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Psycho-social Analysis of Marginalized Women in India and the Role of Education in their Mental Health

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Abstract

Marginalized women refer to individuals whose identities and communities are marginalized by the authorities and other institutions, resulting in their exposure to prejudice and inequity. Marginalization, a systematic manifestation of prejudice, encompasses various detrimental outcomes such as poverty, exclusion, violence, and under-representation, which have significant and widespread implications. To overcome any form of discrimination, education functions as a mechanism, every Indian female has a fundamental right to education under the Right to Education Act of 2009. Despite being among the fastest-growing nations, India's female literacy rate is significantly lower than the international average. The present article offers a psychosocial examination of the plight of India's marginalized women. Further investigation is undertaken to assess the influence of education in their life. Marginalized women can attain greater acceptability and quality education by improving psychosocial conditions; concurrently, by enhancing their education, they can improve their psycho-social circumstances in life. It has been suggested that obtaining an appropriate education can serve as a protective factor against socially and psychologically abusive behaviour among marginalized women.

Keywords

Marginalized women, Psycho-social explanation, Education, Discrimination, Mental health, Gender.

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1. Introduction

The marginalized people do not have the same level of control over their lives and things as those who are living in the mainstream. Eventually, it affects them, rendering them unable to lead a regular life, and causing them to remain secluded and divided from one another. A significant influence on the development of individuals as well as the evolution of society as a whole is exerted by marginalization. Women and other people who are subjected to severe forms of discrimination are the most vulnerable members of marginalized communities. Those women who are marginalized are those who are subjected to discrimination and inequality, as well as those whose communities and identities are marginalized by the state and other different actors. They persist in their efforts to establish a place for themselves in society, yet despite this, they continue to be disregarded and do not receive the prestige that they were due. The situation of these women in India is extremely deplorable, and they continue to struggle for their dignity. In the majority of Indian families, sons are favoured and thought to be the true assets of the family, and the birth of a girl child is not considered to be a significant event. Because girls are expected to marry off and serve their in-laws in the future, the majority of Indian families view the responsibility of raising a girl child as a burden. This is a conventional reality. Beginning at a young age, Indian girls are subjected to training or socialization with the expectation that they will conform their eating habits, living standards, rituals, and clothing to the preferences of their new family members, sometimes known as in-laws. At the time of marriage, a substantial amount of money is required to be spent on the dowry. In numerous instances, if the demand for the dowry is not satisfied by the family of the bride, she is subjected to torture, and there are instances of domestic violence that manifest themselves occasionally.

At this time, the number of crimes committed against women and girls is steadily increasing. Tragically, the position of women in India is a dismal one. Marginalized women themselves are in a confusing condition of disadvantage and impotence as a result of their limited involvement in social, economic, and political realms, where they are meant to contribute based on specific predetermined criteria of their choosing. Women with disabilities who are marginalized experience worse health outcomes, educational performance, economic involvement, and social rejection than women without disabilities as a whole. It is of the utmost importance to support them to preserve their mental health. Over many years, there have been a great deal of conversations and debates in India over the issue of gender equality. These debates and discussions will focus on a variety of subjects, including the position of women in

India in terms of their health, education, economic standing, gender equality, and other social issues. As a result of these debates and conversations, it became clear that women in our emerging nation held a rather contradictory perspective. Swami Vivekanand has rightly said, "It is impossible to think about the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. A bird can't fly on only one wing". Without considering marginalized people in front of society, it is not possible to think about the welfare of the world in reality. To uplift marginalized individuals from their state of adversity, characterized by significant mental, emotional, and social challenges, it is crucial to address the physical ailments that often go unnoticed and unattended. Unfortunately, these physical issues are not prioritized by the individuals themselves or by others, including their children who may experience social discrimination due to their family circumstances. For them to have a better opportunity to break through their constrained boundaries and live their lives in a fully awakened state, it is of the utmost importance to give some thought to their lives and to comprehend their complete psycho-social condition. According to Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru:

"To awaken people, it is the woman who has to be awakened, once she moves, the country moves and thus we build the India of tomorrow."

