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INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCED RESEARCH (IJAR)

Article DOI:10.21474/IJAR01/16281
DOI URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01/16281>



RESEARCH ARTICLE

EXPLORING THE LINK BETWEEN KANYASHREE PRAKALPA AND GIRL CHILD EDUCATION

Sreshtha Banerjee¹ and Promita Mukherjee²

1. Student, J.D.Birla Institute.
2. Assistant Professor, J.D.Birla Institute.

Manuscript Info

Manuscript History

Received: 15 December 2022
Final Accepted: 19 January 2023
Published: February 2023

Key words:-

Kanyashree Prakalpa, Financial Scarcity,
Women Empowerment, Girl-Child
Education, West Bengal

Abstract

In the recent times, to stimulate the educational potential as well as to stop the early marriages of female child, West Bengal Government, with the expertise of Ministry of Department of Women development and Social Welfare (DWD&SD) curated a cash incentive scheme called Kanyashree Prakalpa, launched in the year of 2013, dated 8th April. The main objective of the scheme was to promote higher education as well as stop child marriage, which will showcase a decrease in the mortality rate of both mother and child. The implementation of Kanyashree Prakalpa was done and became a success, but what is the present scenario regarding the scheme? The paper specifically caters the educational aspect of Kanyashree Prakalpa and from the results it was determined whether the scheme has served its purpose in the current setting. The findings of this study suggest that Kanyashree had positive impact on female admission rate in rural area and dropout rate in both rural and urban areas.

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Introduction:-

In the present scenario, when women empowerment is at its peak, there are still some cases where women are lagging behind and one out of such case is Education. India, being a country celebrating and worshipping the Goddesses, that represent certain characteristics of women, producing eminent scholars since the time of the Vedic age like Maitreyi, Lopamudra and Gargi, and telling the tales of different empowered women from our rich Mythology, showcases a gut-wrenching overview that as the years pass by, the importance of women grew less and less as compared to our ancestors.

Certain socio-cultural facts do elaborate the present situation of women empowerment, specifically in the state of West Bengal.

As per Census data of 2011, the Literacy Ratio of Rural Male and Female populations are 78.44% and 65.51% respectively and for urban male and female populations, it is 88.37% and 80.98% respectively. It is observed that the female literacy rate is quite less than that of male literacy ratio and rural women reflect the lowest literacy rates out of all. Even though the situation has changed in the recent years, but it still not has been validated with any current Census data that the situation has improved. It surely did increase from the year of 2001 were-Literacy rate (women) for West Bengal in 2001 was 59.61% and in 2011 it rose to 71.16% with a positive Change in percentage of 11.55%. Previously in the year of 2001, West Bengal ranked 21 out of all states in terms of literacy rate of women and its position change by an increase of 2 ranks, reflecting a position of 19 out of all states in terms of women

literacy rate. Even though the literacy rate of women increased by 8 times from the year of 1951 up to the year of 2011, a general gap between the male and female literacy rate is observed. As long as the social atrocities occur against women, without a push to make them empowered, shall the literacy rate of male and female waver not only in West Bengal but in majority parts of India.

DLHS-4 2012-13 showcases that 32.1% of girls below 18 years get married in West Bengal(36.3% in rural areas, and 21.3% in urban areas)(Biswas and Deb,2019). The states of PurbaMedinipur, DakshinDinajpur, Nadia, Purulia,Bankura, Birbhum, Bardhaman and Murshidabad are the districts that reflect highest child marriage incidence. To mention the fact that PurbaMedinipur boasts as the district having the highest literacy rate, followed by Kolkata, is even more disheartening, as it reflects that being literate does stop the incidence of child marriage. Census 2011, showcases the percentage of women married below the age of 18 is almost 40.24% of its 27.45 million ever-married women, as compared to the national average of 30.21% (Biswas and Deb, 2019)

To make women financially independent and have her right to education, West Bengal Government and the Department of Women Development and Social welfare (DWD&SW), Launched Kanyashree Prakalpa on the date of 8th April 2013.Kanyashree Prakalpa is such a highlighted scheme that it can be considered as a milestone where men and women will have the opportunity to be equally empowered. It is a conditional cash transfer provided to the female students and divided into two major components-i) Annual Scholarship of Rs 1000 and ii) One time Grant of Rs 25000, to mainly support the status and well being of a girl child in West Bengal, as well as facilitate schooling along with stopping the prospect of early marriage till they do not attain the marriageable age of 18 year (previously the legal age of female child).

