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## A Sociological Study on Problems Faced by Female College Students at SRM School of Law, Kattankulathur.

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### ABSTRACT

Education is the most powerful weapon that brings change in the society. Women's education plays a crucial role in building the nation. It encourages women, promotes self-reliance, and discourages discrimination based on gender beliefs. This research analyses the primary problems faced by female students in higher education.

**Keywords:** *Higher Education, Depression, Societal Pressure and Family Pressure*

### INTRODUCTION

Higher education plays an important role in a country's development. Higher education serves as a foundational pillar for a merit-driven and inclusive civil society. It fosters awareness of social norms, empowers individuals with independence and plays a crucial role in challenging biases related to gender, faith, caste and socio-economic status. Female students often face difficulties and issues in colleges which impacts their studies, mental health and overall experience.

Understanding these challenges faced by female College students is crucial for developing targeted intervention, strategies and support systems. This research aims to explore the challenge faced by female college, to identify key areas for concern and ways to enhance.

### OBJECTIVES

- To investigate the barriers encountered by female college students in accessing and continuing higher education.
- To understand the impact faced by gender norms and family expectations.
- To explore the psychological effects of social expectations and institutional bias on the female students.
- To analyse the role of college infrastructure, Safety measures and support services in enabling Female Students' academic Success.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

According to "**Higher Education for Women in India—Choices and Challenges**", Nandita Singh (2007) examines the challenges faced women in higher education. Girls' education is impeded by the concern of physical safety, long travel distances and fear of harassment. Moreover, women's education mostly funnelled into arts and humanities or teaching fields as they are cheaper and shorter, while men's are commonly educated in STEM courses. It also mentions social expectation affect women aspirations.

Based on "**Role of Higher Education in Women Empowerment**" by Dr. Monika Panchani (2017) highlights that higher education empowers women empowerment. It enhances women's decision making, autonomy, and social status. It also mentioned about women are restricted in some occupations because of social attitudes, employers' resistance and ignorance of higher skills and occurring opportunities.

As per, "**PROBLEMS FACED BY FEMALE COLLEGE STUDENTS**" Bhavana K. Bendre (2022), states that women handle too much stress as they handle multiple roles- academic, familial, and sometimes work-related. Moreover, due to financial restrains women are forced to drop out or pursue less rigorous education.

### **AREA OF THE STUDY.**

This study focuses on Problems faced by female Students in SRM School of Law College. This research aims to explore academic, social, psychological, financial and institutional challenges, helping to understand their impact on the students' education and well-being.

### **SELECTION OF SAMPLE**

A purposive sampling method was used to select participants to ensure fair representation of the student body. The survey received 45 responses in total and the data was analysed using Google Sheets.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

It is Descriptive study used a structured survey. The data was gathered through a structured questionnaire, composed through multiple choice questions, distributed only to female students of SRM School of Law. The study population included female students studying in various courses at SRM School of Law. A purposive sampling method was used to select participants to ensure fair representation of the student body. The survey received 45 responses in total and the data was analysed using Google Sheets.

### **SOURCES OF DATA**

**Primary Data:** The data collected from the field through google forms.

**Secondary Data:** collected from books, articles and research papers

### **TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES USED FOR THE STUDY**

The research collected data through the Google form. The data was gathered through a structured questionnaire, composed through multiple choice questions, distributed only to female students of SRM School of Law

### **SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS**

This study understands and analyses various challenges faced by female students especially enrolled in law college. It is empirical study which solely focuses across Five years integrated course, three years Course and LLM course. This Study does not cover the experiences of 1<sup>st</sup> Year BA.LLB/B.COM/BBA students, male students, staffs and students of others streams. This study addresses academic pressures, Gender bias, safety and security concerns, financial constraints, Infrastructure issues, Physical and mental challenges and other responsibilities to the female students only.

## **DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION.**

1. Distribution of Age Group by the respondents.

Category	No. of Respondents	Per cent
Below 18	03	6.7
18 -20	39	86.6
21 – 23	02	4.2
24 and above	01	2.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100</b>

### **Sources: Primary data**

A significant majority (84.4 per cent) of your respondents fall into the 18–20 age group while 6.7 per cent are below 18. A small portion (approximately 6.6 per cent) are aged 21–23 or 24 and above, possibly representing final-year or postgraduate students.

Since most responders are between the age of 18 to 20, the finding will reflect the issues faced individuals in this age group.

