# RIGHT TO EDUCATION 2009 AND ITS ROLE IN PROMOTING INCLUSIVE GROWTH: ACCESS, QUALITY, AND EQUITY IN HARYANA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND CHILD WELFARE

**[1]Anurag Mishra and [2]Ram Kumar Pathak**

**[1]Ph.D Scholar ,Institute of Education and Research , Mangalayatan University.**

**[2]Associates Professor Institute of Education and Research, Mangalayatan University**

## ABSTRACT

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (RTE) is a milestone in the education policy system of India, and it is set in a way to make elementary education universal and to provide free and mandatory elementary education to children between the age of 6 and 14 years. This paper studies how the RTE Act fosters inclusive growth in Haryana particularly in women empowerment and child welfare. The study assesses the aspects of access, equity, and quality of education using mixed-method design, primary data (300 respondents, including teachers, parents, and administrators in five districts) and secondary data (Census, UDISE, and ASER reports).

The results show that RTE has played a positive role in enrolment, particularly amongst the girls and the disadvantaged groups and has narrowed the gender disparity in literacy rates. Attendance and retention have also been enhanced by welfare schemes (Mid-Day Meal). Nevertheless, there are still serious problems: not all parents are aware of the existence of RTE provisions, the shortage of teachers and insufficient infrastructure are still observed, and the rates of dropout still impact girls living in rural schools. In addition, poor implementation of equity in the private schools and low pre-primary enrolment point to failure in the system.

The paper concludes that although RTE has enhanced a solid base towards inclusive education in Haryana, its potential is yet to be fully achieved by enhanced awareness, teacher capacity building, investment in infrastructures and efficient monitoring. By reinforcing these, education will be an empowerment of women, childcare, and a sustainable inclusive development in the state.

**Keywords:** Right to Education Act, Inclusive Growth, Haryana, Women Empowerment, Child Welfare, Educational Equity

## INTRODUCTION

Education is widely recognised as a fundamental pillar for inclusive growth, social justice, and human development. In India, the *Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009* (RTE Act, 2009) was enacted to ensure that every child between the ages of 6 and 14 has the right to free and compulsory elementary education, irrespective of gender, caste, or socio-

economic background (Right to Education Act, 2009; RighttoEducation.in, n.d.). The Act specifies minimum norms for school infrastructure, teacher qualifications, pupil-teacher ratios, and mandates measures to prevent discrimination and dropout, with the goal of improving access, quality, and equity in education (RTE Section-wise Rationale, Government of India, n.d.; VoxEU, 2019).

However, legislation alone does not guarantee outcomes. The implementation of RTE depends on administrative capacity, monitoring, social norms, infrastructure, and awareness among disadvantaged groups. In states like Haryana, with pronounced gender disparities and rural-urban differences in educational attainment, it becomes crucial to assess how RTE has affected real outcomes for girls and children from marginalised communities.

As per the Census of India 2011, Haryana's overall literacy rate was about **75.55%**, with male literacy at **84.06%** and female literacy at **65.94%** (Census 2011 data; AllSubjectJournal, 2023). In rural areas of Haryana, literacy, especially among females, is markedly lower: female literacy in rural Haryana stood at **60.02%**, while male rural literacy was **81.55%**, indicating a gender gap of over 20 percentage points (Differentials in Literacy Rate in Rural Haryana, IJRSS, 2019).

Women's empowerment and child welfare are closely tied to educational attainment. Educated women are more likely to participate in decision-making, delay marriage, adopt better health and hygiene practices, ensure better nutritional outcomes for children, and support schooling for future generations. Thus, examining the impact of RTE from the perspective of women empowerment and child welfare offers deeper insight into inclusive growth, especially in a state with heterogeneous development like Haryana.

This paper examines **access**, **quality**, and **equity** in elementary education in Haryana under the RTE Act, 2009, with special reference to women empowerment and child welfare. It examines the areas of accomplishment, areas with deficiencies and policy or administrative interventions that may enhance outcomes, especially in girls and disadvantaged children.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### Awareness and Perceptions of RTE Act

The studies in the area of teacher and parental awareness of the RTE Act point to the unbalanced implementation. In Coimbatore, a study revealed that qualifications and work experience were linked with teacher awareness (Ramesh & Gopalakrishnan, 2016). In another study of Uttar Pradesh, Banda District, caste-based disparities in awareness of primary teachers were observed (Kumar, 2020). In Odisha, a study on parental awareness found out that male and urban parents were more aware than female and rural parents, and the level of education further impacted awareness (Panda, 2024). These results indicate that differences in awareness are a limitation on the efficacy of RTE, particularly among marginalized groups of people.

