A Fair Chance for Education: Gendered Pathways to Educational Success in Haryana

Final Project Report

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Accompanying resources for the project

In addition to this report, other resources about the project are available on the project website: www.warwick.ac.uk/haryana. This includes various Project Outputs such as project reports and presentations, as well as other information about the project and the people involved.
The project can also be found on Twitter and Instagram as @FCFHaryana.
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Preface

Haryana, a northern Indian state, experiences significant gender-based practices that affect the ability of young people to access and remain within the education system, and to progress into higher education.

The 5-year 'Fair Chance for Education' project, funded by Fair Chance Foundation (henceforth referred to as the FCF Project), sought to determine the gendered factors that contribute to educational success for young people in Haryana. It therefore focused on gendered trajectories to Higher Education (HE). More specifically, the project considered gendered social relations and gender differences in choices, obstacles and opportunities for young people as they progress through the education system, and how these factors affect their ability to make informed choices in relation to accessing HE.

The project adopted,

(a) an evolutionary research design, building upon the results of each phase to develop the next;

(b) a collaborative approach through working with, and learning from, the India based project partners and scholars within the project consultative group; and

(c) a change model which sought to devise a programme of actions that could contribute to positive social change.

This final project report presents the findings of the FCF Project, undertaken in four distinct phases, detailed in the four reports that make up this report.

Phase 1 revealed that most of the participants in the study of young women and men who had accessed HE in government colleges in Haryana identified their family as a key factor, and the home as a key space, where educational decisions were made and supported (Henderson et al., 2021). Gendered access to HE was influenced by multiple factors, such as distance between home and college, family composition, and family background. However, there was very limited understanding in the existing literature on *how* educational decisions leading to HE were made within families.

As a result, Phase 2 sought to explore the social and family background of this cohort of students in more depth, to establish how educational decision making was undertaken within families (Thomas and Henderson, 2022). It was carried out by Dr Anjali Thomas as her doctoral thesis entitled 'Role of Families in the Gendered Educational Trajectories of Undergraduate Students in Haryana, India' (Thomas, 2021).

Phase 3 of the research turned to the HE institutional context. It established that there is a limited culture of formal HE outreach for *access*, within government colleges, which caters specifically for students from marginalised backgrounds. At present, there are no government policies which support institutional level initiatives relating to active outreach for HE access, although colleges may undertake these informally. The research demonstrated, through the development and conduct of a 'taster day', that there is a willingness to engage in forms of active outreach for HE access (Samanta and Stewart, 2023).

Finally, Phase 4 focused on the impact and dissemination of the FCF Project. It aims were

1. To develop an HE outreach culture in Haryana (and beyond) which was based upon the nuanced, evidence-based understanding, provided by the three research phase results, of issues that young women and men from marginalised backgrounds face when exploring HE. This objective was met through the development and publication of a **Policy Brief (PB)** on 'Supporting Gender-sensitive Higher Education Access and Choice in Haryana, India'—containing a range of policy suggestions, which was endorsed by relevant regional and national actors—and of an **Outreach Activity Resource (OAR)** on 'Organising a College Visit 'Taster Day' for Potential Higher Education Applicants'.

2. To gain buy-in for outreach from local actors and national actors to ensure active participation in outreach activities within HE colleges in Haryana and to develop leadership in outreach at the district, state, and national levels. This objective was met through the facilitation of three impact events hosted by some of our project partners and involved a number of local and national academic and education policy makers.

It will be seen from these reports that the original objectives of the project have been met. The importance of the research findings and the suggestions for policy makers at local and national levels have been recognised.

This final report provides a compilation of the Project's four research reports. It starts with a collation of the Executive Summaries for each of the four Phases and finishes with details relating to the research partners and wider project collaborators and a complete list of the project's outputs.

Executive Summaries: Phases 1 to 4

Phase 1 Report Executive Summary

Introduction

Higher education (HE) is an important educational site which not only develops skills, graduate employability and knowledge, it is also a key social institution through which we can redress social inequalities based on gender, social class and forms of social marginalisation such as caste-based discrimination. Historically, access to education and higher education has been denied to women and non-elite or marginalised groups. Therefore, access to HE is a concern for the state, policy makers, educationalists, students, families and communities. Gender inequality in terms of access to HE is a significant concern. This is especially with regard to *how young women and men are making different gendered educational choices*, in terms of choice of discipline, course and HE institution, especially for science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) courses. The Fair Chance for Education project focusses on gender-based inequalities and access to higher education in Haryana, India.

The first phase of the fair chance to education action research project was geared towards understanding the social and educational background of undergraduate students and their motivations and experiences of accessing HE in the various state-funded government colleges in Haryana, India. Access to HE is influenced by several factors such as gender, social class and caste in India. As HE in India is massifying, government colleges, affiliated to various state funded universities, are one of the most affordable and accessible types of higher educational institution in the state.

Haryana is a state which reports numerical gender parity in favour of young women in terms of enrolment in HE and an overall enrolment ratio (29.2) which is significantly higher than the national average (26.3). Haryana also reports exponential economic and industrial growth which is nevertheless accompanied by increasing number of incidences of gender-based violence and gender conservatism.

Research design

This study used a case study design which included a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. It included a quantitative survey of students, semi-structured interviews with young women and men enrolled in undergraduate courses and college representatives, focus group discussions with undergraduate students and collection of outreach and information documents from the colleges. The bilingual (Hindi and English) tools for this study were developed by the project team in the University of Warwick in collaboration with partners in India. Research assistants (RA) in India were recruited through project contacts and were trained to collect data. The project team from the University of Warwick along with the RAs conducted the fieldwork at two of the two sampled urban colleges in February 2018. Quantitative data was also conducted in a third rural college in November 2018.

This data was collated, transliterated and analysed collaboratively at the University of Warwick. The analysis involved an examination of the various intersectional factors influencing their educational choices and how students had overcome different barriers to access higher education in Haryana.

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Key Insights

- Families are intensely involved in the educational trajectories and choices of students, especially in terms of supporting, encouraging and approving their access to higher education.

- Most state-funded higher education institutions or government colleges engaged in very limited outreach or widening participation activities.

Who are the students accessing HE in government colleges in Haryana, India? How is this access gendered and/or influenced by other intersecting factors?

- The participants' gender and caste identities were representative of the sampled districts, however, there were more SC students in the rural college.

- Most students' parents had gendered occupations, in that most mothers were engaged in housework and fathers were engaged in agriculture, labour and local businesses. Many women in Haryana are also engaged in agricultural work, but this was not represented as such on the survey.

- Most of the students enrolled in the three sampled colleges were from families which had no direct first-person experience of higher education and were therefore first-generation students to access higher education.

- A majority of the participants' grandparents had no formal education; indicating that there is no multi-generational history of formal education. Grandmothers and mothers had attained lower levels of formal education than grandfathers and fathers.

- Out of a total of 326 participants, only 58 out of 654 parents had accessed HE. Out of this 58, 43 were fathers. Thus, most of the young women enrolled in the government colleges were members of the first generation of women in the family to access HE.

- Prior to accessing higher education, most students were enrolled in schools in the same urban centres as the colleges.

- More girls than boys started and remained in government schools and more boys than girls started and remained in private schools, thereby indicating that within families more resources were allocated towards education of sons than daughters.

- In terms of academic performance in schooling, which is the primary factor determining enrolment in HE in India, women had a higher mean score by a few percentage points. This suggests a gendered choice by young women to enrol in an institution based on it being closer to home rather than more academically competitive.

- The sampled government colleges had relatively small catchment areas.

- Staying at home was the automatic choice for most students (more than 95% of the respondents).

- Choices regarding higher education institution were focused on distance, duration of commute (less than 50 minutes) and availability of safe and affordable public transport.

- Distance and availability of safe commute was a greater concern for young women than the young men.

How and why are students accessing HE in government colleges in Haryana, India? How is this access gendered and/or influenced by other intersecting factors?

- Students sought information regarding higher education through their personal networks – which differed for young women and men – and teachers.

- Students were supported by a wide variety of family members, especially parents and siblings, schoolteachers and occasionally by other individuals in their neighbourhoods.

- Students were aware that they were making choices or accessing HE in rural communities which are generally conservative, particularly regarding gender relations, and which have placed a low value on HE. Colleges were viewed as having a poor social reputation as well as quality of education; public transport was viewed as unsafe as well as unaffordable; HE was viewed as financially prohibitive.

- Within their own families, students did not enrol in college due to concerns relating to financial constraints; pressure (especially on young men) to start earning; pressures (especially on young women) to marry.

- Students lacked adequate information regarding HE options and admission process and were more generally interested in – or lacked information in relation to – other professional and vocational courses.

- Students enrolled in HE because it was an obvious choice after completing schooling, motivated by possible graduate employment and their families' and personal aspirations.

- Some young women chose to access HE as a means to either delay marriage or to enhance their social status and marriageability.

These findings drove the consecutive phases of the project to focus on families and institutional outreach mechanisms through which colleges can become more accessible, safe and offer quality educational provision to students.

Recommendations

These recommendations are directed at a range of for stakeholders: schools, colleges and the government and the NGO sector and focus on outreach activities.

They are based on a key study finding that, for some students, government colleges represent their only opportunity to access higher education, while for other students these same colleges represent a restriction on choice and opportunity.

There are two target outcomes:

- Where attending the nearest government college is currently the only opportunity for young people to access higher education, colleges should be accessible, safe and offering quality education provision.

- Where young people's higher education choices are limited to accessing the nearest government college due to financial, geographical and/or cultural factors, young people's choices need to be opened up so that they can maximise their potential.

The role of the government and the NGO sector

- State-funded educational schemes and interventions need to be sustainable and accountable, and should involve consultation with young people and different stakeholders in the community, connecting families, schools and colleges. Information about schemes should be disseminated widely in a variety of means, including directly to young people.

- The role of Aanganvadi workers (including training) and other localised services including village panchayats and khap panchayats should be joined up with schools and colleges to promote informed educational choices from an early age.

- The Department of Higher Education should further liaise with the Department of Transport and Infrastructure to consult on bus routes, bus stand locations and bus requirements for college access. Consultation with students and mapping of the catchment area are essential parts of this process.

- Further colleges should be considered where there are no colleges within an appropriate catchment area (1 hour of travel and/or 70-100km distant from students' homes).

- Colleges need to receive sufficient funding to recruit high quality teachers on permanent contracts, to maintain and develop facilities, and to develop a high-quality offer for students (e.g. extra activities, prizes and bursaries).

- Information to be distributed through schools, community groups and directly from colleges.

  - Families need readily available information about school choice and higher education choice (including subject choice) and employability options

  - Information should include positive messaging (a) valuing of girls' educational trajectories; (b) on class 12 marks that are needed for accessing HE, so that families are in an informed position to act if there are concerns about young people's school progress.

  - Information should (a) cover the costs of HE, including fees and supplementary costs, as well as scholarships and bursaries (including of competitive HEIs which may be located further away); (b) include guidance on transport options for students to reach colleges and suggestions for safe journey planning.

- The NGO sector relating to education needs to be stimulated in Haryana.

The role of colleges

Colleges should:

- build a more public presence in their catchment areas, to increase understanding of higher education. They should engage directly with families through visiting communities including villages. College teachers should be more visible in local communities. When engaging with families, colleges need to be aware that parents have the ultimate say in young people's HE access, but respect that mothers and fathers and sisters and brothers have different roles and these need to be respected and explored. Young people need emotional and informed support from their families.

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- open their doors to (guided) visits from families and young people.

- liaise with schools to ensure that young people are receiving information directly to ensure that the school-college transition is facilitated in an informed manner and that young people are aware of their options.

- formalise the role of current students to act as college ambassadors disseminating information about higher education in their communities and giving guided visits of the college.

- engage in more active information and diversely targeted marketing campaigns attractive to young people (e.g. social media) but also to family members (e.g. newspaper, television, radio).

- liaise with local internet providers (e.g. internet cafes) to ensure that young people applying to the colleges from these providers have access to current information. Student ambassadors can play a part here too.

- train any personnel involved in the admissions process to be informative and welcoming to applicants.

- provide step-by-step guidance on the admissions process and ensure this is available at schools, internet cafes and at the college, and available online.

- Some young people are making decisions about HE on their own. Colleges should be aware of this College ambassadors can (in collaboration with schools) work with individuals on their college applications.

The role of schools

- Schools should work with colleges and college ambassadors to facilitate the spreading of reliable, accurate information about higher education options to young people and, where possible, their communities.

- Young people need to be informed of their options, and young women in particular need to receive more training at school level in negotiation skills, so that they can have more involvement in discussions of their futures within the family. Young people at school level should be encouraged to identify different sources of support and information that they could consult. Again, this is a potential role for student ambassadors in collaboration with schools.

Phase 2 Report Executive Summary

Introduction

Higher education (HE) is a key social institution which is a site for development and dissemination of knowledge and skills, and overall social development through inclusive education. It is recognised that successful graduation from a higher education institution (HEI) improves the variety and nature of social and economic opportunities available to individuals and families. However, HE is a limited facility which is not available in equal measure to all people. It is therefore important to understand how young people, young women and men, especially from marginalised communities and groups, access HE and how they make choices about where to study and which course to select.

Families are known to play a key role in the HE choices of young people. In India, families have a significant role in limiting, supporting, encouraging and facilitating young people's access to HE. This was recognised in the project's Phase 1 study (Henderson et al., 2021). Phase 2 of the FCF project was geared towards understanding how undergraduate students who are enrolled in state-funded government colleges – and their families – make gendered educational decisions about HE. Gendered practices and inequalities can be traced in the educational trajectories of both young men and women. These inequalities are sited within the family and therefore it is important to understand what is happening within the family as decisions about HE options are being taken.

Research design

This study used a qualitative research design with a feminist orientation. The study included semi-structured in-depth interviews with undergraduate students which were followed by semi-structured in-depth interviews with their family members. The bilingual (Hindi and English) tools for this study were developed by Anjali Thomas at the University of Warwick. Anjali Thomas conducted fieldwork at the three sampled colleges between December 2018 and March 2019.

This data was collated, transcribed, coded and analysed by Anjali Thomas at the University of Warwick. The analysis involved an examination of the way in which families made educational decisions, the role played in this decision making by different gendered family members and how this gendered process was further influenced by intersectional inequalities such as caste, social class and geographical inequalities.

Key Insights

- Educational decisions are group decisions made within families, and these decisions reflect gendered roles within families. Gendered inequalities influence (limit and/or encourage) HE for both young women and men.

- Families are intensely involved in supporting, inspiring, informing and influencing the educational decisions made within the family. These decisions are significantly influenced by gendered considerations such as the gender of the young person in question, and gendered allocation of resources within the family.

- The ways in which families make gendered educational decisions are shaped by relationships and dynamics between the different gendered family members.

- As the family considers different HE choices, family members reflect on family dynamics, perceived and experienced barriers, and opportunities to strategically remain silent or voice their interests. These negotiations are gendered and result in different educational decisions being taken for sons and daughters.

- These negotiations within the family are further influenced by intersectional inequalities such as caste, social class and geographical inequalities.

The different roles played by the family in educational trajectories

- The four key roles played by family members in decisions about HE are: (1) support, (2) inspire, (3) provide information, (4) influence decisions.

- Role 1: support takes the form of encouragement from parents, including to ensure that their children access more educational and employment opportunities than they did; support is also provided from the natal maternal family. Support is often linked to

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pride in and expectations of exceptional academic performance, particularly in relation to young women whose access to HE may be conditional on being a model student

- Role 2: figures of inspiration may not be directly involved in HE decisions within a family, but provide a reference point for families considering HE. These figures are often 'trailblazers' who are other members of the community who have accessed HE. Trailblazers play a vital role. However, the inspiration often follows a gendered pattern where young women trailblazers inspire other young women, and likewise for young men.

- Role 3: information about HE is provided by a number of sources, including parents, who access information through their workplaces and social circles, and trailblazers, who provide direct experiential information about HE. Information is also obtained through the use of cybercafes. The transfer of such information is along gendered lines of communication due to social segregation.

- Role 4: influences on HE decisions included young people's awareness of the family's means, knowledge that they needed to cultivate family support for HE, sensibility to gendered emotional attachments in the family and the desire to remain within the family – for both young women and men.

How educational decisions are taken within families

- Educational decisions are affected by (1) family dynamics and (2) how the family rationalises educational decisions.

- Family dynamics (1) include the role of fathers and also brothers, who are key decision makers. Mothers often supervise everyday decisions and act as intermediaries between the children and father.

- Decisions about HE taken within families are rationalised (2) according to family beliefs and priorities. The decision to attend the nearest college to home is rationalised as the *preferable choice* based on cost, distance and commute. HE-related decisions are also rationalised according to aspirations for marriage and employment, which frame decisions to either invest in HE (to improve marriage prospects for both young men and women) or avoid investing in HE due to marriage costs (young women) or to aim for employment prospects (particularly young men).

- Decision-making is influenced by strategic actions in relation to (1) and (2). This includes indirect actions from young people such as selective information provision and locating advocates for their choices within the extended family. Strategic actions also include voices and silences, for instance young people may communicate selectively with their fathers and may also choose to remain silent with their fathers.

How HE decision making is influenced by intersectional factors

- It is important to examine individual student cases in order to understand how different factors act as barriers and enablers to HE and to informed choice for HE access.

- The case of Deepika shows that a woman from a rural village with traditional norms, who is from a marginalised caste group (OBC) and a working class background and family with no higher secondary school education, who has attended a government secondary school, faces barriers to accessing HE. However these barriers are

countered by living in a joint family which includes a trailblazer, a supportive mother, maintaining a model student profile and the existence of a college in the village.

- The case of Jaya shows the importance of life circumstances in determining HE access. She was from a rural area and marginalised caste group (OBC) and lower-middle class background. Her father had died and her maternal uncle had supported the family until her mother's remarriage. She was the third child but the first to access HE as her sisters had been married during the family strife. She had benefitted from private schooling which had been in part funded by her teachers and had presented as a model student. She had chosen the local college from consideration of the family finances.

- The case of Mohan reveals the effects of social mobility. Mohan was from a rural community and a Dalit caste group (SC), but his family had benefitted from his father's employment in the postal service and connections with the village panchayat. His HE choices were heavily influenced by his father's preferences. He had access to a personal scooter which facilitated the commute.

- The case of Hritik also reveals the importance of life circumstances. His father had passed away and this led to him switching from English-medium to Hindi schooling. His father had attended HE but had died before passing that knowledge on. His mother had, unusually for the study, completed class 12. The family fortunes improved with the mother's second marriage and Hritik was supported by his mother and expected by his stepfather to enrol in HE to improve his marriage chances and employment prospects. He chose the nearest college based on his responsibilities towards the family and the family business.

Recommendations

The recommendations from the Phase 2 study focus on recognising the role of families and parents in young people's educational trajectories. Based on this focus, the recommendations **target two outcomes**:

- All family members need to be aware of the educational options for young people. Given that different family members access different spaces and different sources of information, this needs to be recognised in terms of building a holistic approach to informed choice for HE.

- Young people themselves need to be more informed of their options and better equipped with reliable information about HE and negotiating skills in order to participate in decision making within their families about their educational futures.

The recommendations for Phase 2 draw on and extend the recommendations of Phase 1. This is displayed in the table below.

The role of the government and the NGO sector	
Phase 1: state-funded educational schemes and interventions should be disseminated widely in a variety of means, including directly to young people.	Phase 2: this information should be shared with all members of the family (through appropriate means), for the purposes of collective informed decision making.
Phase 1: Aanganvadis and other localised state services such as village panchayats, government schools and colleges should collaborate in this effort.	Phase 2: the need for these services to consider parents, grandparents, other relatives and community members as recipients of information on HE, in addition to the young people as targeted recipients. It would be beneficial for public service employers to store information about HE to disburse to employees, as the workplace has been identified as one means of parents from disadvantaged groups learning about information.
Phase 1: families need to have access to readily available information about school choice and higher education choice (including subject choice) and employability options, and connecting these to envision educational trajectories for young people.	Phase 2: different family members may have different types of involvement and may benefit from the provision of information about HE in different locations and formats. For instance, fathers and mothers occupy different physical spaces in the community, so information targeting different parents needs to be provided in appropriate spaces. Audio or video information is particularly important for family members who have not attained high levels of formal education. This needs to be a key consideration as the government develops and supports technology and as HEIs follow the NEP recommendations to provide outreach.
Phase 1: information should be included about costs of HE, including fees but also supplementary costs, as well as scholarships and bursaries (including of competitive HEIs which may be located further away).	Phase 2: the need for advice for low-income families for budgeting for HE and information to be presented in a clear and accessible manner including for parents who may have doubts about the worth of HE.
The role of colleges	
Phase 1: colleges need to engage with families more directly, through visits to communities and through guided visits of the colleges, and mothers and fathers as well as sisters and brothers have different roles and these need to be respected and explored.	Phase 2: it is highly recommended for colleges to interact with young people's relatives, including parents and other family members, as well as the young people. It is important for all those who have a say in decision making to access more information and understanding about HE. Just targeting one family member e.g. young person or father does not reflect the way in which educational decisions are taken within families. Some families do contact e.g. a college principal for advice, and this can be extremely helpful. However many parents

	would not be aware that this is possible nor be aware of how to go about seeking advice from the college. Colleges could usefully discuss how they wish to be contacted and for which types of questions, and should then display this information on any materials circulated about the college. Other family members e.g. maternal uncles may also play a strong role in young people's education, so the concept of the family needs to encompass potential input from other relatives.
Phase 1: colleges should formalise the role of current students acting as ambassadors for the colleges in disseminating information about higher education in their communities and giving guided visits of the college.	Phase 2: 'trailblazer' students have potential to make a significant contribution to spreading accurate, reliable and experience-based information about HE in local communities who do not have a history of HE. Formalising this role in the form of student ambassadors will enhance informed choice. Trailblazer influence is gendered, i.e. young women are more likely to influence other young women and likewise with young men. This should be borne in mind when establishing the role of student ambassador including in terms of gender balance of ambassadors.
Phase 1: colleges should provide step-by-step guidance on the admissions process and ensure this is available at schools, internet cafes and at the college itself, and available online.	Phase 2: this information could also be made available to employees in government jobs. Locations where the parental generation frequent can be identified and stocked with this information.
The role of schools	
Phase 1: schools should work with colleges and college ambassadors to facilitate the spreading of reliable, accurate information about higher education options to young people and, where possible, their communities.	Phase 2: when parents are called to school for parent-teacher meetings or other occasions, information about HE should be provided and clearly signalled. Some families face misfortune which severely affects their quality of life and livelihoods. Particularly of note are single-parent households including those affected by bereavement. Schools are more likely to be aware of these cases than e.g. targeted colleges, so, in cases like these, schools may need to pay additional attention to HE advice (especially on the systems and processes) for young people in families facing these situations.
Phase 1: young women in particular (as well as men) need to receive more training at school level in negotiation skills, so that they can have more involvement in discussions of their futures within the family.	Phase 2: the training can have an emphasis on how to engage in participatory discussion within the family and also on confidence building of young women.

Phase 3 Report Executive Summary

Introduction

Phases 1 and 2 of the FCF project identified the social inequalities that influence educational choices and the decision of whether to access HE (Henderson et al., 2021; Thomas and Henderson, 2022). They highlighted the key role played by families in Haryana in influencing the HE choices of young women and men.

These earlier phases also established that Government Colleges in Haryana are providing educational opportunities for first generation students whose parents (and wider family members) have little or no experience of HE and access to very limited sources of information within their social settings. Students thus often lack reliable information and support in navigating HE choices.

The need for HE policy responses which recognise that these social, cultural, and economic disadvantages deeply affect access to HE is now widely recognised. 'Widening Participation' programmes conducted within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have a key role to play as policy interventions to ensure greater diversity and inclusion among the student body. Evidence from a number of countries suggests that open-days are one of the most effective outreach strategies to enable knowledge of and access to HE (Connor et al., 1999; Briggs and Wilson, 2007; Reay, 2016).

This Phase 3 study examined the role of Government Colleges in mitigating the lack of accurate, relevant, formal knowledge, and information available to young women, young men, and their families. In particular, it involved working in partnership with local colleges to develop, implement, and evaluate a 'Taster Day', as a specific form of outreach activity.

The research asked four research questions:

1. What role do public institutions currently play, if any, in enabling gendered access to higher education in Haryana?

2. What are the institutional attitudes towards carrying out outreach in Haryana?

3. Does the development and delivery of an outreach activity contribute towards the development of an institutional culture of outreach and if so how?

4. What impact does the delivery of this outreach activity have on differently positioned young women and men and their access to higher education?

The study therefore explored the role of Government Colleges as local hubs of knowledge about HE for first generation of students and their families and consequently as facilitators of informed choice.