Aims of Kanyashree Prakalpa:-

1. Motivating the students to complete their line of education and be financially independent.
2. Delaying of child marriages of female students below the age of 18, the previous legal age of marriage of girls.
3. To make money a tool of women empowerment and leaving the decision of money utilization from the grant, on the female recipients
4. Enhancing the social power and self-esteem of girls

Literature Review:-

Saha (2015) explained that the Department of Women Development and social welfare of West Bengal introduced Kanyashree Prakalpa keeping a specific set of objective in mind to gain desired goals. He also pointed out that the time period was too early to say if the pre-determined goals reflect to be fully successful or not. In his paper, he stated that first two years of implementation of the scheme showed that the scheme has achieved great success along with receiving international acclaim.

Choudhury (2018) mentioned many loopholes while conducting her survey. Her survey focused on the result that many families did not know about the main condition that their daughters must be unmarried while they pursue their school education to further avail the K2 benefit. She also observed that in many cases, many married girls remained in school with registering their marriage and claimed the K2 scheme.

Nandi and Nandi (2019) proposed some suggestive measures. They mentioned that all the necessary information should be provided to the students and their parents before availing the scheme in the form of workshops, discussions, seminars, etc held in schools and specifically as “PathaNatika” for the rural regions, with which the students and their guardians can relate. They also mentioned that the girls who have successfully went up against any extreme situation must be introduced to the masses of her fellow juniors, so that they can motivate them to pursue higher education at any given situation.

Samsujjaman and Haldar (2018) - mentioned in his thesis that Kanyashree Prakalpa does impact a decrease in the rate of child marriage and does increase the interest of girls in higher education. He also mentioned that there is difference between Urban and Rural girls level regarding the awareness of Kanyashree and motivation of girl students to pursue higher education with the benefit of Kanyashree scheme.

Objectives Of The Paper:-

The main objective of the research was mainly –

1. To explore students’ awareness about the Kanyashree Prakalpa
2. To analyse whether Kanyashree Prakalpa has motivated the female students to pursue higher education
3. To understand whether students have been empowered or conceived an idea about empowerment
4. To analyse the impact of Kanyashree Prakalpa on repeat, dropout and the admission rates.

Research Methodology:-

Method of Data Collection-

Two sets of questionnaire were prepared catering to two different groups of Kanyashree scheme, K1 and K2. The data was collected through a primary survey, going to schools in the South Kolkata region for urban population and the Panchayat regions of Hooghly district for the rural population. Interactive sessions were also conducted after filling of the questionnaire, to understand the depth of their answers. Data of the admission, repeat and dropout rates for these schools were collected with the permission of the school headmistresses, from the registers kept specifically for each category. The attendance data was collected with the attendance log as well in front of the teachers with the permission of the headmistresses. Data for the K2 students was collected with the aid of teachers assigned with the supervision and implementation of Kanyashree scheme of those schools itself.

The Sample size of data-

From the date of 22nd March 2022 to 1st of May 2022, the data samples were collected. For K1 category, a total of 200 samples, 50 from each class of 9 to 12 belonging from both urban and rural population were collected, making it a total of 400 samples, which is also the case of K2, where a total of 100 samples were collected, consisting of both urban and rural population.

Results And Discussions:-

In support of the idea of gaining information about the level of awareness of the students about the Kanyashree Prakalpa, from figure 1 and 2, it is evident the most of the survey respondents answered “School/ school authorities” which indicates that schools and school authorities do play their relevant role in providing necessary information and guiding them for the said Government facility. It is also observed that even after passing out from school, the authorities have guided them regarding the availing conditions of Kanyashree Prakalpa. Thus it appears that the schools and school authorities ultimately help in building up of foundation and will remain beside their students, even when they continue to flourish in their lives.

