Issues and Hurdles in Women's Education in Rural Haryana: A Comparative Study

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ABSTRACT:

Women's education plays an important role in empowerment, gender equality, and social development. Women in rural India continue to face barriers to education. This study examined the problems and challenges related to women's education in rural areas of Haryana. A descriptive survey design was used, and data were collected through a three-stage multistage sampling technique from 300 women aged 20–30 years from 28 villages across the districts of Rohtak, Jhajjar, Palwal, and Nuh. Data were collected using a self-prepared Gender Stereotype Test, the Socio-Economic Status Scale developed by Kalia and Sahu (2012), and open-ended questions. The collected data were analysed using percentages, one-way ANOVA, Tukey's HSD test, and the Chi-square test. The findings showed that most women belonged to the middle socio-economic status group (78%), while 68% held some gender stereotypes. Only 38% of the respondents had completed graduation or higher education. Significant differences were found between the districts in terms of gender stereotypes and educational attainment. Gender stereotypes had a significant association with education, but socio-economic status did not have any significant relationship with education. The study used a cross-sectional design where causality cannot be drawn from the findings. The major challenges reported by the respondents were safety concerns (34%), family commitments (20%), and the non-availability of schools near their homes (10%). The study suggests that gender sensitization initiatives, community-based programmes, skill-based interventions, and financial support programmes may help to improve women's educational opportunities in rural areas.

Keywords: Women's education; gender stereotypes; socio-economic status

INTRODUCTION AND IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN'S EDUCATION

Education is the foundation of our thoughts, understanding, and problem-solving skills. Education creates genuine self-respect and provides new directions depending on one's abilities. By withholding any individual from education, we are inhibiting their overall development both personally and socially. Any democratic country needs to provide proper education to all its citizens in order to create an advancing society. It is extremely important to educate women as they play equally responsible roles in the family and society. The educated woman takes more care of the well-being of her family as she takes care of their health, hygiene, manages finance, and makes the right decisions. It is completely related to women empowerment, social justice, and development. Though Article 15 of the Indian Constitution promises all citizens to have access to education, educating all the girls is not an easy task.

According to the Census of 2011, almost half the total population in India is female. Women work relentlessly in all sectors; however, their contribution always remains unacknowledged. Majority of the females get married

in their twenties and continue living life as a housewife in India. Research findings reveal that more than 65 percent of females surveyed were housewives and only 4 percent worked in the government sector. Financial dependence reduces their capacity to make independent choices. In the cities where they are aware of their rights, very few approach courts. Women keep adapting themselves and establishing their position in every sector (Sangeeta, 2019).

Major Hurdles and Social Stereotypes

Women have occupied the highest posts such as Prime Minister and President of India (Pais, 2020). Despite all that, girls from rural parts such as Rohtak lack adequate education. Females' literacy rate is considerably less as compared to males and many girls tend to drop out. Despite the significant role of women in the economy (Suguna, 2011), there are various societal hurdles to genuine development.

One of the main reasons for low female education is gender inequality at home and school (Jha and Nagar, 2015). One more issue is the early child marriage among females, especially in West Bengal and Bihar where the percentage of children who got married early exceeds 40% among uneducated women (Raj et al., 2009). In cases when schools are distant from home, parents become concerned about their safety, harassment on the streets and poor school environment.

Gender stereotypes have an equally important part to play here. Men are usually expected to be independent and strong in decision making, whereas women are expected to only care and remain engaged in doing household work (Hoyt et al., 2009). Due to these traditional beliefs, parents usually tend to spend more on educating their sons than daughters (Iqbal et al., 2013; Sarkar et al., 2017). Dropout ratio of girls from primary schools is 8.2%, whereas that of boys is 2.7% (Kamaldeen et al., 2012).

