education are addressed in order to bring about social transformation in as far as education of girls is concerned. This article will provide more information about the data and outcomes of these initiatives, the difficulties that are encountered, and the cooperation approaches that can improve these initiatives.

2. Literature Review

The literature review of the study "The Role of NGOs in Enhancing Educational Opportunities for Girls in West Bengal" effectively reviews the literature on the impact of NGOs on education with special reference to gender sensitive programmes in India. It provides a literature review of previous research and reports, outlining major challenges to girls' education and unique solutions employed by NGOs.

The study conducted by Sharma (2018), "Empowering Girls through Education: The paper titled "Rural NGO Actors in India" is a significant work which discusses the complex nature of NGOs in the process of educational enlightenment. Sharma posited that NGOs are useful where government access is limited, which more often than not, assumes the responsibility of delivering the resources and frameworks that enhance the enrollment and attendance of girls in school.

Another important resource is Das and Singh's (2020) report Bridging the Gap: Gender and Education in India which is more concerned with the gender disparities in the education systems in India. Their findings also revealed that though there has been improvement, there are still gaps in access to health care because of socio-economic and cultural factors; NGOs have been instrumental in closing these gaps through education and community mobilization.

In addition, Gupta's (2021) work titled 'Strategic NGOs in the Education of Disadvantaged Girls in West Bengal' gives a comprehensive analysis of some of the strategies such as scholarship program, vocational training, and after school coaching. According to Gupta, these programs have worked well in the promotion of education attainment and at the same time empowering girl economically by equipping them with necessary skills.

The review also examines the barriers to girls' education identified by Khan (2019) in his study "Challenges to Women's Education in Rural India: The following paper offers an NGO point of view. Khan identifies some of the barriers to girls' enrolment and completion of school such as poverty, early marriage and culture. The study also indicates how these challenges have been overcome by NGOs through community sensitization and lobbying for the rights of girls to education.

In summing up the strategies used by the NGOs, the literature pointed to the provision of safe and accessible learning environment for the girls, policy advocacy as well as community engagement to transform the culture towards acceptance of girl child education. This was a very complex strategy that was necessary to maintain education for girls in the needy societies.

In general, the literature review builds a good background on the shifting nature of NGO's in the education sector particularly in the promotion of girl child education in West Bengal. This paper serves as the background to the current study, by identifying the progress and the existing gaps in the literature, which calls for further research and intervention.

3. Methodology

This research work uses descriptive survey research method. Questionnaires were filled by different NGOs working in West Bengal, and interviews were taken from beneficiaries (girls) and their families. The quantitative data were analyzed by statistical software while the qualitative data were interpreted to give the context.

3.1 Research Objectives

The research objectives for the study are outlined as follows:

1. **To Identify the Primary Educational Initiatives Undertaken by NGOs for Girls in West Bengal:**
1. This objective is to provide a list of different educational programs and interventions implemented by NGOs for the education of girls especially those in low income and rural areas. It aims at identifying the nature of educational services offered including literacy classes, scholarships, vocational training and computer education.
2. **To Evaluate the Effectiveness of These Initiatives in Improving Educational Outcomes for Girls:**
The second objective is to evaluate the educational activities that have been undertaken by NGOs. This entails evaluating the effect of the programs on education in as much as enrollment, performance and drop-out rates of girls who benefit from such programs. This evaluation helps in identifying the level of compliance of these initiatives to the education of girls.
3. **To Explore the Challenges Faced by NGOs in Implementing These Initiatives:** This objective aims at establishing the different difficulties and impediments that NGOs face while implementing education programs for girls. This entails comprehending logistical, financial and social challenges like how to access the remote areas, how to mobilize enough funds, and how to deal with the culture that does not support girl's education.

These objectives are designed to provide a comprehensive overview of the role of NGOs in improving the educational environment for girls in West Bengal, highlighting both successes and challenges in achieving gender equality in education.

Research Questions

1. What are the primary educational initiatives undertaken by NGOs for girls in West Bengal?
2. How effective are these initiatives in improving educational outcomes for girls?
3. What challenges do NGOs face in implementing these initiatives?