Research design

The research used a range of methods: participatory; document analysis to understand the current institutional context relating to access; observation and journaling to study the institution in the process of organising the taster day; questionnaires administered immediately prior to and post the taster day to student attendees; and semi-structured interviews with selected student attendees prior to and after the event to measure the impact of the activity.

The bilingual (Hindi and English) tools for this study were developed by Nikita Samanta at the University of Warwick. She conducted the fieldwork at the three colleges between September 2019 and November 2019. Data was also collated, coded, and analysed by Nikita Samanta at the University of Warwick.

Key insights

- There have been few requirements for state funded HEIs to undertake outreach activities and therefore there was little formal outreach carried out by these institutions in Haryana.

- Outreach had been confined to printed prospectus and newspaper advertisements announcing admissions, which did not provide the students with much information on the mechanisms to access HE or the choices available.

The transition to online university application systems

- The move to online admissions, and a reliance on college websites as the main source of formal information, since 2012 had reduced opportunities for prospective students and their families to visit colleges and to make contact with staff.

- Online admission increased the challenges faced by first generation students from disadvantaged backgrounds whose families lacked resources to support informed decision making during the admissions process.

- Because of a lack of appropriate technology at home, students and their families relied upon the resources offered by cyber cafés. The resultant errors in the applications had to be addressed by college staff. Predominate gender conservative cultural assumptions were reinforced through this application process.

College attitude towards outreach

- Senior college staff had a positive attitude towards the idea of carrying out institutional outreach and recognition of its role in improving informed choices about access to HE. This was evidenced by staff undertaking informal outreach on social media, assisting parents and counselling prospective students.

- There were considerable constraints on the staff capacity to undertake outreach. The colleges were under resourced, lacking their full complement of permanent staff and were required to undertake a range of additional non educationally related responsibilities.

- Senior college staff at all three colleges were willing to undertake a taster day when suggested by the researcher.

- The level of engagement in the taster day reflected different institutional contexts within the three colleges. One saw the taster day as a way of increasing numbers; another saw it as a way of addressing issues relating to inclusion and the third, an oversubscribed institution, was willing to take part but less inclined to take responsibility for implementation.

- The project was designed to evaluate the extent to which college staff had the capacity to plan and then implement such an event. A staff 'champion' who understood the objectives and was willing to work with the researcher greatly assisted the planning and implementation this process.

- Two events were conducted, hosted by the colleges, demonstrating support for and ability to undertake such an event (while the planning for the event took place in the third college, ultimately it was not possible to conduct it due to external constraints). The event was well received by staff.

Outcome of the taster day

- The study demonstrated therefore that the taster day events were successful in building the colleges' capacity to carry out such events in the future.

- Analysis of the pre- and post-event surveys and interviews evidenced that the taster days assisted young women and men from disadvantaged backgrounds in learning more about the choices available to them and to navigate the online application and admission process.

- There was a very significant increase in the number who now felt they had the information necessary to choose a HE institution.

- More young women than young men now felt confident in this decision making.

- There was also evidence of increased confidence in navigating the admission process and making informed choice about subjects to be studied.

- Overall, the analysis revealed a very high level of participants reporting that the event was useful and such an event should be adopted by colleges.

- The data from the evaluation conducted 10 months later (drawn from a limited response rate due to the Covid pandemic) established that the taster day had been very valuable in helping them to navigate the HE admission process and to make informed choices.

- One year later the two colleges who participated in the study reported an increase in application numbers. One had not carried out a precise quantitative evaluation, but the other reported a 15% increase in numbers. It is important to remember that by this time India was experiencing the full effects of the Covid pandemic.

Overall, the study demonstrated the effectiveness of carrying out institutional outreach, especially by colleges that were identified in Phase 1 as being at the frontiers of access to HE (because they are low cost and situated locally and often accessed by first generation students).

Recommendations

The recommendations for Phase 3 draw on and extend the recommendations of Phases 1 and 2. This is displayed in the table below.

The role of the government and the NGO sector		
Phase 1: state-funded educational schemes and interventions should be disseminated widely in a variety of means, including directly to young people.	Phase 2: this information should be shared with all members of the family (through appropriate means), for the purposes of collective informed decision making.	

Phase 1: Aanganvadis and other localised state services such as village panchayats, government schools and colleges should collaborate in this effort.	Phase 2: the need for these services to consider parents, grandparents, other relatives and community members as recipients of information on HE, in addition to the young people as targeted recipients. It would be beneficial for public service employers to store information about HE to disburse to employees, as the workplace has been identified as one means of parents from disadvantaged groups learning about information.	Phase 3: Staffing shortages should be addressed to facilitate the role of staff in important activities such as outreach. Faculty members' additional duties that are not related to higher education (e.g. assisting with elections) should be reduced to allow further concentration on core duties.
Phase 1: families need to have access to readily available information about school choice and higher education choice (including subject choice) and employability options, and connecting these to envision educational trajectories for young people.	Phase 2: different family members may have different types of involvement and may benefit from the provision of information about HE in different locations and formats. For instance, fathers and mothers occupy different physical spaces in the community, so information targeting different parents needs to be provided in appropriate spaces. Audio or video information is particularly important for family members who have not attained high levels of formal education. This needs to be a key consideration as the government develops and supports technology and as HEIs follow the NEP recommendations to provide outreach.	Phase 3: The application process should be made multimodal (offline and online) to make it easier for rural students (or with disadvantaged backgrounds) to apply to HE.
Phase 1: information should be included about costs of HE, including fees but also supplementary costs, as well as scholarships and bursaries (including of competitive HEIs which may be located further away).	Phase 2: the need for advice for low-income families for budgeting for HE and information to be presented in a clear and accessible manner including for parents who may have doubts about the worth of HE.	Phase 3: Funding should be made available for colleges to organise taster days and other outreach activities.

The role of colleges		
Phase 1: colleges need to engage with families more directly, through visits to communities and through guided visits of the colleges, and mothers and fathers as well as sisters and brothers have different roles and these need to be respected and explored.	Phase 2: it is highly recommended for colleges to interact with young people's relatives, including parents and other family members, as well as the young people. It is important for all those who have a say in decision making to access more information and understanding about HE. Just targeting one family member e.g. young person or father does not reflect the way in which educational decisions are taken within families. Some families do contact e.g. a college principal for advice, and this can be extremely helpful. However many parents would not be aware that this is possible nor be aware of how to go about seeking advice from the college. Colleges could usefully discuss how they wish to be contacted and for which types of questions, and should then display this information on any materials circulated about the college. Other family members e.g. maternal uncles may also play a strong role in young people's education, so the concept of the family needs to encompass potential input from other relatives.	Phase 3: Families should be invited and involved in the outreach efforts.
Phase 1: colleges should formalise the role of current students acting as ambassadors for the colleges in disseminating information about higher education in their communities and giving guided visits of the college.	Phase 2: 'trailblazer' students have potential to make a significant contribution to spreading accurate, reliable and experience-based information about HE in local communities who do not have a history of HE. Formalising this role in the form of student ambassadors will enhance informed choice.	Phase 3: It would also be useful if there were members of staff hired to solely look after the admission process who could be responsible for outreach and improving access. Colleges should recognise and reward existing outreach practices that are occurring and faculty members'

	Trailblazer influence is gendered, i.e. young women are more likely to influence other young women and likewise with young men. This should be borne in mind when establishing the role of student ambassador including in terms of gender balance of ambassadors.	endeavours in relation to outreach When colleges organise events such as taster days, they need to consider: • Appointing a key in-charge faculty member to oversee the event. • Including a number of other faculty members in the planning. • Plan for bus transport and refreshments. • Arrange the programme. • Ensure the venue has audio-visual equipment. • Work with local schools to attend. • Consider using a questionnaire to evaluate the success of the event. • Try to invite parents and other family members as well as school students.
Phase 1: colleges should provide step-by-step guidance on the admissions process and ensure this is available at schools, internet cafés and at the college itself, and available online.	Phase 2: this information could also be made available to employees in government jobs. Locations where the parental generation frequent can be identified and stocked with this information.	Phase 3: Colleges, especially public colleges, should carry out some form of outreach to bridge the gap in information and knowledge and make access to HE easier. Informational brochures should be distributed in hard copy to give students all the necessary information about a particular college.
The role of schools		
Phase 1: schools should work with colleges and college ambassadors to facilitate the spreading of reliable, accurate information about higher education options to young people and, where possible, their communities.	Phase 2: when parents are called to school for parent-teacher meetings or other occasions, information about HE should be provided and clearly signalled. Some families face misfortune which severely affects their quality of life and livelihoods.	Phase 3: Schools should work with local colleges to support their students attending taster days or invite faculty members to the college to provide information on HE.

	Particularly of note are single-parent households including those affected by bereavement. Schools are more likely to be aware of these cases than e.g. targeted colleges, so, in cases like these, schools may need to pay additional attention to HE advice (especially on the systems and processes) for young people in families facing these situations.	
Phase 1: young women in particular (as well as men) need to receive more training at school level in negotiation skills, so that they can have more involvement in discussions of their futures within the family.	Phase 2: the training can have an emphasis on how to engage in participatory discussion within the family and also on confidence building of young women.	

Phase 4 Report Executive Summary

This Phase 4 Report focuses on the contribution that the Fair Chance for Education (FCF) Project has made to HE policy making within the framework provided by India's National Education Policy 2020 and to the development of gender and Higher Education (HE) research agendas. It documents the impact and dissemination activities undertaken between 2020 and 2021 (with additional funding from the United Kingdom Economic and Social Research Council Impact Acceleration Award scheme). Phases 1 to 3 established,

- that developing an outreach culture in HE colleges is both possible and desirable in order for more young people from often disadvantaged backgrounds to access HE and make informed choices about accessing HE, in the context of the prevalent gender conservative culture, and

- while Western outreach strategies are often primarily focused on individual young people, culturally appropriate HE outreach in Haryana needs to involve families.

The contribution to HE policymaking was achieved through two impact objectives. The first involved developing an *HE outreach culture* in Haryana (and beyond) which was based upon the nuanced, evidence-based understanding of issues, *provided by the FCF research,* that young women and men from marginalised backgrounds face when exploring HE options, thereby resulting in *enhanced informed decision making* within families. This involved developing *HE outreach facilitation skills* in HE colleges in Haryana.

This objective was achieved through,

- co-development and publication of a **Policy Brief** (PB) on 'Supporting Gender-sensitive Higher Education Access and Choice in Haryana, India' containing a range

of policy suggestions, which was endorsed by relevant regional and national actors, and

- co-production with local partners and publication of the 'Fair Chance for Education **Outreach Activity Resource** (OAR) for Higher Education Institutions. This guide, on how colleges can organise and evaluate a 'taster day' for students and family members, was based primarily upon Phase 3 research findings.

The second impact objective focused on gaining buy-in for outreach from local actors and national actors to ensure active participation in outreach activities within HE colleges in Haryana and to develop leadership in outreach at the district, state, and national levels.

This objective was met by the co-development with FCF project partners and partner institutions of the PB and OAR and co-facilitation of three targeted events:

- The first event was hosted by Central University Haryana and shared the key findings of the FCF project as well as drafts of the PB and OAR. Three colleges agreed *to pilot the OAR* by organising taster days.

- The second event was hosted Bhagat Phool Singh Mahila Vishwavidyalaya (BPS Women's University) heard reports of the hugely successful piloting of the OAR from the three college Principals.

- The third event was hosted by the Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education at the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration. In this event, the *policy relevance of the project findings suggestions encapsulated in the PB and OAR ('road tested' through three successful pilot events)* for the development of an HE outreach culture was acknowledged by leading national education policy makers.

The FCF Project has contributed its *collaborative and participative methodology* to developing HE research agendas in India and beyond. It has built capacity among but also learned from HE scholars including within its Consultative Group. Its academic conference 'A Fair Chance for Education: Problematising Access and Mapping Gendered Pathways to Higher Education in India' jointly hosted by TISS Mumbai and the University stimulated and enhanced academic scholarship.

A Fair Chance for Education:
Gendered Pathways to Educational Success in Haryana

Phase 1 Findings Report

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This report can be downloaded from:
https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/law/research/projects/rlaaa3083/output/

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The views expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the University of Warwick.

Accompanying resources for the project

In addition to this report, other resources about the project are available on the project website: [www.warwick.ac.uk/haryana](#). This includes various Project Outputs such as project reports and presentations, as well as other information about the project and the people involved.
The project can also be found on Twitter and Instagram as @FCFHaryana.
The project Team can be contacted at [fcfharyana@warwick.ac.uk](#)

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Preface

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This is a report on the findings from Phase 1 of the 5 year 'Fair Chance for Education' project on gender and access to higher education in Haryana, India. Phase 1 was an exploratory study designed to understand the social background of students accessing higher education, and to identify how their educational trajectories and experiences of accessing higher education are gendered within their particular social context in Haryana. This involved an examination of the various intersectional factors influencing their educational choices and how students had overcome different barriers to access higher education in Haryana. This study provides key insights which inspired the research conducted in Phases 2 and 3 of the 5-year project.

Phase 1 found that (i) families are intensely involved in the educational trajectories and choices of students, especially in terms of supporting, encouraging and approving their access to higher education, and (ii) most state-funded higher education institutions or government colleges engage in very limited outreach or widening participation activities. Phase 2 of the project therefore focused on the involvement of families in the gendered educational trajectories of undergraduate students and Phase 3 on the institutional outreach mechanisms operating within educational institutions in Haryana.

Executive Summary
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Introduction

Higher education (HE) is an important educational site which not only develops skills, graduate employability and knowledge, it is also a key social institution through which we can redress social inequalities based on gender, social class and forms of social marginalisation such as caste-based discrimination. Historically, access to education and higher education has been denied to women and non-elite or marginalised groups. Therefore, access to HE is a concern for the state, policy makers, educationalists, students, families and communities. Gender inequality in terms of access to HE is a significant concern. This is especially with regard to *how young women and men are making different gendered educational choices*, in terms of choice of discipline, course and HE institution, especially for science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) courses. The Fair Chance for Education project focusses on gender-based inequalities and access to higher education in Haryana, India.

The first phase of the fair chance to education action research project was geared towards understanding the social and educational background of undergraduate students and their motivations and experiences of accessing HE in the various state-funded government colleges in Haryana, India. Access to HE is influenced by several factors such as gender, social class and caste in India. As HE in India is massifying, government colleges, affiliated to various state funded universities, are one of the most affordable and accessible types of higher educational institution in the state.

Haryana is a state which reports numerical gender parity in favour of young women in terms of enrolment in HE and an overall enrolment ratio (29.2) which is significantly higher than the national average (26.3). Haryana also reports exponential economic and industrial growth which is nevertheless accompanied by increasing number of incidences of gender-based violence and gender conservatism.

Research design

This study used a case study design which included a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. It included a quantitative survey of students, semi-structured interviews with young women and men enrolled in undergraduate courses and college representatives, focus group discussions with undergraduate students and collection of outreach and information documents from the colleges. The bilingual (Hindi and English) tools for this study were developed by the project team in the University of Warwick in collaboration with partners in India. Research assistants (RA) in India were recruited through project contacts and were trained to collect data. The project team from the University of Warwick along with the RAs conducted the fieldwork at two of the two sampled urban colleges in February 2018. Quantitative data was also conducted in a third rural college in November 2018.

This data was collated, transliterated and analysed collaboratively at the University of Warwick. The analysis involved an examination of the various intersectional factors influencing their educational choices and how students had overcome different barriers to access higher education in Haryana.

Key Insights

- Families are intensely involved in the educational trajectories and choices of students, especially in terms of supporting, encouraging and approving their access to higher education.
- Most state-funded higher education institutions or government colleges engaged in very limited outreach or widening participation activities.

Who are the students accessing HE in government colleges in Haryana, India? How is this access gendered and/or influenced by other intersecting factors?

- The participants' gender and caste identities were representative of the sampled districts, however, there were more SC students in the rural college.
- Most students' parents had gendered occupations, in that most mothers were engaged in housework and fathers were engaged in agriculture, labour and local businesses. Many women in Haryana are also engaged in agricultural work, but this was not represented as such on the survey.
- Most of the students enrolled in the three sampled colleges were from families which had no direct first-person experience of higher education and were therefore first-generation students to access higher education.
- A majority of the participants' grandparents had no formal education; indicating that there is no multi-generational history of formal education. Grandmothers and mothers had attained lower levels of formal education than grandfathers and fathers.
- Out of a total of 326 participants, only 58 out of 654 parents had accessed HE. Out of this 58, 43 were fathers. Thus, most of the young women enrolled in the government colleges were members of the first generation of women in the family to access HE.
- Prior to accessing higher education, most students were enrolled in schools in the same urban centres as the colleges.
- More girls than boys started and remained in government schools and more boys than girls started and remained in private schools, thereby indicating that within families more resources were allocated towards education of sons than daughters.
- In terms of academic performance in schooling, which is the primary factor determining enrolment in HE in India, women had a higher mean score by a few percentage points. This suggests a gendered choice by young women to enrol in an institution based on it being closer to home rather than more academically competitive.
- The sampled government colleges had relatively small catchment areas.
- Staying at home was the automatic choice for most students (more than 95% of the respondents).
- Choices regarding higher education institution were focused on distance, duration of commute (less than 50 minutes) and availability of safe and affordable public transport.
- Distance and availability of safe commute was a greater concern for young women than the young men.

How and why are students accessing HE in government colleges in Haryana, India? How is this access gendered and/or influenced by other intersecting factors?

- Students sought information regarding higher education through their personal networks – which differed for young women and men – and teachers.

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- Students were supported by a wide variety of family members, especially parents and siblings, schoolteachers and occasionally by other individuals in their neighbourhoods.
- Students were aware that they were making choices or accessing HE in rural communities which are generally conservative, particularly regarding gender relations, and which have placed a low value on HE. Colleges were viewed as having a poor social reputation as well as quality of education; public transport was viewed as unsafe as well as unaffordable; HE was viewed as financially prohibitive.
- Within their own families, students did not enrol in college due to concerns relating to financial constraints; pressure (especially on young men) to start earning; pressures (especially on young women) to marry.
- Students lacked adequate information regarding HE options and admission process and were more generally interested in – or lacked information in relation to – other professional and vocational courses.
- Students enrolled in HE because it was an obvious choice after completing schooling, motivated by possible graduate employment and their families' and personal aspirations.
- Some young women chose to access HE as a means to either delay marriage or to enhance their social status and marriageability.

These findings drove the consecutive phases of the project to focus on families and institutional outreach mechanisms through which colleges can become more accessible, safe and offer quality educational provision to students.

Recommendations

These recommendations are directed at a range of for stakeholders: schools, colleges and the government and the NGO sector and focus on outreach activities.

They are based on a key study finding that, for some students, government colleges represent their only opportunity to access higher education, while for other students these same colleges represent a restriction on choice and opportunity.

There are two target **outcomes**:

- Where attending the nearest government college is currently the only opportunity for young people to access higher education, colleges should be accessible, safe and offering quality education provision.
- Where young people's higher education choices are limited to accessing the nearest government college due to financial, geographical and/or cultural factors, young people's choices need to be opened up so that they can maximise their potential.

The role of the government and the NGO sector

- State-funded educational schemes and interventions need to be sustainable and accountable, and should involve consultation with young people and different stakeholders in the community, connecting families, schools and colleges. Information about schemes should be disseminated widely in a variety of means, including directly to young people.

- The role of Aanganvadi workers (including training) and other localised services including village panchayats and khap panchayats should be joined up with schools and colleges to promote informed educational choices from an early age.
- The Department of Higher Education should further liaise with the Department of Transport and Infrastructure to consult on bus routes, bus stand locations and bus requirements for college access. Consultation with students and mapping of the catchment area are essential parts of this process.
- Further colleges should be considered where there are no colleges within an appropriate catchment area (1 hour of travel and/or 70-100km distant from students' homes).
- Colleges need to receive sufficient funding to recruit high quality teachers on permanent contracts, to maintain and develop facilities, and to develop a high-quality offer for students (e.g. extra activities, prizes and bursaries).
- Information to be distributed through schools, community groups and directly from colleges.
    - Families need readily available information about school choice and higher education choice (including subject choice) and employability options
    - Information should include positive messaging (a) valuing of girls' educational trajectories; (b) on class 12 marks that are needed for accessing HE, so that families are in an informed position to act if there are concerns about young people's school progress.
    - Information should (a) cover the costs of HE, including fees and supplementary costs, as well as scholarships and bursaries (including of competitive HEIs which may be located further away); (b) include guidance on transport options for students to reach colleges and suggestions for safe journey planning.
- The NGO sector relating to education needs to be stimulated in Haryana.

The role of colleges

Colleges should:
- build a more public presence in their catchment areas, to increase understanding of higher education. They should engage directly with families through visiting communities including villages. College teachers should be more visible in local communities. When engaging with families, colleges need to be aware that parents have the ultimate say in young people's HE access, but respect that mothers and fathers and sisters and brothers have different roles and these need to be respected and explored. Young people need emotional and informed support from their families.
- open their doors to (guided) visits from families and young people.
- liaise with schools to ensure that young people are receiving information directly to ensure that the school-college transition is facilitated in an informed manner and that young people are aware of their options.
- formalise the role of current students to act as college ambassadors disseminating information about higher education in their communities and giving guided visits of the college.
- engage in more active information and diversely targeted marketing campaigns attractive to young people (e.g. social media) but also to family members (e.g. newspaper, television, radio).
- liaise with local internet providers (e.g. internet cafes) to ensure that young people applying to the colleges from these providers have access to current information. Student ambassadors can play a part here too.

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- train any personnel involved in the admissions process to be informative and welcoming to applicants.
- provide step-by-step guidance on the admissions process and ensure this is available at schools, internet cafes and at the college, and available online.
- Some young people are making decisions about HE on their own. Colleges should be aware of this College ambassadors can (in collaboration with schools) work with individuals on their college applications.

The role of schools

- Schools should work with colleges and college ambassadors to facilitate the spreading of reliable, accurate information about higher education options to young people and, where possible, their communities.
- Young people need to be informed of their options, and young women in particular need to receive more training at school level in negotiation skills, so that they can have more involvement in discussions of their futures within the family. Young people at school level should be encouraged to identify different sources of support and information that they could consult. Again, this is a potential role for student ambassadors in collaboration with schools.

1. The Phase 1 Study
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1.1   Introduction

Higher education (HE) is an important social institution which performs multiple roles such as building knowledge and skills, developing the human resources available to society, and enhancing the employability of students. HE can also address social justice concerns such as historical marginalisation of women and young people from disenfranchised communities (Varghese 2015, 2015; Tierney 2012; Nussbaum 2012; Castells 1994). Increasing access to HE helps to address these multiple social concerns. As a result, state governments as well as universities implement policies to increase enrolment. The government of India's National Education Policy (NEP 2020) confirms a national interest in increasing the GER (gross enrollment ratio) for India, which according to the most recent annual survey of HE in India, (AISHE 2018-19) stands at 26.3%.

In terms of access to HE, women's participation has been a concern across the world (Boliver 2013; David 2015) and in India (John 2012; Chakravarti 2012; Chanana 1988, 1990, 2000, 2007, 2017). Educational choices as students access HE in India are significantly gendered (Sudarshan 2018; Sahu et al. 2017; Gautam 2015; Verma 2014; John 2012) and additionally influenced by intersectional factors such as caste and social class (Varghese et al. 2019; Wadhwa 2018; Sabharwal and Malish 2016). The AISHE 2018-19 reports a gender parity of 1 for the first time to indicate that cumulatively there is parity in the number of young women and men enrolled in higher education (HE) in India. However, the GER is lower for marginalised caste communities (23 overall) in India, and there are also concerns about gendered access to HE which go beyond gender parity to query the inequalities within HE choice. Indian higher education has also been expanding and massifying (Varghese 2015). Within the massifying social ecology of higher education institutions in India, state funded colleges (i.e. government colleges) cater to the needs of "full-time and local, or regional traditionally aged students" (Tierney and Sabharwal 2016: 24). Students from wealthier and higher social status families are able to afford to stay away from home and travel longer distances to access HE (Varghese et al. 2019). A similar difference is also noted in the distances travelled by young men and women. Young men are selecting institutions which are more prestigious and farther away from home, whereas young women tend to be enrolled in institutions are closer to home and are accompanied by safer and often more expensive commute options (Borker 2017).

Haryana reports an overall GER of 29.2 (AISHE 2018-19) which is significantly higher than the national average, and numerical parity between enrollment of young men and women. However, the state continues to report increasing number of incidence of violence against women and social scrutiny and monitoring of young people's movements outside the home, especially that of young women (Women against Sexual Violence and State Repression 2015, 2014; Ahlawat 2012; Chowdhry 2012). Haryana also is a state which has one of the lowest overall and juvenile (0 to 6 years) sex ratios in India, which is indicative of persistent social preference for sons, sex-selective abortions, dowry and gendered matrimonial and inheritance practices. It is therefore important to explore how these gendered social inequalities feed into HE access and choice.