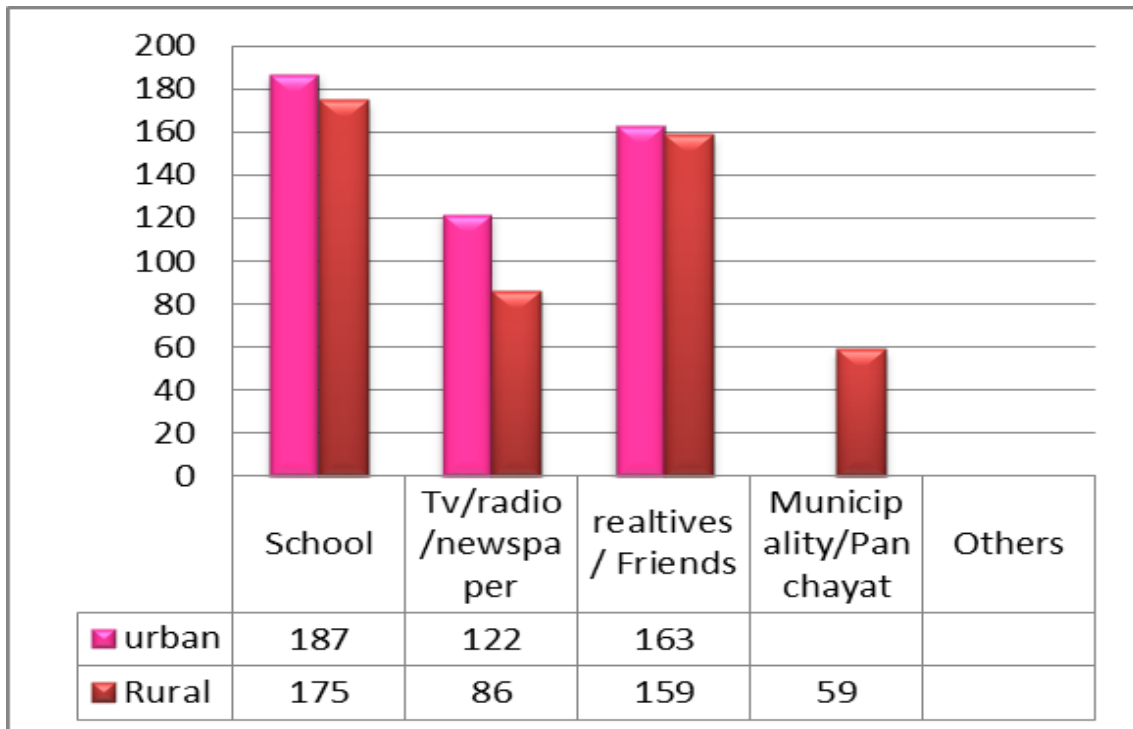


Figure 1:- K1 student’s awareness about Kanyashree.

