

Empowering Women's Education in India: Policies and Trends Towards Gender Equality



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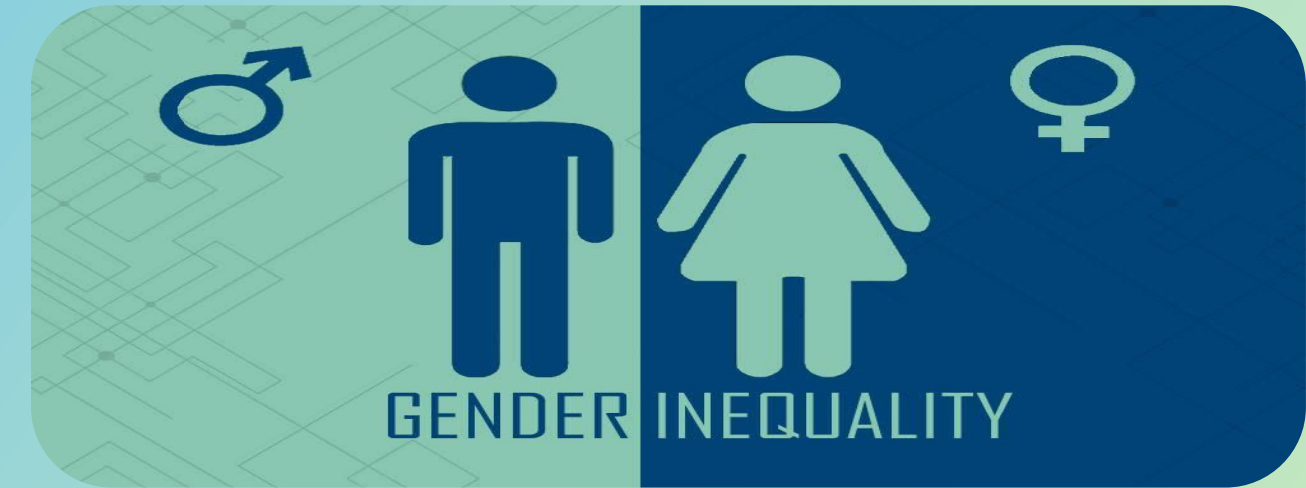
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Why this topic?



According to 2023 US SEVIS Active Data count there were 143,495 Indian female students studying in US. (One of the largest international student group in the US, behind China and Indian male students).



By many margins, Women in India are still a marginalized group. For instance, in 2023, the labor force participation rate for women in India was 32.7%, compared to 76.8% for men (World bank Gender Data Portal).



Why this conversation?



Indian women are often expected to adhere to strict gender roles surrounding within traditional Indian culture, thus leading to experience degrees of cultural value conflict much more complex than Indian male students.



This presentation will provide HEI's more information about this cultural sub-group, which may lead to a better understanding of their needs and help bridge the gap between those needs.



Brief look into History



- In 1883, Anandibai Gopalrao Joshi from Maharashtra became the first Indian woman to study abroad. She pursued medicine at Women's Medical College of Pennsylvania, now known as Drexel University College of Medicine.
- The Women's Medical College of Pennsylvania, was the first women's medical college in the world that began attracting international students who were unable to study medicine in their home country.



An Inspirational Path Forward



Sarojini Naidu



Indira Gandhi



Kalpana Chawla



Indira Nooyi



Mira Nair



Gita Gopinath



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The Evolving Role of Indian Women

The Changes

- Literacy rates: 8.86% (1951) to 65.46% (2011) census.
- The government's AISHE report 2021-22, found that 43.3 million students are currently enrolled in higher education institutions in India, up from 41.4 million in 2020-21, and 34.2 million in 2014-15.



The Challenges

As India's population soars, number of women in workforce shrinks

The gender gap in India's labour force, attributed largely to conservative social norms

Table 1: LFPR in usual status (ps+ss) for persons of age 15 years & above (in %)

Years	Rural			Urban			Rural+Urban		
	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person
2017-18	76.4	24.6	50.7	74.5	20.4	47.6	75.8	23.3	49.8
2021-22	78.2	36.6	57.5	74.7	23.8	49.7	77.2	32.8	55.2
Change in 2021-22 over 2017-18 (% points)	1.8	12.0	6.8	0.2	3.4	2.1	1.4	9.5	5.4

Source: Annual PLFS Report, MoSPI



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The Policies and its Effects

Primary Education (Grades 1-5):

- Enrollment rates for girls have reached near-universal levels, with over 90% of girls enrolled in primary school.
- The Right to Education Act (RTE) of 2009 played a crucial role in ensuring free and compulsory education for all children aged 6-14, contributing to this increase.



