

2022

**IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON SAFE AND SECURE SECONDARY EDUCATION OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN INDIA: A RAPID SURVEY**



**COUNCIL  
FOR SOCIAL  
DEVELOPMENT**



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# 1

## Introduction

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### 1.1 Context

Education has both the intrinsic value of being an end in itself and the instrumental value of achieving other desired goals in life. Moreover, girls' education has wider social benefits and often education has its impacts beyond the girl herself, as the entire community and the country also get benefitted. As reviewed by Mitra et al. (2021) girls' education contributes to economic growth through an increase in productivity, reduction in the wage gap, and increase in the tax base. It also leads to several social benefits such as a reduction in the incidence of child marriage and infant and maternal mortality, declines in population growth by having fewer children and using smart reproductive health practices. Moreover, educated girls are more likely to participate in politics and make concrete changes in the community compared to uneducated girls. That is why investment in girls' education is considered to be one of the best investments a country can make to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty (Summers, 1992). However, despite various benefits of girls' education, there exist lower educational opportunities for girls in different parts of the world.

Various reasons have been cited in the existing literature for gender discrimination in education, including pro-male bias within-household allocation of educational expenditure (Azam & Kingdon, 2013), various social and infrastructural bottlenecks such as engagement in the traditional role at home (inter alia, household chores, agricultural work, sibling care), gender-based discriminatory treatment in schools, harassment, lack of toilets, lack of safety in the school premises, among others (Williams, 2013). Gender discrimination is further interlinked with household characteristics like caste (Kelly et al., 2016), educational background of parents, household wealth, and opinions (Kingdon, 2002; Mohanty & Rammohan, 2015; Sahoo, 2017).

Across the globe, the recent COVID-19 pandemic not only affected lives and health but also caused learning crisis, social and emotional repercussions among students

(McKinsey & Company 2022, The World Bank, UNESCO and UNICEF 2021, UNICEF 2020). The crisis brought education systems across the world to a halt, with school closures affecting more than 1.6 billion learners (The World Bank, UNESCO and UNICEF 2021). These studies also highlighted that the pandemic has widened the existing gap of education between developed and developing countries. This poses challenges to achieving sustainable development goal (SDG) 4 of quality education and gender equality (SDG 5) by 2030 for a large number of developing countries.

## **1.2 The particular case of India**

Within India, even after significant improvement in girls' education since its independence, the literacy rate of girls (65.5 per cent) is much below than that of boys (82.1 per cent) (Census, 2011). Adolescent girls constitute roughly — one-tenth of the total population of the nation with a staggering 120 million girls in this age group (Gogoi, 2021). The transition of girls from elementary to secondary level happens at this age. According to the Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+) 2020-21, there is a significant difference between boys and girls at the transition rate from elementary to secondary. This is despite the fact that for millions of girls across India, getting an education is the only way to escape poverty, child abuse, early marriage, etc.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further aggravated the situation through multiple channels. In India, within a month of lockdown, the unemployment rate increased drastically from 8.7 per cent in March to 23.5 per cent in April 2020, leading to loss of jobs for nearly 140 million people, and an income drop for more than 45 per cent of households (Goel et al, 2020). Beyond social and economic life of people, it impacted systems including health, education and overall governance posing challenges in the democratic functioning of the country (Hasan, 2021). India, unlike any other country (with the exception of Uganda), has refrained from allowing physical access of children to schools (Ghatak et al 2022). The country has seen one of the longest periods of school closure, except for the respite of a few months in between the second and the third wave, where schools were momentarily open for a few grades. Even these open periods were with severe restrictions such as alternate days of schooling and other guidelines. Ghatak et al (2022) emphasized that it is indeed agonising to note that schools have been the first to close and the last to open in India, when it should have been the

opposite. The findings of a parliamentary committee highlighted that the pandemic has affected girls, especially their education (GoI, 2021).

Bahl et al (2021) documented that pandemic situation increased domestic workload (particularly among adolescent girls), incidents of child marriage, child labour, domestic violence and other crimes including cybercrimes. According to Jejeebhoy (2021) many girls in India ended up dropping out of school to care for their younger siblings, get involved in household chores. Author also highlighted that due to the uncertainties and hardships brought about by the pandemic, child marriage has also increased in India. Ghatak et al (2022) also found that, in Bihar, reverse migration during the first lockdown further pushed up the rate of child marriages in the state. The recent study conducted in Council for Social Development (CSD) by Poornima et al., (2022) highlighted that during school closures, girl's engagement in household chores like cooking, utensil cleaning, taking care of siblings etc. has increased significantly. Another CSD study by Mitra and Sharma (2021) highlighted on increased stress and anxiety level among girls compared to boys during the pandemic induced school closure. As per a poll conducted by UNICEF, it was highlighted that 33 per cent respondents said that the girls who had dropped out of school were engaged in domestic work. 25 per cent of respondent also reported that the girls who had dropped out had got married (Yadav 2022).