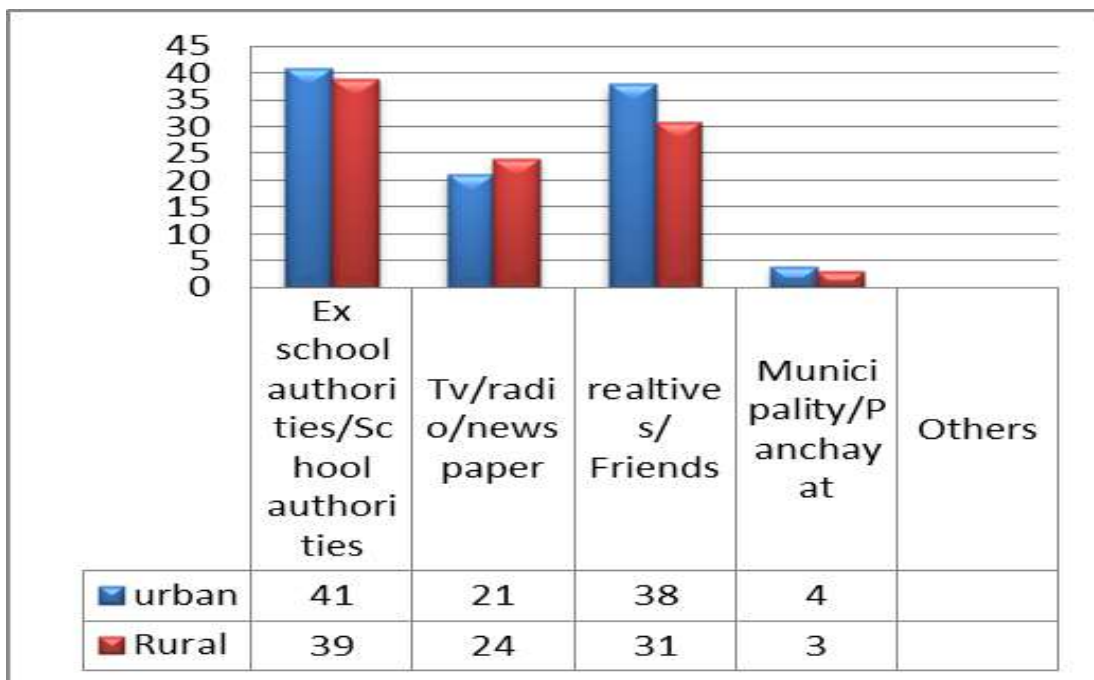


Figure 2:- K2 students awareness about Kanyashree.

Analysing The Effects of Kanyashree Prakalpa Regarding Motivation To Pursue Higher Education and concievation of an idea about empowerment

The students belonging from the K1 category are mostly students of classes 9 to 12, majority below the age of 18. The results of the K1 category elaborated that the students were extremely regular to school, specifically the rural students, which can occur due to availability of various other schemes and yojanas and it is not completely determinable that Kanyashree Prakalpa, alone influenced the regularity of the these students with regards to school attendance. One important point can be noted here that for urban students, Kanyashree is not the prime factor to make them pursue higher education as most of their parents prefer them to study in english medium schools, if they have certain monetary support. Also, the students belonging from the age of 14 to 17, are vulnerable and under their parents guidance, being extremely dependent on them, so an influence of their parents over the decision making tendency can be observed, which again is acceptable as they have not passed the then legal age of 18, even though a significant trend was observed that the situation of “financial scarcity” made the parents take decision against their ward’s will. So here, the data and results of the K1 category is weak, hence our channel of main concern is shifted towards the students belonging to the K2 category and whether Kanyashree did cause a force of empowerment within these students.

While enquiring the students belonging from the K2 group regarding how they use their OTG 25000/- grant from Table 1, it is evident that that students from urban population mostly use the money or plan to use the money for Higher education. This may be the result of their parents giving permission to them to use the money for higher studies as well as for their personal expenses, albeit it must have some kind of utility which will be required by them on a long run, as claimed by the students. The rural students, even though they have their priorities set for higher education, using the money for providing for household expenses became a necessity, as observed in the answering pattern were 28 responses out of 50 samples utilize the money on account of “Household expenses”. The main reason for so as taken into consideration and also accepted by the respondents is the financial scarcity prevailing in their family. Thus, their parents allow them to use some part of the OTG grant for their higher education, as they are broadening their thought process slowly with the societal advancement and the rest is utilized by them to make their ends meet.