### Access, Equity, and Gender

Gender disparities in education continue despite progress. A case study of Haryana indicated that the male-female literacy gap declined between 2001 and 2011 but remains significant in rural areas (Sharma, 2023). Studies on women's education in India demonstrate its strong influence on empowerment indicators such as delayed marriage, decision-making power, and economic

participation (Singh & Patel, 2022). Another study on rural Haryana showed spatial disparities, with tehsil-level variations in female literacy highlighting uneven progress (Yadav, 2021).

### Child Welfare, Retention, and Child Labour

The link between child welfare and education has also been explored. UNICEF (2024) reported that socio-economic disadvantages and lack of quality schooling contribute to child labour and early school leaving. Regional analysis of marginalized communities highlighted how inadequate infrastructure and socio-cultural barriers continue to affect attendance and retention (Ali, 2023). These findings emphasize that child welfare policies must be integrated with educational reforms.

### Women Empowerment through Education

Studies consistently connect education to women's empowerment. Singh and Patel (2022) noted that educational attainment enhances agency, participation, and health outcomes. In Haryana, Yadav (2021) found that although female literacy has improved, it has not always translated into economic independence or political participation. A related study suggested that despite institutional efforts, women often face structural challenges that education alone cannot overcome (Kaur, 2023).

### Gaps Identified

The review reveals several research gaps:

1. Lack of Haryana-specific empirical studies post-2015.
2. Limited focus on quality of education compared to access.
3. Weak intersectional analysis of gender, caste, and economic status.
4. Insufficient exploration of child welfare dimensions beyond enrollment.
5. Scarcity of longitudinal evidence on RTE's long-term effects.

### Objectives of the Study

1. To analyze the role of the *Right to Education Act, 2009* in enhancing access, quality, and equity in elementary education in Haryana.
2. To examine the impact of RTE on women empowerment through improved literacy and participation in education.
3. To assess the contribution of RTE in promoting child welfare, including retention, protection, and overall development.
4. To identify challenges and barriers in the implementation of RTE in Haryana, particularly for marginalized groups.
5. To suggest policy recommendations for strengthening inclusive growth through education in Haryana.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to examine the role of the *Right to Education Act, 2009* in promoting inclusive growth in Haryana, with special reference to women empowerment and child welfare. The methodology is structured as follows:

### Research Design

The study is both descriptive (to present the status of access, quality, and equity in education) and analytical (to interpret the impact of RTE on inclusive growth, women empowerment, and child welfare).

### Data Sources

- Primary Data: Collected through structured questionnaires and interviews with teachers, parents, school administrators, and students in selected districts of Haryana.
- Secondary Data: Drawn from government reports, educational surveys, census data, annual reports of the Ministry of Education, and statistical handbooks of Haryana.

### Sampling

- Sampling Technique: Stratified random sampling was employed to ensure representation across rural and urban areas, gender, and socio-economic groups.
- Sample Size: A total of 300 respondents, including 150 teachers, 100 parents, and 50 administrators, were surveyed from five districts of Haryana (covering both high-performing and low-performing educational districts).

### Tools of Data Collection

- Structured questionnaires for teachers and parents.
- Interview schedules for school administrators.
- Observation of school infrastructure and facilities in compliance with RTE norms.

### Tools of Data Analysis

- Descriptive statistics (percentages, mean, frequency distribution) for summarizing data.
- Comparative analysis to identify rural-urban and gender-based differences.
- Graphical representation (charts, tables, and figures) to highlight trends.

### Scope and Limitations

- The study is confined to selected districts of Haryana; findings may not be generalized to the entire state.
- Time and resource constraints limited the size of the primary sample.