Socio-Economic Factors and the Way Forward

Patriarchal traditions impose significant restrictions on freedom of women, particularly in rural India where 74.2% of women reside (Census, 1991; Vecchio and Roy, 1998). Women realise these discriminating norms – for example, early marriage, gender wage gap, preference for sons, but remain silent because of fear of society. Severe problems such as female feticide and dowry problems violate women's right to live (Medhi, 2000; Dreze and Sen, 2002). Low-caste and poor women suffer from dual marginalization, since they are engaged in low-paid informal sector of economy without being respected by others (Dixon, 1982). In addition, education is an instrument for developing basic literacy skills, as well as ability to manage finances independently (Arora, 2016). Dreze and Sen (2013) argued that poor economic conditions and strict social traditions prevent girls from getting education. Recent studies revealed that high status of families increases achievements of girls in education (Saxena and Yadav, 2024). It is necessary to change social attitude, to construct safe local schools and to encourage girls' education.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Drèze and Sen (1995) argued that socio-economic status (SES) directly influences girls' educational attainment, as low-income families often prioritise boys' education and withdraw girls from school to conserve resources. Filmer and Pritchett (1999) analysed data from 35 developing countries and found that household wealth quintiles strongly predict girls' school enrolment, more so than boys. Kingdon (2005) found that low parental income, parental illiteracy and caste discrimination jointly depress female schooling rates in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, while Colclough et al. (2000) documented that SES has both a direct effect (ability to pay fees, buy books, afford transport) and an indirect effect (through parental expectations) on girls' progression to secondary school. Huisman and Smits (2015), examining data from 25 Indian states, concluded that SES was the single most important predictor of school completion for girls, and Kaur and Sangwan (2019) showed that girls from low-SES households in rural Haryana had a significantly higher probability of school dropout by age 15.

Research conducted by Subrahmanian (2005) shows that parents' adherence to traditional gender roles predicts low enrolment and high dropout rates among girls. The research conducted by Sahoo (2017) revealed that

villages located in rural areas of Rajasthan that exhibit stronger patriarchal practices show significantly lower levels of female literacy, even after considering the effects of household income, indicating that gender stereotypes influence literacy independently of SES. Gender inequality beliefs exhibited by heads of households have been shown to reduce girls' enrollment in secondary schools according to the findings of Srivastava & Bajpai (2021), and girls from Assam living in rural areas exposed to gender stereotypes exhibited low academic aspirations and were absent from classes, irrespective of family income according to Choudhury (2011). According to Bhagavatheeswaran et al. (2017), girls perceiving gender equity at home were almost twice as likely to attend secondary schools compared to girls who experienced strict gender norms, regardless of household income, while Amin et al. (2020) revealed that despite the elimination of economic barriers due to stipends, gender stereotypes still prevent girls from advancing past lower secondary education in rural Bangladesh.

Parkash (2019), through Census data on Haryana, established that the level of female literacy was always lower than that of male literacy in all districts. Parul and Arya (2024) analyzed 389 households in 9 villages of Haryana and realised that education levels were higher in those villages with good transportation, socio-economic background, and linkages with urban areas, while education levels were lower in remote villages. Henderson and Sabharwal (2024) realised that girls in Haryana faced more constraints as far as subject, institution, and future career choice were concerned, while Nanda et al. (2022) discovered that education was considered as a tool of making marriages better for girls. Chaudhary (2013) observed that domestic responsibilities and early marriage are major reasons for girls' discontinuation of schooling in rural Haryana, and Singh and Mukherjee (2007) found that girls who marry early are unlikely to resume education. Prasad (2011), studying four village of Sonepat district, found that women's domestic work was treated as non-productive and unrecognised, which increased their economic dependence on male family members.

Vecchio and Roy (1998) concluded that women are aware of their oppression but fear social retaliation. Murmu and Yadav (2025) revealed that urban women had significantly higher educational qualifications, better awareness of legal and social rights and greater employment opportunities than rural women, who faced poverty, gender discrimination, limited educational facilities and traditional social norms. Ramanaik et al. (2018) found that poverty, restrictive gender norms and household responsibilities were the major reasons for girls dropping out of school in northern Karnataka, and Chatterjee and Nair (2020) reported that early marriage remains a significant barrier to girls' secondary and higher education in Bihar. Kavita (2025) found that districts of Haryana with higher female literacy, better healthcare services and greater employment opportunities showed an improved status of women, and Kingdon and Theopold (2008) noted strong spatial heterogeneity in gender gaps, suggesting the need for district-level analysis such as the present study on Haryana

Collectively, these studies reveal that women's education in rural India is shaped by the intersection of low socio-economic status and pervasive gender stereotypes, compounded by infrastructure deficits, safety concerns, domestic workload and early marriage. SES and gender stereotypes each use independent and relating effects on girls' educational achievement. This form of literature provides the theoretical foundation for the present study.

Rationale Of The Study

Women's education is vital for speeding up any nation's development. Even though the government is taking various steps, we still struggle to provide higher education to all women. Two major hurdles behind this are gender stereotypes and poor socio-economic conditions, which heavily influence how people think and act. Research shows that these social myths and economic limits are closely connected, which is why this study focuses on how they affect women's schooling.

