



## **SOCIO ECONOMIC AND EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF UNDERPRIVILEGED SECONDARY GIRL STUDENTS IN PURULIA OF WEST BENGAL**

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### **RESEARCH ARTICLE**



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#### **Abstract**

The education of underprivileged secondary girl children from deprived socio-economic backgrounds remains a critical concern in Purulia. This study investigates the socio-economic and educational status of deprived-class secondary school girls in Purulia district, West Bengal. The research focuses on five major dimensions 1: To analyze the socio-economic background of underprivileged secondary girl students in Purulia District. 2: To identify the socio-cultural barriers and challenges of underprivileged secondary girl students. 3: To assess the availability and accessibility of educational facilities in rural area of Purulia. 4: To evaluate the level of awareness and utilization of Government schemes and policies among the target group and their families. 5: To suggest policy-level recommendations for improving the educational conditions of underprivileged girls in rural and tribal regions. The study adopts a descriptive survey research design, suitable for collecting both quantitative and qualitative data from a large population across diverse socio-economic backgrounds. For the data collection, an interview schedule was developed by the researchers. Preliminary results reveal that while enrolment levels have improved due to government interventions, challenges persist in attendance, retention, and learning outcomes. Socio-cultural constraints, economic hardship, and inadequate facilities continue to hinder progress. Awareness of welfare schemes exists but their utilisation remains uneven, particularly among the most underprivileged households. This paper explored the need for targeted policies, social apathy, and parental educational disadvantage to create an enabling environment for underprivileged girls' education. Strengthening implementation of existing schemes, expanding financial support, and addressing gender-based barriers are crucial for enhancing both the socio-economic and educational status of underprivileged secondary girl children in Purulia.

**Keywords:** *Education, Socio-economic Status, Underprivileged Girls, Governments schemes, Socio-cultural Barriers*

#### **Introduction**

Education is a fundamental right and a critical instrument for the social, economic, and political empowerment of individuals, especially for girls from marginalized communities. For underprivileged girls, education can open doors to opportunities that were historically denied to them. In India, the Right to Education (Article 21A) 2009, and several government initiatives, such as Sarva Siksha Abhiyan, and more recently the National Education Policy 2020, have sought to make education accessible to all children.

Though the reality on the ground tells a different story. Social and economic inequities still stand in the way of girl's education, particularly for those from deprived section of society. Poverty, poor school infrastructure, lack of parental awareness, and the burden of household chores often prevent them from attending school regularly. Social issues like early marriage, gender bias, and cultural restrictions push many girls out of the education system.

In case of Purulia district the situation of underprivileged girls' student is quite worrisome. Purulia is characterized by high poverty rates, a large tribal population, and limited access to quality education especially for girls at the secondary level. Many girls face systemic barriers such as family income, parental education, caste, access to resources, early marriage, lack of proper school facilities and community attitudes influence the girls' schooling experiences. These challenges are compounded in underprivileged communities, where education is not always prioritized due to social and economic constraints.

The paper emphasizes into the socio-economic and educational status of underprivileged secondary girl in Purulia, identifying the barriers they face and analysing the inter relationship between socio-economic factors and educational outcomes. Through

empirical analysis and data-driven insight that can inform region-specific perception and policies aimed at promoting equitable education.

### Objectives of the Study

Objective 1: To analyze the socio-economic background of underprivileged secondary girl students in Purulia District.

Objective 2: To identify the socio-cultural barriers and challenges of underprivileged secondary girl students.

Objectives 3: To assess the availability and accessibility of educational facilities in rural area of Purulia.

Objectives 4: To evaluate the level of awareness and utilization of Government schemes and policies among the target group and their families.

Objective 5: To suggest policy-level recommendations for improving the educational conditions of underprivileged girls in rural and tribal regions.

### Research Questions

In accordance with objectives of the study, the following research questions were formulated:

RQ 1. What are the socio-economic characteristics of underprivileged girl student in Purulia district in terms of family income, parental occupation, housing conditions, and access to basic amenities?

RQ 2: What socio-cultural barriers – such as gender discrimination, early marriage, and domestic responsibilities – affect the education of underprivileged girl children?