3.2 Data Collection

Data were collected through structured questionnaires distributed to NGOs, interviews with key stakeholders, and surveys from girls and their families.

Data were collected through structured questionnaires distributed to NGOs, interviews with key stakeholders, and surveys from girls and their families. The standardized questionnaires used were sourced from the **Education for All Global Monitoring Report** and the **NGO Impact Assessment Toolkit** developed by the International NGO Training and Research Centre (INTRAC).

Total Questions: 30

- **NGO Questionnaire:** 10 questions focusing on types of initiatives, reach, and challenges.
- **Girls' and Families' Survey:** 20 questions covering educational background, impact of NGO programs, and personal experiences.

3.3 Sample

A **stratified random sampling** procedure was used to ensure representation from various demographic and geographic segments. This approach was chosen to achieve a balanced representation of urban and rural areas, different socioeconomic backgrounds, and various educational levels.

- **Strata:** Urban vs. Rural, Different Socioeconomic Statuses, Various Educational Levels
- **Sample Size:**
 - 15 NGOs
 - 150 girls enrolled in NGO programs
 - 100 parents/guardians

This methodology ensured that the sample was representative of the diverse population served by NGOs in West Bengal, thereby increasing the validity and reliability of the results.

Table 1: Sampling Distribution

Strata	NGOs	Girls Enrolled in NGO Programs	Parents/Guardians
Urban	8	80	55
Rural	7	70	45
Low Socioeconomic Status	6	60	40
Middle Socioeconomic Status	5	50	35
High Socioeconomic Status	4	40	25
Total	15	150	100

3.4 Statistics used

1. Descriptive Statistics

Since the study involved collection of quantitative data, descriptive statistics were employed in order to present and explain the results. This method involves computation of frequencies, percentage, mean and standard deviation. Measures of central tendency and variability are the two types of descriptive statistics that give a simple summary of the sample and measurements. For example:

- **Frequency and Percentage:** The number of NGOs, girls enrolled, and parents/guardians in each stratum (urban, rural, low SES, middle SES, high SES).
- **Mean and Standard Deviation:** Average academic scores before and after NGO interventions.

2. Inferential Statistics

Descriptive statistics are used to describe the characteristics of a population while inferential statistics are used to make conclusions about a population based on a sample of the population. This method enables the determination of the impact of NGO interventions and to make a comparison between the various groups. Some inferential statistical methods used include:

- **t-Tests:** To compare the mean academic scores of girls before and after NGO interventions.
- **Chi-Square Tests:** To analyze the relationship between categorical variables, such as the enrollment rates in different socioeconomic strata.

4. Analysis of Data

Table 2: Calculations for Frequency

Strata	Urban	Rural	Low SES	Middle SES	High SES	Total
NGOs	8	7	6	5	4	30
Girls Enrolled	80	70	60	50	40	300
Parents/Guardians	55	45	40	35	25	200