Various challenges of adolescent girls continue to exist primarily because secondary education is still not a fundamental right in the country. Section 8 of NEP (2020) only mentions free and compulsory education school education without bringing it under the umbrella of RTE Act 2009. Existing studies highlighted that when care giving at home is unavailable, more girls dropped out of school as they replace the work done by care givers (Huisman and Smits 2009) who might be away due to COVID-19-related work, illness etc. This might encourage parents, particularly those putting a lower value on girls' education, to keep their girls at home even after schools reopen. Although many studies highlighted the challenges of children during the pandemic induced school closure, there is paucity of literature on the existing situation just after the opening of the schools, and that of a sensitive group of adolescent girls.

### **1.3 Objectives of the study**

In the above mentioned background, the present study of CSD entrusted by Right to Education (RTE) Forum attempts to shed some lights on the challenges faced by adolescent girls in India during the school closure as well as just after reopening. The specific objectives of the study are to explore:

1. Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on adolescent girl's education in India
2. Existing socio-economic challenges of adolescent girl education and how it got aggravated by COVID-19
3. The institutional challenges of adolescent girl education and how it got aggravated due to COVID-19

### **1.4 Study Area and Sampling**

The rapid survey was carried out in total 12 districts in six states viz. Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Delhi, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal in the month of April-May 2022 (Figure 1.1).



**Figure 1.1: The states covered in the national scenario**

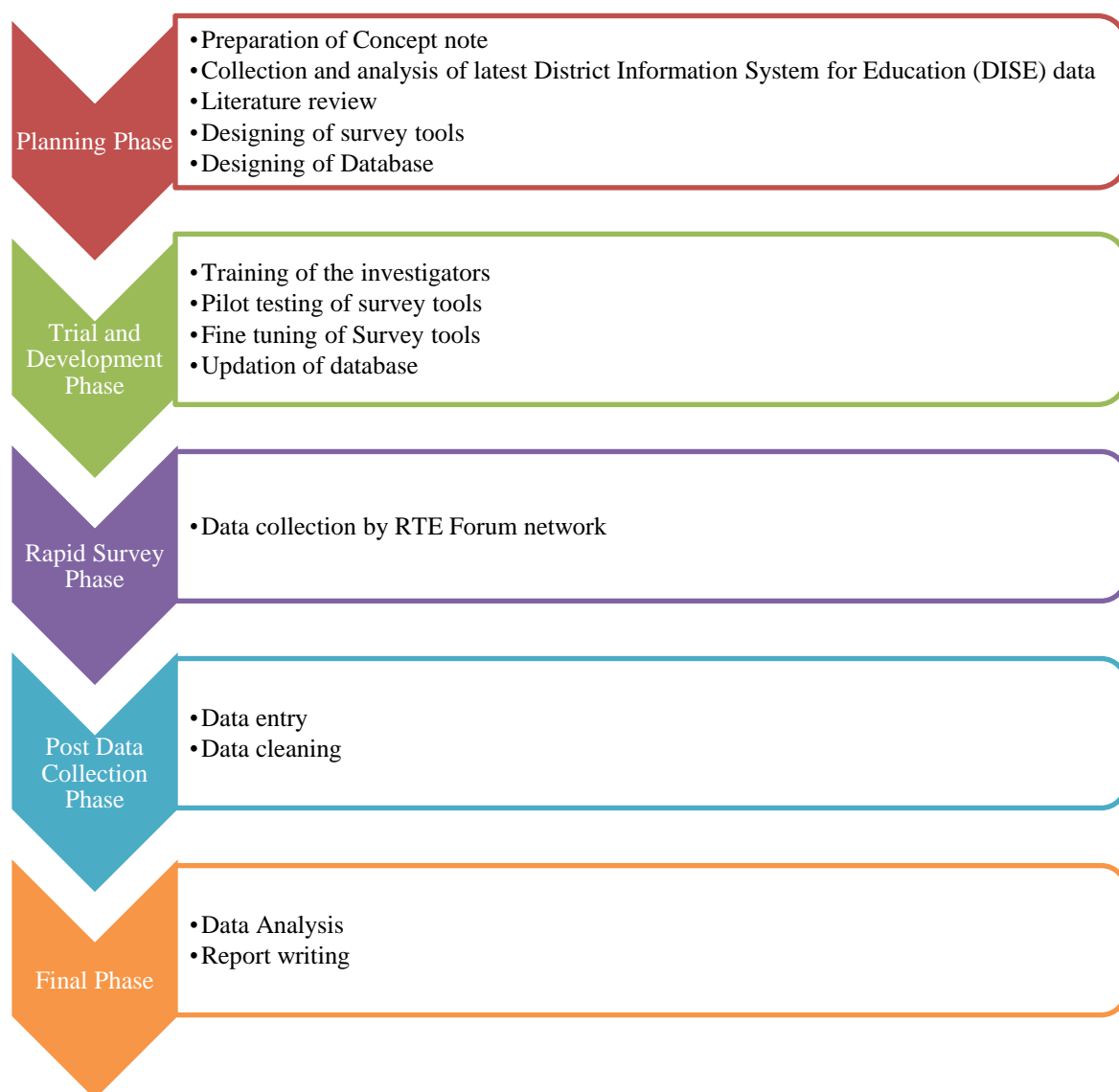


Source: Prepared by authors with maps from maps of India

## 1.5 Approach and Method

The rapid assessment used a survey method with closed ended questionnaire, to capture and analyse the quantitative information from adolescent girls across six states. Structured interview schedules were developed to collect closed ended information at the individual level (from adolescent girls) to understand the challenges faced by them in continuing their education during the lockdown and just after school reopening. Some questions were mutually exclusive, whereas some questions allowed for multiple responses. Various steps were involved in completing the study within a short period of time as highlighted in Figure 1.2.