The 'Fair Chance for Education project' in Haryana is based on the understanding that access to HE is gendered and aims to influence equitable and informed access to HE. The Phase 1 study provided

the solid evidence and rich foundation upon which to build the further phases. It was thus designed to better understand the personal and educational backgrounds and trajectories of young people in Haryana who have accessed higher education via government colleges. Moreover, it sought to explore a variety of facets of the young people's lives, in order to avoid pre-determining findings, and indeed to permit the discovery of the unexpected, particularly in relation to gender. Finally, the Phase 1 study facilitated the development of long-term sustainable contacts in Haryana, in order to deepen the project's engagement at a district level. The Phase 1 fieldwork was conducted during a project visit in February 2018.

The **research questions** for this phase 1 study were as follows:

1. Who are the students accessing HE in government colleges in Haryana, India?
   - How is this access gendered and/or influenced by other intersecting factors?
2. How and why are students accessing HE in government colleges in Haryana, India?
   - How is this access gendered and/or influenced by other intersecting factors?

1.2 Research design

The study was designed as a **mixed methods case study**, initially of two colleges in two separate districts, with a third site added later. The aim of the study was to explore the background and educational trajectories of young people who have accessed higher education via government colleges, and to explore how gender influenced these trajectories. The study sought to understand how and why young people accessed higher education at all, and why in their chosen college. As such, the study focused on *access to* and *choices pertaining to* higher education. Case study was selected as a methodology because the study sought to recognise and explore differences between districts and colleges within the state, due to factors relating to proximity of other states and higher education institutions, and degree of rurality. The study therefore sought to explore gendered access to higher education in Haryana through in-depth case studies of specific areas, with the inclusion of multiple sites facilitating generalisability.

Within the case study methodology, the **methods** chosen were as follows: institutional profile and background statistics for documentary analysis; semi-structured interview with college Principal or nominated member of senior leadership to facilitate our understanding of the student body and institutional policies; survey of around 100 undergraduates in each college, across subjects, to include men and women students, with the purpose to assess socioeconomic status, family education history, mobility (social and geographical); focus group discussions (FGDs) with 5 women students and 5 men students in each college, focusing on their perceptions of the barriers and enabling factors for access to higher education; semi-structured biographical interviews with 2 women students and 2 men students in each college, focusing on their perceptions of the barriers and enabling factors that had influenced their own educational trajectories.

The design of the study was followed by an application for **ethical approval** from the appropriate University of Warwick ethics committee. Ethical approval was granted. The colleges and all study participants were carefully anonymised. The colleges are given the following pseudonyms: Mahendergarh District College (MDC), Sonipat District College (SDC), Sirsa District College (SiDC).

1.3 District and college selection

As noted above, initially two districts were selected for the study, Mahendergarh and Sonipat, with data collection conducted in February 2018. While it was not possible to replicate the full case study design in the third district, we replicated the survey in a rural college in Sirsa district in November 2018. This enabled the study to encompass a wider range of locations and students. The districts were chosen based on (i) contrast (e.g. proximity to NCR[1]), (ii) statistical profile regarding sex ratio and education, (iii) strength of local contacts.

Table 1: District comparison

District	Urban Population	Sex Ratio	Juvenile Sex Ration	Female Literacy	Overall Literacy
Mahendargarh	14.41%	895	775	64.6%	77.7%
Sonipat	31.27%	856	798	69.8%	79.1%
Sirsa	24.65%	897	862	60.4%	68.8%
Haryana	34.88%	877	834	65.9%	75.5%

Source: Census of India 2011

One co-educational government college was selected in each sampled district, in comparable environments (small urban centres, not the district centre). All three selected colleges were co-educational at the time of the study, although it was observed that strict gender segregation was observed within the college spaces. None of the colleges maintained a hostel. MDC and SDC offered all three general education streams (BA, BCom, BSc), but SiDC offered just two of these (BA and BCom) at the time of data collection, although it has since begun to offer BSc.

SDC, previously a coeducational college, was in the process of moving to being a women's college. The college representative stated that, even before this change, there had been more women than men in the college population. At the time of the study, **MDC** was in the process of opening up more courses to women. However, it was populated by more men as there was a women's government college in the same urban centre, which was preferred by women. Women wanting to study BSc had to enroll in MDC. **SiDC** was a new college which had been established about 10 years before our study, on land donated by a landowner in the village; the college was located about 5km from the nearest small urban centre.

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[1] The National Capital region or NCR refers to districts from different states surrounding New Delhi, the administrative capital of India. Several districts in Haryana such as Mahendargarh, Sonipat, Gurgaon, and Faridabad are part of the NCR are therefore located in prominent national corridors of development and special economic zones for industrial development. Being located within the NCR and proximity to NCR is associated with greater degree of industrial and infrastructural development such as investment and development of national and state roadways and transport facilities (Planning Commision 2009; Apex Cluster Development Services 2015).

Figure 1.1 Government college building in Haryana

1.4 Fieldwork implementation

The research instruments for the study were initially workshopped in January 2018 by the Warwick team. The instruments were piloted by three members of the project's Consultative Group (CG): Sharmila Rathee, Manju Panwar, Roma Smart Joseph. Research Assistants (RAs) were recruited for the study through project contacts; all RAs were doctoral researchers. Sooraj H. S. was the RA for SDC data collection along with Anjali Thomas (PhD 1). Annu Kumari and Sohan Lal were the RAs for MDC data collection. Before embarking on the fieldwork, a training workshop was conducted for the RAs by the project team.

Following the preparation stages, the research team departed for Haryana, with MDC data collection conducted by Ann Stewart and Renu Yadav with Annu Kumari and Sohan Lal, and SDC data collection conducted by Emily Henderson and Sharmila Rathee with Anjali Thomas and Sooraj H. S. SiDC data was collected by Anjali Thomas on a separate occasion. Nidhi S. Sabharwal prepared a background discussion note on the nature of challenges that students from rural/semi-urban areas experience in the pathways to higher education with students studying in the State University and its affiliated colleges located in the district of the SiDC. Access to the colleges was facilitated by CG members Renu Yadav (MDC) and Sharmila Rathee (SDC and SiDC). Key contacts were established in each college, who then assisted with recruitment of participants. The questionnaire survey was completed in classrooms with the kind permission of tutors, and in MDC students were summoned to the lecture theatre for questionnaire completion. The college contact then selected participants for the interviews and FGDs, which were conducted in private spaces (e.g. empty computer room) by the RAs and PhD 1. The interviews with the college representatives were conducted by the project team. Data collection proceeded smoothly, with the expected sample reached for the survey and rich qualitative data produced. The colleges were supportive of the study, for which the team is appreciative.

1.5 Data analysis

The **questionnaire survey** was administered using a bilingual (Hindi/English) paper form. Nidhi S. Sabharwal provided significant inputs in the development and finalisation of the research instruments, including student survey questionnaire, semi-structured interview and focus group discussion guide. For the purposes of data inputting, Hindi responses were transliterated/translated as appropriate. The forms were then inputted to SPSS. The questionnaire data was relatively high quality, in that the students were of high literacy and enrolled on degree courses, so had a good level of competence in completing the form. The free text responses were coded by Anjali Thomas (PhD 1) with Emily Henderson. Following inputting, each variable was analysed using descriptive statistics and graphic representations. The survey was designed to provide a general picture of the college populations, against the specific detail of the qualitative data collection. As such, a more involved statistical analysis was not necessary for our purposes. In the analysis, at times we refer to the 'case colleges' (MDC and SDC) together, where e.g. the numbers were too small to draw conclusions from the single college data. SiDC is always analysed separately as it forms a rural comparator.

Figure 1.2 Explanation of the questionnaire survey to students

The qualitative data audio files were transcribed into Hindi with Roman script. The **student interviews** were analysed in a multi-stage, collaborative process. The first stage involved a data analysis workshop during the UK project visit in 2018. The workshop included Nidhi Sabharwal, Renu Yadav, Sharmila Rathee along with members of the project team. Four interviews were read and discussed for the purposes of identifying important issues and themes. In relation to higher education access and choice, the discussion identified important facets of the interviews to focus on in the subsequent coding: family educational and employment background, including caste/class factors; siblings including their educational background; participant's schooling and hobbies/extra-curricular activities; participant's motivation for studying the chosen subject and their employment aspirations; their basis for college choice (including discussion of other HEIs considered) and who was involved in this decision; their process of applying to the college and any obstacles identified; their journey to college. Initial findings from the analysis were presented to the CG and in some research presentations to ascertain the potential for the full, detailed analysis, which was then conducted. The student interviews were then read and discussed by Emily Henderson with Nikita Samanta (PhD 2), who assisted with

Hindi comprehension. The interviews were biographical in nature, so the resultant analysis involved compiling a student profile for each student, using the same format for each profile to ensure comparability. Participants were then considered both holistically as individuals, and thematically in line with the different aspects of the survey.

The **FGDs** were analysed using thematic analysis. To facilitate this process, Anjali Thomas (PhD 1) translated the transcripts into English. These were then thematically analysed using the questionnaire structure and the key aspects identified in the data analysis workshop as the basis for deductive coding, in addition to inductive coding where unexpected themes emerged. The college representative interviews were analysed in the same manner. Following this process, the structure of the findings was established, and the resulting findings sections include a combination of data from across the different sources.

Figure 1.3 Data analysis workshop

The case study methods included **document analysis** of materials about the college. However, there was very little documentation available, which was in itself a finding of the study – that the colleges are not engaging in a practice of producing and circulating brochures or information leaflets about the colleges. For the purposes of our study, we were able to obtain some information from the administrative personnel regarding the student body. SDC handed the team some brochures, but these were a few years out of date. There was at that time no internet presence for the colleges. We were therefore unable to include document analysis in the study.

2. Who are the students accessing HE in government colleges in Haryana, India? How is this Gendered and/or influenced by other intersecting factors?

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2.1   Sample information

Sample

The sample for the questionnaire survey amounted to: 124 from MDC, 118 from SDC, 84 from SiDC.

Gender

Our case college sample (MDC and SDC) consists of 40% women, 60% men, and no other genders listed. At SDC, which was transitioning to being a women's college, 66% of our sample were women and 34% men. MDC was a mixed gender college, but was located near to a women's college, so was attended by more men (84% men and 16% women in our sample), with the women attending this college having made an active choice to do so (e.g. for Sciences). At SiDC, the gender balance of our sample was 48% women and 52% men.

Caste

Our study sample was divided according to the four caste groupings in Haryana – Non-SC/ST/OBC, BCB, BCA, SC, where BCB is less marginalised than BCA. MDC was characterised by a relatively high BCB population, while SDC had a larger Non-SC/ST/OBC group. The SC population of the colleges (according to our sample) was fairly representative of the district averages, with the exception of SiDC, where there was a higher proportion of SC students in our sample than in the district by a margin of 10%. At MDC, the study sample is characterised by more Non-SC/ST/OBC and more SC men than women. At SDC, there were more women from Non-SC/ST/OBC groups than men, and more men from SC groups than women. At SiDC, there was a very large SC women group and a very small Non-SC/ST/OBC group. There was a great deal of variety across specific named castes across the colleges. However in each college there was a numerically dominant caste (Ahir, BCB at MDC; Jaat, Non-SC/ST/OBC at SDC; Meghwal, SC at SiDC).

Figure 2.1 Caste group distribution across colleges and genders
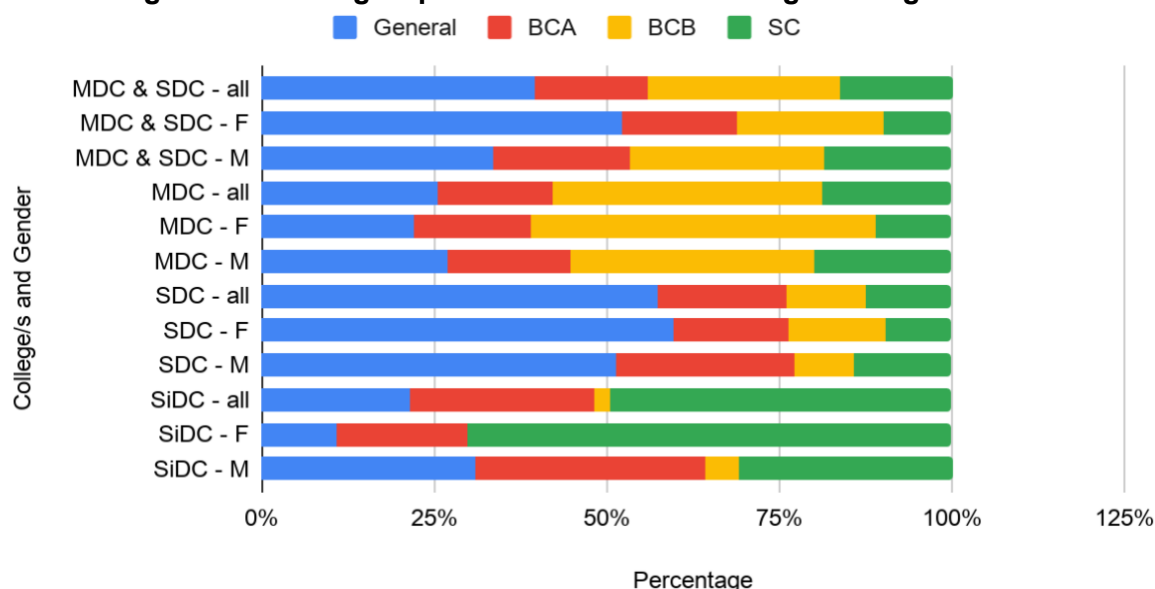
Religion

The study sample was almost exclusively Hindu, matching the respective district statistics (MDC 100% Hindu, 99.04% Hindu for Mahendargarh district; SDC 98.2% Hindu, 95.87% Hindu for Sonipat district – Census 2011). The exception was SiDC which included some Sikh respondents (7.1% Sikh for SIDC, 26.17% Sikh for Sirsa district – Census 2011).

2.2 Students' higher education details

Class 12 marks

Class 12 marks are the primary measure through which higher education isntitutions in India evaluate applications made by prospective students for BA, BSc and BCom (Commerce) courses in India. Professional courses such as medicine, nursing engineering, architecture, law, fashion design, art and hotel management often use additional public national or state competitive examinations to evaluate prospective students. The government colleges in this study exclusively use class 12 marks to evaluate prospective student applications. The mean class 12 marks at the case colleges were just over 75%; at SiDC the mean mark was just under 70%. Women students had a higher mean score for class 12 marks than men by a few percentage points. This could be attributed to women's higher performance in these exams. However, it should also be noted that women tend to attend colleges that are closer to home, so it is possible that more high-performing women had applied to the colleges, with high-performing men able to apply to more competitive colleges and courses such as engineering, medicine and law. The mean class 12 score decreases by caste group in accordance with levels of marginalisation, with a 6% difference in mean score between Non-SC/ST/OBC and SC groups; this is also reflected at SiDC but there is a wider discrepancy between Non-SC/ST/OBC and BCA.

Course studied

In our study sample, the majority of students were studying BSc or BCom, with fewer students enrolled on a BA course. At SiDC, however, the vast majority of students were studying for a BA, with a low number enrolled on BCom courses – there was no BSc option at that time. The colleges vary when course selection is compared by gender. Given the location of MDC in proximity to the women's college, there is a higher likelihood of women choosing MDC to study subjects that are unavailable in the women's college. However it can be said that, across all three colleges, proportionally more women were studying for BA courses, and proportionally more men were enrolled on BCom and BSc courses. This reflects common gendered subject choices; however, we are unable to dig deeper into specific subject choice due to variation in students' reporting of their subjects on the survey. Nevertheless, there were no conclusive findings relating to subject choice and caste group.

Scholarships

Though the findings relating to scholarships must be treated with caution due to inaccuracies in student responses, it is noteworthy that 21.3% of the MDC/SDC respondents versus 56.3% of SiDC respondents stated that they were in receipt of scholarships. This reflects different conditions of accessing HE for the different college populations. The majority of students stating they received a scholarship were SC, with some from the BC groups. Of the total of 5 Non-SC/ST/OBC caste group students across the three colleges who received scholarships, these may have referred to other scholarships such as merit-based or relating to sports or military. More men from the case colleges stated they received a scholarship, while more women at SiDC noted this. There are no conclusive findings regarding gender and scholarships, but it should be noted that women did not have to pay tuition fees at these colleges due to state government policy to increase enrolment of women in HE.

2.3   Family structure

Student marital status

Very few of the participants in our study were married. Across all three colleges, 11 respondents were married (six women, three men, two gender unknown) and four were engaged (three women, one man); no student interview or FGD participants stated that they were married or engaged. The implication of this is that the vast majority of students, irrespective of gender, are still living at home with their families, and thus their higher education decisions were determined within the family. There is also the suggestion that, having reached HE, it was possibly easier to postpone marriage until after graduation, or even Masters level. Early marriage is portrayed in our study as a phenomenon that occurs *elsewhere*, whether in another (more rural) location or in another era. However, it is clear from the qualitative data that marriage figures strongly in students' future planning, and that there is pressure from different parties for both men and women to fix the timescale for marriage.

Family unit

The study suggests that the majority of the students' decisions relating to HE were taken in a household unit consisting of a relatively small nuclear family (but with more than 3 people). However, we also know from the qualitative data and the parts of the survey relating to HE choices that other family members were closely involved. The respondents of the questionnaire significantly identified

parents (more participants identifying fathers than mothers) and siblings (more participants identifying brothers than sisters) in a gendered manner. Additionally, extended family members such as uncles and aunts and cousins often provided advice and information to students and family members.

Siblings

Only one respondent in our survey was an only child. This means that the vast majority of students had taken their decisions relating to HE in families where there were also siblings. Students' decisions will therefore have been situated among family decision-making processes for multiple offspring, including considerations of investment in education and preparation for marriage. Many students' families included more than two offspring, suggesting that decisions about HE were taken in relation to more than one sibling. Women students in our study sample had more siblings than men students. This has the implication that decisions about young women's education were being taken in relation to more siblings then for young men's education, suggesting more complex consideration in terms of dividing resources and planning futures. Our study revealed that many families consisted of older daughters and younger sons. There was a tendency for girls to have younger brothers (and sisters) and for brothers to have older sisters. This seems to reflect the tendency of families to 'try for a boy'. This shapes the decision-making process around HE, as the young women in these families are engaging in formal education – and potentially HE – before their brothers. In families where there is no history of HE, as most of the families in our study were, this means that older sisters were potentially the first in family to access HE, with their brothers and younger sisters able to make plans and decisions based on their sisters' experiences. It is possible to conjecture, however, that multiple girl children places a financial burden on the family due to marriage costs, thus potentially limiting potential willingness to invest in education and/or postpone marriage until after graduation. Families tended to have more than one older sister, but just one older brother. With the value placed on the boy child, if there is just one older brother in the family, it is possible to conjecture the level of responsibility this member of the family is given, and the role he may play in family decision-making. However it is also possible to consider the older sisters as a resource which may not be fully tapped due to gendered constraints within the family. This family structure analysis is thus important to consider when exploring the decisions and influences impacting upon young people's access to HE.

2.4   Family educational history

Grandparents' schooling

In our study, many students were unaware of their grandparents' education levels. However, it is noteworthy that more students seemed to be aware of their grandfathers' education (on both sides) than the level of education attained by their grandmothers (on both sides). Students were more aware of their paternal grandparents' education than their maternal grandparents' education, probably because they live in greater proximity to their paternal grandparents due to the tendency of brides to relocate to their husbands' place of residence upon marriage. This knowledge of family members' educational profiles is important in terms of young people situating themselves within the educational history of their family – as following in the footsteps or breaking new ground. The students' grandparents had low levels of formal education, with almost 50% having accessed no formal education at all (and over 60% at the rural college). This indicates that, for the students accessing HE in government colleges, there is no multi-generational history of formal education in their families. This has implications for HE decision-making, as it marks a huge disparity between the educational

experiences across the three generations, meaning that there is potentially little experience to draw on from family members. Notably, a much higher proportion of grandmothers than grandfathers had received no formal education, meaning that fewer women students then men were positioned in multi-generational histories of gender-specific formal education. Where grandparents had accessed formal education, many finished formal schooling after primary school (class 5) or part-way through secondary education (class 8); more grandfathers tended to leave at class 10 or 12 than grandmothers, most of whom had already left by that point. Again this shows that, even where a multi-generational history of formal education exists, this is for many students limited to primary or secondary school, and in some cases high school. Women students are more likely to be positioned as first or second-generation gender-specific learners than men students, who are more likely to be second or third-generation. Grandparents from Non-SC/ST/OBC caste group were most likely both to access formal education and go on to access HE. Grandparents from the BCA group were least privileged in both regards. This may reflect the enhanced measures for SC groups to access education, but equally there is a clear discrepancy between Non-SC/ST/OBC group and all three marginalised groups (BCB, BCA and SC).

Figure 2.2 Parents' education levels by maximum class attained
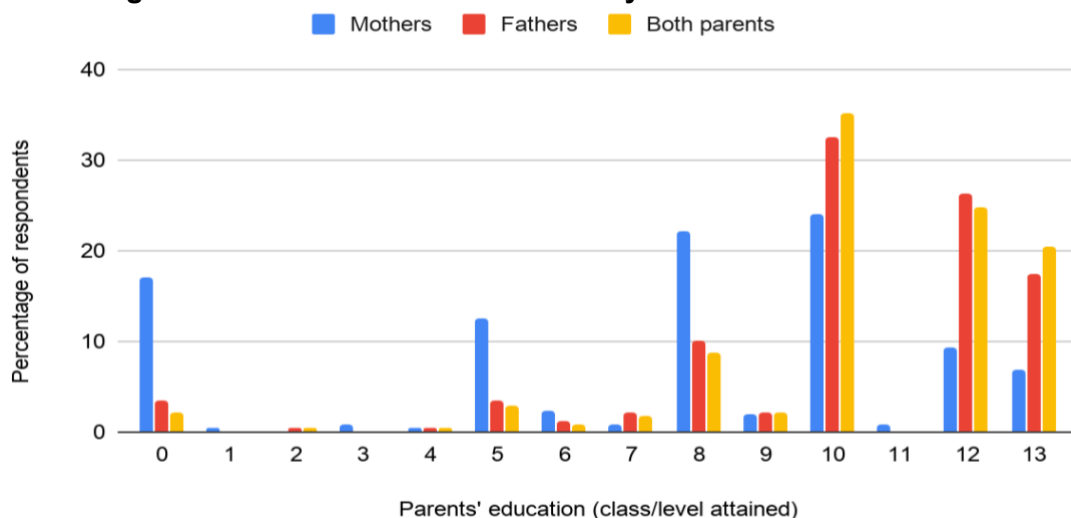
Parents' schooling

For parents' educational attainment, there was less missing information. However there were still more missing responses for mothers than fathers. Most students, unlike their parents, had not grown up in households where neither parent had accessed formal education, although incidence of no formal schooling was higher at the rural college. This means that most students were at least 2nd generation learners within their households. When incidence of no formal education is compared for mothers and fathers however, proportionally more mothers had not accessed formal education than fathers, with this figure still reaching over 50% of mothers at the rural college. The concerning finding here was that, despite significant improvement in access to formal education between the grandparents' and parents' generation, a higher proportion of grandfathers from the case colleges had accessed formal education than mothers at the rural college. The findings from this analysis indicate that, while most households contained at least one parent who had accessed formal education, there was still a fairly high chance that women students entering HE came from families where they were the first generation to access any formal schooling. Again this sets the scene for HE decision making. As with grandparents, more mothers had exited formal education earlier than

fathers, with class 5 and 8 as well as 10 constituting exit points. The difference between mothers' and fathers' educational attainment was striking, with many more fathers having completed secondary school, high school and even higher education. This again reflects the imbalance between maternal and paternal educational histories in students' families, with women's education being less normalised for future generations to follow. The majority of students' fathers had attained higher levels of education than their spouses, with a lower percentage having the same level and an even smaller number being less educated than their spouse. In some cases, fathers who had accessed HE were married to women who had not accessed or completed primary school. This sets the scene for families with vast gendered discrepancies in parental educational capital. More mothers from Non-SC/ST/OBC caste group accessed higher levels of education, and fewer had not accessed any formal education. This was the reverse for mothers from the SC group. The disparity was less evident for fathers, but still apparent, particularly in relation to accessing no formal education. Students from the Non-SC/ST/OBC caste group were more likely to have mothers who were more educated or equally educated as their spouses. SC households were least likely to include mothers that were equally as educated as their spouses, and no mothers were more educated than their spouses. This suggests that more Non-SC/ST/OBC group households were already challenging gendered expectations of spousal education levels in the parental generation. It is clear that, when considering e.g. the ideal age of marriage versus the ideal age to complete education, the women students in our study were negotiating the ideal age of education completion, as opposed to following in the footsteps of previous generations of educated women.