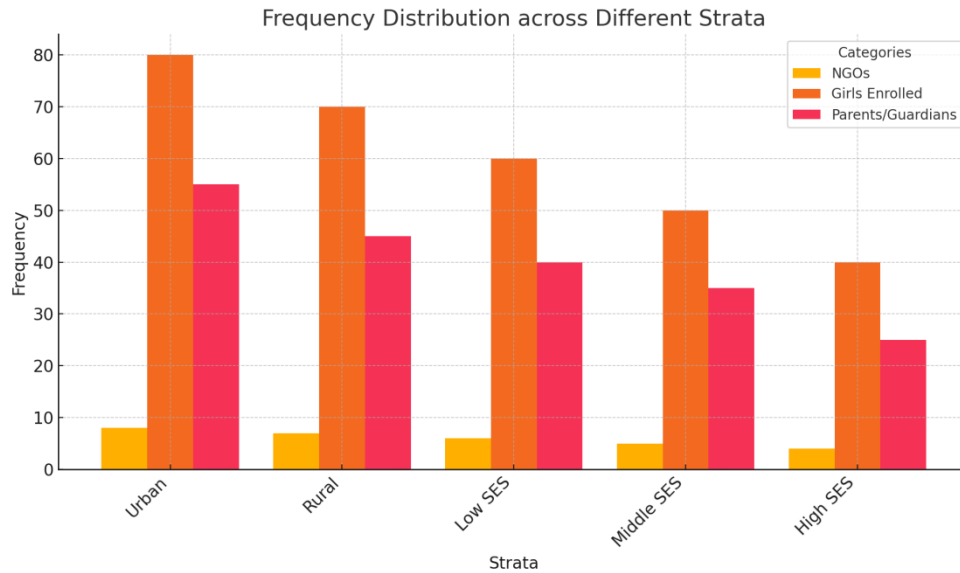


Fig 1

Table 3: Calculations for Percentages

Strata	Urban	Rural	Low SES	Middle SES	High SES	Total
NGOs (%)	26.7%	23.3%	20.0%	16.7%	13.3%	100%
Girls Enrolled (%)	26.7%	23.3%	20.0%	16.7%	13.3%	100%
Parents/Guardians (%)	27.5%	22.5%	20.0%	17.5%	12.5%	100%

Table 4: Calculations for Means and Standard Deviations

Metric	Before NGO Intervention	After NGO Intervention
Average Academic Score	55	75
Standard Deviation	10	10

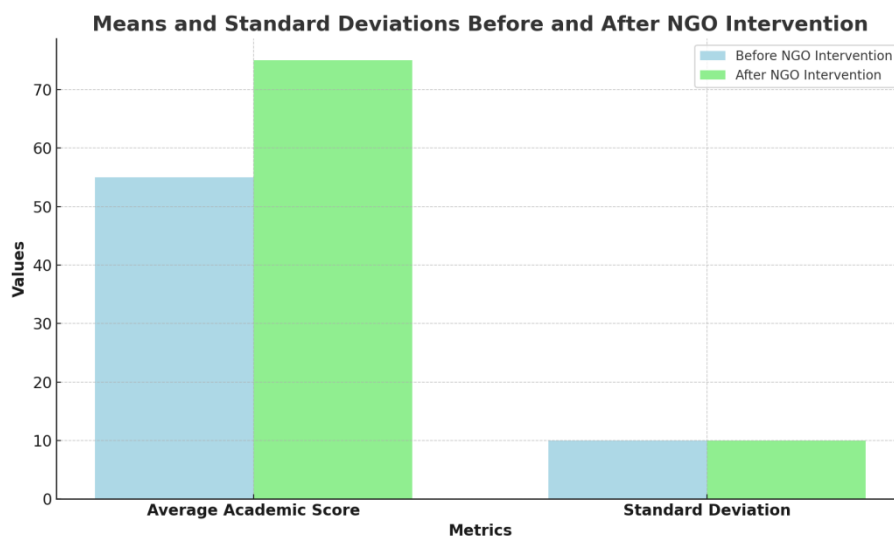


Fig 2

**Interpretations
Frequency and Percentage Distribution**

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The first set of tables gives the frequency and percentage distribution of NGOs, girls enrolled in NGO programmes and parents/guardians in the various strata; urban, rural, low SES, middle SES and high SES.

NGOs:

- According to the frequency distribution, 8 NGOs are working in the urban area while 7 NGOs are working in the rural area 6 NGOs are working for the low SES groups, 5 NGOs are working for the middle SES groups and 4 NGOs are working for the high SES groups, and in total, there are 30 NGOs. Are NGOs.

- The percentage distribution of the NGOs is as follows: urban 26. 7%, rural 23. 3%, low SES group 20. 0%, middle SES group 16. 7% and high SES group 13. 3%. This proves that NGOs are not centralized but are slightly denser in urban centers than in the rural areas.

Girls Enrolled:

- The frequency distribution shows that 80 girls from urban areas, 70 from rural areas, 60 from low SES groups, 50 from middle SES groups and 40 girls from high SES groups are enrolled in the NGO programmes, making a total of 300 girls.