**Figure 1.2: Phases involved completing the study**



Source: Prepared by Authors

Reaching a large number of respondents across six states during a pandemic situation has been really challenging. During the fieldwork, the Omicron variant was increasing significantly particularly in Maharashtra. It limited the report in accessing some of the key respondents. Therefore, maintaining a uniform sample size of 200 respondents across six states became infeasible, which limits the rigor of the methodology. Despite this, the strength of the report is based on primary data of 1120 adolescent girls collected by people in RTE forum network. The demographic profile of the total sample size was 1120 adolescent girls is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Brief profile of the respondents**

Indicators	Codes	Numbers	percentages
<b>Age of respondent</b>	13-15 years	759	67.8
	16-18 years	361	32.2
<b>Family size</b>	Up to 5 members	594	53.0
	6-8 members	449	40.1
	Above 8 members	77	6.9
<b>Caste</b>	SC	239	21.3
	ST	216	19.3
	OBCs	396	35.4
	General	242	21.6
	Others	10	0.9
	No Response (NR)	17	1.5
<b>Religion</b>	Hindu	842	75.2
	Muslim	213	19.0
	Christian	30	2.7
	Buddhist	25	2.2
	Others	2	0.2
	NR	8	0.7
<b>Parents' education (highest of the two)</b>	Illiterate	235	21.0
	Elementary	406	36.3
	Secondary	320	28.6
	Higher	151	13.5
	NR	8	0.7
<b>Family monthly income</b>	Less than Rs. 3000	185	16.5
	Rs. 3000-6000	320	28.6
	Rs. 6000-10000	263	23.5
	Rs. 10000-15000	143	12.8
	More than Rs. 15000	118	10.5
	NR	91	8.1
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1,120</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: primary survey data

The table shows that nearly 70 per cent of the respondents were in the age group of 13-15 years and remaining in the age bracket of 16-18 years. Caste distribution was more or less equal with slightly higher share (35 per cent) from other backward caste (OBC) group. Three fourth of the adolescent girls were Hindu, and nearly 20 per cent were Muslim. A large set of respondents (29 per cent) were from families with household monthly income level being as low as Rs. 3000-6000, followed by Rs. 6000-10000 income level group (24 per cent), and even less than Rs. 3000 (17 per cent). Many of the respondents were first time learners with nearly 60 per cent mentioning the highest level of parents' education to be of elementary level.

The next chapter presents the quantitative findings, whereas chapter 3 provides recommends based on the findings.

# 2

## Findings

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The findings of the primary survey are presented thematically under the three specific objectives of the study.

### 2.1 Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on Adolescent girls' education

Among our total sample of 1120 adolescent girls across six states of India, we found that more than 6 per cent girls were out of school (never gone to school or dropped out of the system before completing entire school education) even before the pandemic situation. The situation was worst in Uttar Pradesh (24 per cent) followed by Bihar (8 per cent). Our findings corroborate the DISE data of 2019-20 which shows that dropout rates of girls in India increases significantly from primary (1 per cent) to upper primary level (3 per cent), and further to secondary level (15 per cent) (Table 2.2). Moreover, among the six selected states, DISE data also shows that the situation is worst in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

COVID-19 pandemic has added to this existing grim situation as found in our primary survey. In addition to those 6 per cent adolescent girls who were out of school even before the pandemic, 9 per cent more girls in our sample mentioned that they were going to school before the pandemic, but completely stopped attending or attending infrequently after the school has reopened after a long closure (Table 2.1).

**Table 2.1: State wise percentage of out of school and at-risk adolescent girls**

	Attending school pre & post-COVID	Out of school pre-COVID	Out of school/ at risk post-COVID	Total
Andhra Pradesh	100.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
Bihar	73.0	8.2	18.9	100.0
Delhi	92.0	3.0	5.0	100.0
Maharashtra	84.3	0.0	15.7	100.0
Uttar Pradesh	69.3	24.0	6.8	100.0
West Bengal	88.1	2.1	9.8	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>84.6</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: primary survey data

**Table 2.2: Dropout rates of girls at different levels in the selected states**

	Dropout rate at		
	Primary level	Upper Primary level	Secondary level
<b>India</b>	<b>1.22</b>	<b>2.96</b>	<b>15.05</b>
Andhra Pradesh	0.00	0.21	12.16
Bihar	1.52	9.24	22.66
Maharashtra	0.05	1.52	13.99
Delhi	0.00	0.23	11.81
Uttar Pradesh	2.53	4.01	14.24
West Bengal	0.33	0.00	13.61

Source: CSD's calculations based on DISE data 2019-20

Table 2.1 shows that the effects of COVID-19 on out of school or at-risk adolescent girls have been highest in Bihar (19 per cent), followed by Maharashtra (16 per cent). However, in Maharashtra, part of infrequent attendance might be due to the rise of Omicron variant during the field survey. The share of adolescent girls attending schools regularly during pre and post COVID situation was highest in Andhra Pradesh (100 per cent), followed by Delhi (92 per cent) and West Bengal (88 per cent).