Although institutions like Maharishi Dayanand University and several colleges exist across four districts in Haryana, many women in rural villages still miss out on quality education. Because of this, these specific districts were chosen as the research area. This study looks at the level of gender stereotypes existing in these areas so

that targeted awareness programs can be planned. By comparing local educational challenges, the study highlights ground-level problems and suggests practical, local solutions to improve women's education.

Objectives

The objectives of the study were as follows:

- To assess the levels of Socio-Economic Status and Gender stereotypes among women aged 20–30 in different district of Haryana.
- To assess the educational status among women aged 20–30 in different districts of Haryana.
- To compare the gender stereotypes among women aged 20–30 in different districts of Haryana.
- To compare education levels among women aged 20–30 in different districts of Haryana.
- To study the relationship between gender stereotypes and the education level of women aged 20–30 in the four districts of Haryana.
- To study the relationship between the socio-economic status and the education level of women aged 20–30 in the four districts of Haryana.
- To analyse and compare the issues related to women's education in the age group of 20–30 in different districts of Haryana.

Hypotheses

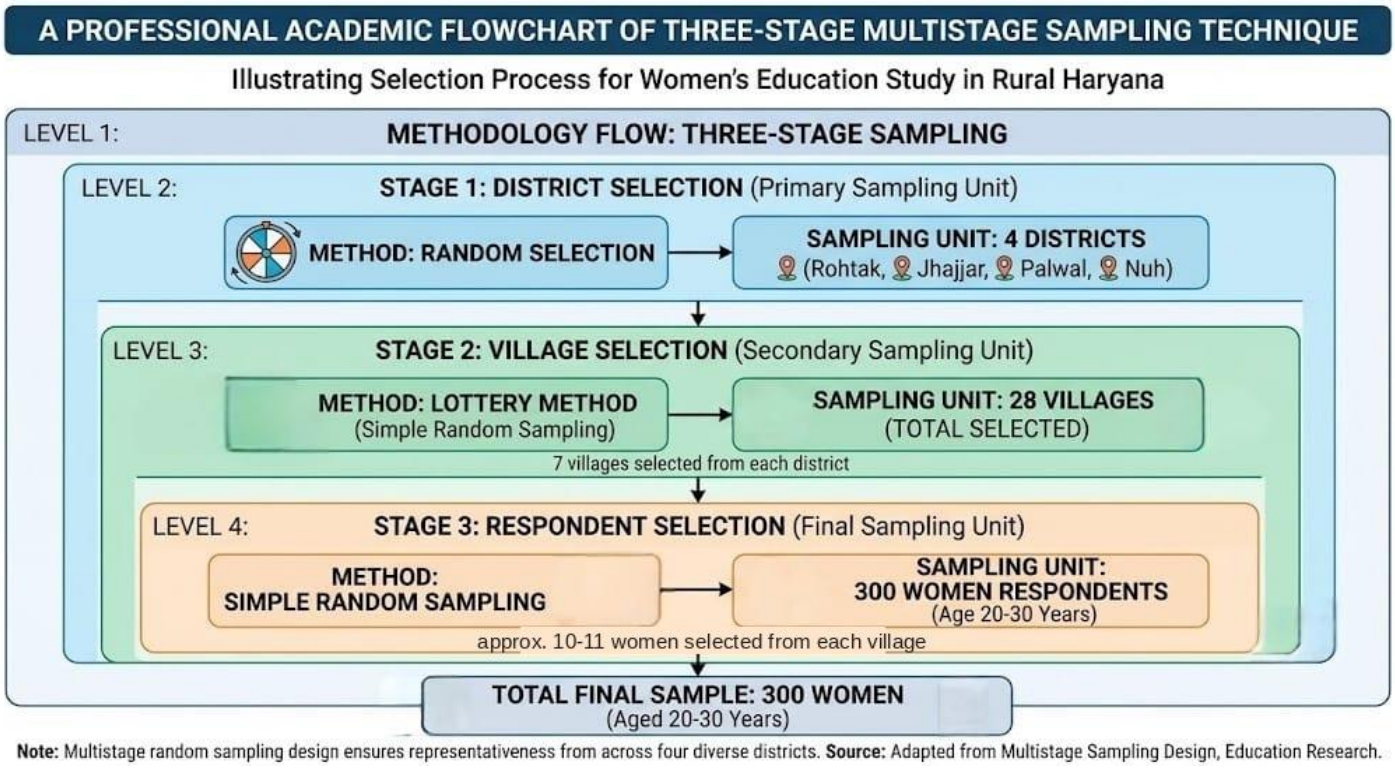
- There will be a significant difference in the gender stereotypes among women aged 20–30 in different districts of Haryana.
- There will be a significant association between the education level of women aged 20–30 and their district of residence in Haryana.
- There will be a significant difference in the gender stereotypes among women aged 20–30 having different levels of education in Haryana.
- There will be a significant relationship between the socio-economic status and the education level of women aged 20–30 in Haryana.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