Figure 2.3 Mothers' and fathers' education compared by caste group

Legend: ■ Mother more educated ■ Equal ■ Father more educated

Caste group	Mother more educated	Equal	Father more educated
General	13.8	26.4	59.8
BCB	11.5	15.4	73.1
BCA	11.1	25	63.9
SC	0	13.3	86.7

% of pairs in each caste group
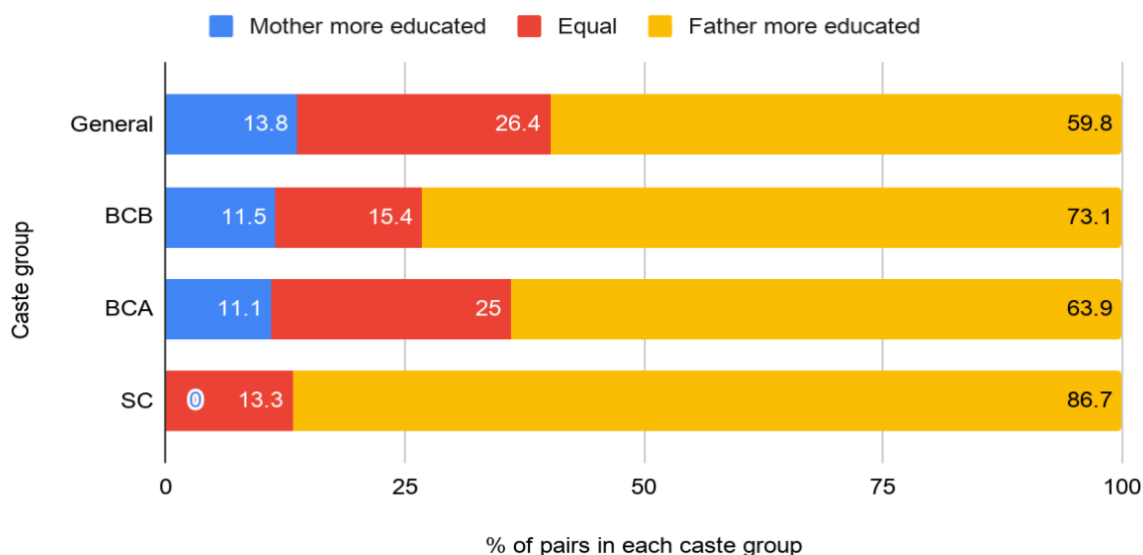
Generational difference between grandparents' and parents' educational attainment

Families with low or no formal education in the grandparents' generation also tended to have relatively low levels of parental education, with very few parents from these families having accessed HE. Families with higher levels of education in the grandparents' generation tended to have higher levels of education in the parents' generation. This reinforces the educational capital that some students brought to their own HE experiences, with some students being family newcomers and others having had a more stepped generational trajectory towards HE. At each college, there were a concerning number of students (24 in total) where the maximum level of education that their parents had attained was lower than the maximum level attained by at least one of their grandparents. There were also

several students (45) where the maximum level of education that their parents had attained was equal to the maximum level attained by at least one of their grandparents. These findings disrupt the progress narrative that our study seemed to indicate, with a stepped increase in level of education attained for each generation. However the narrative was upheld by the remaining students, where their parents were more educated than the grandparents, usually by 1-4 classes. A significant number of students (52) were from families where the maximum level of education that their parents had attained was at least 10 classes higher than the maximum level attained by at least one of their grandparents. This latter finding suggests a leap into the unknown for many families at the parental generation.

History of HE in the family

The vast majority of the respondents in our study were first generation higher education students (68.5% at MDC, 84.7% at SDC, 96.4% at SiDC). Very few students' families (22) included multi-generational access to HE. In some cases (10), grandparents had accessed HE but parents had not. No grandmothers had accessed HE, and only two had attained class 12. This means that no women students were positioned as 3rd generation HE women entrants. More grandfathers had attained HE (24), meaning that more men students were 3rd generation men in their families to access HE. Grandfathers' HE qualifications ranged across vocational and general education qualifications. 4 grandfathers had obtained an MA qualification. The majority of grandparents having accessed HE were from Non-SC/ST/OBC caste group. It is noteworthy that the vast majority of students had no family history of HE beyond their parents' generation, meaning that grandparental input to the decision-making process was not based on personal experience of HE. There was more evidence of parents having accessed HE than grandparents; a total of 58 parents across the three colleges had attended HE. This meant that there were students who were not the first in family to attend HE. However 43 of these parents were fathers, meaning that the vast majority of women students were the first generation of women to attend HE. Of students in families where parents had accessed HE, Non-SC/ST/OBC caste group was proportionally over-represented. A range of qualifications had been attained by fathers, with the most common being BA (24). 6 fathers had obtained a Master's degree. Fewer qualifications were mentioned for mothers, though again BA was most common (8). 4 mothers had obtained a Master's qualification. Since only 11 students in our entire study came from families where at least one member of the family had attained a post-graduate qualification, there was also a very limited extent to which parents' future aims for their offspring's education were based on personal understanding of education beyond the undergraduate degree.

2.5   Employment background

Mothers' employment

Over 90% of respondents' mothers were homemakers across the three colleges (extending to 98.5% at SiDC). Of the few external jobs reported for mothers, this included teacher, business, government job, childcare, farming, skilled/technical labour, nurse, labourer. This means that the majority of respondents' mothers were not working outside of the home, irrespective of their educational attainment. This point is salient for young women's educational decisions, as they were living in households where educational attainment had not influenced their mothers' employment possibilities.

Fathers' employment

For fathers, there was a greater variety in job type. No fathers listed 'home-maker' as their occupation. The majority of fathers of students at the case colleges were employed in farming, business or labour, which is to be expected in small urban centres within an agricultural state. It is important to note that many women in Haryana are also engaged in agricultural work, but this was not represented as such on the survey. At SiDC, the rurality of the college was reflected in the only significant job types being farming and labour. This finding is important as a backdrop for the decision-making processes relating to young people's HE choices. The majority of parents were not employed in jobs that required graduate education or even class 12 completion. This must have contributed to the (gendered) employment horizons of the students.

Figure 2.4 Father's jobs – top types by caste group
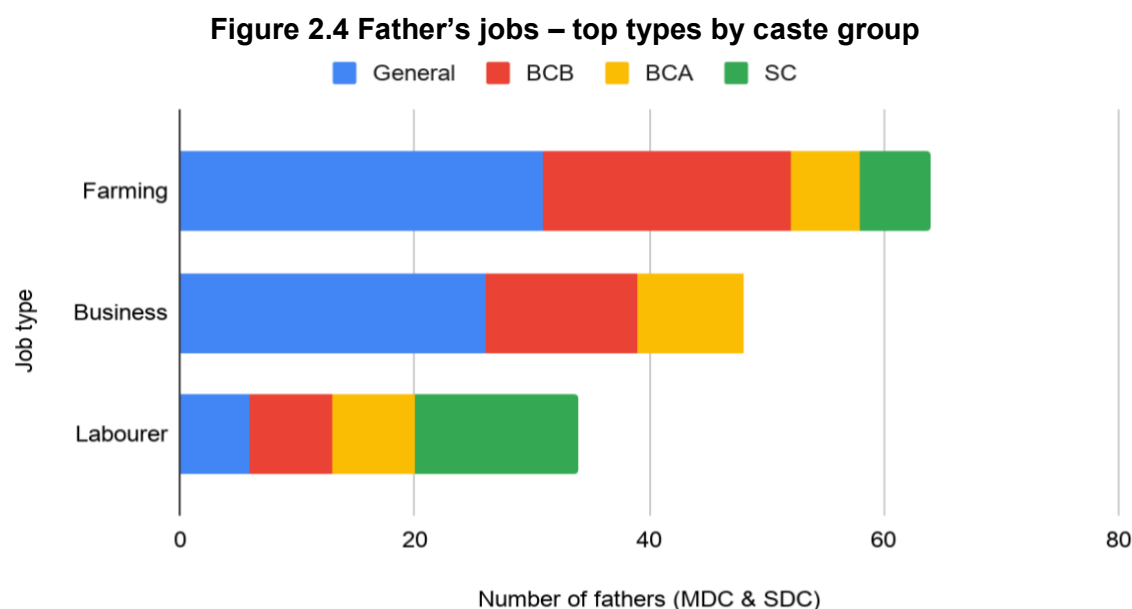
Employment type in relation to caste group

Regarding caste group, farming and business were dominated by Non-SC/ST/OBC and then BCB groups, while labourers had a higher concentration of SC fathers. Almost half of the SC fathers were labourers, with a further quarter in government jobs, perhaps reflecting the reservations for marginalised groups in government jobs. Students in the sample from less marginalised groups were more likely to have grown up seeing a variety of jobs including agriculture and business, which may have contributed to their own aims and motivations when selecting higher education options.

Students engaging in part-time work

Very few students stated that they were engaged in part-time work. Those who did record part-time work were predominantly men. There were no patterns relating to caste group. Given the low numbers of married students in the sample, it is striking that three of the working students were married. The jobs listed did not include farming or labour, which adds to the notion that students did not declare the work they were doing to assist with the family economy. Some students were engaged in serious hobbies which involved either earning money during their studies (e.g. singing for occasions) or which would assist with future career options (e.g. NCC, boxing).

Students' employment aspirations

Aspirations (as recounted by students in the qualitative data) bore little resemblance to the employment background they had grown up in, reflecting recent changes in the Indian employment market and related aspirations for upward social mobility. Students mentioned achieving post-graduate qualifications, which seemed to have become normalized for their generation although few of their parents had been educated beyond high school. No students mentioned agriculture or continuing a family business. All of the women had clear and ambitious further study and employment prospects, but it was not clear if this was for pre-marriage studies and employment, or if they expected to continue once married. Banking and finance was a popular sector and seen as appropriate for women due to the possibility of staying in the family home and because they could enter banking without further qualifications (thus potentially meaning that marriage could happen sooner). Some students aspired to work in education, but this occurred as a back-up option if other careers in e.g. sport or the military did not work out. Others aspired to work in government jobs, including the civil service, police and military. Generally there was a large discrepancy between parents' employment background and their aspirations for their children. As such, parents were encouraging their children to enter into jobs that they had no experience of, which also necessitated college education with which they were also mostly unfamiliar.

2.6   Students' educational backgrounds

Medium of instruction (MOI) in schooling

The majority of students in the case colleges had been schooled in Hindi, across genders and caste groups. Men students had had more exposure to English MOI than women. Non-SC/ST/OBC caste groups also had received more exposure to English MOI education. SC and BCA groups had received the least exposure to English MOI. At SiDC, the vast majority of students had completed class 12 in Hindi, with no SC students having accessed English or English/Hindi MOI education. Whilst recognising the benefit of being fully educated to a high level in Hindi, access to English MOI education unlocks certain future opportunities for HE, including more prestigious HE institutions and the Sciences. Not having studied in English prior to HE means that it is both less likely that a student will opt for a prestigious institution and/or a Sciences course, and also that, should a student take this path, that they will not be able to succeed or thrive in their HE studies. MOI is also significant as an indicator of investment in previous education, in that many English MOI schools are either private or state schools with competitive entrance exams that may require tuition or at least the time and space at home to study. Having been educated in English therefore gives further indication of the foundation for HE laid by previous schooling.

Private versus public schooling

Most of the students in our study had attended private and/or government schools. Over 50% of students at the case colleges had attended private school across all four periods of schooling (classes 1-5, primary; classes 6-8, lower secondary; classes 9-10, upper secondary; classes 11-12, high school), peaking at 66.5% for classes 6-8 (i.e. lower secondary school). The lowest proportion was 57.1% for classes 11-12. This was also noted for SiDC, where enrolment in private school was lowest for high school at 22.9%. This may represent parents only having resources for a limited period of private schooling (perhaps affected by the arrival of other siblings), or be based on notions of

government schooling quality being higher for high school. It is noteworthy that the majority of SiDC students had studied at government schools, reflecting the lower socio-economic status of students' families, and also potentially different investments and strategies relating to children's education. While girls and boys started off with close to the same proportion of pupils in government and private schools, a split opened up in the latter three educational periods, where the proportion of boys in private school increased, while the proportion of girls in government schools increases. It appears from these results that girls may be transferred out of private education into government schools, with the reverse being true for boys, which seems to reflect gendered investment in schooling. Furthermore it should be noted that, although all of these respondents had 'succeeded' educationally, in that they had all accessed higher education, there is a stark gender difference in terms of parental investment in education. There seems to be a gendered pattern where daughters are enrolled in government schools, and more sons are enrolled in private schools which are more expensive and considered to provide higher quality education. Because of this, there is also a gendered disparity in terms of the type of educational preparation (for example Medium of Instruction) that students received in their schooling histories. There is also a caste dimension to the split between government and private schooling. There is a stepped effect for each period of schooling, with a marked increase in proportion of pupils attending government schools as the social disadvantage of the caste groups increases. These results may show some preference for state systems for more marginalised groups, but it is likely that these results are based on the financial capabilities and restrictions for different groups.

Schooling pathways

The majority of students in our study had stayed in the same school type throughout their education. For those who had changed school type, the most common was to be enrolled in one type for one period, and the other type for three periods, such as starting in private and changing to government for the remaining periods, or spending three periods in private and switching to government for high school. A minority of students had switched schooling type multiple times. Schooling pathways are a gendered phenomenon. More girls than boys started and remained in government schools throughout, more girls than boys changed between schooling pathways, and fewer girls than boys started and remained in private education throughout. This could reflect the tendency of parents to invest more in their sons' education, with daughters' education perhaps more likely to reflect changes in family fortune and considerations about return on investment. We also know from the siblings analysis that daughters are more likely to be succeeded by sons and indeed further daughters, the arrival of which may affect family educational planning. Broadly speaking, the more privileged caste group students were in, the higher the likelihood of starting and remaining in private school; changing school is also less likely for more privileged groups, and starting and remaining in government schools is less likely. The reverse is true for more marginalised groups. Stability in schooling is the preserve of the most and least privileged. The schooling pathways reveal substantial discrepancies relating to caste and gender, when schooling pathways lay the foundation for students accessing HE. It should be remembered that these are the students who have accessed HE through its most accessible form - namely, government colleges. We might expect to see heightened inequalities for more expensive and competitive forms of higher education.

Location of previous school

There was limited evidence of feeder schools for these colleges. An important figure to note is that over 40% of students across the three colleges had attended their previous school in the same town as their college, meaning that a high proportion of students had attended a college in a place with which they were already familiar. Beyond the towns in which the colleges were located, there were

1.26

no school locations with a substantial proportion of respondents. This reflects the contexts of the case colleges as being located in small urban centres, with relatively dispersed rural communities surrounding them. For SiDC, which was situated on the edge of a smaller urban centre, there were higher concentrations in surrounding villages. Across the 3 colleges, a total of 58 students (including 35 from SiDC) had attended their previous school in the same location as their place of residence. While we cannot assume that these students did not study in other locations in earlier periods of schooling, it is possible that, prior to attending college, some students in our study sample had not attended educational institutions away from their home location. This may have significance for educational choices at higher education level, as students who have previously occupied a relatively small geographical area in their educational and life trajectories may be less likely to consider opting for a higher education option that is further away.

2.7   Geographical factors

Accommodation status

The vast majority of students (over 95%) across the three colleges were living at home, at their permanent address. This is important for our analysis of HE decision-making processes, as the students were making decisions about HE at home, knowing that they would then stay at home during their studies. The vast majority of students lived with their parent/s (more than 95%). Of those few who lived with others, this included living with other relatives, other students and living in the marital home. The majority of students had not enrolled in a college that would necessitate leaving their parental home. The qualitative data reveal insights into students' lives as they live at home and make decisions about their futures – including who does the housework (the student? Or the student is free to study?) and family farm work, where students can study (in shared spaces?), and who is present in the house when decisions are made (other relatives apart from parents?). The qualitative data also reveal strong relationships between students and their parents, based on freedom of action, trust and support.

Proximity of residence to college (distance)

The vast majority of all respondents across the three colleges resided in the same district as the college. Only 12 respondents from the entire sample did not reside in the same district. All of the students not residing in the same district as their college resided in neighbouring districts or states which bordered onto the colleges' districts. For those studying at the colleges but residing in other districts or states, there was no gender element, but it is notable that 7 of these respondents were from the Non-SC/ST/OBC caste group, which could reveal a tendency for more privileged students to exercise more choice with wider horizons. The catchment area for each college is less than 100km x 70km. MDC shows the largest catchment area, followed by SDC and SiDC.

Figure 2.5 Map showing the districts in which respondents resided
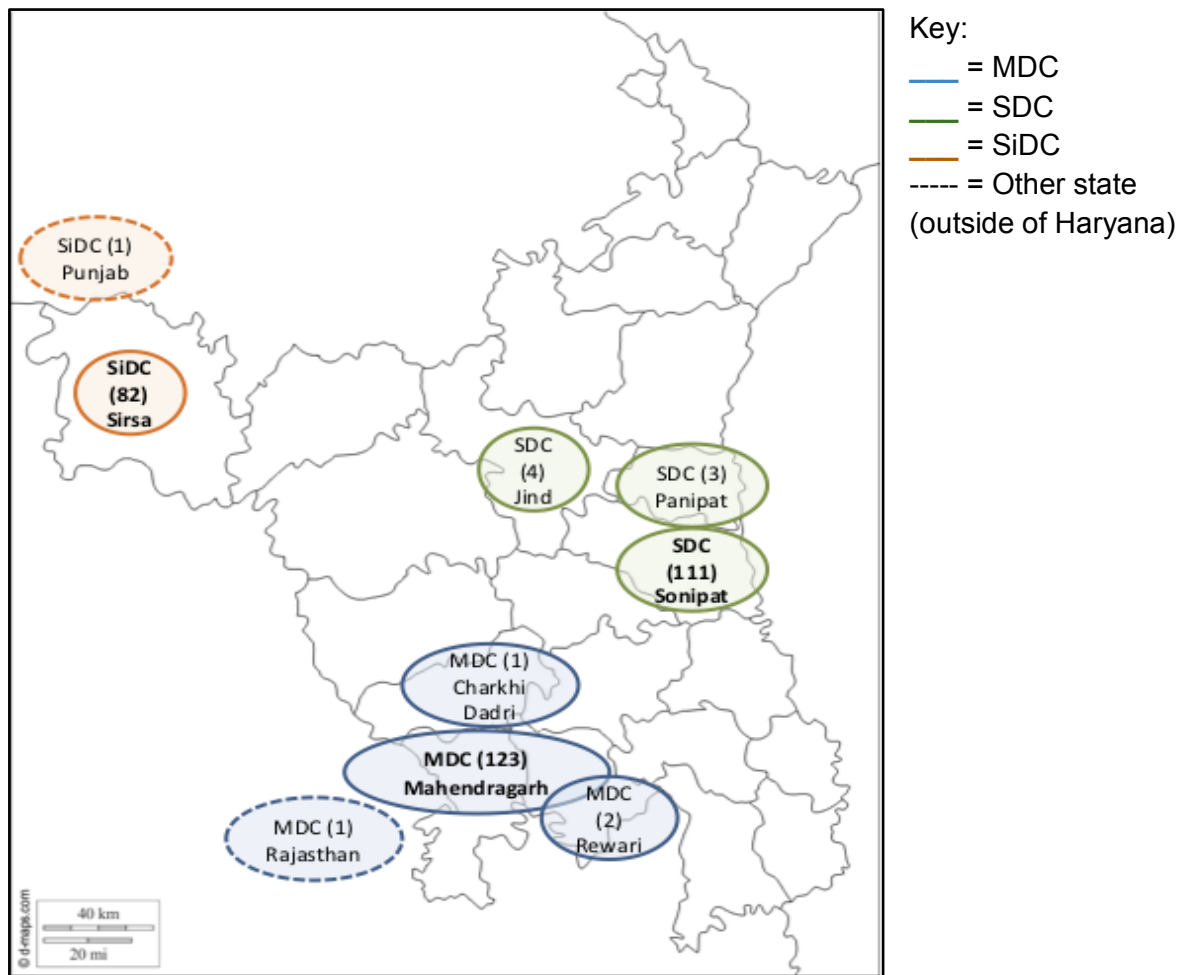
Proximity of residence to college (time)

The commute to college was in general relatively short, with the mean travel time for all 3 colleges being less than 50 minutes. The mean travel time for MDC was c. 15 minutes longer than for SDC, as shown also in the larger catchment area. The travel time for SiDC lay between that of MDC and SDC, reflecting the nature of the catchment area, where students live within relative but not immediate proximity to the college. The range of journey times is large, varying from 5 minutes to over an hour. It is important to take the commute time into consideration because the families in the study had selected the college based on its commutability. Commutability is itself a relative concept so it is important to take into consideration this value of <1 hour when exploring reasons for the choice of college, for example. Across the case colleges, men travelled for an average of about 15 minutes longer than women to reach the colleges, with women's average travel time being under 30 minutes, though this is not carried through to SiDC. This is a further important consideration when exploring gendered access to HE for commuter students, as there are different standards for acceptable distance and/or directness of transport links for young women and men. When we explore time to college by caste group, in each case the mean duration of journey to college is lowest for students from the Non-SC/ST/OBC caste groups and highest for SC groups. This could be attributed to a number of factors, such as SC students having less access to direct and personalised transport means. Students with a longer journey to college have less time for study and other activities, and

may also be subject to greater delays or non-attendance due to transport issues, depending on mode of transport.

Mode of transport used to access college

Most students in our study access their college by bus (potentially in combination with other means of transport). This ranges from about 50% at the case colleges up to over 80% at SiDC. We know from the qualitative data that this may include private bus services (e.g. run from villages by the village residents) as well as state services, for which students can obtain a pass. The popularity of the bus as a mode of transport adds further nuance to the question of whether students are accessing colleges that are closer to home and/or on direct transport links. Buses were reputedly often late, or were cancelled, or terminated the service midway, and that they were very full. The students noted that their attendance at college was directly impacted by the unreliability of the bus service. Many students also included walking in their journeys to college, again around 50% for the case colleges (but lower for SiDC). For SiDC, walking and using a bike were in equal second place. Bike was also relatively popular in the case college at c. 20%, with rickshaws being used by c. 15% of respondents. Reflecting the small catchment areas of the colleges, and the unavailability of train travel to most locations in the district, only 3 respondents took the train to reach the college, with no students from SiDC using the train. Many fewer students had access to more privileged modes of transport such as being dropped off at college by a family member (11 respondents from the case colleges; 2 from SiDC) or using a personal car (4 respondents; none from SiDC). Some students used a tractor or a scooter to travel to college. For the scooter, this may be considered a solution as a low-cost but rapid form of personal transport, but there are also issues of being hassled by boys on the journey. These findings must be taken into consideration in combination with the travel time to college. If transport time to the college needs to be under one hour in order to be 'commutable', and the main forms of transport are either dependent on transit routes and schedules (bus) or slower (walking, bike), then the calculation that families are making on the commutability of a college is significantly affected by these limitations.

When exploring the modes of transport by gender, it emerges that, while bus is the most popular form of transport for the whole sample, walking is the most common mode of transport for women. This may reflect the fact that women are choosing to attend a college that is within walking distance, and/or that families find walking safer than the bus, due to the known problems of over-crowding and women-directed harassment on buses. Men students' higher use of the bus may reflect the larger catchment area for men students as well as a lack of concern about taking public transport in terms of safety. More men use a bike to reach college. All three students who noted that they took the train were men; while the numbers are too small to draw clear conclusions, it is important to consider that a college may not be considered 'commutable' for a women student if the journey involves train travel, given that train travel implies that the distance is greater from home. At the case colleges, walking was more common for Non-SC/ST/OBC caste groups and less common for SC groups, possibly due to the more rural dwellings of SC students. However this was reversed for SiDC. SC students were more likely to take the bus than Non-SC/ST/OBC students across all 3 colleges, possibly reflecting SC students' restricted use of other forms of transport due to location and cost. The students being dropped off were limited to Non-SC/ST/OBC and BCB groups. Students taking the train, on the other hand were limited to SC and BCA groups. Students having access to a personal family car were in Non-SC/ST/OBC group and BCA. Overall the main finding relating to caste was that the bus is very important to SC students. This means that, when making decisions about HE, it is possible that access

to a bus route would enter into the picture strongly – which must be combined with our knowledge that the bus is also considered undesirable for women.

Journey to college

The more in-depth picture of the journeys was captured by the interviews. While some journeys were quite straightforward, it was also clear that some participants (particularly in rural areas) faced journeys which were complex, unreliable and even dangerous. The women participants facing long walks alone as part of their commute did not seem to have solutions in place for preventing these issues, but rather relied on retrospective action of parents. These issues are important to consider as reports of issues that others face on the commute, and fear of anticipated danger on the commute, are taken into account during the HE decision-making process.

Figure 2.6 Walking to college in Haryana

3. How and why are students accessing HE in government colleges in Haryana, India? How is this gendered and/or influenced by other intersecting factors?