The Policies and its Effects

Secondary Education (Grades 6-10):



- Enrollment rates for girls at the secondary level have also increased significantly, but challenges remain.
- The dropout rate for girls is higher than for boys, with factors like early marriage, household responsibilities, and safety concerns contributing to this issue.
- Government initiatives like the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (Save the Daughter, Educate the Daughter) campaign aim to address these challenges and promote girls' education.



The Policies and its Effects

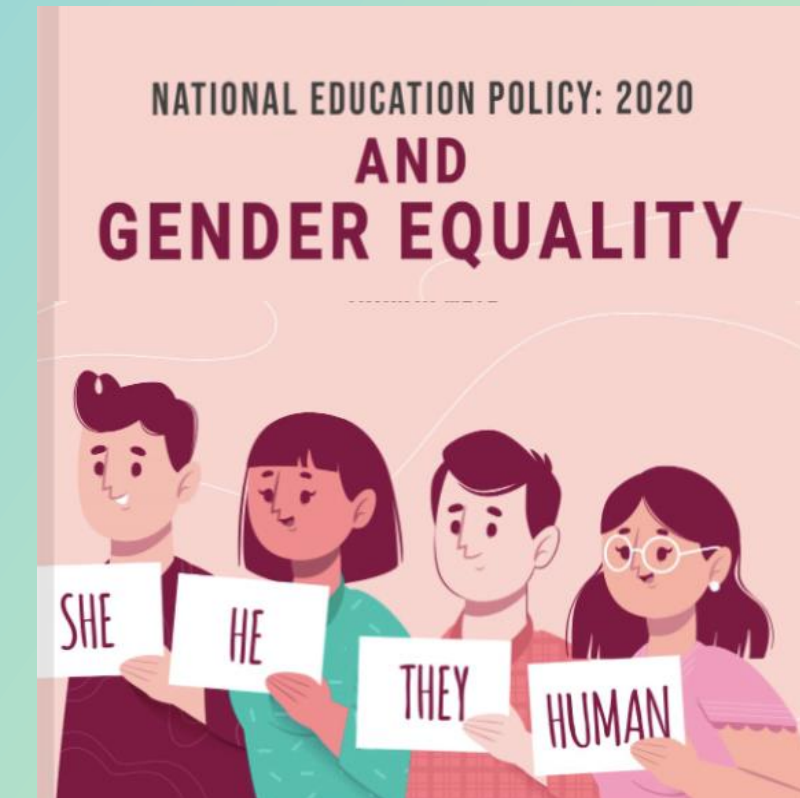


- **Higher Secondary Education (Grades 11-12):** While enrollment rates for girls are lower than boys at this level, the gap has been narrowing over time.
- **Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA):** Though it primarily focuses on grades 9-10, its infrastructural development and quality improvement initiatives have a positive ripple effect on higher secondary education.



National Education Policy: Gender Equality

Aspect	Details
Gender Inclusion Fund	Establishment of a fund to provide equitable quality education for all girls and transgender students, reducing gender gaps in education.
Ensuring Access and Equity	Focus on access to quality education for all, particularly girls and women, ensuring no child is deprived of educational opportunities.
Promotion of Women's Participation	Encouragement of gender sensitization at all educational levels and promotion of women in leadership roles within educational institutions.
Special Focus on Dropout Rates	Targeted initiatives to reduce dropout rates among girls, offering flexible and alternative education options to bring them back into the educational system.
Support for Girls in STEM	Bridging the gender gap in STEM fields through special incentives, scholarships, and support mechanisms for girls.
Safety and Inclusion	Creation of safe and inclusive learning environments, free from discrimination, harassment, and violence, with a special focus on the safety of girls.
Adult Education for Women	Opportunities for adult education aimed at women, particularly in rural areas, to improve their socio-economic status.
Special Education Zones (SEZs)	Establishment of SEZs in areas with significant gender disparities, with targeted interventions to promote education among girls and women.
Vocational Education and Skill Development	Inclusion of women in vocational education and skill development programs to ensure they are equipped for the workforce.
Gender Sensitization and Counseling	Integration of gender sensitization into the curriculum and provision of counseling services to support girls in addressing gender-related challenges.