A descriptive survey research design was used to examine the relationship of gender stereotypes and socio-economic status with women's education and to compare these variables across districts. Data were collected through a survey that included scales (quantitative data) and open-ended questions (qualitative data). As the data were collected at a single point in time (cross-sectional design), the study examines associations and differences and does not establish causal relationships.

Population, Sample And Sampling Technique



Note: Multistage random sampling design ensures representativeness from across four diverse districts. **Source:** Adapted from Multistage Sampling Design, Education Research.

All females in the age group of 20–30 years in four districts of Haryana were the population of the present study. A three-stage multistage sampling technique was used. In the first stage, four districts, i.e. Rohtak, Jhajjar, Palwal and Nuh, were selected. In the second stage, seven villages were selected from each district using the lottery method (simple random sampling), giving a total of 28 villages. In the third stage, women were selected from each selected village using simple random sampling. Thus, the total sample consisted of 300 women aged 20–30 years (approximately 10–11 women per village), representing diverse socio-economic and educational backgrounds across the four districts. The district-wise sample consisted of 77 women from Rohtak, 75 from Jhajjar, 75 from Palwal and 73 from Nuh. The distribution of the sample is given in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of sample

Stage	Sampling unit	Sampling technique	Details / selection process	Sample size
Stage I	District of Haryana	Random sampling	Four districts selected: Rohtak, Jhajjar, Palwal and Nuh	4 districts
Stage II	Villages within each district	Lottery method (simple random sampling)	7 villages selected from each district	28 villages
Stage III	Women (respondents) within each village	Simple random sampling	Approximately 10–11 women selected from each village	300 women (total)

Source: Primary data.

Tools Used

Data on the independent variables, i.e. socio-economic status and gender stereotypes, were collected using

different tools. Socio-economic status was assessed with the Socio-Economic Status Scale by Kalia and Sahu (2012), and a self-prepared 'Gender Stereotype Test' was used to collect data on gender stereotypes. During the survey, the women were also asked some open-ended questions about issues related to women's education, which gave the basis for the qualitative analysis of the study.

Gender Stereotype Test. The Gender Stereotype Test was designed by the researchers to determine how much women comply with gender stereotypes. This test is unique to this particular research and hence, has not been standardised and its reliability and validity have not been determined. Scores were grouped as high, middle and low depending on gender stereotypes. Thus, the findings regarding gender stereotypes should be cautiously interpreted.

Socio-Economic Status Scale. The scale used for measuring the socio-economic status of the respondents is called the Socio-Economic Status Scale (Kalia and Sahu, 2012). The respondents have been categorised into three categories of high, middle and low socio-economic status. It is a standardised scale and its reliability and validity have been determined by the scale's authors (Kalia and Sahu, 2012).

Qualitative data and coding procedure. The answers given for the open-ended questions were analyzed using manual content analysis. This involved reading the answers several times to familiarize oneself with the data, identification and coding of the meaningful parts of the answers and categorisation of the codes with similar themes based on the contents (such as safety issues, household chores, absence of schools near by). The major problem reported by each individual respondent was categorised, and the percentage of each category out of the total number of respondents (N=300) was calculated.

Ethical Considerations

The study was carried out following the ethics requirements of the organisation. Participation in the study was on a voluntary basis, and the respondents gave their informed consent after the purpose of the study was explained to them. They were made aware that they had the liberty to opt out of the study at any time. The identities of the respondents were kept anonymous; the data collected were kept confidential and were used for the purposes of the study alone.

Statistical Techniques And Delimitations

The quantitative data were analysed using mean, standard deviation, percentage, Chi-square and one-way ANOVA, followed by Tukey's HSD post-hoc test. The qualitative data were analysed through content analysis, as described above. The study was delimited to 300 women aged 20–30 years from four districts of Haryana (Rohtak, Jhajjar, Palwal and Nuh).

RESULT AND FINDING

The results of the study are presented according to the objectives.