## 2.2 Existing socio-economic challenges of adolescent girl education and how it got aggravated by COVID-19

The socioeconomic status of the surveyed 1120 adolescent girls in our sample suggests that secondary education of at least one parent reduced pre-COVID out-of-school status, whereas higher education of at least one parent reduced both pre-COVID out of school as well as post-COVID school attendance related vulnerability (Table 2.3). The correlation of parents' education level and adolescent girls' school attendance becomes evident from the table.

**Table 2.3: Percentage of OOS and at-risk adolescent girls by parents' education**

The highest level of education of parents	Attending school pre & post-COVID	Out of school pre-COVID	Out of school/at risk post-COVID	Total
Illiterate	84.7	6.0	9.4	100.0
Elementary	79.8	11.1	9.1	100.0
Secondary	87.2	2.5	10.3	100.0
Higher	93.4	0.7	6.0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>84.8</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>9.1</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: primary survey data

Better economic condition of family is associated with lower percentage of OOS and at-risk adolescent girls, as found in our primary data (Table 2.4). The effect of COVID-19 pandemic on economic vulnerability and uncertainty aggravating the educational vulnerability of adolescent girls is also visible from the primary data. Among the respondents coming from the households with monthly income of less than Rs. 3000, nearly 20 per cent were out of school even before the pandemic, and additional 10 per cent reported to have become vulnerable after the crisis. However, in three economic groups of upto 15000 of monthly household income, the share of out of school (or at risk) girls has seen to be significantly increased in the post COVID school reopening phase.

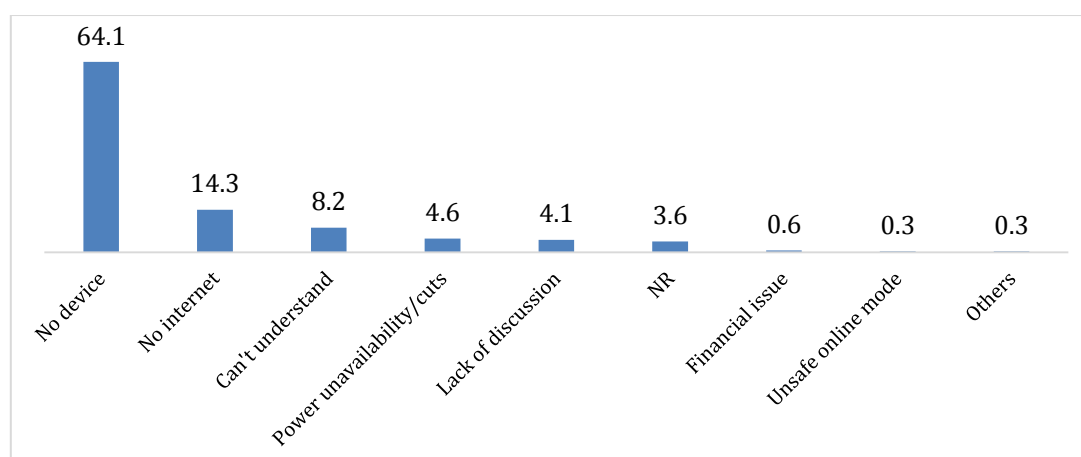
**Table 2.4: Percentage of OOS and at-risk adolescent girls by household income**

Monthly family income	Attending school pre & post-COVID	Out of school pre-COVID	Out of school/at risk post-COVID	Total
Less than Rs. 3000	71.9	17.3	10.8	100.0
Rs. 3000-6000	85.3	6.6	8.1	100.0
Rs. 6000-10000	85.9	3.0	11.0	100.0
Rs. 10000-15000	86.7	2.8	10.5	100.0
More than Rs. 15000	93.2	2.5	4.2	100.0
NR	89.0	4.4	6.6	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>84.6</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: primary survey data

One of the major factors behind the correlation between economic status and educational vulnerability has been the dependence on digital education during the pandemic induced school closure. The greatest difficulty faced during online schooling has been lack of device and internet facilities as reported by 64 per cent and 14 per cent adolescent girls respectively (Figure 2.1).

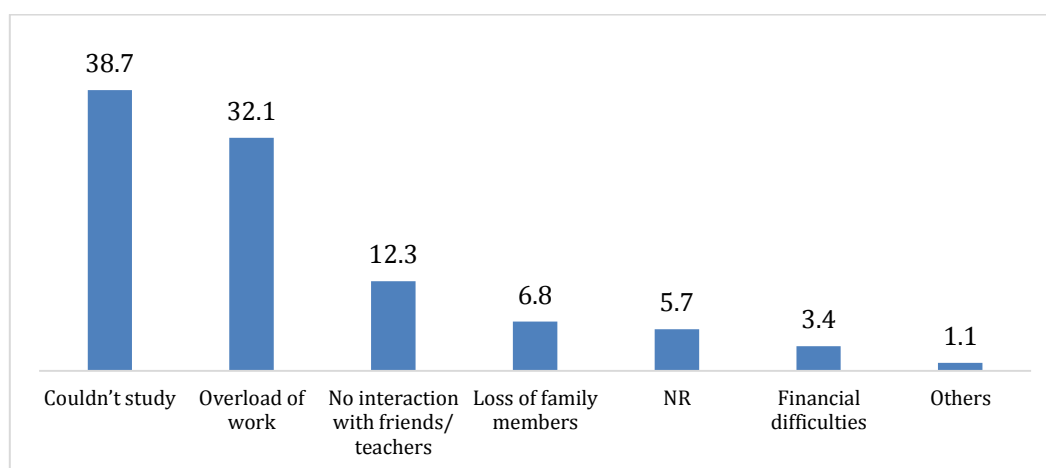
**Figure 2.1: Major challenges faced during online mode of teaching (%)**