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3.1 Why do some students not apply for HE? Presenting the views of students in our study

Social environment factors

Few young people were aware of wider social environment factors that would affect access to HE. Those who mentioned these factors referred to the poor implementation of interventions, including corruption issues, and also named some interventions which were perceived to be more effective, such as 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' and computer centres/classes.

Community factors

Community factors affecting access to HE were portrayed as relating to a traditional or village (i.e. rural) mentality. This was perceived to be both exacerbated and challenged by media representations which either increased fears about women's safety or displayed role model figures for women. One of the aspects of community factors includes the **low valuation of HE** in Haryana societies. This particularly applied to young men, where employment was valued and HE was seen as potentially a waste of time. Participants inferred that there was something of an anti-intellectual spirit in Haryana, with sports and the army valued above formal educational attainment. A second community factor related to **gender conservatism**. Gender conservatism included restrictions on young women's appearance and behaviour, as well as a high degree of surveillance and control over their movements. Young men were seen as having more freedom e.g. in going out in the evening, with women constantly monitored and questioned. Gender conservatism also set an ideal early age for women's marriage, meaning that access to HE was seen as delaying marriage – a delay which some families were unwilling to permit. Moreover the fears for a woman's honour getting damaged led to decisions not to delay marriage. Finally, because investment in young women is still perceived as benefiting the in-laws instead of the birth family, there was a perception that young women were not permitted to access HE as class 12 was considered sufficient. The final factor identified in this set of community factors relates to **caste-based prejudice**. There was little discussion of caste in the study, but students identified caste-based prejudice occurring at college from classmates, family and community members and teachers. This can be inferred to pertain to previous educational experiences as well as experiences of admission (which are also reflected in the literature).

HE-transport nexus

The HE-transport nexus was identified as a barrier to HE. This was due to the combined geographical distribution of HEIs and of public transport services. For students who were depending on public

transport to reach colleges that were at some distance from their houses, there were various issues such as the college being far from the bus stand, villages not being served by buses, and the bus arriving full, arriving late, terminating the service mid-route or not arriving. Gendered issues included boys having to sit on the bus roof and girls experiencing harassment on the buses. Public transport and a sparse distribution of HEIs were therefore a barrier both in terms of not being able to access a college and in terms of fueling safety concerns preventing some families from permitting their daughters to apply for college.

Institutional factors

Institutional factors preventing access to HE included the reputedly poor quality of colleges, including teacher quality, poor toilet facilities, lack of hostel facilities. However, a stronger institutional factor pertained to the college 'environment' (*mahaul*). This included colleges having a reputation for cheating and fraud in admissions and exams. There was also a strongly gendered aspect to environment, as attending a college with a poor reputation could in turn incur reputational risk to the young woman and her family. Reputational risk was attached to colleges which were reputed for romance as well as for 'loafing boys' who would hang around the college and pass comments. The effect of reputational risk was to push some families to choose a college that was further from home, but for students where the choice was between attending the nearest college or no HE, this became a solid impediment to accessing HE. Co-educational colleges were in themselves associated with reputational risk due to the presence of young men. One of the college representative interviews included the perspective that the solution of opening more single-gender colleges would not challenge the gender conservatism that lies at the root of women's differential access to HE.

Family factors

Families were seen as barriers to HE access for a number of reasons. This included a lack of financial and emotional support. **Financial barriers** were cited as a family-related barrier. This was due to general socio-economic disadvantage, but also due to specific circumstances, where the offspring had to leave formal education early and seek employment. Circumstances included family unemployment, ill health of family members and alcoholism in the family. HE was considered unaffordable for many families, because of the direct costs such as fees and travel costs. The **pressure to earn** was also cited as a family-related barrier. This was associated with the foregone earnings caused by taking longer to complete education. It was considered that families were unable and/or reluctant to spare their children's labour for any longer than class 12. Young people were helping out at home with managing the household and contributing to income-generating activities. This was particularly an issue for young men, who were expected to contribute to the household economy, including contributing to siblings' wedding and education costs. **Marriage** affected young women at this stage of education, as there was a social perception that class 12 was sufficient education for young women. Once married, women then struggled to access HE as they were dependent on being granted this opportunity – and the time to study – by their in-laws. It was perceived that young married women were burdened with domestic duties and/or enrolled in other courses or jobs, according to the in-laws' preferences.

Family and individual overlapping factors

A further set of barriers affecting access to HE was where family and individual factors overlapped. Firstly, both individuals and their families **lacked information and understanding of HE options and admissions processes**, meaning that there was a lack of guidance. Secondly, **other education**

options were selected instead of HE; these choices represented decisions taken by young people and their families, often based on family pressure to earn sooner by taking a shorter and/or more practical course. This issue seemed to be more prevalent for young men. Thirdly, and again often due to family pressure and/or a sense of responsibility for the family, young people **chose to seek a job** instead of applying for HE. This seemed to be rooted in the anti-intellectual culture and low valuation of HE.

Individual factors

There were two factors which could be classified as individual factors, though with caution as our sociological analysis situates these factors against a backdrop of socio-economic disadvantage. Firstly, **low marks achieved in class 12** was cited as a major barrier to accessing HE. Secondly, a **lack of interest in further studies** – and/or having other priorities – were also cited as motivating young people to opt for other trajectories.

3.2   Why do students apply for HE?

HE as the obvious choice

From the qualitative data there was some evidence of students attending HE because it was the obvious thing to do, which is perhaps surprising when they do not come from families with a history of HE. However, it is possible that the high proportion of peers and siblings attending HE meant that HE had become the obvious option.

Family and personal motivations

Students also referred to family-related motivations for attending HE, such as the family expecting a student to attend HE, wishing to support parents in their old age, and contributing to the upward social mobility of the family. Students discussed the general purpose of HE as contributing to personal development, in terms of being more educated and potentially more successful.

Employment related motivations

Students considered that an undergraduate degree would boost their employability, as it was considered preferable to employers, and that it would lead to a good job and higher salary. A degree would also improve the entry point for job applications e.g. for government jobs. Graduating was thus seen by some as a hurdle to clear before they could apply for the jobs they wished to do. Students in our study expressed general employability-related motivations for attending HE, but others had planned a specific trajectory in order to qualify for a specific job (e.g. teacher, self-employed business owner). A degree was also seen as a fall-back option which could lead to other career options if they failed to gain admission into their preferred option (e.g. police service).

Gender-related motivations for women

Students discussed that attending HE was a way for women to pass the time before getting married, or on the other hand it was a way to actively delay getting married. Having a degree was also considered a means of enhancing marriageability in terms of finding a prospective groom, as this is

desirable in an era when young men are also more highly educated. Students also discussed the benefit of HE for young women to set a trend for other girls in the family to be educated. They also discussed the fact that HE can lead to students becoming more confident and independent.

3.3   Who encourages and supports students in applying for HE?

Sources of encouragement and support

Students were encouraged and supported to enrol in HE by: mother, father, sister/s, brother/s, other relatives, school teachers, seniors, neighbours, elders, college teachers, government workers, Aanganvadi workers, friends. Some students indicated that they had taken this decision alone. There is very little mention of outside organisations (governmental or NGOs) in terms of their influence in young people's HE trajectories, with the exception of formal mechanisms, principally schools.

Figure 3.1 People influencing students to apply for Higher Education
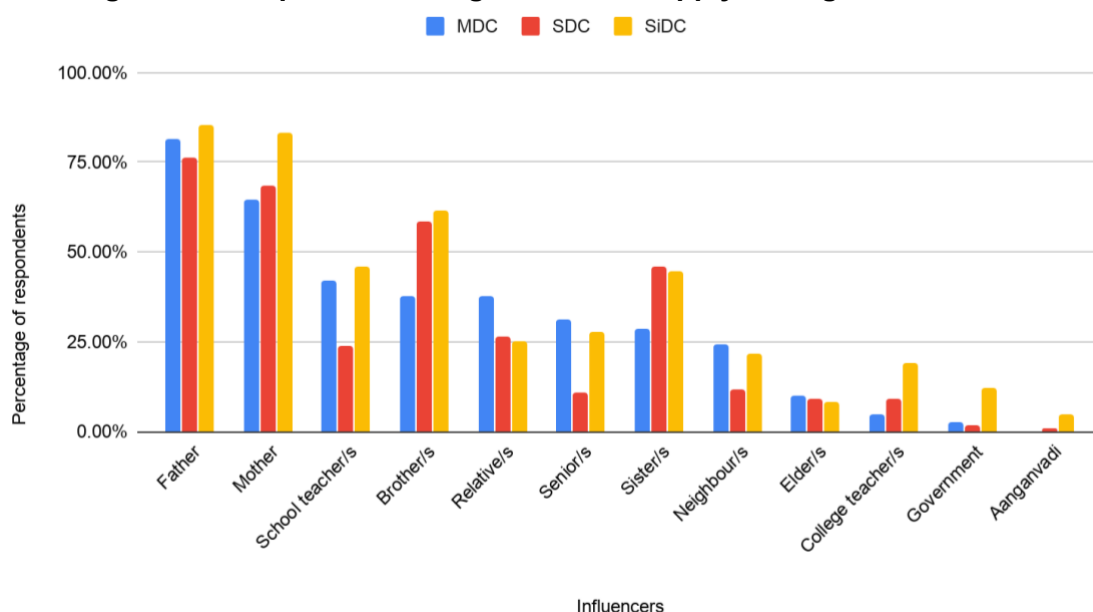
Immediate family

Immediate family is clearly extremely important. For the most part, the immediate family is ranked by gender, from father to mother to brother to sister. This holds true for the most part across gender groups and caste groups. It is important to note the centrality of the parents and the other siblings to the decision to apply for higher education, so any widening participation drive should consider how to tap into family decision-making processes in addition to targeting potential applicants. It is important to note that, though close family members were cited as important sources of encouragement and support for the decision to apply to HE, these families were mostly first generation HE entrants, so may not have been fully equipped with knowledge to advise on options. Further research is needed on the form that the influence takes, and the extent to which the influence involves participatory discussion between family members or instructions from more powerful to less powerful family members.

Parents

Parents were referred to by participants as a unit, invoking for example a family ethos with regards to educational opportunities. Parents had often not availed of educational opportunities and were keen to ensure that their offspring accessed the opportunities they had missed. There were examples of parents interacting with other actors (e.g. neighbours, college principal) who were encouraging or discouraging them to grant their children permission to attend HE. It is important to consider parents as social actors whose decisions are embedded in local contexts with associated beliefs and assumptions about the meaning of HE. In addition to being portrayed as a family unit, parents also have different roles and are also recognised differently by their sons and daughters. For daughters, mothers were equally or almost equally cited as being influential. For sons, fathers were cited more commonly as influential than mothers (with the exception of SiDC, where they were equal). There is also a caste-group dimension here, where students from Non-SC/ST/OBC group were more likely to list their mother and father, perhaps due to higher levels of education among mothers of this group. If an HE intervention targets parents, it is important to take into consideration these patterns of influence. In the qualitative data, mothers were considered potentially more approachable than fathers. There was an example of a mother who had attended college and been very successful, but was married soon after and prevented from achieving her professional ambitions, so she was very supportive of her son's aspiration to attend college too. Fathers were referred to as being supportive, but were also discussed as being the decision-makers in the family who are potentially vulnerable to being dissuaded to permit their children (in particular daughters) to attend HE. It is clear that parents are extremely important in facilitating access to HE, but that the nature and form of influence is worthy of further exploration.

Siblings

Siblings were extremely important in influencing the decision to apply for HE, though caution is needed as it is possible that students were in places referring to 'brothers' and 'sisters' in the wider, community, sense of the term. Women students were more likely to be influenced by their siblings than men students. Brothers were cited more frequently than sisters, for both men and women students. This finding is somewhat surprising, as we might have expected to find that sisters influenced their sisters to apply, and likewise brothers with their brothers, given the gendered life pathways of women and men in Haryana. Given the prevalence of sisters, particularly older sisters, we may have expected to see a greater role for sisters, though any older sisters who had married at that time would in general not be living in the family home, so may have less direct involvement. We may also point to gendered norms that could lead students to not recognise the role of their sisters in their higher education trajectory, so it is also important to recognise that the findings report on the people that students *perceived* to have been influential in their decision to apply. Sisters' educational experiences and career choices were important to their younger siblings. Brothers were referred to in the same way, giving specific advice about HE options. This demonstrates the need to differentiate between different types of influence, ranging from basic/emotional support and encouragement, to informed support and encouragement.

Other family members

Beyond the close family members, other relatives seemed to be less important in terms of encouragement and support to apply for HE, though still at least 25% of participants across gender/college groups cited other relatives as having been influential. Grandparents lent their

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grandchildren support in terms of encouraging them to study (due to their own lack of opportunities) and ensuring their duties (e.g. farm work) were taken care of. Aunts and uncles also featured, with an aunt (a teacher) acting as a source of guidance to her niece and her niece's friend, with her son also helping out, and an uncle acting as a role model and providing an opening for experiencing life and work beyond school before entering college. Cousins were mentioned as sources of information and also as a role model (a college teacher). The relative paucity of accounts of extended family members' influence here is indicative of students' close relationship with their nuclear families and the strong influence of their close family members on their decision to apply for HE.

Other actors

Other actors featured less in students' educational trajectories, with the exception of schoolteachers and seniors, and to a lesser extent neighbours. These actors were more influential for the college where more choice was being exercised, particularly for women (MDC). At SiDC, schoolteachers and also college teachers were commonly cited in student interviews as influential – our fieldwork conversations showed that there were informal 'outreach' networks operating in that area. College teachers barely featured in the survey analysis. This seems to indicate a lack of 'widening participation' and 'outreach' activities and networks, whether informal or formal, and would be a vital area for further exploration.

Neighbours tended to be more influential for men students, perhaps in part because women may avoid discussing with neighbours due to neighbourhood surveillance. Only Non-SC/ST/OBC group students had included Aanganvadi workers. School teachers were represented as a positive influence, particularly where there had been one teacher who supported students to apply for HE. On the other hand, teachers were evoked as giving generic encouragement as opposed to more detailed information about HE options. This highlights the difference between general support and encouragement and specific guidance, with different types of support appreciated and expected from different actors. In terms of potential strategic target areas for future intervention, school teachers are already well-established sites of influence, but a culture of outreach would need to be created to develop a conduit between college teachers and the community and/or schools to open paths of access to higher education.

Peer-group influence

In the student interviews, we also explored the HE options that students' peers had taken after high school, in order to explore their 'reference group'. Most of the students' peers had enrolled in HE of some kind, including the same college, colleges in nearby districts, other districts in Haryana and cities beyond including Delhi and Jaipur. Others were referred to as having obtained government jobs, including the army, or taking coaching to work towards jobs. Others were already working in family businesses or on the farm. Some were 'sitting at home' – particularly women were referred to in this way – unless they had already been married. For classmates who were unable to continue with studies, this was attributed to poverty and family circumstances, marriage, gender restrictions on attending college for women and the availability of other options (e.g. family business). Dropout was mentioned as an issue for men students – one participants' classmates had joined the same college but had left the college after one year.

3.4   How do students choose their college?

College choice as opportunity or compromise

We have tried to understand what makes students choose government colleges when they otherwise would not have been able to choose any college (i.e. access to HE via government colleges as an *opportunity* to pursue HE), and secondly what makes some students choose government colleges when they could have chosen other colleges based on their grades, for example (i.e. access to HE via government colleges as a *compromise*). Students in the study had limited access to information and guidance about HE choices, but they were aware of the other options that could have existed, and of the status of their college and degree in comparison with more elite forms of HE. For many, attending the local government college represented a compromise of their aspirations. For many students, when they seriously approached taking admission for an HE course, the local college was the only option. Students in the sample also referred to a lack of personal choice in the decision-making process, in that their college had been chosen for them.
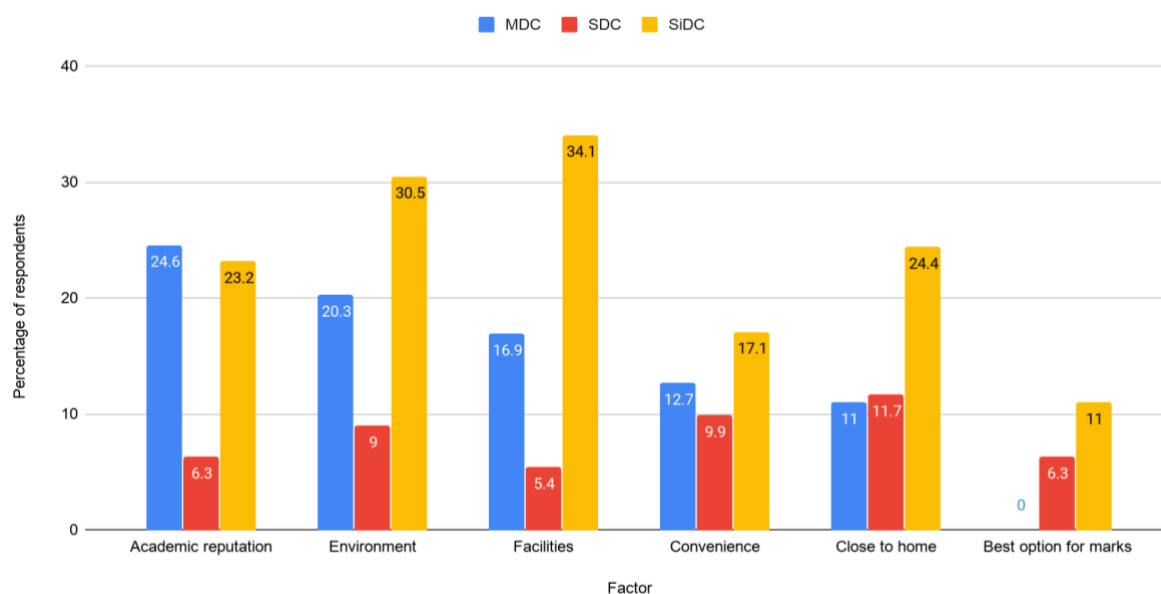
Motivations for college choice

The qualitative data gave rich insights into students' motivations for studying at the government colleges. Firstly, students had selected colleges based on their **reputation**. This related to their reputation as government colleges (as opposed to private colleges), as they were seen to be more correct (i.e. less corruption). As government colleges, they were also perceived to have a good standard of teaching. Reputation was also a gendered phenomenon, as some colleges were perceived as having bad reputations based on harassment from men students. This would have made attending these colleges a risky move for women, who relied on their parents trusting them to attend college without incident in order to stay within the HE system. Returning to the earlier discussion of neighbours intervening (in the parents' influence section) and of daughters being kept at home after school completion (in the peer group analysis), attending a college with this reputation can be understood as highly undesirable for a young woman. Some students had also chosen their college based on it being 'easier' than e.g. more selective colleges, and on the standard of the college being unimportant for undergraduate study. Secondly, a clear motivation for choosing government colleges was on the **financial basis** of the fees and extra costs being low for these colleges. This was a major factor for students at these colleges. Thirdly, students were motivated to choose their college through **active and passive recommendation**. Active recommendation was where e.g. family members (perhaps a sibling who had attended the college) directly recommended that they enroll in the college. In other cases, a more passive strategy was followed of choosing the same college as friends or others in the village. Fourthly, many students cited the fact that the college was **'close to home'** as a major motivation. However this was a complex factor as it comprised many different aspects. The notion of 'outside' (*bahar*) was deployed here, as a subjective marker which relates to distance as well as in part to commutability. For some families, 'outside' refers to anywhere outside the direct place of residence, and for others this refers to a college that necessitates taking accommodation elsewhere. Thus, for some families, MDC and SDC were themselves 'outside' (and thus inaccessible), and for others these colleges were not considered 'outside', or were less 'outside' than others (so were preferable). For some students at the colleges, not having gone 'outside' for college was seen as a compromise of their aspirations. One aspect of 'close to home' involved commutability within financial restrictions, where going 'outside' was costly in terms of transport fees (for a long daily commute) or a hostel (for a non-commutable college). It was considered that a long commute was

wasteful of time and resources, and this also reduced the potential for students to contribute to the household economy after college hours. Taking a hostel was considered too expensive by students' families. 'Close to home' was also a gendered notion, as women students had to negotiate (and extend) the boundaries of 'outside' (and 'inside') to accommodate college education. This involved a generational shift from school completion within the near vicinity to attending a college further away. This was already seen by some relatives and parents as inappropriate. Young women were under pressure to meet the conditions of their families for attending HE – to maintain the family's honour. Men students were seen as more free to attend HE 'outside' (and further 'outside' too), and this was also seen as a family priority in order to enhance young men's career options. The qualitative data from individual student interviews revealed how these motivations were intertwined, combining different considerations according to different family situations and living conditions. It is vital to view the different motivations as interconnected – one motivation set cannot be singled out for an intervention, for example, as the students should be viewed in terms of their holistic motivations profile.

Motivations for college choice (variations between colleges)

Regarding motivations for college choice, there seemed to be a sense of the colleges having different profiles. For students at MDC, academic reputation, college environment and facilities were singled out. For SDC, distance from home was the most popular option, with convenience for travel and college environment following. This reflects the difference between MDC as a college which students are more actively choosing, and which has a larger catchment area, and SDC, which more students choose as the default option because it is close to home. At SiDC, facilities and environment were the top factors. However, for SiDC it should be noted that this college was the only option for many students (even more so than the case colleges) and therefore the process of choice and decision-making implied by this question and these findings should be treated with caution. Overall this analysis shows the extent to which student populations in equivalent institutions vary. For women at MDC, distance from home and convenience of travel barely featured as motivational factors, and rather women had chosen MDC as it was the best option for their marks, indicating the active choice women had taken to attend this college. For men students at MDC, the academic reputation was the most popular motivational factor. This reflects a pattern across the colleges of men students being more preoccupied with reputation, though this may be linked with the expectations of masculinity. At SDC, women's top factors were distance from home, environment, convenience of travel. For men students, SDC seemed to simply be the default choice, though academic reputation also featured in their survey responses. For SiDC, the academic reputation of the college features more highly for men respondents than women. Women and men students do not necessarily share the same motivations for choosing the college, which should be borne in mind for interventions, particularly given the socially inscribed gender norms which underpin some of these decisions.

Figure 3.2 Factors influencing the final decision to enrol in the chosen college

Sources of information consulted for college choice

When students were asked which sources of information they had used to inform their choice of college, parents played a less important role than for encouragement and support to apply to HE. School teachers, seniors and siblings were commonly cited as sources of HE information. It is clear from this analysis that *informed guidance* was sought from others who had experience of HE, alongside or even instead of parents. College teachers did not feature highly. Newspaper and web did not feature highly, though most for MDC. Students were not accessing information about the college directly from the college. Fathers still featured highly for women and men students alike, though less than in relation to support and encouragement. Mothers were cited as sources of information by few students, even less so for men than women. This reflects the role of mothers as sources of aspiration but not necessarily of information, which may be attributable to their lower level of education. Brothers were very commonly cited as sources of information for both men and women students (bearing in mind that this may not refer to siblings but to community 'brothers'). Sisters were ranked higher than brothers for women students, presumably as they provided sources of information on how to negotiate accessing HE as a daughter. Brothers were also influential for women students, but sisters were not reported as influential for men students (with the exception of SDC). Seniors and school teachers played a strong role for both women and men at MDC – presumably due to their active choice to attend this college – and similarly at SiDC, where accessing HE was not a given in the local community. This was less the case at SDC, perhaps because SDC was simply the obvious college choice, so external sources of advice may have been less important. Newspaper information was accessed by men and women at MDC, but less so in the other colleges. Web information was accessed by few students, but more so by men than women, suggesting young men may have more access to e.g. internet cafes than women. College teachers were referred to as a source of information by few students, but even fewer men than women. The colleges were referred to by few students as sources of information about college choice – in terms of direct contact with college teachers and with information in the newspapers or on websites. We were unable to obtain substantial or indeed any recent documentation from the colleges with promotional and/or informational material, as this was not available. It was clear that the colleges were not engaging in active marketing strategies, in part because they have a somewhat guaranteed intake, and because there is no or a limited culture of

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outreach. The college representatives confirmed this. At MDC, they do engage in newspaper publicity (as reflected in the students' survey responses). They also engage in indirect communication with communities – particularly with regard to women's access to HE – by encouraging current students to support others to apply for HE. However they do not go to these communities themselves as part of a formal programme. It was observed in the semi-structed interviews with students, especially in SDC that SDC was the only college they considered as this was the only college which was geographically accessible to them. Similar sentiments could be inferred from the catchment area mapped for SiDC, most of whose students were from the villages surrounding this rural college.