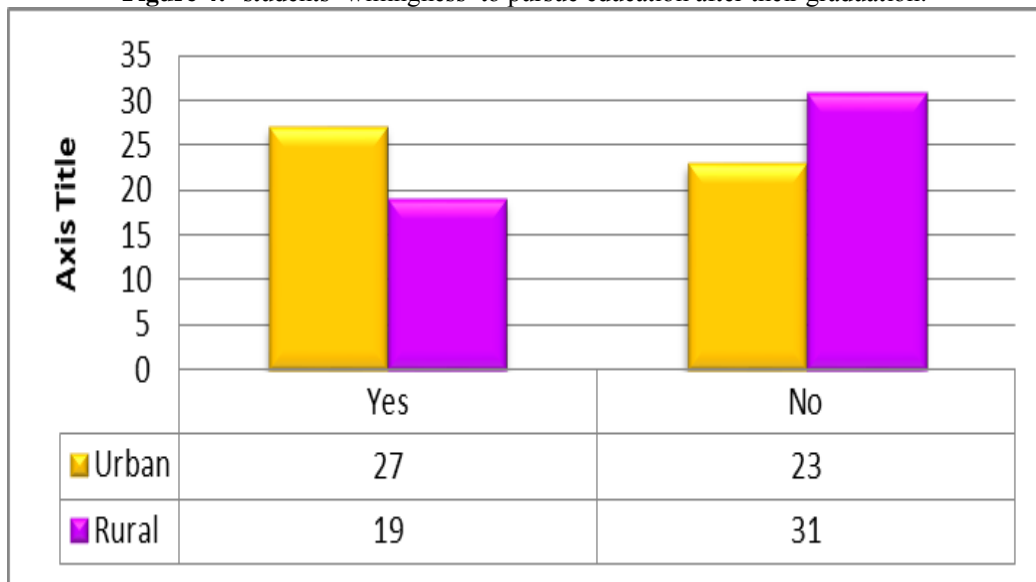
Table 1:- Pattern of Utilization of Grant Received from K2 among Rural and Urban Female Students.

	Higher Education	Personal Expenses	Household Expenses	Marriage	Total
Urban	21	22	7	0	50
Rural	19	2	28	1	50

The authors have also performed chi square test to analyse if there is a significant difference of utilization pattern of the money received from K2 across rural and urban students and the difference is highly significant (Chi square statistic=29.36,p value<0.01)

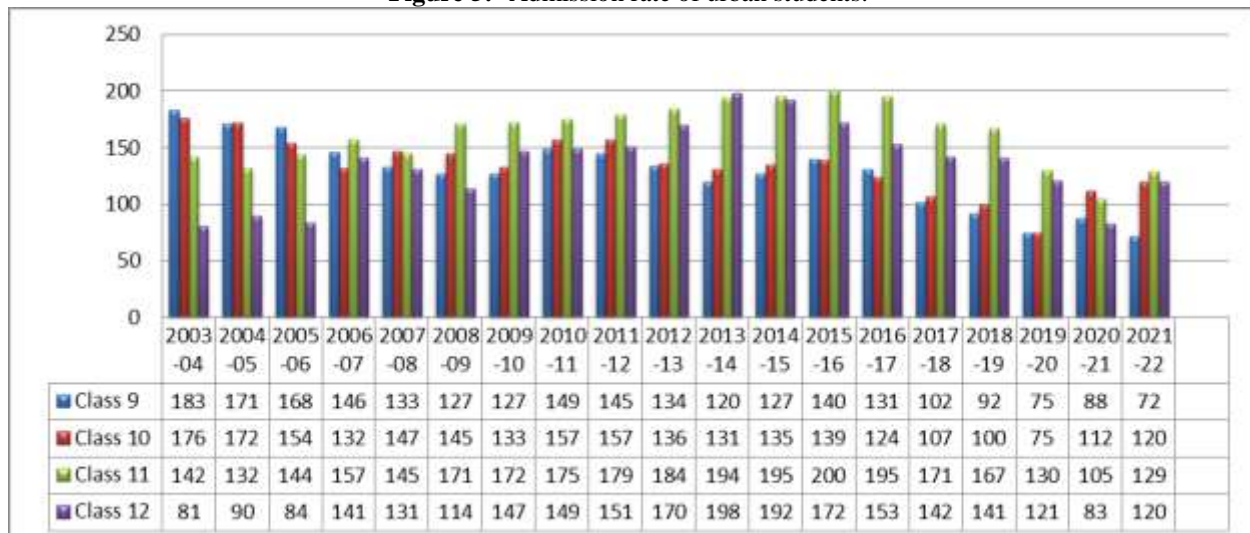
Kanyashree Prakalpa had a positive impact on the mind-set of the female students as it can be determined from certain point mentioned above to complete their higher secondary education and also pursue a bachelor’s course, but whether it has influenced them to seek education after graduation, that is a question. From Figure 4 given below, the answers in itself interprets an evident picture that, majority of urban students do have the intention and also are willing to go for higher studies after completing their graduation but this is not the case for the rural students, as majority of them answered “No” for this. It can be determined that specifically for the rural students, the prime reason for the negative remark from them is-financial scarcity, that pressurises them to start working after they complete their graduation. Upon further pondering on the subject with them, the prospect of marriage came up to sight, shedding light that early marriage is still a situation faced by many female students, even when they would like to secure their future and prosper in their lives.