Source: primary survey data

Emphasise on online/digital education during the COVID induced school closure along with lack of devices led to lack of studies during the school closure. Moreover, for adolescent girls there were additional load of domestic chores. All these have added to anxiety/stress level of the adolescent girls as revealed in our primary data (Figure 2.2). Inability to study and overload of work have been mentioned as the primary causes of anxiety/stress after COVID outbreak as reported by nearly 40 per cent and more than 30 per cent respondents respectively. School is considered to be the most healthy stress buster and shock absorbing environment for adolescent girls. No interactions with friends and teachers during the school closure have also added to the stress.

**Figure 2.2: The primary cause of anxiety/stress after COVID outbreak (%)**



Source: primary survey data

The adolescent girls' vulnerability regarding the school attendance also increases with age, or in other words as they approach towards the marriageable age. In our sample we found adolescent girls of 16-18 years of age are relatively more vulnerable in terms of dropping out than 13-15 years age. Their proportion of out-of-school in the pre-COVID period, and particularly out of school/at risk of dropping out in the post-COVID period is higher than 13-15 years age group (Table 2.5).

**Table 2.5: Percentage of OOS and at-risk adolescent girls by age**

Age	Attending school pre & post-COVID	Out of school pre-COVID	Out of school/at risk post-COVID	Total
13-15 years	87.9	5.3	6.9	100.0
16-18 years	77.6	8.9	13.6	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>84.6</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

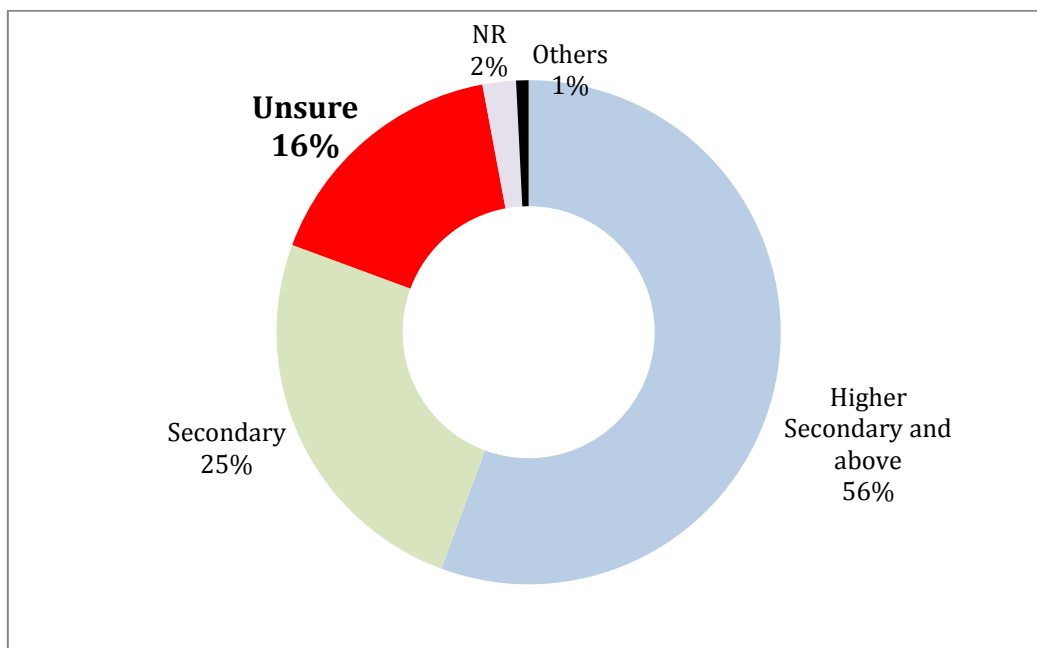
Source: primary survey data



According to the DISE (2019-20) data, dropout rate at different levels of school education has a correlation with social categories. The highest share of dropouts is among ST girls, followed by SC, OBC and general caste girls. However, in our primary data no such caste wise pattern has come out significantly.

In the survey, we asked the school attending adolescent girls about their expectations regarding their successful completion of secondary or higher secondary of education. Figure 2.3 shows the distribution.