3.5   How do students choose their HE course?

Figure 3.3 Government College in Haryana

Own choice of course

The vast majority of the students in our study said that they had chosen their own course. However, it should also be noted that the notion of 'choosing one's own course' is layered with notions of individual agency, whereas we know from the literature and from the above analysis that the choice of course is embedded in layered processes of decision-making by multiple stakeholders, over many years. For example, for women the choice of subject was often restricted in a previous education stage through their enrolment in a school without a science curriculum.

Motivations for course choice

The top motivations for course choice (coded from the free text responses on the survey) for the case colleges combined were: 34.9% of respondents identified a link with career (specific); 26% of respondents identified own interest in subject; another 26% of respondents did not specify their preference; 10.2% of respondents felt that this course was required for success/personal development; and 9.3% of respondents linked their course with employment (general). For SiDC, the top motivations were slightly different. 40.3% of respondents cited their own interest in subject; 20.8% of respondents had linked their course with career (specific); another 20.8% of respondents did not specify their preference; 13.9% of respondents linked their course with employment (general); 8.3% of respondents identified the college as their reason; 8.3% of respondents shared that they chose this course as they had the same subjects in school. To explore the motivations for course choice in more detail, they were separated into 6 themes. **Unspecified preference**, where students had expressed a general preference for the course without a more specific explanation. **Specific subject reasons**, where students had chosen subjects that were easy for them or that they knew they could pass, where

students had studied these subjects in school and wanted to continue and where students chose their course because they were interested in the subjects. However, these reasons should be read against the backdrop of the course hierarchy, with Sciences at the top, followed by Commerce, followed by Arts, and which cannot be separated from students' interests and choices. **Employability.** Students had chosen their course either because it would lead to a particular job or sector, or had chosen the course because they thought it would enhance their employability more generally. **Future planning/aspiration.** Students chose their courses because they would assure their personal development and/or future success, because they would lead to further study and/or coaching for entrance examinations, and because they wanted to contribute to the development of the country. **Active decision-making.** Some students had chosen their course because other options did not work out, so they had to arrive at a compromise option. **Other actors.** Parents, siblings, other relatives and teachers advised – or in some cases pressured – students to apply for certain courses. Exploring the motivations for course choice within the more holistic picture of the students who participated in the individual interviews, it is clear that most students had various interconnected reasons for choosing their courses.

3.6   How do students experience the admissions process?

Admissions as a challenging process

Our study shows that it is necessary to explore the admissions process as a step in how students access HE in government colleges, as this process is experienced as highly daunting and complex by many students, due to the multiple steps and lack of guidance. The process was acknowledged to be more streamlined than before, due to online forms, online banking, computer provision in and near to the college.

Assistance with admissions

Students were assisted during the admissions process by different actors, including members of the community who had graduated. Some students had gone to the college alone for admissions. Others had not gone to the college at all, but rather another member of their family had completed admissions for them. An applicant is vulnerable to decisions being taken for them (or her, if this is a gendered phenomenon), if the applicant is not physically present during the admissions process.

Issues with admissions

A variety of issues were raised about the admissions process. The lack of step-by-step advice was noted, and applicants had had to physically go to the college to try to understand the process. However, within the college, the administrative staff had not been welcoming or helpful. Filling in the form in the college computing facilities was deemed to be a good idea, but it seemed that this opportunity had not been made clear to applicants. Issues with the admissions process had been more serious for some applicants, for whom access to HE had potentially been jeopardised by issues with accessing the admissions process. This was particularly an issue for young people from marginalised households (with parents and family members who had not accessed formal education) in marginalised areas (without internet shops), who faced higher costs for admission associated with hiring a 'helper' and paying for their own and the helper's travel expenses.

4. Conclusions

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This exploratory study has enabled us to analyse holistically young people's access to higher education via government colleges in Haryana, India. This is vitally important as the young people who formed the subject of this study are part of a huge wave of entrants to HE during the massification of HE in India. **Arguably to understand access to HE it is imperative to study the *frontiers of access* – i.e. colleges attended by students who would otherwise not access HE, and who have little or no HE history in their families.**

4.1 Who are the students accessing HE in government colleges in Haryana, India? How is this gendered and/or influenced by other intersecting factors?

Our study has painted the picture of young people accessing HE at the *frontiers of access* according to multiple dimensions. Young people were undertaking decisions about HE – and their HE studies – living at home in close family units, often living in close proximity to other family members. They were generally not yet married, but marriage plans were in progress. Multiple siblings were common, with daughters more commonly going through their education before their younger brothers. The young people were growing up in families where, in general, there was no history of accessing HE or in many cases higher levels of schooling from either parents or grandparents. Fathers had attained higher levels of education than mothers; marginalised caste groups tended to have accessed lower levels of education. The young people's mothers were mostly homemakers, irrespective of their educational attainment; fathers were employed in business, farming and labour, with more marginalised caste groups working in labour. Young people, men and women alike, were aspiring towards graduate-level jobs in finance, business and government sector. Most of the young people had received previous schooling from Hindi or Hindi-English medium schools, with more women and marginalised caste groups accessing secondary education in government, Hindi medium schools. Boys and Non-SC/ST/OBC caste group students were more likely to have begun and then stayed in private schooling throughout their secondary education. The students and their families were living in close proximity to the colleges they had chosen, with a commute of under one hour. They were accessing the college by bus and/or walking for the most part. There were issues with bus travel which negatively impacted on access to HE, as the bus routes and colleges were not always well connected, and there were harassment issues for women students on the bus (as well as when walking), which also affected whether other young women would be allowed to apply for HE.

In short, students accessing HE through government colleges in Haryana are living locally and are embedded in close family structures, and they aspire to receive education and gain employment in ways that are markedly different to their parents. Important gendered factors relate to differences between women and men in previous generations, where sons are following on from fathers and grandfathers with higher levels of education than mothers and grandmothers, meaning that young women are making more of a leap in their educational – and employment – aspirations. These findings are in general exaggerated for young people from marginalised caste groups.

4.2 How and why are students accessing HE in government colleges in Haryana, India? How is this gendered and/or influenced by other intersecting factors?

It was reported that students often did not continue their education after schooling due to a variety of reasons, including: the devaluation of HE, gender conservatism, distance and/or transport reasons, institutional reasons particularly related to college 'environment', family factors including financial barriers, pressure to earn and marriage, other factors such as lack of guidance or preference for direct employment or other education, and academic performance in school. Students had enrolled in HE because, for some it seemed the obvious next step, for others it related to family support or pressure or employment aspirations. For some young women, they were trying to delay marriage, pass time before marriage, or enhance their marriageability – or become role models in the community. Young people had been encouraged and supported to apply for HE predominantly by their parents, with siblings also playing a significant role, as well as seniors and school teachers. Young people had chosen their college either as their only opportunity to access HE or as a compromise choice due to other options being ruled out. Students chose their college on the basis of reputation (academic and moral), low fees, recommendation from others, proximity to home. Moral reputation and proximity to home were particularly important for young women. Young people were informed about college options again by fathers and siblings, but less so by mothers, and seniors and school teachers were also important. Very few students accessed web or newspaper information about college choice (and there was little available), mainly relying on word of mouth. Young people had chosen their course based on a range of factors, including employment reasons, personal interest in the subject and as a compromise because another course had not worked out. As the final stage of the HE access process, admissions was recognised as a challenging process, requiring assistance from those already experienced with the process. In the absence of assistance, admissions was identified as a point where marginalised students may not proceed to accessing HE.

To summarise, young people are making the decision to access HE with the knowledge of others around them not having this opportunity, or selecting other options; HE is not a given. The decision to access HE was taken within the family, with parents and siblings playing a vital role in both opening up and limiting HE choices. The colleges were barely involved in promoting access to HE for the young people, and decisions about the college and course were taken based on word of mouth information rather than information from the colleges or college teachers. Admissions was a challenging final hurdle to accessing HE. The process of applying to HE was gendered in a number of ways. Marriage factors affected women more, in that women are expected to marry younger than men, so there was more time pressure on women. HE was also seen as a risky endeavour in terms of young women's honour (and therefore the family's honour) being damaged by romantic relationships and/or sexual harassment at or *en route* to college. College choice was therefore more likely to be based on the college being close to home and/or with a safe reputation. Young men were more affected by the pressure to earn and contribute to the family economy (including sisters' weddings and siblings' education), whether via HE or instead of HE. Caste-related factors included some caste-based discrimination in colleges, which could act as a deterrent for future applicants from marginalised groups.

4.3 Final conclusions

The students in our study were undoubtedly accessing HE at the frontiers of access, in government colleges located in rural areas or small urban centres. They represent the new wave of students entering HE through the massification phase. While there were vast discrepancies in the sample between more and less privileged students, this is within a spectrum of disadvantage, as none of the students in our study were highly privileged. They all took the decision to apply for HE in a situation where classmates had not done so, but the majority had taken this decision based on word of mouth information and assumptions/beliefs about what HE is for and what it entails. Moreover, the decision had been taken within a close family structure where the elders of the family (including parents) had not attained HE or high school, so had limited personal experience of HE, but had a strong influence in the decision-making process.

From a gender perspective, it is easy to argue that HE access is fair due to gender parity statistics. However, it is important to recognise that young people's educational trajectories are gendered.

Young women are more likely to be sent to Hindi-medium, government schools, or to have a disrupted schooling trajectory where they start in private and are transferred to government. Their subject choices may be limited by their previous schooling, where Sciences may not have been offered. They are highly unlikely to have mothers and grandmothers who have attained HE or completed schooling, or who are working outside the home, so they have more ground to cover to negotiate access to HE and employment. They are more likely to be first in family to access higher levels of education due to the birth order resulting from son preference ('trying for a son'), so must be the first to negotiate the systems involved in HE access. Alternatively, they may be married before being able to access HE, or enrolled in a shorter course to enable earlier marriage. Their HE choices (college, subject) are not associated with future employment so are less likely to be prioritised in terms of family investment. Young women are holders of the family honour and reputation, and their HE access may be prevented or limited by this gender conservatism. College choice for young women is less likely to be determined based on class 12 mark or employment aspirations (as is the case for men), but rather involves seeking a college that is close to home and/or involves a direct commute, and that does not have a reputation for romantic relationships or sexual harassment. **As such, while *access to HE* is now held up as equitable in India, *HE choice* is limited for women.**

Young men are privileged in their families, but there are still gender issues to highlight and to address. Young men are under pressure from their families to contribute to the family economy, and also to set themselves up well professionally so they are ready for marriage. Because young men stay with their families even after marriage, they are seen as providers for old age and for their siblings. This leads to pressures to take shorter courses or obtain a job sooner, and students were often taking coaching classes for job applications alongside their HE studies; HE was somewhat devalued for young men. In communities where marriage was encouraged at or near to the legal minimum, this clashed with young men's HE trajectories. Young men were also making choices to attend HE close to home and at a commutable distance due to their family and household duties, and to avoid incurring extra expenses to their families. **As such, young men's *HE choice* needs to also be taken into consideration alongside the women's gender issues.**

Regarding other factors affecting HE access and choice, it was clear that the issues outlined above were exaggerated for more marginalised caste groups. For instance, previous educational levels (of

parents and grandparents) were lower, so students accessing HE were launching into a more unknown sphere, particularly young women. The financial situation of families would have been less secure based on the prevalence of labour as fathers' employment. Young people from marginalised caste groups were more likely to access previous education in Hindi-medium government schools, which led to restrictions on subject and HE choice regarding courses were offered in English. It is noteworthy that the BCA group (the more marginalised of the two OBC groups in Haryana) often emerged as similarly or even more disadvantaged than the SC groups, perhaps due to not accessing as many social mobility schemes as SC groups. There was some mention of caste discrimination occurring in colleges. It was more difficult to disentangle social class from caste as we did not take a measure of class as such, but it is clear from the study that most young people were aware of financial limitations on their educational trajectories, and on the pressure to earn (for young men) and either to leave the birth family for marriage or to earn briefly before doing so (for young women). The young people at the frontiers of access have clear limitations on their HE choices based on financial and related cultural factors.

For some students at the frontier of access, accessing HE in the nearest college to home was their *only* option to attend HE, and for others it was a *compromise* based on their options being restricted by financial and/or cultural factors. On this basis, one clear requirement here is to elevate the quality of educational provision in these key sites of localised HE provision. A second requirement is to provide young people and their families with more guidance about their HE options, so that young people are able to make informed choices about HE. Further support is needed for families and young women to guide young women's HE choices, with a noteworthy finding that young men and their families would also benefit from further support. This support would be beneficial for all young people, but would be most beneficial for marginalised caste groups, where families may have the least existing knowledge of the HE systems and processes.

5. Recommendations
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Our recommendations are based on a key study finding that, for some students government colleges represent their only opportunity to access higher education, while for other students these same colleges represent a restriction on choice and opportunity. Based on this fact, our recommendations target two outcomes:

- Where attending the nearest government college is currently the only opportunity for young people to access higher education, colleges should be accessible, safe and offering quality education provision.
- Where young people's higher education choices are limited to accessing the nearest government college due to financial, geographical and/or cultural factors, young people's choices need to be opened up so that they can maximise their potential.

5.1 The role of the government and the NGO sector

- State-funded educational schemes and interventions need to be sustainable and accountable, and should involve consultation with young people and different stakeholders in the community, connecting families, schools and colleges. Information about schemes should be disseminated widely in a variety of means, including directly to young people.
- The role of Aanganvadi workers (including relevant training) and other localised services such as village panchayats and khap panchayats should be joined up with schools and colleges to promote informed educational choices from an early age.
- The Department of Higher Education should further liaise with the Department of Transport and Infrastructure to consult on bus routes, bus stand locations and bus requirements for college access. Consultation with students and mapping of the catchment area are essential parts of this process.
- Further colleges should be considered where there are no colleges within an appropriate catchment area (1 hour of travel and/or 70-100km distant from students' homes).
- Colleges need to receive sufficient funding to recruit high quality teachers on permanent contracts, to maintain and develop facilities, and to develop a high quality offer for students (e.g. extra activities, prizes and bursaries).
- Information about higher education should be disseminated to community groups and to schools.
  - Families need to have access to readily available information about school choice and higher education choice (including subject choice) and employability options, and connecting these to envision educational trajectories for young people.
  - Positive messaging for consideration of and valuing of girls' educational trajectories should be included.
  - Messaging should also be included about the class 12 marks that are needed for accessing HE, so that families are in an informed position to act if there are concerns about young people's school progress.
  - Information should be included about costs of HE, including fees but also supplementary costs, as well as scholarships and bursaries (including of competitive HEIs which may be located further away).
  - Information should include guidance on transport options for students to reach colleges and suggestions for safe journey planning.

- o This information can be distributed through schools, community groups and directly from colleges.
- The NGO sector relating to education needs to be stimulated in Haryana.

5.2 The role of colleges

- Colleges should build a more public presence in their catchment areas, including going out to villages to increase understanding of higher education. College teachers should be more visible in local communities. Colleges need to engage with families more directly, through visits to communities and through guided visits of the colleges. When engaging with families, colleges need to be aware that parents have the ultimate say in young people's HE access, but that mothers and fathers as well as sisters and brothers have different roles and these need to be respected and explored. Young people accessing HE need both emotional as well as informed support from their families.
- Colleges should also open their doors to visits from families and young people.
- Colleges should liaise with schools to ensure that young people are receiving information directly. Colleges need to liaise with schools to ensure that the school-college transition is facilitated in an informed manner and that young people are aware of their options.
- Colleges should formalise the role of current students acting as ambassadors for the colleges in disseminating information about higher education in their communities and giving guided visits of the college.
- Colleges should engage in more active information and marketing campaigns via different channels, including via means that young people access (e.g. social media) as well as via means that family members access (e.g. newspaper, television, radio).
- Colleges should liaise with local internet providers (e.g. internet cafes) to ensure that young people applying to the colleges from these providers have access to current information. This is another opportunity for the involvement of current students as student ambassadors.
- Colleges should train any personnel involved in the admissions process to be informative and friendly to applicants.
- Colleges should provide step-by-step guidance on the admissions process and ensure this is available at schools, internet cafes and at the college itself, and available online.
- Some young people are making decisions about HE on their own. Colleges should be aware of this and again this is where college ambassadors could (in collaboration with schools) work with individuals on their college applications.

5.3 The role of schools

- Schools should work with colleges and college ambassadors to facilitate the spreading of reliable, accurate information about higher education options to young people and, where possible, their communities.
- Young people need to be informed of their options, and young women in particular (as well as men) need to receive more training at school level in negotiation skills, so that they can have more involvement in discussions of their futures within the family. Young people at school level should be encouraged to identify different sources of support and information that they could consult. Again, this is a potential role for student ambassadors in collaboration with schools.

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A Fair Chance for Education: Gendered Pathways to Educational Success in Haryana

Phase 2 Report: The Role of Families in the Gendered Educational Trajectories of Undergraduate Students in Haryana, India

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Accompanying resources for the project

In addition to this report, other resources about the project are available on the project website: www.warwick.ac.uk/haryana. This includes various Project Outputs such as project reports and presentations, as well as other information about the project and the people involved.
The project can also be found on Twitter and Instagram as @FCFHaryana.
The project Team can be contacted at fcfharyana@warwick.ac.uk

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Preface

This report summarises the development and findings of Phase 2 of the Fair Chance for Education Project (FCF). Phase 2 was developed on the basis of an exploration of the social and family background of the participants from Phase 1 of the FCF project (Henderson et. al 2021). Phase 1 revealed that a majority of the participants identified their family as a key factor and the home as a key space where educational decisions were made and supported. This preliminary finding was supported by a review of literature (see also section 1.1). It was found that gendered access to higher education was influenced by multiple factors such as distance between home and college, family composition and family background. However, there was very limited understanding shown in the literature of *how* educational decisions leading to higher education were made within families.

Phase 2 of the FCF project encapsulated the doctoral training of the lead researcher for Phase 2, and lead author of this report, Anjali Thomas. The doctoral research study was funded by the Fair Chance Foundation in collaboration with the WCPRS (Warwick Collaborative Postgraduate Research Scholarships) scheme and additional funding from the Warwick donor community and the Department of Education Studies at Warwick. The doctoral research study, supervised by Dr Emily Henderson and Prof Ann Stewart, has been successfully examined and is available in full as the PhD thesis entitled *Role of families in the gendered educational trajectories of undergraduate students in Haryana, India* (Thomas, 2021). This findings report presents the findings from the doctoral study in an accessible way for a wider audience.

Executive Summary

Introduction

Higher education (HE) is a key social institution which is a site for development and dissemination of knowledge and skills, and overall social development through inclusive education. It is recognised that successful graduation from a higher education institution (HEI) improves the variety and nature of social and economic opportunities available to individuals and families. However, HE is a limited facility which is not available in equal measure to all people. It is therefore important to understand how young people, young women and men, especially from marginalised communities and groups, access HE and how they make choices about where to study and which course to select.

Families are known to play a key role in the HE choices of young people. In India, families have a significant role in limiting, supporting, encouraging and facilitating young people's access to HE. This was recognised in the project's Phase 1 study (Henderson et al., 2021). Phase 2 of the FCF project was geared towards understanding how undergraduate students who are enrolled in state-funded government colleges – and their families – make gendered educational decisions about HE. Gendered practices and inequalities can be traced in the educational trajectories of both young men and women. These inequalities are sited within the family and therefore it is important to understand what is happening within the family as decisions about HE options are being taken.

Research design

This study used a qualitative research design with a feminist orientation. The study included semi-structured in-depth interviews with undergraduate students which were followed by semi-structured in-depth interviews with their family members. The bilingual (Hindi and English) tools for this study were developed by Anjali Thomas at the University of Warwick. Anjali Thomas conducted fieldwork at the three sampled colleges between December 2018 and March 2019.

This data was collated, transcribed, coded and analysed by Anjali Thomas at the University of Warwick. The analysis involved an examination of the way in which families made educational decisions, the role played in this decision making by different gendered family members and how this gendered process was further influenced by intersectional inequalities such as caste, social class and geographical inequalities.

Key Insights

- Educational decisions are group decisions made within families, and these decisions reflect gendered roles within families. Gendered inequalities influence (limit and/or encourage) HE for both young women and men.
- Families are intensely involved in supporting, inspiring, informing and influencing the educational decisions made within the family. These decisions are significantly influenced by gendered considerations such as the gender of the young person in question, and gendered allocation of resources within the family.

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- The ways in which families make gendered educational decisions are shaped by relationships and dynamics between the different gendered family members.
- As the family considers different HE choices, family members reflect on family dynamics, perceived and experienced barriers, and opportunities to strategically remain silent or voice their interests. These negotiations are gendered and result in different educational decisions being taken for sons and daughters.
- These negotiations within the family are further influenced by intersectional inequalities such as caste, social class and geographical inequalities.

The different roles played by the family in educational trajectories

- The four key roles played by family members in decisions about HE are: (1) support, (2) inspire, (3) provide information, (4) influence decisions.
- Role 1: support takes the form of encouragement from parents, including to ensure that their children access more educational and employment opportunities than they did; support is also provided from the natal maternal family. Support is often linked to pride in and expectations of exceptional academic performance, particularly in relation to young women whose access to HE may be conditional on being a model student
- Role 2: figures of inspiration may not be directly involved in HE decisions within a family, but provide a reference point for families considering HE. These figures are often 'trailblazers' who are other members of the community who have accessed HE. Trailblazers play a vital role. However, the inspiration often follows a gendered pattern where young women trailblazers inspire other young women, and likewise for young men.
- Role 3: information about HE is provided by a number of sources, including parents, who access information through their workplaces and social circles, and trailblazers, who provide direct experiential information about HE. Information is also obtained through the use of cybercafes. The transfer of such information is along gendered lines of communication due to social segregation.
- Role 4: influences on HE decisions included young people's awareness of the family's means, knowledge that they needed to cultivate family support for HE, sensibility to gendered emotional attachments in the family and the desire to remain within the family – for both young women and men.

How educational decisions are taken within families

- Educational decisions are affected by (1) family dynamics and (2) how the family rationalises educational decisions.
- Family dynamics (1) include the role of fathers and also brothers, who are key decision makers. Mothers often supervise everyday decisions and act as intermediaries between the children and father.
- Decisions about HE taken within families are rationalised (2) according to family beliefs and priorities. The decision to attend the nearest college to home is rationalised as the *preferable choice* based on cost, distance and commute. HE-related decisions are also rationalised according to aspirations for marriage and employment, which frame decisions to either invest in HE (to improve marriage prospects for both young men and women) or avoid investing in HE due to marriage costs (young women) or to aim for employment prospects (particularly young men).

2.6

- Decision-making is influenced by strategic actions in relation to (1) and (2). This includes indirect actions from young people such as selective information provision and locating advocates for their choices within the extended family. Strategic actions also include voices and silences, for instance young people may communicate selectively with their fathers and may also choose to remain silent with their fathers.

How HE decision making is influenced by intersectional factors

- It is important to examine individual student cases in order to understand how different factors act as barriers and enablers to HE and to informed choice for HE access.
- The case of Deepika shows that a woman from a rural village with traditional norms, who is from a marginalised caste group (OBC) and a working class background and family with no higher secondary school education, who has attended a government secondary school, faces barriers to accessing HE. However these barriers are countered by living in a joint family which includes a trailblazer, a supportive mother, maintaining a model student profile and the existence of a college in the village.
- The case of Jaya shows the importance of life circumstances in determining HE access. She was from a rural area and marginalised caste group (OBC) and lower-middle class background. Her father had died and her maternal uncle had supported the family until her mother's remarriage. She was the third child but the first to access HE as her sisters had been married during the family strife. She had benefitted from private schooling which had been in part funded by her teachers and had presented as a model student. She had chosen the local college from consideration of the family finances.
- The case of Mohan reveals the effects of social mobility. Mohan was from a rural community and a Dalit caste group (SC), but his family had benefitted from his father's employment in the postal service and connections with the village panchayat. His HE choices were heavily influenced by his father's preferences. He had access to a personal scooter which facilitated the commute.
- The case of Hritik also reveals the importance of life circumstances. His father had passed away and this led to him switching from English-medium to Hindi schooling. His father had attended HE but had died before passing that knowledge on. His mother had, unusually for the study, completed class 12. The family fortunes improved with the mother's second marriage and Hritik was supported by his mother and expected by his stepfather to enrol in HE to improve his marriage chances and employment prospects. He chose the nearest college based on his responsibilities towards the family and the family business.

Recommendations

The recommendations from the Phase 2 study focus on recognising the role of families and parents in young people's educational trajectories. Based on this focus, the recommendations **target two outcomes**:

- All family members need to be aware of the educational options for young people. Given that different family members access different spaces and different sources of information, this needs to be recognised in terms of building a holistic approach to informed choice for HE.

2.7

- Young people themselves need to be more informed of their options and better equipped with reliable information about HE and negotiating skills in order to participate in decision making within their families about their educational futures.

The recommendations for Phase 2 draw on and extend the recommendations of Phase 1. This is displayed in the table below.