RQ3: How available, accessible, and adequate are educational facilities (distance of school from home, separate toilets, mid-day meals) in the district of Purulia?

RQ 4: To what extent are underprivileged girl student and their families aware of and utilising government schemes and policies (e.g., Kanyashree and any other scholarship from state or central government)?

RQ 5: What policy measures and community-based strategies could effectively improve the socio-economic and educational status of underprivileged girl student in Purulia district?

### Methodology

The study adopts a descriptive survey research design, suitable for collecting both quantitative and qualitative data from a large population across diverse socio-economic backgrounds. This design helps in understanding the current socio-economic conditions, educational status, and the challenges faced by underprivileged secondary girl students of Purulia district. The population of the study includes secondary-level girl students from government-aided schools across the Purulia district of West Bengal. The primary data were collected from the 108 students across Purulia District. For the data collection, an interview schedule was developed by the researchers, consisting of 14 questions related to the current socio-economic conditions, educational status, and the challenges faced by underprivileged secondary girls' student. This study was carried out in Purulia district of West Bengal specifically in Purulia block II, Balarampur and Hura was physically visited by the researchers. The collected data were subjected to analysis using frequency distribution and percentage calculation to interpret the results.

### Data Collection Tools

To collect relevant data, the following tools were used:

#### a. Structured Questionnaire (for Students)

A pre-tested questionnaire in Bengali was developed, covering:

- Demographic details (age, caste, family size)
- Parental education and occupation
- Household income and assets
- School facilities and attendance
- Study habits, academic performance, dropout risks
- Aspirations and barriers to education

#### b. School Observation Checklist

Used to assess the school environment, sanitation, and availability of resources like libraries, and mid-day meals.

### Results and Discussion

RQ1: What are the socio-economic characteristics of underprivileged girl student in Purulia district in terms of family income, parental occupation, housing conditions, and access to basic amenities?

**Table 1: Socio-economic characteristics**

Occupation	Parents	Agriculture	House wife	Daily wages worker	Service	Unemployed	Other
	Father	37.7%		13.2%	17.9%		31.1%
	Mother		88.8%	5.6%	2.8%		2.8%

Family income	Below 50000/-		50000-100000		Above 100000			
		42.6%		23.1%		34.3%		
Housing condition	Mud House		Concrete House		Mud-concrete House			
	9.3%		48.1%		42.6%			
Access to basic amenities	Electricity		Drinking water		Toilet		Land	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
	100%		91.7%		88%		91.7%	
			8.3%		12%		8.3%	

Table 1 shows a concerning picture that the majority of fathers are engaged in agriculture (37.7%), followed by those involved in other occupations (31.1%). Around 17.9% work in service sectors, while 13.2% earn their livelihood as daily wage workers. Mothers are engaged as house wives (88.8%), only 2.8% work in service sector, while 5.6% engaged as daily wages worker and rest of 2.8% involved in others sector. In terms of annual family income, 42% of families earn below ₹50,000, 23.1% fall within ₹50,000–₹1,00,000, while 34.3% have an annual income above ₹1,00,000. Above table shows a concerning picture of living conditions of respondents. A majority of the respondents (48.1%) were living in concrete houses while remaining 42.6% were living in mud-concrete houses and 9.3% respondents were living in mud house. It was observed that 91.7% respondents having access to safe and clean water facility but they were depending on community tap water or handpumps remaining 8.3% have not they were collecting drinking water from well. The findings reveal that 88% of the population has access to toilet facilities. This indicates a significant improvement in basic sanitation infrastructure, reflecting progress towards better hygiene and public health. Though 12% still lack proper facilities, highlighting a gap that needs to be addressed to ensure universal access. With 100% electricity connection was the only facility that avail to all the underprivileged secondary girl’s student.

RQ 2: What socio-cultural barriers – such as gender discrimination, early marriage, and domestic responsibilities – affect the education of underprivileged girl children?