**Figure 2.3: Expectations regarding successful completion of school education (%)**



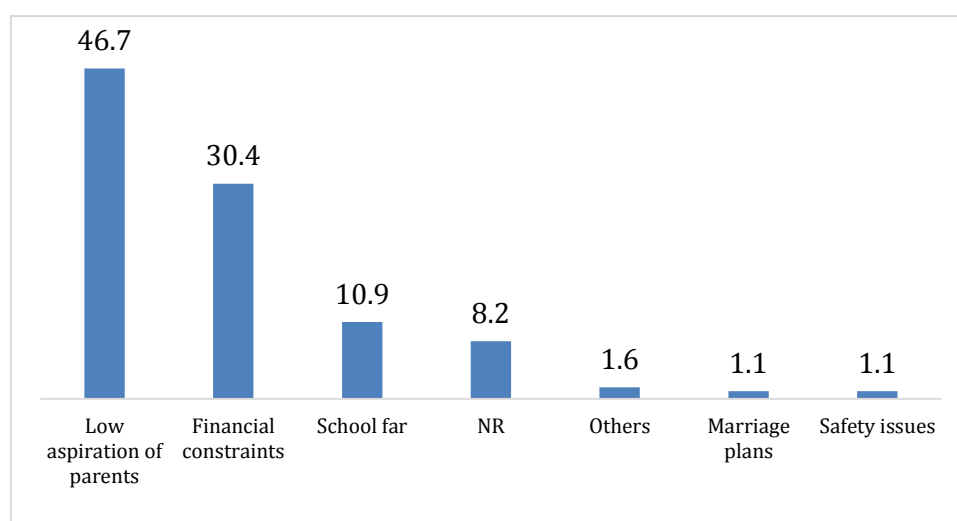
Source: primary survey data

For the group who were unsure of completing their secondary or higher secondary of education, further enquire was done by asking reasons for their responses. Low aspirations of parents, financial constraints, and distance to the school were the major responses (Figure 2.4).

We also mapped the reasons of being unsure against their economic conditions, low aspirations of parents to be correlated with their economic situation as well (Table 2.6).

In order to understand the further implications of schools at a distance, we explored their mode of commuting to school and whether there has been any shift after COVID (Table 2.7).

**Figure 2.4: Reasons for being unsure of completing further education (%)**



Source: primary survey data

**Table 2.6: Reasons why further education is unsure, by family income (%)**

	School far	Financial constraints	Marriage plans	Low aspiration of parents	Safety issues	Others	NR	Total
Less than Rs. 3000	15.6	34.4	0.0	48.4	0.0	1.6	0.0	100 (N=64)
Rs. 3000-6000	4.4	32.4	1.5	55.9	0.0	0.0	5.9	100 (N=68)
Rs. 6000 +	12.5	20.0	2.5	42.5	5.0	2.5	15.0	100 (N=40)
NR	16.7	33.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.3	41.7	100 (N=12)
<b>Total</b>	<b>10.9</b>	<b>30.4</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>46.7</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>8.2</b>	<b>100 (N=184)</b>

Source: primary survey data

Regarding mode of commuting to school, 21 per cent reported walking alone to school before COVID which increased to 36 per cent after COVID pandemic. Those who were commuting through rickshaw or motor-cycle before COVID pandemic, 44.6 per cent and 41 per cent respectively shifted to walking. Financial difficulty could be a possible reason. Those who were walking with friends, nearly 17 per cent of them shifted to walking alone. Drop-outs of friends, or their shifting to other schools could be a possible reason, could not verify most of these conjectures from data though.

**Table 2.7: Mode of commuting to school and shifts after COVID**

Mode of commuting before COVID	Mode of commuting after COVID					
	Rickshaw	Motor-cycle	Walk with friends	Walk alone	Others	Total
Rickshaw	40.6	5.0	9.9	44.6	0.0	100.0
	80.4	13.5	2.2	11.7	0.0	9.4
Motor-cycle	3.3	50.8	3.3	41.0	1.6	100.0
	3.9	83.8	0.5	6.5	0.7	5.7
Walk with friends	1.5	0.0	80.7	16.8	1.0	100.0
	15.7	0.0	95.3	23.1	3.3	49.3
Walk alone	0.0	0.4	3.9	93.5	2.2	100.0
	0.0	2.7	2.0	55.8	3.3	21.4
Others	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.2	92.8	100.0
	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.9	92.8	14.3
Total	4.8	3.5	41.7	35.9	14.3	100.0
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: calculations based on primary survey data

## 2.3 Institutional challenges and how it got aggravated by COVID-19

Coming to the supply side or institutional challenges, our primary data reveals that increasing proportion of adolescent girls were out of school even before COVID pandemic started, from Primary (up to 8th), to 10th and 12th standard class. The pandemic added more adolescent girls to this group (Table 2.8). Girls attending/completed 12th are the most vulnerable and at risk of dropping out due to the COVID pandemic.

**Table 2.8: Percentage of OOS and at-risk adolescent girls by last/currently attending class**

Last/currently attending class	Attending school pre & post-COVID	Out of school pre-COVID	Out of school/at risk post-COVID	Total
Primary	85.6	5.9	8.6	100.0
9 <sup>th</sup>	88.9	3.2	7.8	100.0
10 <sup>th</sup>	85.5	6.2	8.4	100.0
11 <sup>th</sup>	83.7	7.8	8.5	100.0
12 <sup>th</sup>	75.5	9.8	14.7	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>85.1</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: calculations based on primary survey data

The relative proportions of adolescent girls going to public and private institutions remain more or less the same after reopening of schools. However, of those going to private schools pre-COVID, 16 per cent have shifted to public schools. In contrast,

among those who were going to public schools before COVID, less than 2 per cent shifted to private schools. Among those who were out-of-school before COVID, nearly 29 per cent started going to public schools (Table 2.9). The COVID pandemic and the subsequent school reopening have increased demand for the public sector and have increased pressure on the public school system. Among those who shifted from private to public school after reopening, 50 per cent reported inability to pay fees to be the reason of such shift (data not shown). In contrast, those who have shifted from private to public schools, 60 per cent of them have reported unavailability of public secondary school to be the reason for the shift (data not shown).