2. Psycho-social Condition of Marginalized Women

An individual's psychological, biological, and social functioning are all taken into consideration during a psycho-social analysis,

which is a methodical assessment strategy. Both the individual's self-perception and their capacity to function in the community are evaluated through this process. In the context of marginalized women, it is a significant question to comprehend their psychological and social status, how they perceive themselves, and how they might contribute to society. Numerous aspects of life are impacted by marginalization, which is a particular type of systematic injustice. In addition to the fact that they typically confront poverty, marginalized women also face major obstacles when it comes to acquiring land, resources, and necessary services. Marginalized women encounter a plethora of obstacles. Gender discrimination is a common occurrence where women are subjected to unfair treatment in several domains such as education, jobs, and politics. When compared to males, marginalized women are more likely to be victims of many sorts of violence, including sexual assault and domestic abuse. As a result, women are disproportionately affected by gender-based violence to a greater extent than men. In many aspects of life, including education, employment, medical care, housing, and law enforcement, marginalized women are commonly subjected to systematic disparities, restricted access to opportunities, and unequal treatment. A recent study examining mental health issues among marginalized women revealed that women in low-income settings in India experience mental health challenges due to various factors, including everyday issues and gender-related stressors. These stressors primarily revolve around motherhood, poverty, and domestic conflict.

Women who are marginalized are subjected to social marginalization and injustice, which can lead to their being excluded from accessing equitable opportunities for high-quality education, employment, and access to justice. There is a possibility that marginalized women will have limited access to a limited pool of bright persons, which may impede their advancement in certain institutions and workplaces. The opinion that Mahatma Gandhi held for marginalized women was crystal clear. What he said was that referring to women as "the weaker sex" is a disparaging term that reflects the unjust regard that men have for women. Under the assumption that moral energy is synonymous with strength, woman is incomparably superior to man. If nonviolence is the law that governs our existence, then the future does not belong to men but to women.

3. The Mental Health of Marginalized Women

Mental health refers to an individual's state of emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It is a fundamental human entitlement that holds significance across all stages of life and is equally crucial to one's physical well-being. Mental wellness encompasses more than just freedom from mental diseases. Mental health is a condition of optimal functioning that enables individuals to effectively manage stress, recognize their capabilities, acquire knowledge and perform well, actively participate in their society, make informed choices, establish meaningful connections, and influence their environment. Several social and economic factors contribute to marginalized women having a higher risk of having poor mental health. Marginalized women are more likely to experience higher levels of stress, anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as a result of gender inequality, which can have a significant impact on mental health. Additionally, marginalization might be a factor in the existence of disparities in access to behavioural health care services. There are numerous forms of marginalization, including the fact that women who are disabled or refugees also have a greater risk of mental health problems. Even though marginalized women are among the most stigmatized groups in society, the quality of life of these women continues to be negatively impacted by negative attitudes and experiences of rejection.

Particularly in India, where the burden of sickness is compounded by acute shortages in mental health practitioners and fragmented services, the mental health of women who are living in poverty is becoming an increasing public health problem. Nevertheless, there is a paucity of studies on how women of this type comprehend mental illness. They lack a comprehensive understanding of the concept of mental health. The research "A Woman's Life Is Tension" provides a gendered analysis of women's pain in poor urban India. Thematic analysis of the data revealed that women use the term "tension" to discuss mental illness. Tension was regarded as both a normal part of life and a condition caused by more profound gender-related stressors, including pressures associated with childbirth, persistent poverty, and domestic conflict. Approaches to controlling stress were diverse and centred on the resumption of social responsibilities. The findings are consistent with those of other studies in similar cultural situations, implying that women's suffering has a common,

transnational nature and that scholarship on women's mental health in low-income settings needs to be more sensitive to gendered forms of marginalization (Saloni Atal and Juliet Foster, 2020).

It is crucial to possess a thorough comprehension and consciousness of mental health to timely and appropriately take action for oneself. There should be an accessible and user-friendly platform where marginalized women may have access to and acquire knowledge to enhance their mental health. Self-care can be an important component in the maintenance of mental health and can also be of assistance in the treatment and recovery process if someone is suffering from a mental disorder. It has been observed that the group of marginalized women does not practice self-care, and even those women do not have a clear understanding of what it means to adequately care for themselves and their mental health. Encouraging individuals to not just enhance their comprehension but also inspire them to prioritize self-care may be a challenging endeavour.