Levels of socio-economic status and gender stereotypes

Table 2: Level of Socio-Economic Status and Gender Stereotypes among Women

Levels	Socio-economic status (%)	Gender stereotypes (%)
High	2	7
Middle	78	68
Low	20	25
Total	**100**	**100**

Source: Primary data.

Table 2 shows that only 2% of women aged 20–30 belong to the high socio-economic class, with significant wealth and access to resources. The majority, i.e. 78%, belong to the middle socio-economic status with moderate income, resources and access to education, while 20% belong to the low socio-economic status and face more financial or social challenges. With regard to gender stereotypes, 7% of women have high scores, which means that they accept gender stereotypes strongly; 68% accept certain gender stereotypes; and only 25% have fewer gender stereotypes.

Educational status of women

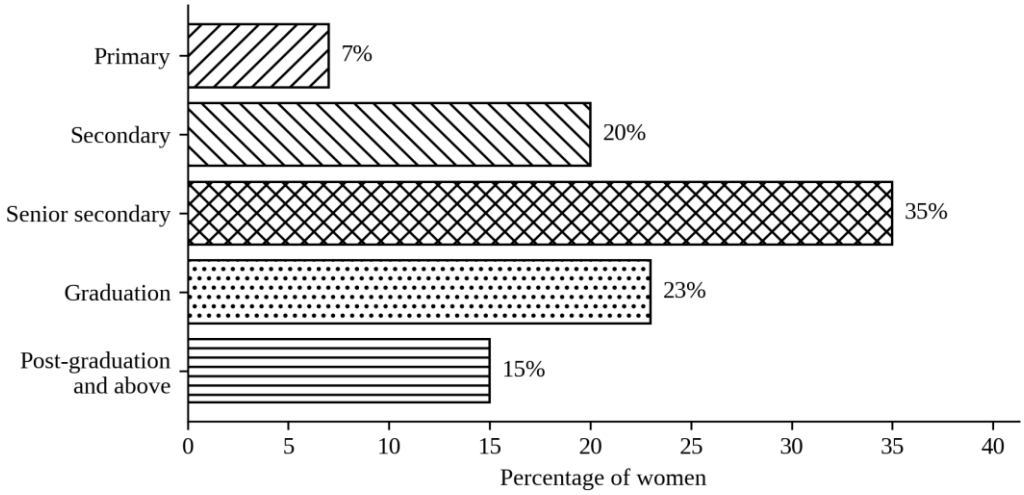


Figure 1: Educational Status of Rural Women in four districts of Haryana

Figure 1 shows that 7% of women have completed only primary education, 20% have attained secondary education, 35% have completed senior secondary education and 23% have achieved graduation. Together, 62% of women have not progressed beyond senior secondary education. Only 15% have pursued post-graduation and higher levels of education. Thus, higher education (graduation and above) has been attained by only about 38% of women aged 20–30 years in these four districts, indicating that senior secondary remains the level at which most women's education is discontinued.

Comparison of gender stereotypes across districts

H01: There is no significant difference in gender stereotypes among women aged 20–30 in different districts of Haryana. ANOVA was employed to test this hypothesis (Table 3).

Table 3: ANOVA Summary of Comparison of the Gender Stereotypes among Women in District

District	Mean	Std. deviation	F-value	Significance (p-value)
Rohtak	90.12	12.600	4.933	0.002 (significant at 5% level)
Nuh	84.19	15.081		
Palwal	85.26	12.857		
Jhajjar	89.55	15.621		
Total	**87.28**	**14.276**		

Source: Primary data.

The calculated F-value of 4.933 and the p-value of 0.002, which is less than 0.05, indicate a significant difference in gender stereotypes among women across the districts. So, the null hypothesis is rejected. Rohtak district has

the highest mean gender stereotype score as compared to other districts, while Nuh district has the lowest. The reasons for these district-wise differences were not examined in the present study.

The Tukey HSD post-hoc test showed that the difference between Rohtak and Nuh (mean difference = 5.925, p = 0.010) and between Jhajjar and Nuh (mean difference = 5.356, p = 0.028) is statistically significant at the 0.05 level, suggesting that women from Nuh differ notably from those of Rohtak and Jhajjar in their gender stereotype scores. However, the difference between Rohtak and Palwal (p = 0.053) is not significant, implying similar gender-related attitudes among women in these two districts. Overall, the findings reveal differences in gender stereotype scores across the districts.

Table 3.1: Tukey's HSD Post-Hoc Test showing comparison of the gender stereotypes among women of different districts of Haryana.