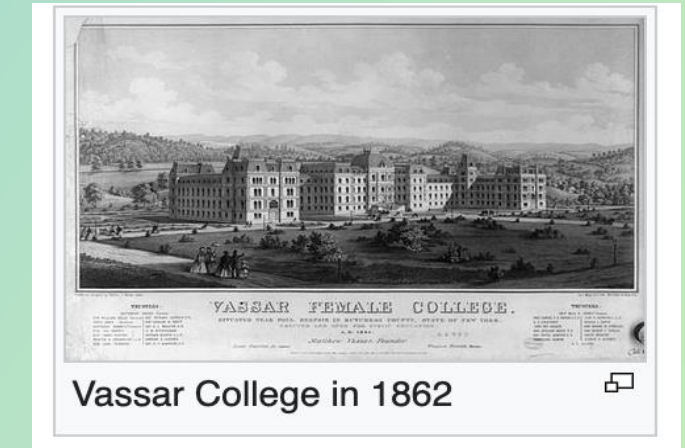
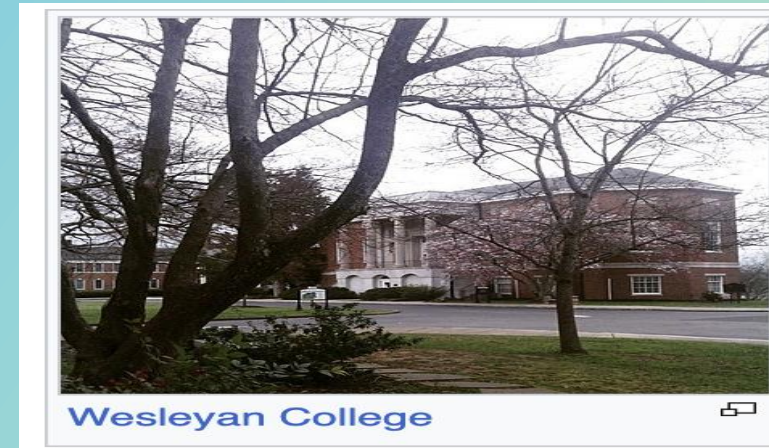


The Transition of Female students enrolling in US HEIs



Early 20th Century

Limited Access and Societal Expectations: In the early 1900s, higher education was predominantly male-dominated. Women's roles were largely confined to domestic spheres, and educational opportunities for them were limited.



Mid 20th Century

World War II: During and after World War II, the demand for higher education increased as returning veterans sought to utilize the GI Bill.

The Rise of Women's Colleges: Institutions like Smith, Wellesley, and Vassar provided women with opportunities for higher education, which began to shift societal perceptions about women's capabilities and roles.



The Transition of Female students enrolling in US HEIs

1960s-1970s

Civil Rights Movement: The Civil Rights Movement played a significant role in challenging traditional gender roles and advocating for equal rights, including education.

Title IX (1972): This landmark legislation prohibited gender discrimination in federally funded education programs, leading to a substantial increase in female enrollment and participation in higher education.

1980s-1990s

Changing Labor Market: As the economy shifted from manufacturing to service-oriented industries, there was a growing demand for educated workers. More women pursued higher education to gain the necessary skills and credentials.

Shift in Societal Norms: Increasingly, societal norms began to accept and even expect women to pursue higher education and careers.

2000s-Present

Majority Female Enrollment: By the early 2000s, women began to outnumber men in college enrollment. This trend has continued



The Current State of Female Enrollment in US Higher Education Institutions

Enrollment Statistics

Majority Female Enrollment: Women constitute a majority of the student population in many colleges and universities. As of the latest figures, women represent approximately 57% of all college students in the United States.

Undergraduate and Graduate Levels: Women outnumber men at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. At the undergraduate level, they make up about 56-58% of the student body, while at the graduate level, they account for around 59-60%.

Field of Study

Humanities and Social Sciences: Women dominate in fields such as education, health professions, psychology, and social sciences.