It has been observed that marginalized women may experience emotions of solitude and melancholy in a range of elements of their lives. There is a common awareness of the fact that women are more likely to be victims of sexual and gender-based violence, which can have a detrimental impact on their sense of self-worth and confidence. As a result of their lack of self-assurance, they choose not to have the fortitude to fight for themselves and instead choose to accept injustice that they do not deserve. In the study on the Status of Marginalized Women in Indian Society, it came to light that economically marginalized women of society lacked sufficient funds for their medical care. The primary social and psychological requirements of the victims included inadequate access to medical care, reliance on fraudulent practitioners, and limited opportunities for remote education. These needs were not promptly met due to social marginalization. Furthermore, the marginalized women encountered prominent challenges such as resistance, neglect, distrust, and harshness (Simrath Jeet Kaur and Sangeet, 2022). In the article on Empowering Marginalized Women in India, research has revealed that women in India are frequently regarded as subordinate to men, resulting in further constraints on their chances. Women frequently lack influence over their financial matters, family dynamics, and even their income, with marginalized women experiencing an even greater degree of this. Women who are marginalized are particularly vulnerable to experiencing gender-based violence due to the

significant social and cultural shame associated with women's responsibilities and societal expectations (Jitna bhagani, 2020)

4. Children of Marginalized Women

Children who are born to women who are marginalized are not allowed to participate in mainstream activities; this includes economic, political, cultural, and social activities. Exclusion is the process of excluding something or someone from a group and assigning it a lower priority than other members of the group. The majority of the time, this is a social phenomenon in which a subgroup or minority is excluded, and its desires and preferences are ignored. The presence of marginalization is a worldwide phenomenon that has an impact on their children's lives. When it comes to choosing the direction that their life will take and the resources that are accessible to them, female who are marginalized have a limited amount of agency at their disposal. They have fewer options available to them. As a result of this, their capacity to make contributions to the lives of their children decreases, and as a consequence, the contributions that they make to society that are significant are restricted. The trafficking of children continues to be a big problem in India. On the other hand, research indicates that children who require specific protection frequently come from marginalized and socially excluded populations, such as scheduled castes and tribes, as well as the impoverished (UNICEF, India). This is even though it is not always easy to obtain comprehensive statistics and information on child protection concerns. Even though India has been a sovereign nation for seven decades and has enacted the Right to Education, children in the country continue to face persistent disparities that are based on aspects such as caste and financial status. They are confronted with a lot of difficulties, particularly if the child is a member of a group of marginalized women. It is common for parents to be hesitant about sending their children to school due to the occurrence of biased conduct and societal inequality. This is because there is a tendency for biased behaviour.

To make progress towards the objective of providing equitable and all-encompassing educational opportunities and ongoing learning experiences for all individuals, it is not only necessary to ensure that disadvantaged children continue to attend school, but it is also crucial to offer access to these changes. One of the most essential things that can be done is to make sure that children who

come from underprivileged Indian communities and have special needs are protected in the same way when they are trying to get an education. It is difficult for marginalized women with little financial resources to acquire printed books in their native language or first language. The importance of having a diverse variety of languages, which is a significant component of India's cultural diversity, is not often the subject of emphasis at educational institutions. Changing the way that people read and write in more than one language is something that should be prioritized.

5. Education and Marginalized Women

The development of any nation mainly depends on the development of its all sections of people. India will truly progress if educational opportunities are extended to the marginalized groups that comprise a large part of its population. The cultivation of a hostile environment occurs as a consequence of discrimination, which may lead to frequent absences and, ultimately, the children's refusal to attend school. The Right to Education Act of 2009 states that every girl in India has the right to receive an education as a fundamental societal entitlement. Although India is experiencing fast economic growth, the literacy rate among women in our country is far lower than the norm for the rest of the world. General education in schools and colleges, professional and technical education, and health education are all examples of the types of education that fall under the umbrella of women's education. The goal of these many types of education is to foster the overall development of women. Education is a powerful instrument that may be used to promote empowerment and raise awareness about one's civil and political rights. To facilitate the socio-cultural and economic growth of women in society, education is an endeavour that plays a significant role.

Even though the government of India has launched several programs to advance women's education, women who come from underprivileged regions continue to fall behind in terms of educational achievement, and developing a high literacy rate among them continues to be an unattainable objective. Several factors contribute to low literacy rates and high dropout rates among marginalized women. Some of these factors include parental attitude, parental illiteracy and ignorance, poverty, inadequate school environment, early marriages, bias toward educating male children, and insufficient infrastructure and communication facilities. When it

comes to the pursuit of social and economic advancement for the most disadvantaged populations in India, literacy is a crucial preliminary measure that must be taken. Not only may individuals improve their level of living by increasing the number of options available to them, but they can also acquire access to the countless fundamental services and rights to which they are entitled. Concerns have been made over the incapacity of a major part of marginalized communities-including those from low-income households, scheduled castes/tribes, backward classes, and other ethnic minority groups-to display even the most rudimentary levels of accomplishment.