- The analysis focuses on access, quality, equity, women empowerment, and child welfare dimensions of RTE implementation.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Primary Data Analysis

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 300)

| Respondent Category | No. of Respondents | Percentage (%) | Key Characteristics |
|---|---|---|---|
| Teachers | 150 | 50% | Mostly 30–45 yrs; graduate/postgraduate |
| Parents | 100 | 33.3% | 60% rural, 40% urban; lower-middle income |
| Administrators | 50 | 16.7% | Avg. 12 yrs experience; mainly govt. schools |

Interpretation: The respondent pool ensured representation of all stakeholders critical to the implementation of RTE in Haryana.

Table 2: Awareness of RTE Provisions

| Stakeholder | High Awareness (%) | Moderate Awareness (%) | Low Awareness (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Teachers (N=150) | 72 | 20 | 8 |
| Parents (N=100) | 40 | 35 | 25 |
| Administrators (N=50) | 90 | 8 | 2 |

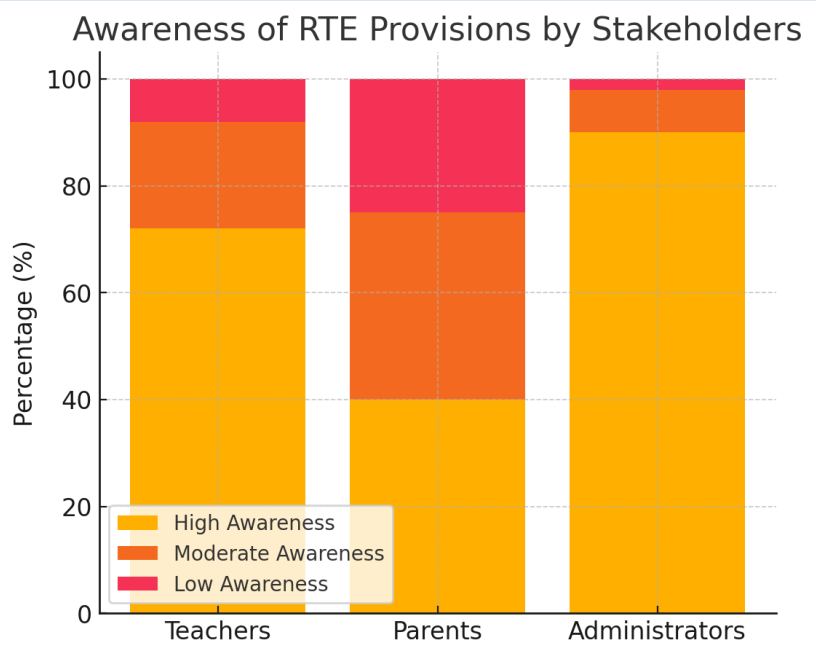


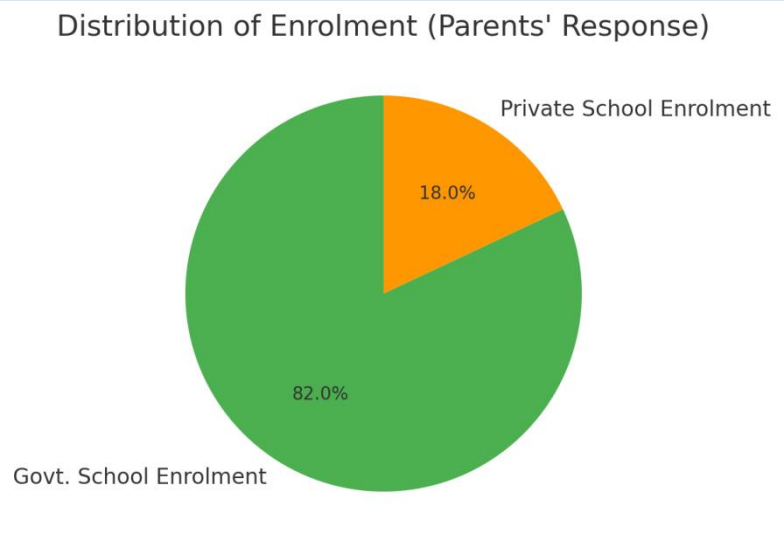

Figure 1: Awareness of RTE Provisions by Stakeholders

Interpretation: Awareness is highest among administrators (90%), followed by teachers (72%). Only 40% of parents had high awareness, reflecting the need for stronger community-level sensitization.