The role of the government and the NGO sector	
Phase 1: state-funded educational schemes and interventions should be disseminated widely in a variety of means, including directly to young people.	Phase 2: this information should be shared with all members of the family (through appropriate means), for the purposes of collective informed decision making.
Phase 1: Aanganvadis and other localised state services such as village panchayats, government schools and colleges should collaborate in this effort.	Phase 2: the need for these services to consider parents, grandparents, other relatives and community members as recipients of information on HE, in addition to the young people as targeted recipients. It would be beneficial for public service employers to store information about HE to disburse to employees, as the workplace has been identified as one means of parents from disadvantaged groups learning about information.
Phase 1: families need to have access to readily available information about school choice and higher education choice (including subject choice) and employability options, and connecting these to envision educational trajectories for young people.	Phase 2: different family members may have different types of involvement and may benefit from the provision of information about HE in different locations and formats. For instance, fathers and mothers occupy different physical spaces in the community, so information targeting different parents needs to be provided in appropriate spaces. Audio or video information is particularly important for family members who have not attained high levels of formal education. This needs to be a key consideration as the government develops and supports technology and as HEIs follow the NEP recommendations to provide outreach.
Phase 1: information should be included about costs of HE, including fees but also supplementary costs, as well as scholarships and bursaries (including of competitive HEIs which may be located further away).	Phase 2: the need for advice for low-income families for budgeting for HE and information to be presented in a clear and accessible manner including for parents who may have doubts about the worth of HE.
The role of colleges	
Phase 1: colleges need to engage with families more directly, through visits to communities and through guided visits of the colleges, and mothers and fathers as well as sisters and brothers have different roles and these need to be respected and explored.	Phase 2: it is highly recommended for colleges to interact with young people's relatives, including parents and other family members, as well as the young people. It is important for all those who have a say in decision making to access more information and understanding about HE. Just targeting one family member e.g. young person or father does not reflect the way in which educational decisions are taken within families.

2.8

	Some families do contact e.g. a college principal for advice, and this can be extremely helpful. However many parents would not be aware that this is possible nor be aware of how to go about seeking advice from the college. Colleges could usefully discuss how they wish to be contacted and for which types of questions, and should then display this information on any materials circulated about the college. Other family members e.g. maternal uncles may also play a strong role in young people's education, so the concept of the family needs to encompass potential input from other relatives.
Phase 1: colleges should formalise the role of current students acting as ambassadors for the colleges in disseminating information about higher education in their communities and giving guided visits of the college.	Phase 2: 'trailblazer' students have potential to make a significant contribution to spreading accurate, reliable and experience-based information about HE in local communities who do not have a history of HE. Formalising this role in the form of student ambassadors will enhance informed choice. Trailblazer influence is gendered, i.e. young women are more likely to influence other young women and likewise with young men. This should be borne in mind when establishing the role of student ambassador including in terms of gender balance of ambassadors.
Phase 1: colleges should provide step-by-step guidance on the admissions process and ensure this is available at schools, internet cafes and at the college itself, and available online.	Phase 2: this information could also be made available to employees in government jobs. Locations where the parental generation frequent can be identified and stocked with this information.
The role of schools	
Phase 1: schools should work with colleges and college ambassadors to facilitate the spreading of reliable, accurate information about higher education options to young people and, where possible, their communities.	Phase 2: when parents are called to school for parent-teacher meetings or other occasions, information about HE should be provided and clearly signalled. Some families face misfortune which severely affects their quality of life and livelihoods. Particularly of note are single-parent households including those affected by bereavement. Schools are more likely to be aware of these cases than e.g. targeted colleges, so, in cases like these, schools may need to pay additional attention to HE advice (especially on the systems and processes) for young people in families facing these situations.
Phase 1: young women in particular (as well as men) need to receive more training at school level in negotiation skills, so that they can have more involvement in discussions of their futures within the family.	Phase 2: the training can have an emphasis on how to engage in participatory discussion within the family and also on confidence building of young women.

2.9

1. The Phase 2 Study

1.1   Introduction: families and access to higher education in India

There are several social inequalities that influence the educational choices which may or may not lead students towards accessing HE. Researchers across the world and in India have identified inequalities such as social class (Reay et al, 2005, Engberg and Wolniak 2010, Lehmann 2016), caste (Deshpande 2006, Singh 2013, Sabharwal and Malish 2016), racial and ethnic identities (Burke 2011, Shiner and Noden 2015, Mendes et al. 2016) and gender (Mullen 2014, Verma, 2014, Gautam 2015, Smith 2017, Sudarshan 2018) as some of the most common factors shaping educational choices and pathways into higher education. Over the decades, there have been many different state and institutional policies which have tried to address these inequalities through different kinds of affirmative action, widening participation and outreach activities. These efforts and the documentation of these efforts have recognised that pathways into higher education are particularly challenging for students who are first generation (Wadhwa 2018), i.e. from the first generation of their family to attend HE, and first-in-family (O'Shea 2015 and 2020), i.e. the first member of their family to access HE. Similarly, in India, there is a rising concern for new entrants or first-generation students into higher education (Wadhwa 2018).

Families are known to play a core role in influencing the HE choices of young people worldwide. Research on students preparing to access HE finds that a majority of students seek information from a small group of family, friends and current students in HE institutions (Slack et al. 2014). Research indicates that a significant role is played by family and other social networks when students enrol in HEIs. It is also important to note that formal and informal information sources are different for first generation students and students who have parents or immediate family members who have had experience of HE (Häuberer and Brändle 2018). Research on HE choice has shown that the maintenance of a middle or upper-middle class social identity and/or upward class mobility seem to be common primary objectives in parental reasoning behind educational choices. This thrust for social mobility cannot be uncoupled from gendered arrangements of family priorities, parental decision making and educational aspirations and choices for daughters and sons (Marks and McLanahan 1993, Davis and Pearce 2007).

Not only are families actively involved in maintaining and/or enhancing their social status through their children's HE choices, families also make educational choices with the consideration of how daughters will in future become mothers who will in turn perform the role of maintaining social status in society (Donner 2006). Similar patterns can be drawn for young men within this gendered pattern operating in the family, wherein young men (especially in Indian families) are steered towards disciplines and careers which lead towards employment (Sudarshan 2018). For instance, a study (Gautam 2015) observed that science is the *de jure* choice for male offspring within families in India; this was perceived to resonate with the family's perception of the son's gendered capabilities and ability to engage in hard work. These gendered differences are rooted in social practices in Haryana (the setting of this project – see Preface) and much of northern India, related to feminine chastity, matrimony, dowry and inheritance (Chakravarti 1993, Kandiyoti 1988, Karve 1953, Dube 1988, Chowdhry 2011a and 2011b). Thus, educational decisions within the family are both the cause and effect of reproduction of gendered educational inequalities in society.

2.10

The findings of the Fair Chance for Education Phase 1 study (Henderson et. al 2021) mirror the observations made by Sudarshan (2018), Sahu et. al (2017) and Verma (2014), who have argued that families of women undergraduate and post-graduate students are predominantly concerned about the safety and reputation of girls in an HEI, distance of the HEI from the family residence, along with the existence, quality and safety of hostel facilities. These concerns are different for young men students, where decisions are more likely to reflect concerns about subject choice, academic reputation of the HEI and employability prospects. These studies also indicate that families are significantly influenced by social concerns such as the family's safety and honour, which are embodied in the body of women. Sahu et. al (2017) show the tremendous amount of control that families, parents in particular, have over the gendered educational choices and mobilities of young people. This is simultaneously a barrier and source of support.

Therefore, there is a need to explore and understand *how families are making gendered educational decisions which lead students towards enrolment in higher education institutions*. The following three research questions guided this study (see Thomas 2021 for the full PhD thesis):

- What are the different roles played by different family members as students access higher education, and how are these gendered?
- How are different gendered educational decisions taken within families? How do different family members justify these decisions?
- How are the families' gendered plans and experiences of enrolling in college influenced by a range of other intersecting factors?

1.2   Research design

This study used a **qualitative research design** with a feminist orientation, and is based on the understanding that families play a prominent role in making gendered educational choices which lead young people towards enrolling into undergraduate courses in Haryana. Leading on from the Phase 1 exploratory study (see section 1.1), the Phase 2 study explored what happens within the family or household as gendered educational decisions are being made. While the student was the primary focus of this study, the student was simultaneously placed within the family group, in recognition of the importance of families in educational decision making. The research design, therefore, included **semi-structured, in-depth interviews with students** from across the same government colleges that were sampled for Phase 1 of the study. This was followed by **semi-structured in-depth interviews with students' family members**.

This study obtained **ethical approval** from the Department of Education Studies at the University of Warwick. The colleges carry the same pseudonyms used in Phase 1 of the project (MDC= Mahendargarh District College; SDC= Sonipat District College; and SiDC= Sirsa District College). Additionally, all the students and family members who participated in this study were anonymised to maintain confidentiality. All participants were provided with information about the research project and they voluntarily consented to be participants of this study. Written informed consent was sought from each participant before commencing the recorded interviews.

The **research tools** for this study were developed on the basis of preliminary analyses of the quantitative and qualitative data of the Phase 1 study. The interview guides were developed and piloted with families of Indian Origin in UK in June 2018, and in Haryana, India in November 2018. These consecutive piloting exercises helped to refine the interview questions. The research tools for this study include interview guides for in-depth interviews with students and family members, along with a pro forma which was used to collect the educational and social backgrounds of the undergraduate student participants and their families. The interview guide and pro forma were bilingual (Hindi and English), as were the consent form and information document which were shared with all participants.

1.3   Sampling and recruitment of participants across three districts

The selection of district and colleges for this study followed the sampling set in place by Phase 1 of the project (Henderson et. al 2021, section 1.3). The first phase of the project sampled districts and colleges on the basis of geographical location and distance from the national capital (New Delhi) and indicators of gender based inequalities such as juvenile and overall sex-ratio and literacy of women, the presence of co-educational state-funded (government) colleges and the availability of accessible institutional gatekeepers (Henderson et. al 2021). The same districts (Mahendargarh, Sonipat and Sirsa) and colleges (MDC, SDC and SiDC – pseudonyms, as noted above in 1.2) were sampled for this study.

A roadway in rural Haryana

Sampling the same colleges in the same three districts brought several benefits. One of the key benefits was that Phase 1 of the study provided a set of quantitative data which described and illustrated the context of the students and HEIs. This allowed Phase 2 to complement and extend the exploratory findings and observations made in Phase 1 (Henderson et. al 2021). Additionally, this continued relationship with the three colleges facilitated the researcher's entry into and access within the sampled colleges. The key institutional contacts included principals and teaching faculty at each government college. The existing contacts

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at the colleges facilitated the researcher's initial interaction with undergraduate students, who were then given the opportunity to volunteer to become participants of the study.

1.4 Fieldwork implementation and study sample

Students who volunteered to participate in the study in the three sampled colleges were recruited for this study. The in-depth interviews with students were conducted at locations selected by the students. Interviews were conducted with 26 students across the three sampled colleges (see Table 1.1) and the interviews were usually conducted within the college campus or at home. The students enrolled in the sampled colleges were residents of villages in rural Haryana or were residing in urban and semi-urban neighbourhoods. Across these neighbourhoods, communities monitor the movement of young people, especially young women. Therefore, students actively chose between college campus and home interviews, on the basis of their personal comfort. In-depth interviews with students were followed by interviews at the homes of 11 students. At home, depending on the availability of parents and other family members, individual or group interviews were conducted with family members.

Table 1.1 illustrates the demographic diversity of the students who were interviewed for this study across the three sampled districts, in relation to gender and caste group.

Table 1.1: Undergraduate participants; gender, caste and geographical location

Participants	Mahendargarh	Sirsa	Sonipat	Total
Men Undergraduate Participants	2 Suvarna 3 Bahujan	4 Dalit	5 Suvarna 1 Dalit	7 Suvarna 5 Dalit 3 Bahujan
Women Undergraduate Participants	2 Suvarna 1 Bahujan	1 Suvarna 3 Bahujan	3 Suvarna 1 Bahujan	6 Suvarna 5 Bahujan
Total Interviews	**8**	**8**	**10**	**13 Suvarna 5 Dalit 8 Bahujan**

Note: Dalit and Bahujan are terms used for marginalised caste groups categorised within the Indian constitution as Scheduled Caste (SC) and Other Backward Classes (OBC) respectively. Suvarna refers to the relatively privileged or elite caste groups which are not listed in the national and state lists of SC and OBC caste groups. These terms are infused with political meanings and objectives which aim to address caste-based inequalities.

1.5 Data analysis

The **interviews with students and family members** were transcribed and collated with the information collected in the proforma (the students' and families' educational and social background). This was followed by multiple thematic readings of the interview. The repeated reading and analysis of the transcribed interview data was conducted with the support of Dr Emily Henderson who was supervising the development of Dr Anjali Thomas' doctoral thesis (which is the basis for this report, see Thomas, 2021).

The first round of analysis of the transcripts led to the identification of themes such as the different roles being played by family members across chronological moments in the participating student's life. The transcripts were analysed for a second time to explore *how these decisions were being made* within the families, and *how different gendered family members were negotiating* their educational preferences and priorities within the family

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group. Finally, the transcripts were analysed again to examine how these gendered decision-making processes within family-groups were influenced by *intersectional factors* such as gender, caste, social class and rural-urban inequalities. For greater detail on the analysis process and resultant findings see Thomas (2021).

2. The Different Roles Played by the Family in Education Trajectory

2.1 Introduction to the roles played by families in educational decision making

Phase 1 of the project revealed that family members are actively involved in encouraging, supporting and influencing young people's choices to access HE. This was principally observed through the quantitative questionnaire. The questionnaire observed that there was a gendered difference in how students reported that different family members with different gendered identities and relationships were involved in the decision making process (see Henderson et al., 2021, section 3.3). This Phase 2 report chapter addresses the first research question, which sought to explore *in greater depth* how family members are supporting, encouraging and influencing young people's educational choices.

The following four roles were identified from this study, and are explained further in the subsequent sub-sections of this chapter:

a. *Support.* This is performed in multiple ways such as: approval of children's interest in pursuing HE, providing (gendered) support in the form of financial support to pay tuition fees and daily expenses, and encouragement in young people's educational endeavours.

b. *Inspire.* This is a very important role, often played by 'trailblazers' within first-generation families, i.e. the young women and men who are the first generation of women and men in a family and/or community to access HE. Such figures of reference inspire parents to support their children and simultaneously provide immediate and first-hand examples of potential educational pathways for young people.

c. *Provide Information*. Students and families who are contemplating access to HE often seek information regarding application and enrolment procedures, the quality of education and teaching staff at a particular college, college facilities and future career opportunities. This information is key to shaping how education choices are perceived within the family, especially with regard to different educational courses and colleges. Apart from information that parents and family members gather through their personal social networks at home and at their place of work, trailblazing older siblings and cousins are important sources of direct, experience-based information for students and family members.

d. *Influence decisions.* This is a particularly difficult role to perform (and to identify through research). Influencing education-related decisions involves a delicate balance of considering the needs and desires of all family members, cultivating gendered support for higher education, and negotiating what are often intense and complicated emotional gendered relationships with different family members.

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2.2   Role Type 1: Support

As noted in 2.1, support is performed in multiple ways such as: approval of children's interest in pursuing HE, providing (gendered) support in the form of financial support to pay tuition fees and daily expenses, and encouragement in young people's educational endeavours.

Support from parents

Parents were shown to be key family members who support students' access to HE. Parents supported their children in terms of financial and practical support and also in terms of emotional support. In some instances, parents were perceived as a unit in terms of support for access to HE, but in other instances there were differences between mothers and fathers, for instance where mothers acted as intermediaries between fathers and their sons and daughters.

A household in a small urban centre in Haryana

In several instances, mothers shared that they had experienced a lack of support for their educational interests in their youth, and were therefore supporting their children's access to HE in hopes for a better future for them. As identified in section 1.1, social mobility aspirations were a key incentive for parents. Parental support was complemented by a general development in accessible, locally provided education. For instance, over the last two decades, the government school in Geeta's (SiDC) village had changed from a primary school (up till grade 5) to a secondary (grade 10) and senior secondary (grade 12) over the years, and attending higher education had begun to be more normalised. Geeta's mother said:

> at first I wanted to send all my children to school. As my eldest [Geeta's elder sister] finished school, my neighbours and other girls in the neighbourhood came to me and

asked me if I could also send her [Geeta's elder sister] to college with the others. So I agreed and made her do graduation.

The support provided by parents is gendered. Parents who expressed support for their children simultaneously referred to gendered behaviours and observations, such as daughters being skilled in household activities and sons and daughters contributing to different household chores. These reflect the patriarchal gender norms operating within Haryana and North India (Karve 1953, Dube 1988). In the Phase 2 study, support for access to HE was gendered along similar lines. For instance, there were significant pressures on young men to become positioned in the family as breadwinners, which influenced their HE choices towards employability.

The role of the natal maternal family and maternal uncles

Several young women in the study, such as Geeta (SiDC) and Jaya (SDC), shared that their maternal uncles were supporting and financially funding their schooling and higher education. In this way, young women were able to garner financial and social support through traditional patriarchal family structures. This is also allied with how traditional gendered practices bestow maternal uncles with gendered responsibility to support and fund the marriage and matrimony of young women in the family. This is allied with gendered norms of inheritance, dowry and matrimony in northern parts of India (Karve 1953, Dube 1988).

The natal family does not only support the young woman after she marries, but also supports her children, especially the education and marriage of her children in the future. We can see this in the narratives of several young women participating in this study, where they have been supported in several ways by their mother's natal families and maternal uncles. These gendered relationships are significant means through which young women are able to mobilise the economic capital required to access higher education.

Linking support and academic performance

Another aspect of support was observed in family members' expression of great pride in the academic performance and single-minded focus on education observed in their children. This pattern, where the family acknowledges the academic achievements of their children, especially girls, is gendered. For instance, Deepika's (SiDC) grandmother shared,

> Yes, she studies very well. Very well she studies. The children are alright. Goes her own way and comes back her own way [indicating that she is not looking around or getting distracted]. She works hard.

The focus on academic study is based on the social understanding that, since an adolescent girl or young woman is only intent on the pursuit of her studies, she will not have time to develop friendships and relationships with any young men in her vicinity. This is intimately linked with a patriarchal preoccupation with feminine chastity (Chakravarti 1993, Kandiyoti 1988). A similar pride was not observed among parents of young men who participated in the study.

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2.3   Role Type 2: Inspire

As noted in 2.1, inspiring is a very important role, often played by 'trailblazers' within first-generation families, i.e. the young women and men who are the first generation of women and men in a family and/or community to access HE. Such figures of reference inspire parents to support their children and simultaneously provide immediate and first-hand examples of potential educational pathways for young people.

The importance of 'trailblazers'

Similar to the observations made by Henderson et al. (2021) in Phase 1 of the project, a majority or participants of the Phase 2 study are from first-generation families. Among first-generation students, a significant proportion of students are also the first people in their families and indeed sometimes their communities to access higher education. The study identified these first-in-family students as 'trailblazers', as they are establishing new educational trajectories within their immediate families and communities, and have a lasting role within families and communities as figures of reference, inspiration and sources of information and advocacy.

In the Phase 2 study, only three participants were second-generation entrants to HE, one man student from the OBC caste group, and two women students from the General caste group. The remaining participants were all first generation. Several participants had family members who had already accessed HE before them, in the form of at least one sibling or cousin. Ten men students were in this position (6 General, 1 OBC, 1 SC) and four women (2 General, 2 SC). The remaining participants were in the trailblazing position of being the first in their family to access HE. Four men students were in this position (1 General, 1 OBC, 2 SC) and five women (2 General, 3 OBC).

When a majority of students are members of the first generation in their family and community to access higher education, common figures of inspiration are older siblings and cousins. Older brothers and older sisters – who are often themselves trailblazers – inspire the educational aspirations and trajectories of the young people. In several instances, they also influence the educational aspirations of parents, uncles and aunts, who encourage and support students to access higher education. While the Phase 1 report (Henderson et al. 2021, section 3.3) identified parents (fathers more than mothers) and siblings (brothers more than sisters) as important sources of support for accessing HE, the Phase 2 study explored *how* family members are *actively or passively encouraging, supporting and influencing educational decisions*.

Being an inspiring trailblazer

Students who were trailblazers within their families shared how their own successful entry into higher education and exposure to the outside world had led them actively to encourage their younger siblings and cousins to pursue higher levels of education. It was observed that a majority of these older siblings and cousins were aware of the fact that their own educational experiences were useful to younger members of their families and communities. They used their knowledge and experiences and observations to inform and advise young people and their parents towards particular subjects, courses and institutions. For instance, Hema (SiDC) said,

> My brother was doing his B.Com [Bachelors in Commerce] so he suggested it to me, that I could also do the same.

Similarly, Jaspal (SiDC) said,

> *Bhaiyya* [elder cousin brother who is a family trailblazer] kept telling us that we should go to college. 'Get good marks now, in class and in plus two [class 12] to later go to college. The better your number [marks] are you can go to a better college'.

This trailblazing older cousin in this family advised the participant and his siblings to focus on getting better grades, and also assisted them as they filled out the application and enrolment forms for different higher education institutions.

Gendered nature of inspiration

The different patterns of adherence and deviation from established educational pathways is gendered. The initial pioneering movement of young trailblazer women involves a compromise with the gendered norms operating in their families and villages. However, over time, the daughters are seen to be slowly changing the regime and educational pathways available to young people in the family and the village. On the other hand, participants such as Ajay (MDC) and Bobby (MDC) said that they were inspired to access higher education through an older male cousin who was employed in the armed forces. The participant said that he was hoping to replicate the career and success pathway established by his cousin. This is congruent with the gendered pathways and norms within families in Haryana regarding access to higher education and graduate employment for young men.

2.4 Role Type 3: Provide information

As noted in 2.1, providing information was the third role type. Students and families who are contemplating access to HE often seek information regarding application and enrolment procedures, the quality of education and teaching staff at a particular college, college facilities and future career opportunities. This information is key to shaping how education choices are perceived within the family, especially with regard to different educational courses and colleges. Apart from information that parents and family members gather through their personal social networks at home and at their place of work, trailblazing older siblings and cousins are important sources of direct, experience-based information for students and family members.

Information through parents

Although supportive, parents were able to offer little or no information or direct experiences of accessing higher education, due to the limited educational experiences of the parental generation (see Phase 1 findings, Henderson et al. 2021, section 2.4). Parental advice was often limited to recommending a college closer to home or those which were considered (by word of mouth) to be located in a safer location. There were a few exceptions to this trend. Chandni (MDC) said that her parents were acquainted with one of the faculty members working at MDC, and he had informed them about the application process and academic performance of the college. Jaya (SDC) said that her paternal aunt and her aunt's husband had given her the information regarding SDC and the application and admission processes. Another rare experience involved Neil (SDC), who noted that both his parents were in the

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local police force and that they had shared their experiences and observations at work with him and his siblings. He said,

> They told me about how many papers are there. Their department [in the police force] is only such that all the time…you know people talk about the department where they work. So they kept telling me about the responsibilities and the work to be done. So this created an interest in me to do something like this in the future.

Even though both his parents had not experienced higher education, the particular context of the parents' employment gave his parents opportunities to interact with colleagues and co-workers from different backgrounds, and the knowledge to inform their children educational choices and decisions. Similar observations have been made by Brooks (2003) who observed that parents' workplace was an alternate source of knowledge about higher education.

Trailblazers providing information

A majority of the participants' educational trajectories mirrored the trailblazing educational trajectories established by their older siblings or cousins. For instance, Sachin (SDC) was enrolled in the same college as his elder sister. However, this pioneering entry by families into higher education is not gender neutral. Daughters were often encouraged to enter (private) women's colleges, which were socially perceived to be safer for 'chaste' young women, since family members believed that in women's colleges their daughters were less likely to encounter or interact with men outside their own families. Notably, the pioneering step taken by an elder sister helped Geeta's (SiDC) educational trajectory. Geeta was eventually able to gain confidence and autonomy to negotiate a transfer to a government co-educational college to pursue her interest in sports. She was able to operationalise her elder sister's access and experience of higher education to formulate her own unique choice to pursue higher education and sports.

Gendered transfer of information

Studies on youth in India (DeSouza et al. 2009) have observed that young people rarely have friends and acquaintances who are from a different gender. This is a gendered pattern of segregation cultivated within most Indian communities and schools. This is recognised by educationalists such as Krishna Kumar (2021) who have written about education and growing up as a boy in India and how young men have no socialisation with women outside their families in their childhood. Therefore, it is not surprising to observe segregated gendered patterns of inspirations, sources of information and educational pathways.

In Phase 1, Henderson et al. (2021) observed that more young women consulted parents than young men, who tended to consult peers and friends as well as parents. Raj (SDC) is one such example from Phase 2. He said,

> So I chose to do it [HE] here because even my friends and seniors from schools are in this college. They had also advised me for this college.