STEM Fields: Women have made progress in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields but still remain underrepresented compared to men. Efforts to encourage female participation in STEM are ongoing



The Study Abroad question for Indian women

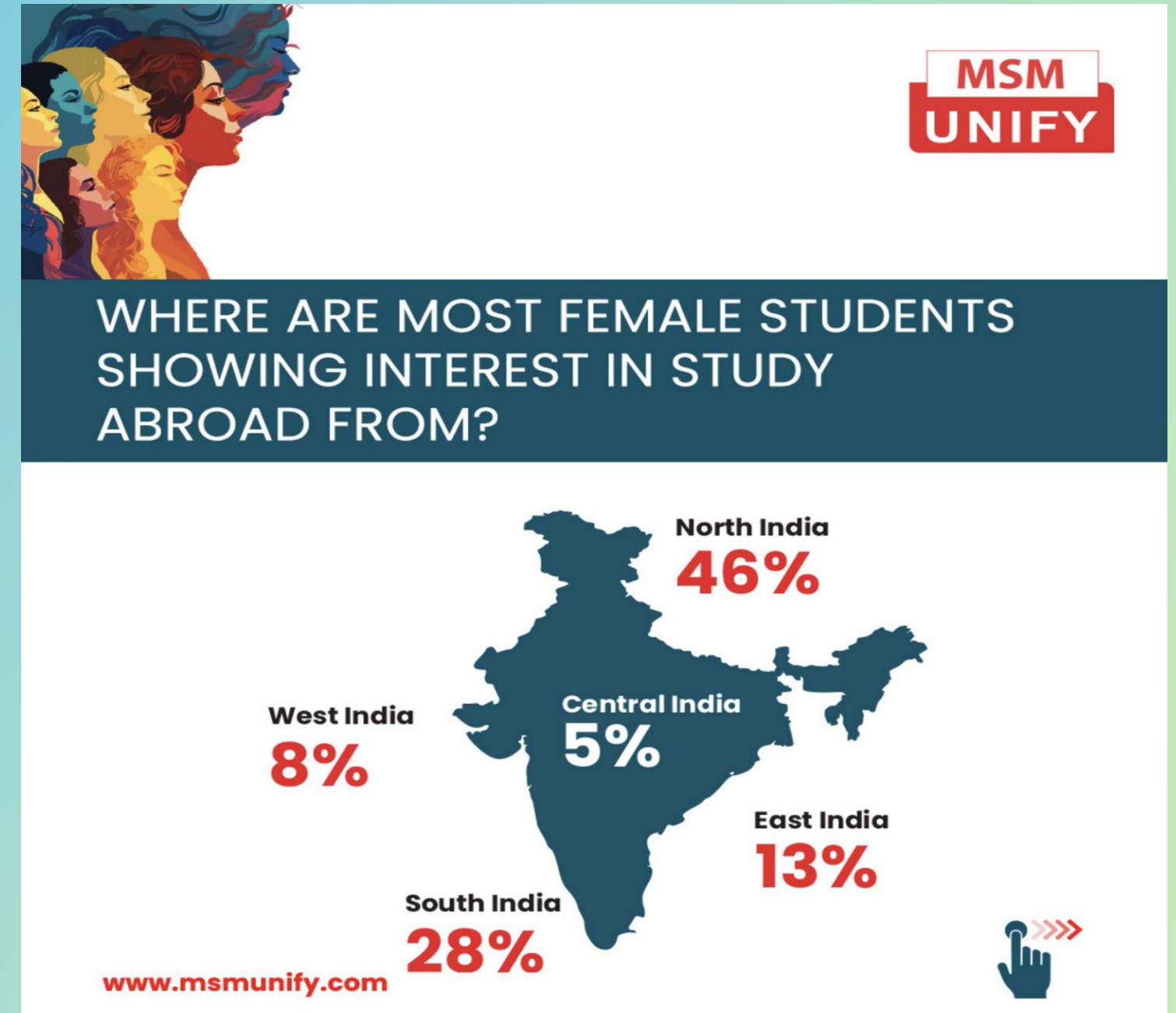
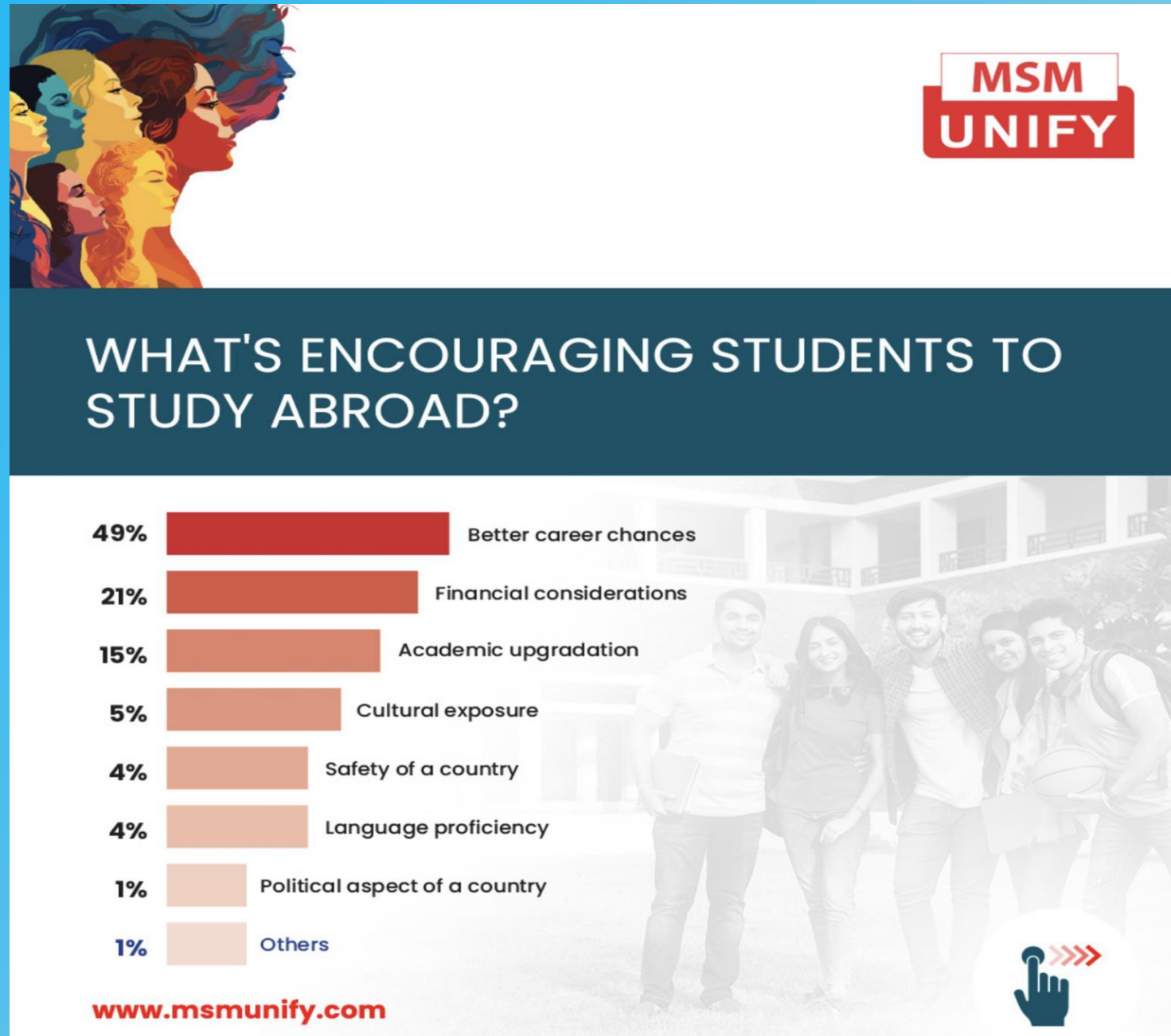