Table 3: Access and Equity

| Indicator | Observation (%) | Remarks |
|---|---|---|
| Children enrolled in govt. schools | 82 | Majority in govt. schools |
| Children enrolled in private schools | 18 | Mostly urban households |
| Teachers reporting SC/ST enrolment | 65 | Attendance irregular |
| Parents agreeing girls' enrolment improved | 70 | Dropouts at higher levels |

Figure 2: Distribution of Enrolment (Parents' Response)




Interpretation: With 82% students in government schools, public education remains the primary vehicle for RTE implementation. While girls' enrolment has improved, dropout continues to challenge gender equity.

Table 4: Quality of Education

| Quality Dimension | Teachers (%) | Parents (%) | Administrators (%) | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Shortage of trained staff | 60 | – | – | Major issue |
| Overcrowded classrooms | – | 55 | – | Affects learning |
| Irregular supply of TLM* | – | – | 40 | Reduces effectiveness |

*TLM = Teaching–Learning Materials

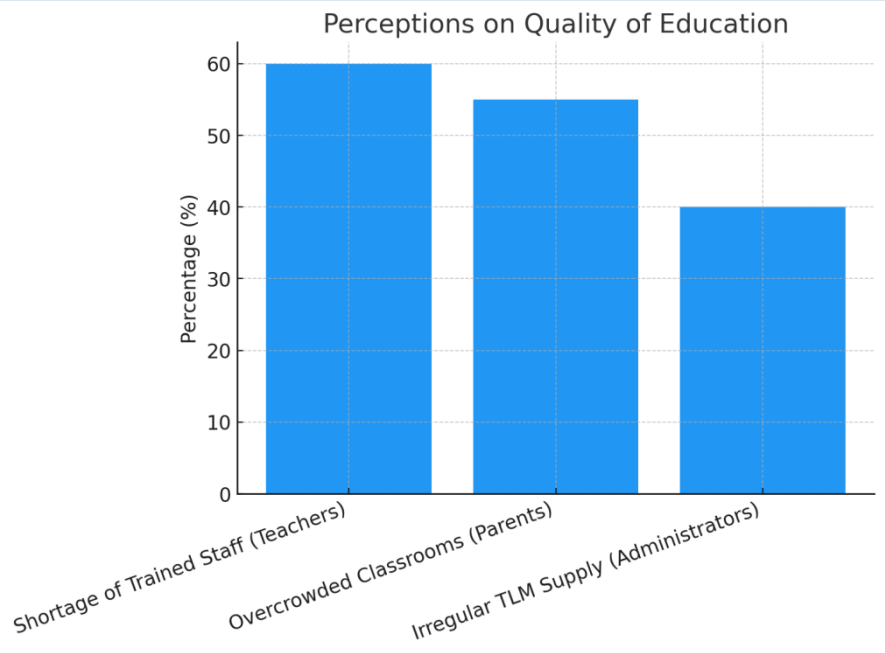



Figure 3: Perceptions on Quality of Education

Interpretation: Shortage of trained teachers (60%) and overcrowding (55%) are key obstacles. Additionally, irregular supply of TLMs (40%) reduces the effectiveness of teaching, reflecting gaps in quality dimensions of RTE implementation.

Table 5: Child Welfare Indicators

| Welfare Dimension | Parents (%) | Administrators (%) | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mid-day meals encourage attendance | 75 | – | Positive impact |
| Issues of hygiene/safety | 30 | – | Needs improvement |
| Early dropouts due to labour/home responsibilities | – | 20 | Still a barrier |