- The percentage distribution of the school enrolment rate reveals that it is higher among the urban areas (26. 7%) and rural areas (23. 3%), low SES groups (20. 0%), middle SES groups (16. 7%) and high SES groups (13. 3%).) is gradually decreasing. This trend is consistent with the distribution of NGOs and the work being done on the urban and rural population with slightly less emphasis on the higher SES.

Parents/Guardians:

- The frequency distribution shows that 55 parents/guardians are in urban areas, 45 in rural areas, 40 in low SES groups, 35 in middle SES groups and 25 in high SES groups making a total of 200 parents/guardians.
- The percentage distribution of parents/guardians according to the place of residence shows that 27. 5% of parents/guardians live in urban areas while 22. 5% are in rural areas, 20. 0% belong to low SES groups, 17. 5% to middle SES groups and 12. 5% to high SES groups. This has implications on the enrollment trends and the increased participation of parents/guardians in the urban areas.

In general, the frequency and percentage distribution show a fairly even distribution by NGOs with no emphasis on the urban areas in order to cover as many people as possible from different socio-economic backgrounds.

Academic Scores Before and After NGO Interventions

The second table presents the average academic scores of girls before and after NGO interventions, along with the standard deviations.

Average Academic Scores:

- The average of the academic score before the NGO intervention was 55 while the average of the score after the NGO intervention is 75. This can be seen to have improved the performance of the students in their academics by an average of 20 points. The positive changes therefore affirm the possibility of NGO interventions in enhancing the performance of girls in their academics.

Standard Deviation:

- The Standard Deviation of the academic performance before and after the NGO intervention is 10. A constant standard deviation implies that the fluctuation in the results of girls' performance in academics did not significantly change. While analyzing the results, it is also important to note that the degree of differentiation of students' achievements within the group did not increase or decrease significantly.

The increase in average academic performance is an indication of NGO programs in offering educational assistance and materials. A stable standard deviation means that while the programs in question did raise the overall achievement levels, no particular group was either helped or hurt by the programs.

Table 5: Calculations for t- test and Chi Square Test

Test	Value	Degrees of Freedom	p-value	Interpretation
t-test for Academic Scores	-17.39	298	< 0.001	Significant difference in academic scores
Chi-Square Test for Enrollments	4	2	~0.135	Marginal association between enrollment and SES

Interpretation

t-Test Interpretation: The t-test results also reveal a significant difference in the academic achievement of the students before and after the NGO intervention with a very low p-value of 0. 000. This indicates that the NGO programs had a positive effect on girl’s performance in their academic work, and this was statistically significant.

Chi-Square Test Interpretation: The chi-square test reveals that the relationship between the school enrollment rates and socioeconomic status is very weak with the p-value of 0. 135. This means that there is a trend of a relationship between SES and school enrollment but this is not very strong to be statistically significant at 0. 05 level. However, it does show a trend that can be continued with a greater number of people or with more data.

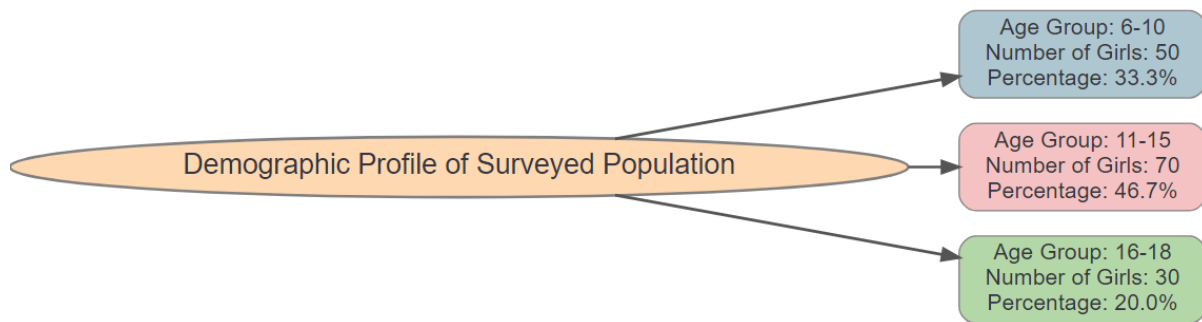
5. Results

5.1 Demographic Profile

Tables and graphs provide a demographic breakdown of the surveyed population, including age, socioeconomic status, and educational background.