**Table 2.9: Type of School and Shifts after Post-COVID School Reopening**

Pre-COVID	Post-COVID				
	Govt.	Private	Other (aided, Trust etc.)	Out-of-school	Total
Govt.	96.5	1.7	0.5	1.4	100.0
	96.5	11.8	5.4	41.4	79.5
Private	15.9	81.2	1.5	1.5	100.0
	2.5	88.2	2.7	6.9	12.3
Other (aided, Trust etc.)	4.2	0.0	95.8	0.0	100.0
	0.3	0.0	91.9	0.0	6.3
Out-of-school	28.6	0.0	0.0	71.4	100.0
	0.7	0.0	0.0	51.7	1.9
Total	79.5	11.3	6.6	2.6	100.0
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: calculations based on primary survey data

We have asked the school attending girls, whether there has been a reduction in numbers of girl students in their class, and mapped that information against whether they have remained in the same type of institution or changed their type of school. Table 2.10 reveals that those who have remained in public schools reported reduction of girl students in their class the least, while those who remained in other institutions (e.g., aided, trust, etc.) and those who remained in private schools reported them the most. Reduction of larger magnitudes, say, reduction by 20 girl students or more, is the highest among those who stayed in private school. Taking all the adolescent students in our sample as a whole, there is a net reduction of girl student in their class post-COVID. The net average reduction is the highest among who remained in private schools is shown in Table 2.11.

**Table 2.10: Change in number of girls after school reopening, by institution type**

	Reduced 20/+ students	Reduced 19-10 students	Reduced less than 10	Same	Increased	Total
Remained in public	7.2	13.0	23.7	40.8	15.3	100.0
Remained in private	11.0	11.0	39.5	31.2	7.3	100.0
Remained in Other	1.5	7.5	61.2	28.4	1.5	100.0
Institution type changed	10.0	13.3	40.0	21.7	15.0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>12.5</b>	<b>28.7</b>	<b>37.9</b>	<b>13.5</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: calculations based on primary survey data

**Table 2.11: Net average change in number of girl students in classes of adolescent students, by type of institution**

Type of institution	Mean
Remained in public	-3.5
Remained in private	-5.3
Remained in Other	-3.2
Institution type changed	-4.4
Total	-3.8

Source: calculations based on primary survey data

Primary data also reveal that those who have remained in other type of institutions and those who have shifted have also changed their mode of commuting the more. Those who remained in public or in private schools have changed the least (Table 2.12).

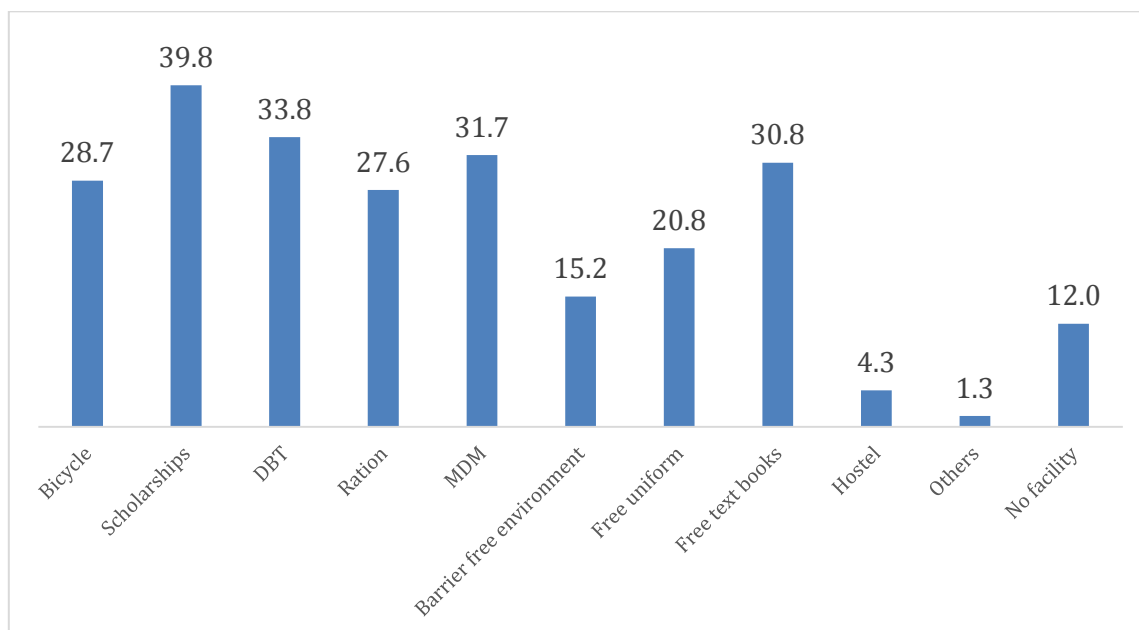
**Table 2.12: Effect of school change on change in mode of commuting**

	No change	Rickshaw/Motor-cycle/Others to walking alone/with friends	Walking with friends to walking alone	Other shifts	Total
Remained in public	83.0	8.3	5.4	3.4	100.0
Remained in private	87.2	2.8	9.2	0.9	100.0
Remained in Other	50.0	22.1	26.5	1.5	100.0
Institution type changed	54.8	9.7	25.8	9.7	100.0
Total	79.7	8.7	8.3	3.4	100.0

Source: primary survey data

Regarding the support received by the school attending adolescent girls, we have collected multiple responses, and Figure 2.5 shows the share of students mentioning about the facilities that supported them to continue education after school reopening.