## 2. Have you ever faced challenges in choosing your college course?

Category	No. of Respondents	Per cent
Yes	20	44.5
No	19	42.3
I don't know	3	6.7
Prefer not to say	3	6.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100</b>

### Sources: Primary data

Nearly 44.4 per cent have mentioned that they faced difficulties while choosing their college course. This suggests that students need career guidance and counselling to support academic decision-making, which may be influenced by parental or societal pressure to choose “safe” courses often steering away from STEM Courses like literature.

According to *UNESCO (2020)*, Girls are significantly less likely than boys to expect to work in science, engineering, and ICT-related professions despite similar performance levels. For example, *OCED countries*, only 7 per cent of girls work in science and engineering. Moreover, deeply ingrained stereotypes about what careers are “suitable” for men and women heavily influence girls’ and boys’ career choices which are reinforced by family, teachers, and society.

In contrast, 42.3 per cent of the respondents did not face any difficulties in choosing their course, as they felt confident and received support in their decision-making. This indicates that they likely had clear career goals, passion, strong guidance, and less external pressure.

Additionally, 6.7 per cent of the students chose not to disclose their experience, and another 6.7 per cent of students were unsure. This reflects underlying uncertainty, lack of awareness, fear of judgement or discomfort in discussing personal academic struggles.

## 3. Feel Stressed or overloaded with academics or exams

Category	No. of Respondents	Per cent
Always	05	11.1
Never	01	02.2
Rarely	12	26.6
Sometimes	27	60
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100</b>

### Source: Primary data

A greater number of respondents (60 per cent) feel stressed or overloaded sometimes with academics or exams as they may face heavy course load, Fluctuating Academic Demands, may lack in studying regularly or in advance and in balancing multiple responsibilities like doing extra-curricular activities along with studies.

Another significant portion (26.6 per cent) reported feeling stressed rarely, which may be due to effective time management skills and emotional or academic support from family, friends, or mentors.

Only a small percentage, (11.1 per cent) stated that they always feel stressed. This is due to heavy academic load, pressure to perform well academically, fear of failure or high family expectations or without proper time management skill.

Lastly, just 2.2 per cent of the respondents stated experiencing low external pressure and high academic confidence. This could be due to different Personality traits - as some individuals are naturally cool, relaxed or emotionally detached from common stress triggers.

#### 4. Factors affects your academic confidence

Category	No. of Respondents	Per cent
Comparison with male peers	03	06.6
Fear of low grades	17	37.7
Lack of encouragement	21	46.6
Language barrier	04	08.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Primary data

Majority of the students (46.6 per cent) identified a lack of encouragement as key factor as many students experience pressure to perform well in academically and compared with peers. Additionally, traditional gender expectations can discourage entering male dominated fields like engineering, defence courses, law courses etc., when the society frames that women's pursuing these courses not "supposed" to succeed, they may be less likely to participate, they feel down and over time, they will lack their confidence.

Another significant a greater number of students (37.7 per cent) responded for the fear of law grades; this may be because of high parental and societal expectations, pressure to maintain academic standing and past academic struggle. Most of the students have internal pressure to prove themselves, especially among the first generation and they feel that their academic pressure will define their worth.

Approximately, 8.9 per cent identified language barrier as a factor affecting their academic confidence, this suggests that some people have rural backgrounds, non-English-medium schools, or first-generation learners. They may face challenges in understanding lectures, expressing ideas clearly in academic writing, or participating in discussions. It leads to feeling of Isolation, low-esteem, fear of Judgement and reduced classroom engagement.

A small percentage, 6.6 per cent witnessed gender stereotypes and comparison can undermine female students' confidence in male-dominated fields.

#### 5. Dropping out due to stress or family issues or other reasons.

Category	No. of Respondents	Per cent
Yes	4	08.9
No	27	60
Sometimes	8	17.8
Prefer not to say	6	13.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Primary data

A majority (60 per cent) of the respondents have not considered dropping out, which is a positive factor indicating they no or less stress and family issues. It also highlights these students have strong will power and not ready to give up their studies in any kind of situation.

However, 17.8 per cent students reported they sometimes consider dropping out. Students may face difficulties like parent's fights, divorce and expectations can elevate stress and depression. *Depression strongly predicts lower GPA (Grade point Average) and higher dropout probability, especially when co-occurring with anxiety. (Eisenberg et al., 2013.)*

Additionally, 8.9 per cent confirmed they 'have', suggesting 1 in 4 students face dropout-level pressure at some point. And 13.3 per cent chose "prefer not to say" which implies they feel uncomfortable talking about it or are afraid of being judged.