When it comes to fostering social fairness and making society more equitable for all people, education is one of the most essential methods to act. Every child in India must have the opportunity to attend an excellent school, regardless of their family, caste, religion, or financial situation. Every day, India makes efforts to ensure that women in every region of the country have access to high-quality educational opportunities. It should come as no surprise that education has a significant role in terms of economic development, scientific advancement, cultural preservation, and social fairness. For a variety of reasons, including individuals with disabilities, members of ethnic and religious minorities, castes, and tribes, women are among the most marginalized groups in the field of education. Several reasons might make it difficult for marginalized women and girls to have access to education. These include gender stereotypes, gender-based violence, child marriage, early and unwanted pregnancy, a lack of inclusive learning environments, inadequate and hazardous education infrastructure, and poverty. There is a positive impact on economic, social, and health standards when marginalized women are allowed to receive an education.

There is a correlation between increased literacy rates among marginalized females and a reduction in the mortality rate of children. Education has a direct influence on the reduction of those who commit crimes. Inequality in society can be reduced by the implementation of education that is marginalized. Children born to educated women who come from marginalized communities have a lower risk of being malnourished or stunted. The government of India is making persistent efforts to guarantee that marginalized women have access to education of a high standard across the entire nation. Education is unquestionably essential for the advancement of economic development, scientific research, the preservation of

cultural traditions, and the promotion of social equality. Children whose mothers are educated and come from marginalized backgrounds have a lower risk of being malnourished or stunted. An ongoing effort is being made by India to guarantee that women from disadvantaged backgrounds have access to high-quality education across the whole nation. Unquestionably, education is of the utmost importance for the advancement of economic development, scientific progress, the preservation of cultural traditions, and social fairness. The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) will make certain that young girls who come from disadvantaged and marginalized communities are provided with equal opportunities to benefit from the school system in India.

The present article would be incomplete without illustrating the transformative impact of education on the lives of marginalized women, exemplified by the remarkable story of Savitribai Phule in the Indian education system. Phule, who was a pioneering female educator, a trail blazing feminist, and a catalyst for social change in India, serves as a powerful testament to the power of education. She has a fervent passion for advancing women's education to empower women in the realms of education and literacy. Savitribai Phule was India's first female teacher (dalit), modern feminist, and social reformer. The revolutionary attitude that she possessed allowed her to improve women's education, which in turn led to the advancement of women in the domains of education and literacy. It was a struggle to educate women, and she was a comrade in arms in that struggle. Because Krantiveer Savitribai Phule was the spark that ignited the fire, her birthday is an important day for all women who are receiving an education in the modern era. Her story serves as a vivid illustration of how education has the power to alter the lives of women who are marginalized and how an educated woman may have an impact on society.

6. Conclusion

Women who are marginalized are more likely to be victims of violence, sexual assault, and abuse. A sufficient number of marginalized women are not adequately represented in the policy and decision-making processes. Women are at a high risk of being excluded from society due to the many conditions that exist. It is possible for women who are marginalized to face a variety of challenges, including but not limited to unfair treatment, poverty,

illiteracy, social and cultural boycotts, a lack of opportunities, and social identities that are not traditional.

Every segment of a nation's population must progress for the nation as a whole to prosper. Providing educational opportunities to the marginalized women who make up a significant portion of India's population is crucial if the country is to make genuine progress. Various constitutional provisions and developmental programs were established by the Indian government to educate and empower them. Education sheds light on several issues affecting women and offers potential remedies. The enhancement of psycho-social circumstances has the potential to assist marginalized women in achieving higher levels of acceptability and quality education. While this is happening, the enhancement of their educational opportunities can also assist them in improving their psychological circumstances in life. For women who are marginalized, it has been suggested that receiving an appropriate education can serve as a protective factor against practices that are both socially and psychologically harmful. This is a proposition that has been taken into consideration.

Even though there has unquestionably been progress in this respect, there is still a great deal more work that needs to be done. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act was approved in 2009, and since then, the government has made enormous progress towards its objective of providing education to all children. Even though these issues need to be solved, the government has made immense work towards its goal. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can carry out extensive programs of education access and enrolment, as well as conversations at community events, to promote the significance of education in marginalized children. These children have been able to become first-generation learners in their families and societies as a result of the provision of gender-sensitive study materials and engagement programs. If children receive an adequate education, it is quite likely that girls will not become marginalized females and will be equipped to confront and surmount challenges in life. Additionally, boys will acquire the skills to interact respectfully with any group of females, regardless of whether they are marginalized or not. To provide equitable rights for marginalized women, it is imperative to provide education not only to girls but also to boys. By equipping both genders with the appropriate knowledge, attitude, and behaviour, they may both make meaningful contributions to their lives.

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