**Figure 2.5: Facilities from school which supported adolescent girls to continue education after school reopening (multiple responses)**



Source: primary survey data

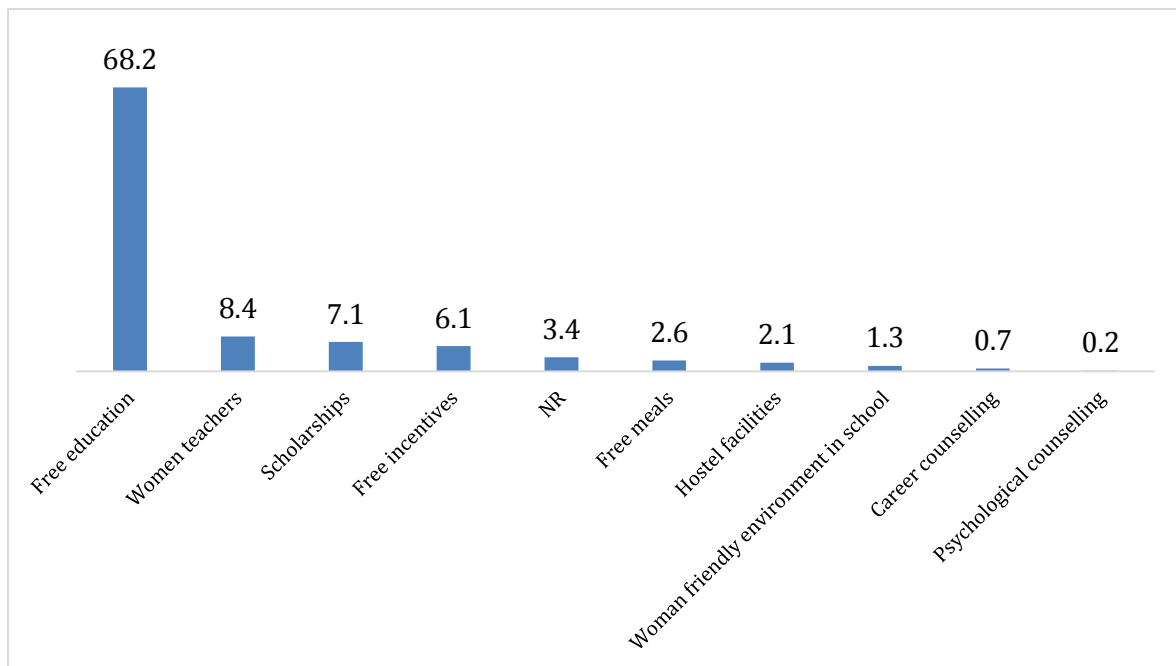
Around 20 per cent of students studying in 9-10 standards and getting fee concession during the pre-COVID period reported of not getting such fee concession after post-COVID reopening of schools (Table 2.13). This finding is relevant in the background of expectations of adolescent girls the support required for completing their secondary and higher secondary school education as shown in Figure 2.6.

**Table 2.13: Percentage of adolescent girls in class 9-10 receiving fee concession, pre and post COVID reopening**

Pre-COVID	Post-COVID		
	Fee concession in 9-10th	No fee concession in 9-10th	Total
Fee concession in 9-10th	80.0	20.0	100.0 (N=70)
No fee concession in 9-10th	4.9	95.1	100.0 (N=326)
Total	18.2	81.8	100.0 (N=396)

Source: calculations based on primary survey data

**Figure 2.6: The most important support needed to complete education (%)**



Source: primary survey data

As reported by adolescent girls, free education is the most important support they expect from the government to complete their secondary and higher secondary school education.

# Recommendations

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Based on the findings the report put forward the following recommendations:

- Extending the upper limit of age bracket of RTE Act from 14 years 18 years (or completion of school education), given the multiple hardships and dropouts in this age group.
- Awareness building regarding girls' education, ill effects of child marriage etc. is required.
- Conditional direct bank transfer (DBT) scheme for families where 6-18 years of girls are attending school to encourage school education
- Given that a major shift has taken place from private to public education system, particularly during the pandemic, strengthening of public education system is necessary, so that adolescent girls do not get pushed out of the system due to crowding out effect. Mapping out the demand supply gap at the local level by local governing bodies, and accordingly increasing the budget for education will be particularly helpful.
- Capacity building of the adolescent girls in the community regarding how to help each other in case of violations to their rights.
- Providing counselling sessions and psychological support for adolescent girls by involving professional counsellors. Also, capacity building of teachers for counselling sessions and psychological support for the adolescent girls at the school.



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