- MSM Unify conducted a survey with a sample size of more than 1256 students, and more than 250 education consultants.
- Among the students, around 65% of respondents were women, and the remaining 35% were men.



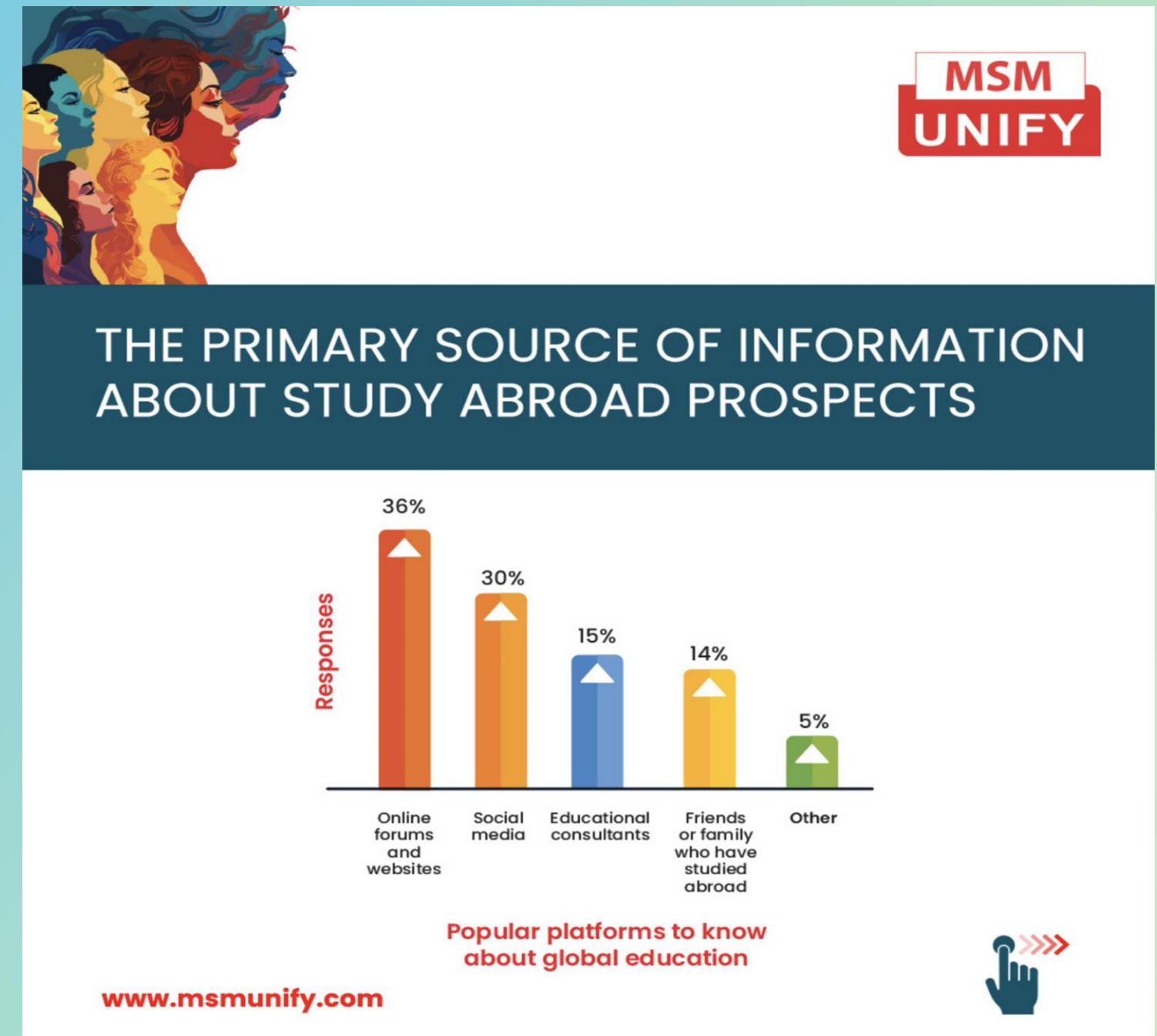
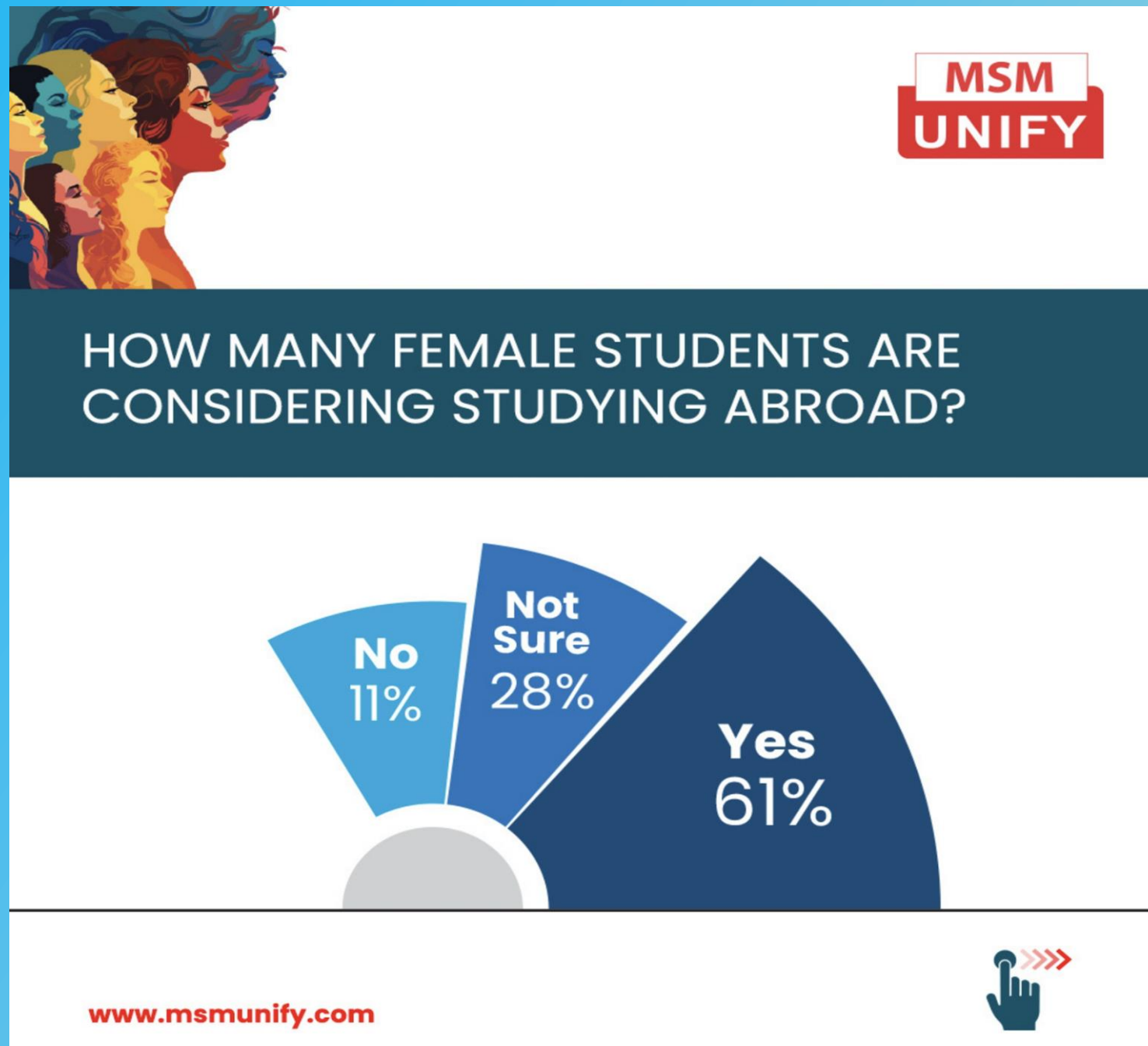
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MSM Unify Survey



