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To mark International Women's day, *Education Times* focusses on e

WHY DO INDIAN GIRLS DROP OUT OF SCHOOLS?

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As we celebrate International Women's Day on March 8, we are reminded that the condition of women in India is not celebratory. The fact that 32.4% of young girls aging 14-18 years opt out of schools due



GANESH CHANDRA

to 'family constraints' is not a pleasant news. Even today, 89% of girls are made to do household chores, despite being enrolled in a school, says the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) report.

The report states that there is no gender bias for enrolment in school in the early age, however as they reach adolescence, more girls (32%) drop out of school than boys (28%).

Sabiha Hussain, director, women's studies, Jamia Millia Islamia, cited sanitary health to be one of the major reasons. "Girls are forced to drop out of schools as soon as they hit puberty mainly due to lack of toilets and in-definite boundaries in the school. Most parents find schools to be an unsafe place for the girls."

The trend, says the report is prevalent because of the patriarchal rules in the society. The ASER report reveals the unfair division of resources for women, as 76% of female students had never used internet

in their life and 22% of girls had never used a mobile phone. However, when it comes to boys, 51% have access to internet and 88% have access to mobile phones. Sabiha says this trend is because parents favour boys more than the girls.

"Few schools in tier II and tier III cities, computer teachers are male and the classes are held after school. Most parents refrain from letting their daughters stay back late in the school," said Sabiha, highlighting an incident in a school in Bihar, where male students worked on the computers, while female students were not seen in the computer lab.

"Education for girls is still seen as a tool to get a groom and marriage becomes a major challenge for women aspiring for higher studies as it is believed that a highly-qualified woman will have a hard time finding suitable 'match'," added Sabiha.

