LANGUAGE, EDUCATION, AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY INFLUENCES ON SECONDARY SCHOOL-AGE GIRLS' DECISION-MAKING IN MUMBAI, INDIA



INTRODUCTION

While tremendous progress has been made in achieving nearly universal access to and completion of primary school throughout India, secondary school-age girls continue to lag behind their primary school and male counterparts in enrollment, completion, and quality of schooling. Access to meaningful higher education and economic opportunities still remains a challenge for these girls. My research studies the main influences that secondary school-age girls in Mumbai's public schools identify as influencing their decision-making, and the role of language in the prospective opportunities they feel they have.

FINDINGS

WHAT WE KNOW



Influence of Language on Dropout and Retention Role of Gender in **Decision-Making** Language, Higher Education, and

Economic Opportunity

Girls and

Secondary Schooling

learning is negatively impacted. Research illustrates that girls, particularly in linguistically diverse developing countries, are significantly more likely

to speak, use, and understand local and regional languages more comfortably than they are the dominant languages. Such linguistic diversity is two-fold: while it has tremendous potential to enrich the quality of schooling, it may also reinforce gender inequalities in education.

Research also confirms gender inequality in the decisionmaking process, influencing girls' ability to choose what to do after schooling. In patriarchal communities, girls' futures are often shaped by the men in the family. For all girls and women to be involved in educational, economic, or health decision-making processes remains a challenge. Without a voice in decision-making, girls and young women are unable to determine life-paths most aligned with their interests and goals.

Many researchers describe the disconnect between pursuing higher education and gaining meaningful employment opportunities for girls. For those girls that do finish schooling and pursue higher education, doing so is often not perceived as an investment into her future. Thus, higher education does not necessarily equate to meaningful economic opportunities, and family responsibility often takes precedence over career choices for girls and young women.

METHODOLOGY

iterature Review

My research population is secondary school-age girls who are, or have been, in various public schools in Mumbai, and who come from lower income families. I specifically focus on this population sample since their age, gender, and socioeconomic status make them vulnerable to unequal gender norms. To explore girls' perspectives on factors influencing their decisions, I used open-ended, semi-structured interviews. My interview questions focused on both general background questions as well as specific career- and language- related questions.

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CONCLUSION

Through interviews of secondary school-age girls in Mumbai public schools, my research finds that parental support, socioeconomic status, and family beliefs are the most significant factors that influence girls' decision making. This research also illustrates how perceptions of language create a pressure to learn and use dominant languages at the expense of diverse mother tongue languages. The findings highlight the need for a holistic, bottom-up approach in developing solutions to boost girls' access to meaningful higher education and economic opportunities. countries.

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Preferred Career Path





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