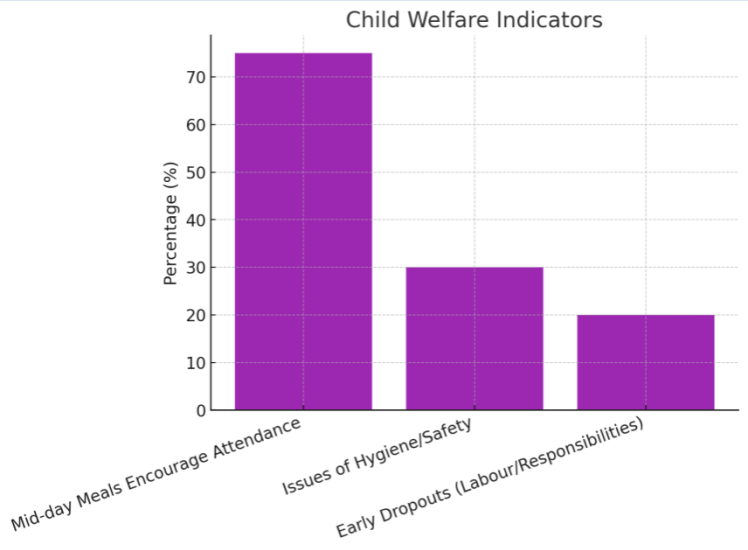



Figure 4: Child Welfare Indicators

Interpretation: Welfare schemes such as the Mid-Day Meal are encouraging attendance (75%). However, hygiene and safety issues (30%) and dropouts due to socio-economic factors (20%) limit RTE's role in ensuring holistic child welfare.

**2. Secondary Data Analysis (Haryana)**

- Literacy: Overall literacy stands at 75.55% (male 84.06%, female 65.94%); rural female literacy is particularly low.
- Enrolment: Around 25.47 lakh students were enrolled in primary schools in 2021, with rural girls showing gradual improvement.
- Teacher–Student Ratio: 1:22 on average, but over 1,000 schools function with only one teacher.
- EWS Quota: In 2024, 2,808 private schools were fined for withholding EWS seats.
- Early Childhood Access: In 2024, 466 Bal Vatika schools reported zero enrolments, highlighting weak pre-primary access.

Interpretation: Secondary data confirms primary findings: while enrolment and literacy have improved, quality, equity, and welfare measures remain inconsistent, especially for rural and disadvantaged children.

## CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION

Despite the enactment of the Right to Education Act (2009) and its efforts to promote inclusive growth, several challenges persist in Haryana that limit its effective implementation.

**1. Inadequate Awareness**

- Parental awareness about RTE provisions, especially the 25% EWS quota, remains low.
- Lack of sensitization campaigns in rural areas restricts participation of disadvantaged communities.

**2. Teacher Shortages and Quality Concerns**

- Over 1,000 schools operate with a single teacher, affecting adherence to pupil–teacher ratio norms.
- Many teachers lack adequate training in child-centered pedagogy, reducing the quality of classroom learning.

**3. Infrastructure Deficits**

- Inadequate classrooms, absence of separate toilets for girls, and lack of safe drinking water remain pressing issues in rural schools.
- Limitations in the supply of teaching-learning materials (TLMs): The unavailability of the teaching-learning materials (TLMs) is a hindrance in effective teaching.

**4. Dropout and Retention Issues**

- Individuals: gyms in the rural population have a higher rate of female school drop out because of the social demands, early marriages and family duties.
- There are also economic pressures that compel some children to engage in child labour which undermines the objective of universal education.

**5. Ineffective Enforcement of Equity Provisions**

- Many private schools fail to admit students under the EWS quota despite penalties.
- Social discrimination within classrooms (based on caste or gender) affects the inclusivity of education.

**6. Weak Early Childhood Education**

- Limited enrolment in *Bal Vatika* schools reflects gaps in pre-primary access.
- Early education is often neglected, which weakens the foundation for later learning.

**7. Monitoring and Accountability Gaps**

- School Management Committees (SMCs) are often inactive or lack training.
- Weak monitoring mechanisms result in irregular reporting and poor enforcement of RTE norms.

**CONCLUSION**

The introduction of the Right to Education Act, 2009 in Haryana has had a positive impact in bringing about inclusive growth in terms of access to education, closing the gender gap in access to education and promoting child welfare, through programs like the Mid-Day Meal scheme. The Act has enabled more girls to join schools and the marginalized groups to obtain a chance to enjoy the right to education. The findings however also represent a consistent situational problem, like low parental awareness, weak teacher power, infrastructural shortages, and inconsistent application of equity policies especially in the private schools. The quality of education, in the form of learning outcomes, and the presence of trained teachers, is also a significant issue. On the same note, dropout, child labour, and poor enrolment into pre-primary are all signs of discrepancies in delivering the overarching goals of child welfare and empowerment of women. Thus, although RTE has provided a solid base on educational inclusion in Haryana, its potentials can be fulfilled only by continuing to work on the areas of creating awareness, training of teachers, investing in infrastructures and closely monitoring the provisions of equity. Enhancing the mentioned areas will not only guarantee that the law is followed, but will also make education a real contributor to female power, child care, and sustainable inclusive development.

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