Figure 4:- students’ willingness to pursue education after their graduation.



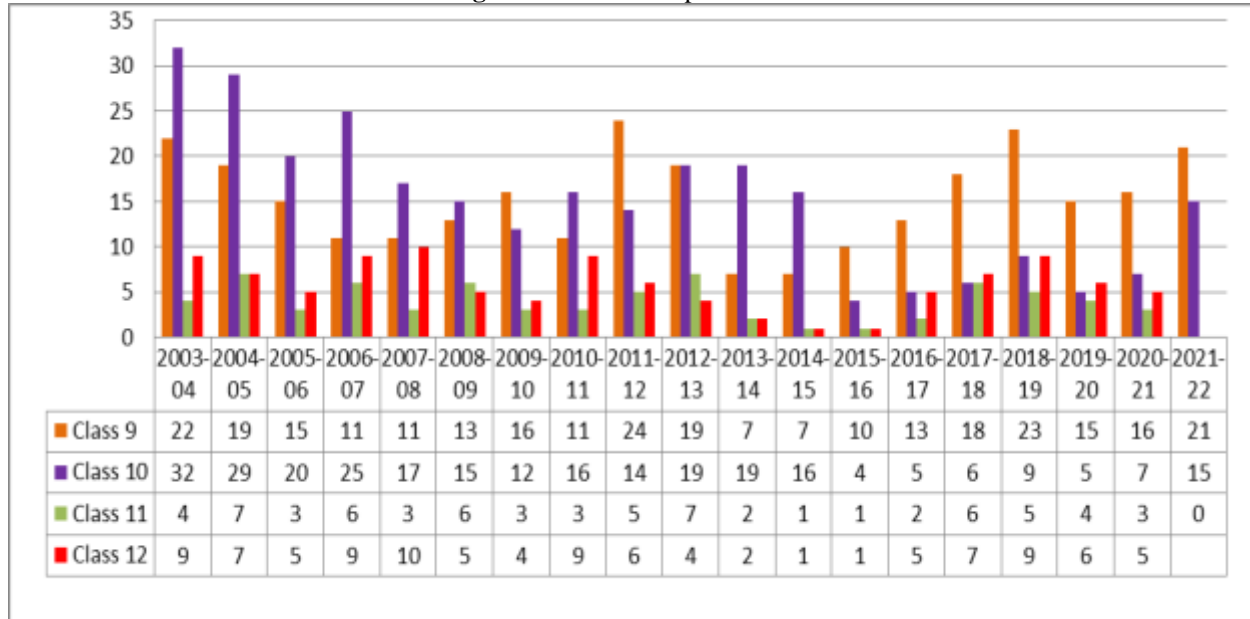
Impact of Kanyashree Prakalpa on Admission Rate, and Dropout Rate

Figure 5:- Admission rate of urban students.