**Table 2: Socio-cultural barriers**

	Yes	No
Parents Support on girls’ education	72%	28%
Social reluctance towards girls’ education	53%	47%
Household chores interfere studies	57%	43%
Girls get early married	8%	92%
Goes to school regularly	87.2%	12.8%
Safety issues going to and from school	99.1%	0.9%

Table 2 shows that 72% of parents support their daughters’ education, reflecting a positive attitude towards girls’ schooling, though a large number of guardians still remains unsupportive. Findings show that 53% of respondents expressed a positive attitude towards girls’ education, indicating a gradual reduction in social reluctance, though (47%) nearly half of the community still holds reservations. The data shows that 8% of respondents still support early marriage, highlighting that while the practice has declined, though it continues to persist in certain sections of society. Around 87.2% of students are reported to attend school regularly, showing a strong trend of consistent participation in education but still 12.8% respondents irregular in attending school. About 99.1% of underprivileged girls reported having no safety issues while going to and returning from school. However, 0.9% (equivalent to one student) mentioned facing serious safety concerns on the way to and from school.

RQ3: How available, accessible, and adequate are educational facilities (distance of school from home, separate toilets, mid-day meals) in the district of Purulia?

**Table 3: Availability of Educational Facilities**

	Below 1Km	1-3Km	Above 3Km
School distance from home	38.9%	49.1%	12%
Mid-day meal	Yes 86%	No 14%	
School uniform and books	Yes 27.8%	No 72.2%	
Separate toilet for girls	Yes 100%	No 0%	

Table 3 shows that 38.9% of students live within 1 km of their school, nearly half (49.1%) travel 1–3 km, while 12% have to cover more than 3 km to attend school. Although the mid-day meal scheme is not officially meant for secondary-level students, 86% of them reported that they still avail the facility only 14% are not taking mid-day meal. About 27.8% students received school uniform and books from school. Table shows that all school provide separate toilet for girl’s student, it is a good sign.

RQ 4: To what extent are underprivileged girl student and their families aware of and utilising government schemes and policies (e.g., Kanyashree and any other scholarship from state or central government)?

**Table 4: Government schemes and policies**

Gets a scholarship	Yes 51.9%	No 48.1%
Know about Kanyashree	Yes 100%	No 0

Table 4 Shows that about 52% of girl students are receiving scholarships, which provides financial support and encourages them to continue their education. 100% underprivileged girl students know about Kanyashree scheme which is remarkable scheme wildly and now it’s very much supportive for girl students.

RQ 5: What policy measures and community-based strategies could effectively improve the socio-economic and educational status of underprivileged girl student in Purulia district?

**Table 5: Girls will be able to continue their further education**

Financial support	Nearby school	Transport facility	Knowledge of Guardian	Others
60.2%	12%	12%	15.8%	

Table 5 shows that about 60.2% students mentioned financial support as a major issue, 12% stated that the school is far from their residence, another 12% reported insufficient transport facilities, and 15.8% pointed out the serious problem of their guardians being illiterate.

**Conclusion**

The study reveals that the socio-economic and educational status of underprivileged secondary school girls in Purulia District remains a matter of serious concern. Most of these students come from economically weaker section, where limited income, engagement in primary sector, and inadequate housing conditions create barriers to their educational opportunities. Most families have built their concrete houses with the help of the Government. Lack of parental literacy, household chores, social reluctance and awareness further reduces the support available for girls’ schooling, reinforcing cycles of marginalization.

On the educational front, although enrolment levels have improved due to government initiatives, challenges persist in the form of irregular attendance, early marriage, financial crisis. Factors such as household responsibilities, inadequate infrastructure, insufficient transport facilities, and gender-based social expectations contribute to these gaps. Financial support schemes and scholarships have had a positive impact.

Overall, the findings underline that socio-economic deprivation and cultural barriers are deeply interlinked with the educational struggles of underprivileged girls in Purulia District. To ensure meaningful change, there is a need for stronger policy implementation, community awareness, and targeted interventions that address not only financial constraints but also social attitudes towards underprivileged secondary girls’ education. Empowering underprivileged girls with equitable opportunities is crucial for their personal growth and for fostering broader social development. Improvement in educational status will contribute to the development both social and economic status.

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