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MSM Unify Survey



Women in Indian Higher Education

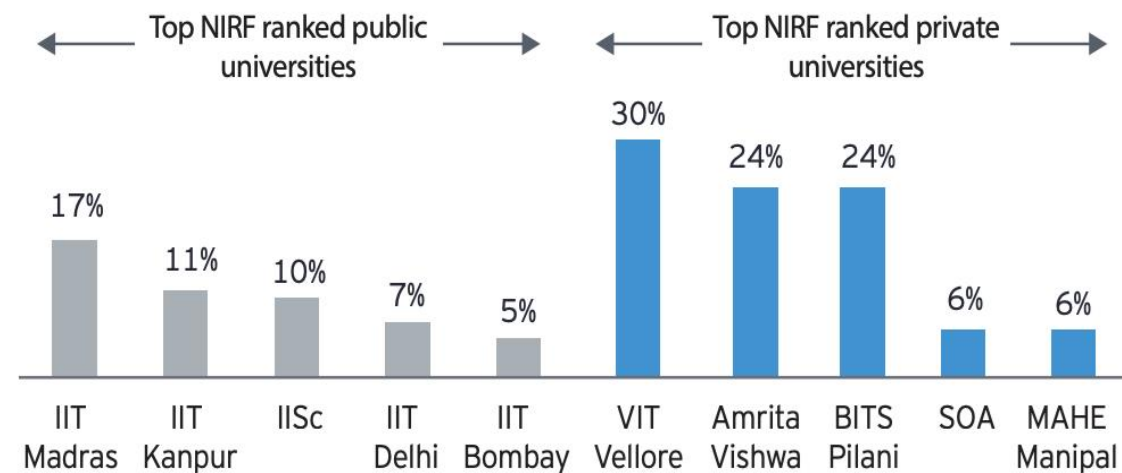


Transformation of Indian higher education: Strategies to leapfrog

Best practices and challenges across four themes

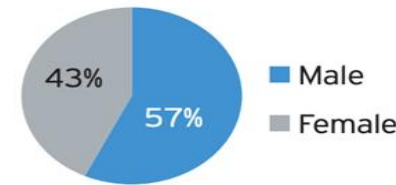
November 2023

% female students (2023)