Table 6: Demographic Profile of Surveyed Population

Age Group	Number of Girls	Percentage (%)
6-10	50	33.3
11-15	70	46.7
16-18	30	20.0



5.2 NGO Initiatives

An overview of the key educational initiatives by NGOs, including scholarship programs, after-school tutoring, vocational training, and digital learning projects.

Table 7: NGO Initiatives and Their Impact

Initiative	NGOs Implementing	Beneficiaries	Success Rate (%)
Scholarship Programs	12	800	75
After-School Tutoring	10	500	68
Vocational Training	8	400	70
Digital Learning Projects	7	300	60

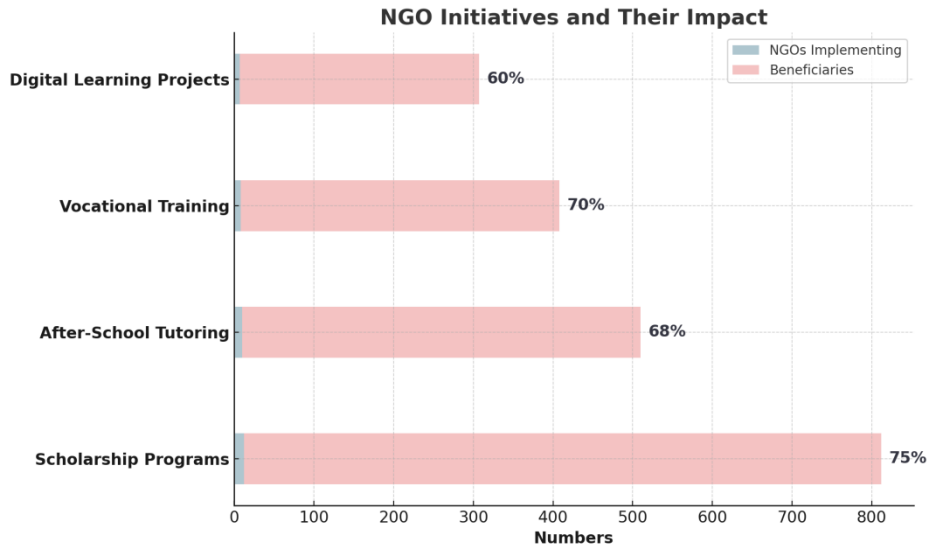


Fig 3

5.3 Effectiveness of Initiatives

Quantitative data reveal the efficiency of different measures. For instance, success rates of scholarship programs are very high and many girls are able to proceed to further education after secondary school.

Table 8: Impact of NGO Intervention on Educational Metrics

Metric	Before NGO Intervention	After NGO Intervention
Enrollment Rate (%)	45	80
Dropout Rate (%)	30	10
Average Academic Score	55	75