(I) District	(J) District	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Level of Sig.	Significance
Rohtak	Nuh	5.925*	1.891	0.010	Significant
	Palwal	4.857	1.900	0.053	Not Significant
	Jhajjar	0.569	1.909	0.991	Not Significant
Nuh	Rohtak	-5.925*	1.891	0.010	Significant
	Palwal	-1.068	1.908	0.944	Not Significant
	Jhajjar	-5.356*	1.917	0.028	Significant
Palwal	Rohtak	-4.857	1.900	0.053	Not Significant
	Nuh	1.068	1.908	0.944	Not Significant
	Jhajjar	-4.288	1.926	0.118	Not Significant
Jhajjar	Rohtak	-0.569	1.909	0.991	Not Significant
	Nuh	5.356*	1.917	0.028	Significant
	Palwal	4.288	1.926	0.118	Not Significant

The results of the Tukey HSD post-hoc test (Table 3.1) indicate significant differences in gender stereotype scores among women across different districts of Haryana. The difference between Rohtak and Nuh (mean difference = 5.925, p = 0.010) and between Jhajjar and Nuh (mean difference = 5.356, p = 0.028) is statistically significant at the 0.05 level, suggesting that women from Nuh differ notably from those of Rohtak and Jhajjar in their perception and adherence to gender stereotypes. However, the difference between Rohtak and Palwal (p = 0.053) is not statistically significant, implying similar gender-related attitudes among women in these two districts. Overall, the findings reveal differences in gender stereotype scores across the districts, with women in Rohtak showing comparatively higher levels of gender stereotyping.

Comparison of education levels across districts

H02: There is no association between the education level of women aged 20–30 and their district of residence in the four districts of Haryana. The district-wise education levels and the Chi-square results are given in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4: District-wise Comparison of Education Levels among Women of Haryana

Educational Level	Rohtak	Jhajjar	Palwal	Nuh	Total
Primary education	3	8	4	6	21
Secondary education	10	8	25	17	60
Senior secondary	39	30	18	18	105
Graduation	22	21	13	13	69
Post-graduation and above	3	8	15	19	45
Total	**77**	**75**	**75**	**73**	**300**

Source: Primary data.

Table 5: Chi-square Table for Comparison of Education Levels among Women Aged 20–30 in Different District of Haryana

Test	Value	df	Asymptotic significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-square	44.11	12	< 0.0001
Likelihood ratio	45.47	12	< 0.0001
Linear-by-linear association	0.904	1	0.342
N of valid cases	300	-	-

Source: Primary data.

The calculated Pearson Chi-square value was 44.11 with 12 degrees of freedom and was statistically significant ($p < 0.0001$), indicating a significant association between the education level of women and their district of residence. No cell had an expected frequency of less than 5. Since $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis is rejected, which indicates that the educational levels of women differ significantly across the districts of Haryana.

Gender stereotypes and education level

H03: There is no significant difference in gender stereotypes among women aged 20–30 having different levels of education in the four districts of Haryana (Table 6).

Table 6: ANOVA Summary of Gender Stereotypes among Women (Age 20–30) across Education Levels

Level of education	Mean	Std. deviation	F-value	Significance (p-value)
Primary education	89.27	15.310	3.528	0.008
Secondary education	89.19	14.494		
Senior secondary	88.72	13.948		
Graduation	83.73	13.061		
Post-graduation and above	84.31	13.469		
Total	**87.28**	**14.276**		

Source: Primary data.

As shown in Table 6, the F-value is 3.528 and the p-value is 0.008, which is significant at the 5% level. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected, and it can be concluded that gender stereotype scores differ significantly among women aged 20–30 having different levels of education: women with higher education tended to have lower gender stereotype scores. The Tukey HSD post-hoc test showed that the mean differences in gender stereotypes between secondary education and graduation (5.46, $p = 0.031$) and between senior secondary and graduation (4.993, $p = 0.046$) were significant, indicating that graduate women had significantly lower gender stereotype scores as compared to those with secondary and senior secondary education, while no significant difference was found in gender stereotypes among women having primary and secondary education. As the data are cross-sectional, the direction of this association cannot be established.

Socio-economic status and education level

H04: There is no significant relationship between the socio-economic status and the education level of women aged 20–30 in the four districts of Haryana (Table 7). One-way ANOVA across the five education levels was used to test this hypothesis.

Table 7: ANOVA Summary for the Relationship between Socio-Economic Status (SES) and Education Level of Women

Source of variation	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F-value	Significance (p-value)
Between groups	1515.146	4	378.787	1.719	0.146
Within groups	64987.092	295	220.295		
Total	**66502.239**	**299**			

Source: Primary data.