**6. Restricts factors most often your ability to attend college regularly**

Category	No. of Respondents	Per cent
Transportation difficulties	19	42.2
Health issue	19	42.2
Financial constraints	03	06.7
Never	04	08.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Primary data**

Transportation difficulties and health issues are significant barriers, each affecting over 42 per cent of respondents. It suggests that there is limited access to safe and reliable transportation. Moreover, safe transportation to college is expensive. Physical health problems and mental health issues like menstrual issues, Chronic illness, Stress leads to absenteeism among female college students.

Financial constraints were noted by 6.7 per cent of respondents, as in some families educating sons is prioritized over daughters, so girls may receive less financial help for tuition, books, or living costs. Additionally, female students take on caregiving roles at home, which can make it harder to work and study. These extra costs can become a barrier to attending or staying in college. They face inability to afford transportation, meals, or college-related expenses.

The low count for “Never” reflects how few students experience an entirely smooth journey in terms of attendance.

**7. Do you experience stress or anxiety because of balancing academic work with social or family expectations?**

Category	No. of Respondents	Per cent
Frequently	06	13.6
Occasionally	18	40.9
Rarely	18	40.9
Never	02	04.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: primary data**

“Occasionally” and “Rarely” categories combined 80 per cent respondents report experiencing at least some level of stress or anxiety due to the pressure of balancing academic work with social or family expectations. The stress and anxiety can lead to mental issues among college students linked to higher risk of anxiety and depression, especially females. They also face challenges like gendered expectations, time management challenges etc... While it may not always be severe, this type of stress is a regular part of students’ lives.

A significant number 13.6 per cent, experience this stress frequently, which is a negative indicator showcasing limited support systems, rigid family expectations or heavy academic workloads with heavy psychological pressure.

Only 4.5 per cent of the students responded that they never experienced Stress which might suggest strong coping mechanisms, less demanding environment.

**8. Which societal constraint has most impacted your ability to pursue higher studies?**

Category	No. of Respondents	Per cent
Early marriage or familial pressure to marry	03	06.7
Safety and mobility concerns.	14	31.1
Financial constraints	10	22.2
Others	18	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: primary data**

A large portion of Students, 40 per cent has selected “Others”, which suggests the presence of multiple unlisted societal factors. It may include gender discrimination, menstrual hygiene issues, discrimination from faculty, lack of encouragement, academic pressure.

Safety and mobility concerns is the major barrier for female students. According to a 2020 survey by *The Wire*, revealed that 57 students out of 567 students of current and former female students from Indian higher education institutions (around one in ten), reported experienced sexual assault. Of those 57 survivors, 87.71 per cent were abused by other students, 12.28 per cent by faculties and 10.52 per cent by staffs. (Dasgupta, S., & Mukherjee, A, *The Wire*).

Financial constraints are another significant concern for female students, as economic hardships limits access to quality education and resources. This contributes to lower college completion rates among women, which can result in economic performance and higher dropout rates.

In total 6.7 per cent of students faced Early marriage or familial pressure to marry. While this may be seen as positive in some contexts, it remains a concerning issue. The consequence of early marriage includes reduced ability to contribute meaningfully to the family's and society's future, interrupted education, and increased dropout's rates.

#### 9. Do you face restrictions from your family in participating in college activities.

Category	No. of Respondents	Per cent
Yes	04	09.1
No	26	59.1
Sometimes	12	26.6
Prefer not to say	03	06.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: primary data

Most of the students (59 per cent) reported they do not face family restrictions when it comes to participating in college activities. Showing the positive shift in familial attitudes towards female education and engagement in extracurricular activities.

A significant proportion (26.6 per cent) indicated they sometimes face restrictions. Showing conditional participation, possibly based on the type of activity, timing, location or tradition. Moreover, some female students are being restricted by their families from participating in extracurricular activities during menstrual days.

A small but notable group (9.1 per cent) encounter strict restriction from their family. This may be due to cultural or traditional norms, safety concerns and fear of being judged by the society.

Only 6.7 per cent of the students hesitated to reveal personal family dynamics, suggesting that they may have any sensational issue.

#### How safe do you feel on campus, especially during early morning or late-evening hours?

Category	No. of Respondents	Per cent
Very safe	09	20
Neutral	25	55.5
Unsafe	05	11.1
I don't know or prefer not to say	06	13.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: primary data

Over a half of the respondents (55.5 per cent) have a neutral stance on campus safety during early or uncertainty about safety measures in place. It reflects lack of strong experiences or uncertainty about safety measures in place.