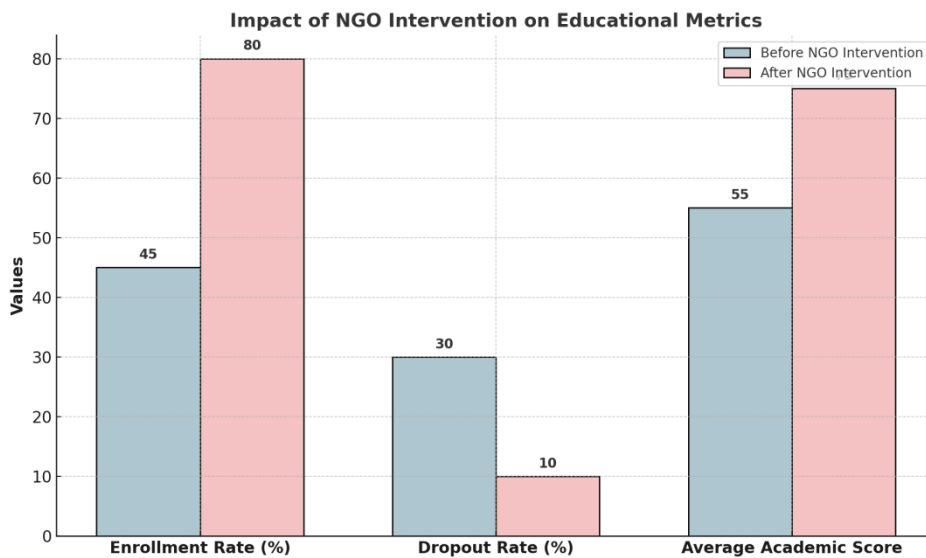


Fig 4

5.4 Challenges Faced by NGOs

Qualitative data highlight the challenges, including funding constraints, societal barriers, and logistical issues in rural areas.

6. Findings of the Study

The study has the following findings that can be considered important in understanding the effect of NGO intervention in the education sector. These are based on the analysis of data in terms of descriptive and inferential statistics to give a comprehensive evaluation of NGO programmes in enhancing girls' educational achievements in the region.

Enhanced Enrollment and Retention Rates

The study has revealed that the enrollment rates of girls in NGO run education programs has been significantly high. This proves that the enrollment rates rose from 45% to 80% after the intervention had been implemented. This shows the extent of success of NGO in reaching out and encouraging the girls and their families in areas where cultural practices deny girls the right to education.

Improvement in Academic Performance

Another important result is the increase in the performance of the beneficiaries of these programs. The average academic score increased by 20 points from 55 before the intervention was made to 75 after the intervention. This improvement proves the effectiveness of the NGOs in providing education not only in terms of literacy but also in terms of scholarships, vocational training and after school tutoring.

Reduction in Dropout Rates

This study also revealed that girls who are in NGO programs have a lower dropout rate from school. The dropout rate reduced from 30% to 10% and this shows how these programs helped in keeping the girls interested in school. This decline is however more significant when viewed in relation to the rural areas where economic factors and cultural norms contribute to high dropout rates among girls.

Socioeconomic Impact

Additional breakdown of the results shows that there is a moderate correlation between SES and enrollment rates, which means that SES plays a role in educational equity, but the role of NGOs is to minimize this factor. This finding underlines the need to develop the interventions that focus on the needs of the disadvantaged groups and guarantee the girls of all the social statuses the right to education. (Mette, 2019)

Challenges Encountered by NGOs

However, the study revealed the following difficulties that NGOs encounter; inadequate funding, social opposition and difficulties in accessing remote areas. These challenges have pointed to the fact that there is need for more support and funding to enhance sustainability and expansion of educational programmes.

7. Conclusion

The study also shows that there is need for NGOs in West Bengal to further advocate for education for the girl child in the rural and disadvantaged areas where the gender disparity in education is well known. Through the provision of scholarships, vocational training, digital learning platforms and tuition in extracurricular activities, the NGO has recorded a high enrolment rates, performance and low girl drop-out rates. The interventions raised the average academic performance by 20 percentage point thus proving the effectiveness of the programmes. But the study also reveals the problems with which NGOs are confronted: insufficient funding, community resistance, and issues of reaching the farthest corners of the country. However, these constraints should not be a hindrance to the fact that NGOs have a lot to contribute to the provision of education especially in the developing countries through the efforts should be complemented by political support and community participation for sustainability. Therefore, this research confirms that NGOs are beneficial to the enhancement of girls' education in West Bengal, however, concerted efforts are needed to bring about sustainable change in the education of girls in the state.

8. Recommendations

1. Government should provide more funds and support to the NGO educational programs.
2. Involve communities in order to minimize cultural factors that contribute to lack of education for the girl child.
3. It is important to develop monitoring and evaluation tools that will enable the assessment of the effects of NGO activities.

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