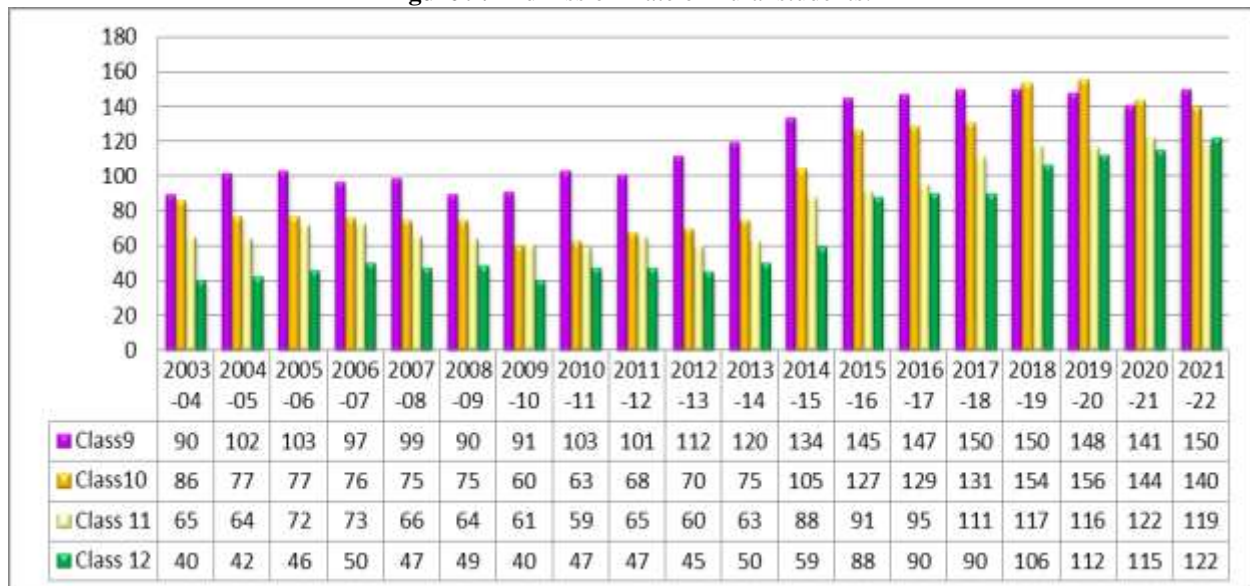
From Figure 5, it is evident that, for each and every class from the year of 2003 the gradual admission rate or enrolment rate of the students showcased a decrease, but after the Kanyashree Prakalpa was launched in 2013, the admission rates again started to showcase an increase in between years of 2014, 2015 and 2016, a clear indication that parents initiated admission of their ward to schools. But slowly showcased a decrease as well. Thus, there is no clear impact of Kanyashree Prakalpa on admission rate in the recent year, for the urban population.

Figure 5:- Urban Drop Out Rate.



In the situation observed in the dropout rate, Kanyashree Prakalpa surely did showcase a significant decrease. If compared with the drop-out rates before 2013- Classes 9 and 10 reflect quite a significant decrease in the drop-out rate. But classes 11 and 12 do not fall far behind as Class 11 showcased a slow but steady decrease. For class 12 students an immediate decrease was observed, where there was 0 drop out cases in between the years of 2014-2017.

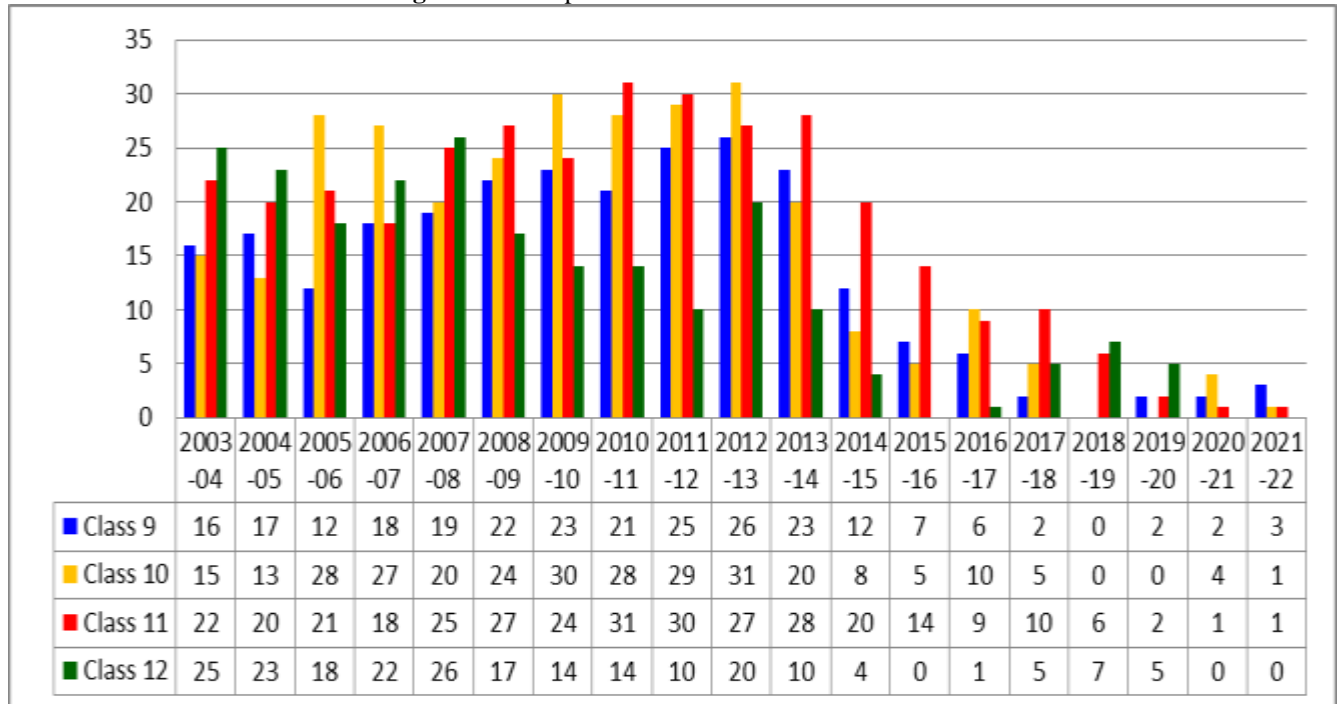
Figure 9:- Admission Rate of Rural students.