This group of respondents (20 per cent) feel completely safe, which may indicate they completely feel safe inside the campus.

Another group (11 per cent) reports feeling unsafe, which is a major negative and concerning factor. These students may have had a bad experience or feel lack of adequate security infrastructure.

A relatively smaller group (20 per cent) feel discomfort in discussing safety possibly due to trauma, fear of blame or inaction.

**11. Have you ever encountered gender-based bias from faculty or peers during your college hours?**

Category	No. of Respondents	Per cent
Frequently	1	2.2 per cent
Occasionally	13	28.8 per cent
Rarely	8	17.7 per cent
Never	23	51.1 per cent
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: primary data**

Over half of the respondents (23 per cent) have not experienced gender bias, suggesting positive campus culture where gender equality practiced.

A substantial portion (28.8 per cent) indicated occasional experience of bias, though not constant, but present as subtle ways, grading influenced by stereotypes and facing assumptions about capabilities by peers or faculties.

17.7 per cent of the students responded that they rarely faced these incidents, though minor or infrequent, are often overlooked or accepted as normal—shaped by cultural habits or the unspoken norms within the institution.

2.2 per cent respondent has frequently faced gender bias, signalling a more persistent and likely serious issue that may be affecting academic performance or mental well-being.

**12. Have you experienced or witnessed any form of harassment in or around the campus.**

Category	No. of Respondents	Per cent
Yes	7	15.6 per cent
No	31	68.8 per cent
Prefer not to say	4	8.9 per cent
I am not aware	3	6.7 per cent
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: primary data**

A significant percentage (15.6 per cent) of the respondents not experienced or witnessed harassment on or near campus. From this we can state that the students felt the environment really safe. We can also conclude that they may go unnoticed, unacknowledged or misinterpreted as normal behaviour.

Another significant percentage of the students confirmed that they either experienced or witnessed harassment, which can be verbal, physical emphasized the hesitation to report such incidents due to stigma. Although numerically small, it suggests that harassment is a present reality on your campus.

This group is highly significant in harassment-related research. Choosing not to answer often indicates: Fear of backlash or judgment, fear, stigma, Emotional trauma and Lack of trust in the outcome

This reflects a lack of knowledge or clarity about what constitutes harassment. These students might have seen or experienced inappropriate behaviour but didn't recognize it as harassment. It could also reflect lack of campus dialogue on the issue. It also shows showing a clear gap in awareness and education.

**13. Have you ever faced challenges within peer or friends' groups.**

Category	No. of Respondents	Per cent
Frequently	3	6.7 per cent
Occasionally	15	33.3 per cent
Rarely	14	31.1 per cent
Never	13	28.9 per cent
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: primary data**

The data shows that a small portion student Frequently (6.7 per cent) have experienced some form of peer challenges like social exclusion, emotional strain, fighting, Jealousy, miscommunication, competition etc...

Another group of Students Occasionally (33.3 per cent) have experienced conflicts may not be chronic but happen during stress periods, psychological distress, Loyalty Conflicts bad mouthing, gossip and Rumours.

31.3 per cent of students have mentioned that they have stable friendships but still experience occasional misunderstandings or discomfort.

Only 28.9 per cent report never facing such challenges, which is a positive factor indicating limited Social Circle, supportive environment, positive peer groups. It also states that many even normalize unhealthy peer behaviour.

#### 14. How adequate are the menstrual-hygiene facilities (clean toilets, water supply, disposal bins) on your campus?

Category	No. of Respondents	Per cent
Very adequate	08	17.8
adequate	29	64.4
Inadequate	06	13.3
Not Sure	02	4.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: primary data*

Majority (64.4 per cent) find facilities adequate but not excellent as they feel their basic menstrual hygiene needs are meet. This implies Bathrooms might be functional but not consistently clean, limited access to disposal bins, soap, or water.

13.3 per cent reported inadequate facilities which states Dirty or broken toilets, no sanitary napkin disposal bins, Inaccessible facilities during class hours which leads to both discomforts, lacking attendance, social withdrawal, and even mental distress.

17.8 per cent consider them "very adequate" indicates need for improvement menstrual hygiene facilities.

4.4 per cent selected "Not sure", this may be because lack of menstrual hygiene awareness and rare use campus facilities'

#### 15. Do you receive sufficient counselling and carrer guidance from your college?

Category	No. of Respondents	Per cent
Yes	10	22.2
No	19	42.2
Maybe	15	33.3
Inapplicable	1	2.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: primary data*

The largest segment (42.2 per cent) respondents reported that they lack of carrier guidance. It may be due to inadequate staffs or faculties, lack of integration in the curriculum and lack of proper knowledge in evolving jobs.