Between-group sum of squares was 1515.146 for 4 degrees of freedom and the mean square was 378.787. Within-group sum of squares was 64987.092 for 295 degrees of freedom and the mean square was 220.295. Since the computed F-ratio of 1.719 (df = 4, 295) and p-value of 0.146 (> 0.05) suggest that the scores on socio-economic status of women were not significantly different across the education levels. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted, suggesting no significant association between socio-economic status and the education level of women in the current sample

Issues related to women's education across districts

The last objective was analysed qualitatively on the basis of the responses to the open-ended questions, using the content-analysis procedure described in the methodology. Table 8 and Figure 2 show the issues that restrict women from getting educated.

Table 8: Issues Restricting Women's Education Reported by Respondents (N = 300)

Rank	Issue (category)	Percentage of respondents (%)	Nature of responses coded
1	Safety concerns	34	Risk of harassment or violence while travelling to and from school
2	Household responsibilities	20	Housework and care of younger siblings limiting time for schooling
3	No schools nearby	10	Lack of schools accessible to girls near their homes
3	Lack of awareness	10	Limited awareness of the importance of girls' education
3	Transportation issues	10	Inadequate transport facilities in rural areas
6	Inadequate facilities for girls	8	Lack of separate toilets and common rooms
6	Limited family support	8	Preference for investing in boys' education
	Total	**100**	

Source: Primary data.