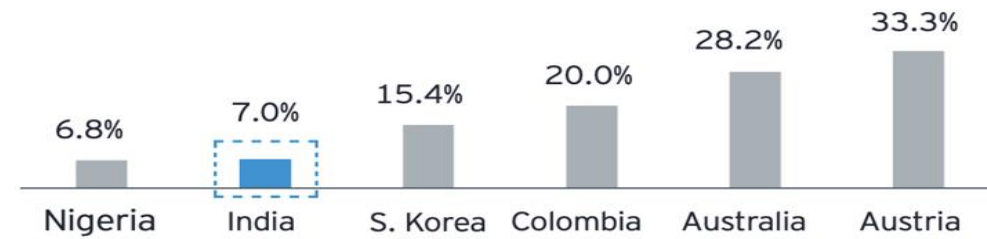


Source: National Institute Ranking Framework

Faculty: gender-wise split in India (2021)



Proportion of female university leaders (2019)



Source: Association of Indian Universities, AISHE 2021, UNESCO

Female graduates in STEM programs (2020)



Source: UNESCO, British Council

% female students (2023)



Source: UNESCO, British Council

43% of faculty in India are women, however less than 7% of vice-chancellors are female in Indian HE, highlighting a clear gap in the advancement of female faculty into senior positions.

India ranks 19th in employing female graduates

A huge disparity in the number of women enrolling in STEM programs and the number of women being able to seek employment in STEM is observed in India.

Proportion of female students is substantially higher at top ranked private universities, with lower ranked private universities displaying similarly strong numbers. Lower ranked public universities have mixed outcomes - Mumbai University (50.7%), IIT Bhubaneswar (18.5%).



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Student Panel Session

Kinley Dema, Graduate, Ashoka University

Toshika Paryani, First Year, Masters' Union



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Overall Findings

The future of women's education in India is promising, though it faces challenges that must be addressed for meaningful progress.

1. Increasing Enrollment and Literacy Rates:

- **Growth in Enrollment:** Over the past few decades, there has been a significant increase in the enrollment of girls in schools and colleges. This trend is expected to continue as more families recognize the value of education for girls.
- **Literacy Rates:** Women's literacy rates have been steadily rising. Government initiatives like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (Save the Daughter, Educate the Daughter) aim to promote education and empowerment.

2. Government Initiatives and Policies:

- **Education Policies:** The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has a strong focus on gender equity and inclusion, aiming to reduce gender gaps in education at all levels.
- **Scholarships and Financial Support:** Various government and non-governmental scholarships are being offered to encourage girls to pursue higher education, especially in rural areas.



Overall Findings

3. Technological Advancements:

- **Digital Learning:** The rise of digital learning platforms and online education is making education more accessible, especially for women in remote areas. Mobile-based learning and internet access are key drivers.
- **STEM Education:** There is a growing emphasis on encouraging women to pursue STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) fields, traditionally dominated by men.

4. Socio-Cultural Shifts:

- **Changing Attitudes:** There is a gradual shift in societal attitudes toward the importance of educating women. Education is increasingly seen as a tool for empowerment and economic independence.
- **Role Models:** The emergence of successful women in various fields serves as role models, inspiring young girls to aspire to similar achievements.

5. Challenges and Barriers:

- **Gender Disparities:** Despite progress, gender disparities in education still exist, especially in rural areas where girls face challenges like early marriage, lack of access to schools, and safety concerns.
- **Quality of Education:** Ensuring the quality of education is as important as increasing access. There is a need for trained teachers, better infrastructure, and a curriculum that is inclusive and relevant.
- **Economic Barriers:** Financial constraints continue to be a barrier for many families, leading to higher dropout rates among girls, particularly at the secondary and tertiary levels.



Overall Findings

6. Empowerment through Education:

- **Economic Participation:** Educated women are more likely to participate in the workforce, contribute to the economy, and make informed decisions about their lives and health.
- **Leadership and Representation:** Education empowers women to take on leadership roles in various sectors, increasing their representation in politics, business, and social movements.

7. Global Collaboration:

- **International Support:** India is working with international organizations to enhance women's education, with initiatives aimed at building skills, reducing gender gaps, and promoting sustainable development goals (SDGs).

Outlook:

The future of women's education in India is poised for growth, but it will require sustained efforts to overcome existing barriers. With continued focus on policy implementation, technological integration, and societal support, India can make significant strides toward gender equality in education. The success of these efforts will have far-reaching impacts on the country's social and economic development.



Thank you for attending!



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