Another segment (33.3 per cent) of students reported that they are unaware or unclear about their expectations. There is also a possibility, that the college may offer guidance but students may not be aware or find it irrelevant.

22.2 per cent students feel that that their college provide adequate carrier growth guidance through carrier cells, internship and mentorship. While positive, it still being a minority suggesting that it is not uniformly accessible.

Minor group (2.2 per cent) responded that they don't require carrier guidance. Suggesting the lack of knowledge or interest on the importance of carrier and counselling. It also suggests that they might have secured future jobs or opportunities like managing father's business.



**16. What of the following emotional challenges have you experienced during college?**

Category	No. of Respondents	Per cent
Anxiety and stress	09	20
Loneliness and isolation	16	35.6
Depression or Sadness	06	13.3
Other	14	31.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: primary data*

Loneliness and isolation have highest response (35.6 per cent), many students feel disconnected despite surrounded by peers. This could be because of academic pressure, lack of social bonds and limited engagement in activities.

The “Other” category is notably high indicating the challenges like burnout, family related problems, pressure to perform well academically, relationship problems etc.

Anxiety and stress (20 per cent) are another most faced issue, which can be due to handling multiple roles, lack of time management skills etc...

Depression and sadness (13.3 per cent), is the least factor affecting the students. It can be hormonal fluctuations, lack of understanding of a person's emotion and increased roles.

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## FINDINGS

- The study reveals that majority of participants (86.6 per cent) belonged to the age group 18–20 which indicates young female law student concerns.
- It found to be Societal or family expectations caused 44.5 per cent of participants to experience challenges when selecting their educational path.
- The present study majority of 60 per cent students felt academic stress or overload during specific times.
- The study reveals that 46.6 per cent of students reported that lack of encouragement weakens their academic self-confidence while 37.7 per cent said they experienced low grades as their main fear.
- The present study reflects that majority of students (60 per cent) have never thought about dropping out which demonstrates their ability to handle various challenges.
- It's found to be Transportation problems together with health issues each affected 42.2 per cent of students who missed their college attendance.
- The present study reveals that 81.8 per cent of students reported experiencing occasional or rare stress related to balancing their academic work with family and social expectations.
- The present research noted that 40 per cent of participants chose "other" as their barrier which included gender bias and menstrual taboos; safety and mobility concerns were chosen by 31.1 per cent of respondents.
- The majority of students (59.1 per cent) experienced no family restrictions concerning their participation in college activities.
- The present study concludes that the students were divided when it came to campus security because 55.5 per cent of them felt indifferent about it during both early and late periods.
- More than half of students (51.1 per cent) reported they had never encountered any form of gender discrimination from either faculty members or peers.
- A majority of 68.8 per cent students stated that neither themselves nor their peers had encountered harassment on college grounds or nearby areas.
- One-third of students reported that they sometimes faced difficulties within their peer groups.
- Students rated the available facilities as "adequate" but not exceptional at 64.4 per cent.
- 42.2 per cent of students expressed that they lacked adequate counselling services and career guidance support.
- 35.6 per cent experienced loneliness and isolation in the study areas.

### Suggestions for Improvement.

- Implementation of targeted welfare schemes and scholarships.
- Strengthening institutional mechanisms like grievance redressal and counselling.
- Creating safe and inclusive learning spaces.
- Encouraging community awareness and cultural shifts toward gender equality.
- Need for academic institutions to implement support mechanisms such as mentoring, counselling, and formative feedback to alleviate grade-related pressure.
- Provide optional language enhancement programs or spoken English clubs for students with language concerns.
- Offer flexible attendance, online modules, or extended deadlines for students with legitimate challenges.
- Introduce on-campus clinics or regular health check-up camps. Provide menstrual hygiene support and awareness.

### CONCLUSION

Students also said they don't get enough help with career planning or guidance. Some feel judged or treated unfairly because of their gender. Even friendships and peer support can be difficult at times.

Many female law students face stress from academics, emotional struggles, and societal pressure. Some feel unsafe on campus or unsupported by family and peers.

Overall, the study shows that these problems are connected. They don't come from one place they are part of a bigger system that needs to change. Colleges should offer better support, improve safety and hygiene, and make sure every student feels respected and encouraged. When female students are supported properly, they can focus on learning, growing, and building their future with confidence.

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