It is noticeable from the above that the admission rates have showcased an increase after the implementation of the Kanyashree Prakalpa. Specific mention or emphasis is to be given for Classes 11 and 12, as they have showcased the highest increase in the admission rate. The teachers did mention that the monetary benefit from the Kanyashree Prakalpa made the guardian of these students to let their ward go to school, as most of the parents either belong from

the farming occupation or labour, or from house help occupation. Thus to obtain the benefit of the grant money, they show inclination toward the thought of sending their children to schools and letting them to continue with their studies.

Figure 10:- Dropout Rate of Rural Students.



The Drop-out rate for all the classes did show case a sudden decrease after the year of 2013, i.e. the year of launching of the Kanyashree Prakalpa, specifically for the students belonging to Class 10 and Class 12, though it did not reflect immediate effect over Class 11, highlighting a clear picture that Kanyashree Prakalpa was not only a huge boost in regards of motivating the students to pursue higher education, but also made their parents to support their idea to receive the benefit of the Prakalpa.

Conclusion:-

Kanyashree Prakalpa is indeed a noble initiative, started by West Bengal Government, to facilitate the right to education and channelize female empowerment, with pros and cons of the scheme going hand in hand. This paper does focus on both the good and bad aspects of the Prakalpa. We are able to interpret that the students from both the categories of K1 and K2 are aware about the scheme, specifically gaining preliminary knowledge from their school authorities. It is also observed that, for K1 category, regularity to schools is indeed a fruitful achievement, but we cannot support that Kanyashree was the sole factor for this result as availability of other schemes may have an even more steady effect. The students of this category are below the age of 18, under their parent’s guidance, so the results from them are weak and heavily influenced by their parent’s decision as their parents decide on their behalf. But a major point was observed that financial scarcity becomes a hindrance for the students to pursue their studies. The K2 students specifically from urban region have the right to take decisions regarding their future higher education and sees themselves to pursue higher studies, i.e. masters Phd.etc and are able to use the money received from Kanyashree Prakalpa for their education and personal expense purpose and no pressure comes from their parents regarding so. But for the rural students majority of them mentioned that they do not see themselves to pursue education after college as they wish to do jobs and earn for and support their family and relieve them from financial burden.

Admission rates, after starting of the scheme did initially observe a rise for urban students but gradually started to reflect a fall, which is not the case for rural students. Admission rates of rural students did increase after starting of the scheme and is still observing a steady level of increase in rates. Dropout rates showcased a substantial decrease for the urban students, specifically for the Classes of 10 and 12 and for all rural students of classes 9 to 12,

specifically focussing on students of class 12, with repeat rate showcasing a decrease after the initiation of the scheme but not reflecting any such change possible at the moment.

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