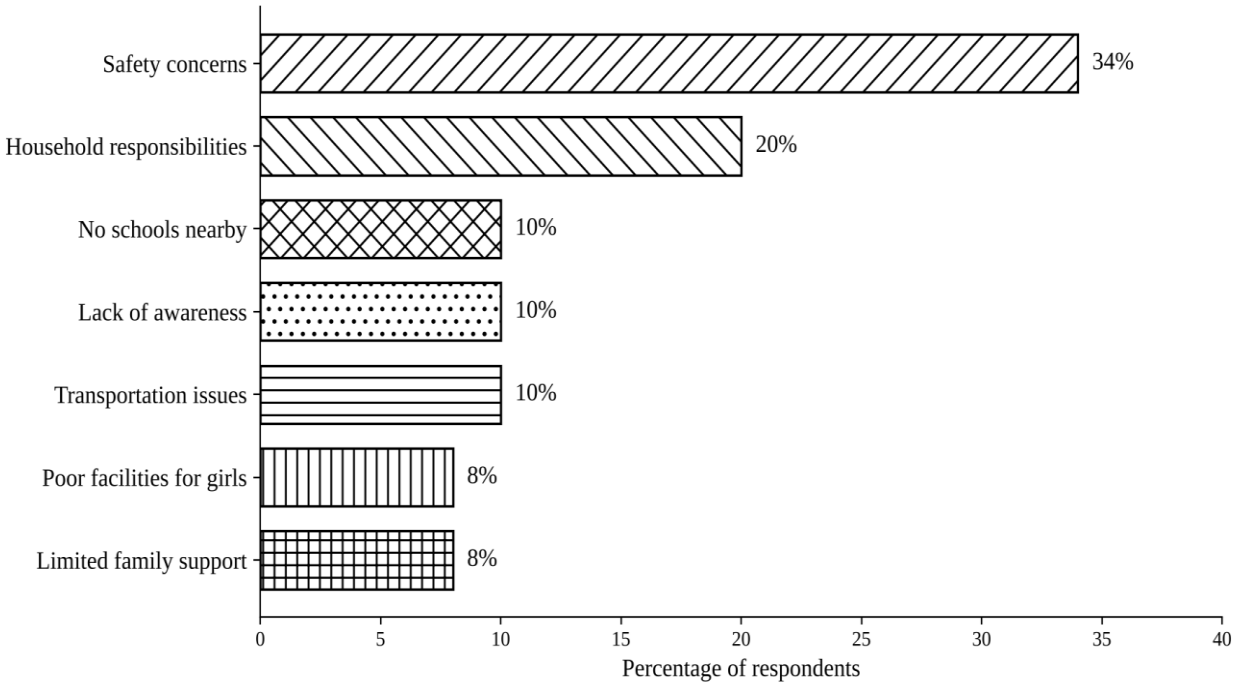


Figure 2: Issues Restricting the Education of Women in Four Districts of Haryana

- Safety concerns: 34% of females indicated safety concerns for girls travelling to and from school. The journey to school can be fraught with risk related to harassment or violence, which causes many families to prioritise their daughter's safety over her education.
- Household responsibilities: 20% felt household responsibilities were a main reason for limiting girls' time for schooling. In most rural communities' girls are expected to help with housework and to look after younger brothers and sisters.
- No schools nearby: 10% cited lack of schools nearby for girls as a reason for girls' lower levels of education.
- Lack of awareness: 10% of respondents thought that the lack of awareness of the importance of girls' education is a reason, which can come from traditional beliefs and cultural norms that do not priotise education for girls.
- Transportation issues: 10% face transportation issues in rural areas which also become a hurdle in women education.
- Facilities: 8% said that poor facilities for girls like separate toilets and common rooms restrict their educational opportunities.
- Limited family support: 8% of respondents raised this issue, as many families prefer to invest in boys' education rather than girls'.

Women of different districts pointed out different issues. Safety concerns for girls were the main issue across all four districts. Household responsibilities and limited family support were more commonly raised by women of Palwal and Nuh. Lack of nearby schools accessible to girls was mainly pointed out by women of Palwal and Jhajjar. Transportation issues were indicated by women across Jhajjar, Palwal and Nuh, while inadequate facilities for girls in educational institutions were raised mainly by women of Rohtak district.

DISCUSSION

A significant difference in gender stereotypes among women aged 20–30 in the different districts of Haryana was found, with women of Nuh scoring significantly lower than those of Rohtak and Jhajjar in the Tukey HSD results. The article in The Hindu (2021) highlighted strong patriarchal beliefs among people of Haryana tier II towns, which are associated with gender stereotypes, and Deepika (2016) also found gender discrimination against the girl child in Sonepat District, which is associated with gender stereotypes.

There also exists a statistically significant difference in educational levels among women across the districts. This finding is supported by Jyoti (2022), who found disparities in the status of education among women of different statuses across Sonepat District, and is aligned with Rana (2016), who highlighted disparities in the education of women across the district of Haryana.

Gender stereotypes significantly varied among the levels of education, implying that women with high levels of education scored low on the gender stereotype scale. This is consistent with Kirik (2006), who studied the extent to which gender stereotypes prevent girls from accessing education. There was no significant association between the socio-economic status and the education level of women in the current research, which contradicts the findings of Drèze and Sen (2013), Kingdon (2011) and Asadullah and Yeasmin (2022). The reason for this contradiction may be attributed to the particular samples and the districts used in the current research. Since the study is cross-sectional, the significant associations noted above cannot be seen as causative

The women of these districts most frequently identified safety concerns for girls travelling to and from school (34%) and household responsibilities (20%) as the issues that restrict them from getting educated, followed by the lack of nearby schools, lack of awareness and transportation issues (10% each). Inadequate facilities for girls, like separate toilets, and limited family support (8% each) were also concerns blocking their education.

Limitations Of The Study

The findings of the study should be interpreted in the light of the following limitations. First, the study followed a cross-sectional descriptive design; therefore, associations between gender stereotypes, socio-economic status and education level were examined, and no causal relationship can be inferred. Second, gender stereotypes were measured with a self-prepared test and the data were self-reported, which may be affected by social desirability. Third, the sample was limited to 300 women aged 20–30 years from four districts of Haryana, which limits the generalisation of the findings to other age groups and regions. Fourth, gender stereotypes, socio-economic status and district were analysed through separate bivariate tests (ANOVA and Chi-square); a multivariate model including these variables simultaneously was not tested, so their independent contributions could not be assessed. Fifth, the qualitative data were obtained from brief responses to open-ended questions and were analysed through frequency-based content analysis, which provides limited depth. Future studies may use multivariate models, longitudinal designs and in-depth qualitative methods to address these limitations.

CONCLUSION

The present study indicated that Gender stereotyping is highly related to the education of women, where women with high educational levels were recorded with low gender stereotyping scores. There is no correlation between socio-economic status and the education of women in the current study sample. As the study is descriptive and cross-sectional, these findings indicate associations and not causal effects. Safety concerns, household responsibilities and the lack of nearby schools were the issues most frequently reported by the respondents. The findings suggest that intervention programmes may be needed to reduce gender stereotypes; gender sensitisation programmes and community-based programmes may be launched to deal with deeply rooted gender stereotypes, skill-based programmes in schools and colleges may help in overcoming societal restrictions, and scholarships and other financial support may help to reduce the economic constraints which create hurdles in women's education. These suggestions are based on the descriptive findings of the present study and need to be tested in further research.

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