The Phase 2 study also observed that the influence of peers such as classmates, friends and seniors from school is observable in narratives regarding the choice of subject both at school and higher education. A couple of participants who were young men pursuing science and

commerce courses, said that they decided to select science or commerce subjects on the basis of similar choices being made by their classmates and friend circles. For instance, a young man, Bobby (MDC) said, 'I took science. All the children [male noun used in Hindi] in school were taking [science] so I too took science.'

The local cyber-café: a gendered public space where educational decisions are made

The cyber-café is a common sight (see figure 1) across rural and urban Haryana and India more generally. These shops usually provide a variety of goods and services. Most undergraduate participants' narratives of access to higher education feature the cyber-café. The cyber-café is a popular site where students and family members fill in their higher education application forms for a small fee. For instance, Kajal (SDC) said, 'When we went to fill the form at the [cyber-café] shop, they told us about the cut off lists [eligibility to apply] of different colleges.' It was observed that the owner of the cyber-café has knowledge about the paperwork or certificates required for applications to higher education institutions and state (government) employment opportunities. For instance, Sachin (SDC) said, 'My friend's [cyber-café] shop is there and there is always a discussion.'

A Cyber-café in Haryana

Since several people in the cyber-café's area would go to this shop to fill forms for employment and educational purposes, discussion and information circulates at this site, making it a significant site where families are accessing information and advice regarding different higher education choices. The owners or individuals providing services in these cyber-cafes, who are being identified as sources of information by the participants, were all men. Gendered practices and inequalities operating in Haryana allow young men to experience relatively less restriction and more freedom in social spaces than young women (Chowdhry 2005). Because of this, most young women mention that their application process in the cyber-café and in the college was not a solo endeavour. Young women such as Amrita (MDC), Hema (SiDC) and Madhu (SDC) said that their brothers who accompanied them or filled their forms dictated their educational decisions for them. This pattern was not observed in the narratives of undergraduate men.

2.5   Role Type 4: Influence Decisions

As noted in 2.1, influencing decisions is the fourth role type**.** This is a particularly difficult role to perform (and to identify through research). Influencing education-related decisions involves a delicate balance of considering the needs and desires of all family members, cultivating gendered support for higher education, and negotiating what are often intense and complicated emotional gendered relationships with different family members.
Considering the collective family economy

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In the Phase 2 study, participants seemed to be aware of the household economy and the impact of their educational choices on the family expenses. The nature of financial considerations on a family's educational decisions can be observed in the following excerpts from the interview with Om (SDC);

> I: Why only [apply to] this college?
> Om: Travel was the reason. That time the situation was such that I could not go out much.
> I: What kind of a situation was that?
> Om: Mostly a financial reason.
> I: But your sisters were also studying.
> Om: We could not manage all that together.

Here, Om mentions that 'We could not manage all that together', referring to his collective awareness of the family budget and its role in his decision to apply to a nearby college.

Cultivating support to access higher education

Different participants engaged in various strategies to influence the decisions being taken by family members about their educational futures. This included gaining support from trusted family members other than parents, who could then advocate for the participant (Jaya, SDC). Other participants deliberately made compromises in order to placate their families, choosing for instance the nearest college to assuage their parents' fears (Amrita, MDC; Madhu, SDC). In another example, Deepika (SiDC) worked hard to gather support within her family. She demonstrated a single-minded focus on her studies during schooling and received merit-based scholarships both in school and in the college. These scholarships subsidised the cost of higher education tuition fees. She said that, when contemplating access to higher education, she chose to apply to the cheaper co-educational rural government college, rather than the more expensive private women's universities. This position satisfied her educational aspirations with the additional benefit of not being a drain on the family finances. This degree of effort to maintain an ideal, chaste, academic identity within the family was not observed in the narratives of any of the men participants.

Gendered emotional attachments in family decision-making processes

While many of the influences on educational decisions were rooted in practical considerations, it is important to recognise the influence of emotional attachments on these decisions. In the participants' accounts, often these attachments were inextricably interwoven with more practical concerns. For instance, Chandni (MDC) rationalised the decision for her to stay with her family for HE in a nearby college, despite having gained entry to Delhi University, by stating (among other practical factors) 'I just did not feel like it then, to suddenly leave the family'.

Three of the young men who participated in the study said that they chose the nearest and most convenient college as they felt obliged to live with their parents or widowed mothers. This can be observed in the following arguments made by Dilip (MDC):

> Anywhere else would have been too far away. Also I am alone. At home there is only me. All my siblings, sisters are married, one brother is in Delhi and my *tauji's* [older paternal uncle] son has died. Now only I stay at home and study at home.

This reflects a gendered emotional pull for young men. While in essence both young women and men were making a decision to continue living with their parents and families, there is a gendered difference in the rationale for this decision that is provided by the young women and men. Young women alluded to a sense of emotional attachment and feelings of sadness when they contemplated living away from family; the young men did not make any emotional allusions. Instead, the educational trajectories of the young men were being influenced by a gendered sense of obligation and responsibility towards parents, and the need to take care of them as they age.

Households in a village in Haryana

2.23

3. How educational decisions are taken within families

3.1   Introduction to how families make educational choices

This chapter builds on the roles being played by families to further explore *how these roles contribute towards how educational decisions are being made within families* for young women and men. The ways in which families make educational decisions are based on

(a) the dynamics or nature of relationships and decision-making practices within the family, and
(b) the ways in which the family rationalises their educational decisions

The dynamics between family members lead each family member strategically to plan and act in specific ways in order to garner support or convince parents to approve access to higher education. Perceptions regarding barriers and aspirations are operationalised by family members to influence the final educational decision made within the family. Additionally, the different barriers and aspirations perceived by different family members motivate each member of the family to act strategically to negotiate access to higher education.

3.2   Family dynamics which foreground decision-making processes

Fathers/brothers as key decision makers

The precedence of masculine relationships such as fathers and brothers over feminine ones such as mothers and older sisters while making educational choices and decisions was observed in Phase 1 of this project (Henderson et al., 2021, section 3.3). The interviews conducted in the Phase 2 study illustrated that, within parental approval, approval by the father was a key component of family decision-making processes. The influence of the father within the family can be seen in this excerpt from the interview with Mohan (SiDC):

> I: So your father told you about you having to go to college?
> Mohan: Father himself said that 'you can do you BA here and then do a B.Ed. [education course]'

On the other hand, Chandni (MDC) said that when her family had to take decisions, the parents discussed between themselves. She explained that they offered her different options from which she could choose. At the same time, she also said that if they, especially her father, did not permit her to go somewhere, she did not go against their wishes. Across most undergraduate women's narratives, the father seemed to have final power to veto any decision. While many families seemed to engage in discussing and sharing different opinions and interests, there were some members, usually the men, who convinced, approved or enforced the final decision for the student.

Mothers as overseeing everyday decision making

A majority of the narratives clearly indicate that mothers supervise the enactment of everyday decisions made by family members, especially within the household. For instance, Raj (SDC)

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said that his mother was involved in decisions regarding concerns within the household. When asked about this, he explained, "No, the house is taken care of by mother so she has more say. Papa used to often stay outside." Raj's father was a driver and there was a clear gendered division between the private and the public spheres. Similar patterns were observed in other families such as Mohan's (SiDC). This indicates a normative division in this family wherein the private, everyday household decisions were undertaken and supervised by the feminine head of the family, whereas the public domain decisions which involved significant financial and social considerations, such as education and marriage, needed the approval and supervision of the masculine head of the family. Mothers of several young women (such as Amrita in MDC, Hema in SiDC and Jaya in SDC) said that they additionally monitored their daughter's movements outside the home.

3.3   Rationalising decision making within the family

Rationalising choosing the nearest college: cost, distance and commute

The study found that, while making educational decisions, students and family members rationalised the educational decisions made within the family. Phase 1 of the project had identified distance and commutability as significant factors affecting decisions to access higher education (Henderson et. al 2021, section 3.4). Along with distance and commutability, financial considerations also influence educational choices. However, it is often difficult to identify these factors in isolation as financial cost and commutability constraints usually increase proportionately with distance. In the Phase 2 study, many participating students and family members also identified distance and availability of affordable public transport which is regular, safe and efficient as important considerations. The location of the college changed how the parents perceived the accessibility of higher education, which in turn influenced how parents rationalised their educational decisions. For instance, Sachin's (SDC) mother stated,

> Children will have to be sent to where the family [parents] say, according to the money they have. If you send them far away to hostel or you send them nearby according to your condition. If the college is in [the same town as home] then what is the need to send them far away? It takes a lot of money and wastes a lot of time.

The mother's explanation indicates that families have to make educational choices which are compatible with their financial capabilities. Rather than describing the choice as a compromise, she rationalises the decision as the most sensible and economical choice. This finding shows that, when analysing family decision-making processes about HE choices, it is important to note that family members may rationalise the decisions taken rather than acknowledge compromises made. Any recollection of decisions taken is seen through an indirect lens as it is a *representation* of the decisions and thus layers the rationalisation with family pride and values, for example.

Rationalising HE decisions based on aspirations for marriage and employment

In the Phase 2 study, it was clear that aspirations were a significant factor influencing educational choices. Aspirations within this study included three concerns: pursuing further education and its connection with marriage and employment.

Aspirations about marriage are relevant in this study as marriage or matrimonial concerns significantly influence the educational decisions of young people and their families

(Sudarshan 2018). Several participants in the Phase 1 study (Henderson et al. 2021, section 3.1) expressed the view that that some of their women classmates did not access higher education as their families arranged their marriage as soon as they turned 18 and finished their schooling (class 12). In the Phase 2 study, Babeeta (MDC) was a family trailblazer who had an older sister who did not enrol in higher education after she completed her schooling. Babeeta rationalised her choice of a shorter course in the following way,

> I have an older sister who is not married and education can be a disturbance. The plan is for both of us sisters to get married together [on the same day to different men] to manage wedding expenses. So, I cannot plan to study for a long time.

The gendered differences in aspirations, education and matrimony are visible in the following excerpt from the interview with Jaspal (SiDC):

> I: So what do you want to do in future?
> Jaspal: In future a government job…looking at the condition of the family it feels as though, if we get a job we will improve our family condition…my father is, you know, now 53 years old and can work less now. Once I get a job, two brothers have studied, there will be an effect from this.
> I: Do you feel that boys have more pressure to start earning fast? And do girls not have that much pressure?
> Jaspal: Yes this is definitely there in our society that only the son works and only the son has to work.
> I: What is the difficulty if a daughter works?
> Jaspal: It is for the son. 'You will get married in the future and you only will have to work'. For the daughter it is that 'we will get you married whether you study or not you will get married'. The daughter has to take care of the family, because of which she is quickly married off.

In most parts of India, especially northern India, marriage and wedding costs are dominant concerns as educational decisions are made for daughters, but none of the literature explored in the section 1.1 of this report express similar concerns regarding educational decisions for sons. Hritik (MDC) stated that he was asked to enrol in college by his stepfather as this would improve his marriage prospects. He said that his father believed that, in their merchant caste group, young women were very educated and would prefer their husbands to have a degree.

These gendered differences in how families rationalise children's educational pathways are further illuminated in the following excerpt from the interview with Sachin's (SDC) mother:

> I: Why didn't you send the younger son to college?
> Mother: We also have to judge the mind of a child. How is he [performing] in studying matters. My elder son's three years were wasted in college; we should have made him study in college via distance.
> I: You think that the three years have gone to waste?
> Mother: Yes
> I: Why?
> Mother: If he could have done college through distance education, he could have done some work along with that. Probably could have taken a coaching in his spare time.
> I: You think the three years your elder son has gone to college has been a waste of time…a complete loss?

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Mother: [Laughs] According to his father it has not been a waste of time…
I: According to his father, what has been the benefit of college?
Mother: That they can fill forms for all posts, particularly higher posts.
I: So higher posts have been the benefit of going to college?
Mother: Yes. Forms can be filled on the basis of +2 [12th class] and 10th standard [class].
I: So at the time of the younger son, his father didn't insist on sending him to college?
Mother: He said 'I got the elder one into college, you plan the younger son's education'. I told him to do ITI [Industrial Training Institute[1]].
I: What did the younger son want?
Mother: He was more content with ITI.

In this excerpt we see rationalising of educational decisions based on employment prospects, with different points of view emerging within the same family. Sachin's mother also shared that the family thinks that the daughter could get a job as a teacher through college education. There is a gendered difference in the scope of careers imagined by the family for the sons and the daughter (Sudarshan 2018). The discussion in the family regarding the education of the sons is primarily directed towards optimizing the employment of the sons in the future. However, this desire is somewhat diluted for the daughter as the primary goals are to educate her and get her married. It is clear from this excerpt that the ways in which educational decisions are rationalised is gendered.

3.4 Strategic actions within the family

Influencing decision making through indirect actions

The study found that family dynamics within each particular family, in combination with the ways in which decisions are rationalised in the family, lead young men and women to take up different strategic positions. These positions are taken up in order to influence the decisions being made about their educational options. While the young people were often unable to influence directly the final decisions being made about their futures, they were very well aware of those who could influence these decisions, and they actively sought to influence the decisions through indirect actions.

The strategic manoeuvres that were described by participants in the study include: selective use of different kinds of information to convince parents, using middle-persons such as mothers to communicate with fathers as key decision makers, demonstrating a good academic record as a 'model student' in order to influence choices, and seeking support from traditional gendered sources such as maternal uncles to counteract lack of support from fathers and brothers (see also 2.2).

Particularly of note is young women's strategy of presenting a 'model student' image to their parents in order to avoid objections to HE based on fears about reputation risk and elopement. For instance, Deepika and Esha (SiDC) seemed to be acting strategically to present themselves as model students, with the understanding that they needed to convince their parents to obtain their permission to access higher education

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[1] ITIs are industrial training institutions which provide (6 months to 2 years) courses which train students in different trades.

Influencing decision making through strategic voices and silences

The study showed that different family members chose to speak or not speak as educational decisions were made.

The study found that young people were strategically careful when they expressed their HE interests within the family, and even avoided speaking at all. For instance, this can be seen in the following excerpt from the interview with Mohan (SiDC),

> I: So your father told you about you having to go to college?
> Mohan: Father himself said that 'you can do your BA here and then do a B.Ed. [education course]'
> […]
> Mohan: If we say…here in this region [rural Haryana]…if we speak up, there could be a problem at home later on… 'I had told you to do this' …if in future I do not get a proper job in my area of interest.

When asked further about this later in the interview, he said,

> it is just a bit of shame [on my part], that it is ok [to not object to father]. If everyone follows what he says his respect [and honour] increases.

Neelam (SDC), who wanted to pursue a career in the police, did not share this aspiration with her parents 'because what our parents say is right'.

Silence was also deployed within decision-making processes as a form of power. The study revealed that, in several cases, the primary decision maker or the individual who held the power to veto a decision chose to remain silent. In most cases, the decision maker was the father or the elder brother (3.2). It was observed that, even through silence, fathers were able to wield a considerable amount of power and control over the educational decisions made within the family. This placed the mother in the centre performing the difficult task of managing the emotions of all the family members (3.2). The following excerpt illustrates this situation in the case of Mohan (SiDC):

> I: So mother tells everything to your father?
> Mohan: I don't say anything to him. It does not feel good to say something directly to father. I tell mother, she then tells him.
> I: You don't like talking directly to your father?
> Mohan: We can discuss things but for important things, we have to do as father says. That is just how things are done.

While key decision makers (particularly fathers) influenced decisions by remaining silent, young women and men who chose to remain silent were seen to accept educational choices which were not of interest to them.

4. How HE decision making is influenced by intersectional factors

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents four cases of undergraduate students and their families to illustrate how intersectionalities such as geographical location, social class and caste backgrounds, in addition to gender, affect the decision-making processes about HE options for young people within their families.

For each case, two questions are explored: (i) which factors acted as potential barriers to HE access for this young person? (ii) which factors enabled the young person to access HE, in spite of the barriers in place? Within the second question, the extent to which the young person engaged in informed choice is also included.

The goal of this chapter is to show how the roles identified in Chapter 2, and the family decision-making processes discussed in Chapter 3, play out in an individual's life, thus demonstrating the applicability of the findings from Chapters 2 and 3. The second goal of the chapter is to show how social inequalities interact with life circumstances to produce different educational pathways for young people. The third goal is to highlight the potential for stakeholders to use the in-depth understanding of the role of families in HE decision-making processes, in order to contribute to more equitable HE access.

4.2 Case 1: Deepika (SiDC)

(i)   Which factors acted as potential barriers to HE access for this young person?

Deepika was a **young woman** who was enrolled in SiDC, the most rural college in the study. Her home was located in a village in a **rural** area. As a young woman located in a traditional rural community, she faced **conservative norms** about appropriate educational trajectories for young women, and discussions in the village about risks to young women's (and therefore families') honour from attending HE. She was from the **OBC caste group** (Bhaat). She was from a **working class** background, with her parent/s engaged in **farming**. Her mother had been educated to Class 5, i.e. end of primary; her father had attended school up to Class 8, i.e. mid-secondary. In her nuclear family, she was the **eldest child**, meaning she was the **first in her family to complete secondary education**, and there was no prior experience of HE in her family. She was followed by one younger brother and one younger sister. She had attended the village **government school** for her prior education.

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Fields in rural Haryana

(ii)   Which factors enabled the young person to access HE, in spite of the barriers in place?

Deepika lived in a **joint family**, with two sets of parents and then also grandparents living in two adjoining houses, which meant she was very close with her cousin and they navigated being the first daughters in their families to complete secondary education and progress to HE together. She and her older cousin, who attended HE before Deepika, helped each other to be **trailblazers** in their respective families (2.3). Deepika's cousin was the first young woman in the village to attend HE. Deepika's **mother** was supportive (2.2), in part because she wanted her daughter to have a better life than she had had. This was in spite of some of the rumours about young men and women socialising together at the co-educational college. Deepika also gained her parents' support by acting as a **model student** (2.2, 2.5). The fact that there was a **college in their village** was a major deciding factor. Without this college, the nearest college would have been a private women's college in the nearby urban centre. This would have required a vastly higher income and also the resources and trust to commute. The **choice of the local college was rationalised** by Deepika, including based on her **considerations of the family economy** (2.5), and by her family based on the notion that hard work ensures success irrespective of institutional quality (3.3). Deepika's **father was the decision maker** in the family (3.2), and once he accepted this pathway for his daughter, he accompanied her to enrol in the college. As a final note, Deepika was now acting as a trailblazer herself (2.3) – a source of inspiration, advice and support – for her own siblings on their educational trajectories.

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4.3 Case 2: Jaya (SDC)

(i) Which factors acted as potential barriers to HE access for this young person?

Jaya was a **young woman** who was enrolled in SDC, one of the colleges located in small urban centres. Her home was located in a village in a **rural** area. She was from the **OBC caste group** (Saini). She was from a **lower-middle class** background (on the basis of parental occupations and the amenities and condition of her home), with her parent/s engaged in **farming**. Her mother had been educated to Class 5, i.e. end of primary; her father had attended school up to Class 8, i.e. mid-secondary. In her nuclear family, she was the **third child**, with two elder sisters, one younger sister and two younger half-brothers. Her elder sisters completed schooling (Class 12) but did not proceed to HE. She was the **first in her family to access HE**, and there was no prior experience of HE in her family. As such, she was the family trailblazer. Her **father had passed away** during her childhood. Her **maternal uncle** (2.2) played a key role for the family during the bereavement period. Jaya's mother then re-married. In Jaya's family, the siblings had accessed different educational opportunities depending on whether they reached important educational decisions before or after the second marriage had taken place. Jaya's elder sisters were married before they could access HE and they attended government school. During the bereavement period, the three eldest daughters stayed with the maternal uncle. However, Jaya was very young at that point, so soon re-joined her mother who was by then living with her new husband and the youngest daughter. The two eldest daughters' educational decisions and marriages were overseen by the maternal uncle. Both sisters, who were present during the fieldwork, stated that attending college would have delayed marriage and placed a further burden on their uncle, who had already been generous to them. Had Jaya been born earlier, her trajectory may have been very different. This illustrates the **importance of life circumstances** in determining HE access and choice. Jaya also noted **gendered differences of freedom** within the family, where the sons of the family were less limited in their choices and activities than the daughters.

(ii) Which factors enabled the young person to access HE, in spite of the barriers in place?

Jaya's educational trajectory was, as noted above, dependent on her good fortune in terms of her **position in the birth order** in her family. The two elder sisters had been limited in their education by the passing of their father, while Jaya's education – accessing **English-medium private school** and then contemplating HE – coincided with the arrival of her step-father. Jaya initially faced opposition towards her HE plans from her step-father (3.2), but she approached her **paternal aunt (biological father's sister) and her aunt's husband** for support for HE and also information about HE (2.5); they acted as advocates for Jaya's progression to HE. They lived near SDC and had sought information about the college and even used their personal networks to talk to the SDC College Principal to facilitate Jaya's enrolment. Jaya also received help and support from **teachers** at her private school, who, when she was nearly withdrawn from the school, stepped in and paid her fees and then arranged for a fee waiver. Jaya also personally deployed the **model student** strategy (2.2, 2.5). Finally, in order to access HE, Jaya accepted a **compromise** on her choice of college, **choosing the nearest college** in order to be able to access HE at all (3.3), partly in **consideration of the household economy** (2.5). As with Deepika, Jaya was also acting as a trailblazer, inspiring the HE aspirations of her younger sister.

4.4   Case 3: Mohan (SiDC)

(i)   Which factors acted as potential barriers to HE access for this young person?

Mohan was a **young man** who was enrolled in SiDC, the rural college in this study. His family home was located in a **rural** village. He was from a **Dalit** (Meghwal) family. His mother had not attained any level of formal school; his father had completed class 12. **Neither of his parents had first-hand experience of higher education**. Mohan was educated in the **local government school** in the village.

(ii)   Which factors enabled the young person to access HE, in spite of the barriers in place?

While **neither of his parents had first-hand experience of higher education, they were highly motivated to educate all of their children** (2.2), and unlike many participants in the study his father had completed Class 12. The parents were key figures of support who ensured access to higher education for all of Mohan's elder sisters, Mohan and his younger brother. Mohan was **not the first in family to attend HE.** His older sisters were enrolled in the private women's college in the nearest urban centre, which provided a private chartered bus service to its students. On the other hand, Mohan and his younger brother were both enrolled in SiDC and both of them had access to **personal motorcycles**, which provided them with mobility in their daily commute to college. Mohan's father was formally employed as a postal officer and one of his extended family members used to be a part of the formal village panchayat members. Within the village, his family was **relatively privileged** since they **had personal vehicles,** larger homes and access to agricultural land. Here it is important to note that the upward social mobility experienced by this Dalit family had empowered them to afford educating daughters in relatively more expensive private colleges. A significant factor in Mohan's access to higher education was that he was not able to communicate directly with his **father who usually remained silent**, yet who had the power to approve and veto educational decisions (3.2), and who played an active role in determining his son's HE choices. The mother was enlisted as a middle-person (3.4) for these negotiations. The young people in the family had to be strategic as they communicated with parents to gain approval to pursue their educational goals.

4.5   Case 4: Hritik (MDC)

(i)   Which factors acted as potential barriers to HE access for this young person?

Hritik was a **young man** who was enrolled in MDC, one of the colleges located in small urban centres. As with Jaya, Hritik's fortunes had also changed when his **father passed away**. This was a turbulent time involving moving back to Haryana from another state, and a period of his mother having to support her children with limited assistance from her husband's family members. Hritik had been attending private school up until then, but then switched to **government school**. He completed Class 12 in government school. The **switch from private to government school** was challenging as he had been attending an English medium school and then had to move to Hindi medium. However, it was more challenging for his sisters as they had completed more years of schooling in English. **Neither Hritik's step-father nor mother had attended HE**, though his mother had, unusually, completed

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Class 12 (high school), and his step-father had completed class 10 (secondary school). His birth father had attended HE but his untimely death had prevented any knowledge of this process being passed down to the next generation. This again highlights the **importance of life circumstances** in determining HE access and choice.

(ii)   **Which factors enabled the young person to access HE, in spite of the barriers in place?**

Hritik's home was located in the **same urban centre as the college**. He was from a **non-marginalised caste group** (Baniya). Hritik's mother had remarried and his step-father ran a **small business**; they **owned their own, newly-built home** and could therefore be described as **middle class within a relatively disadvantaged area**. Although Hritik's step-father and mother had not attended HE. In the project it was relatively unusual to find a **mother who had completed Class 12** (Henderson et al., 2021, section 2.4) and highly unusual to find a family where the mother had attained a higher level of education than her spouse (ibid.). Even though Hritik's birth father had died before being able to transfer his knowledge of HE to his children, there was still a **legacy of HE** in the family which may have contributed to the expectation that Hritik would also attend HE. Hritik was the **third child**, the **only son** and the **youngest child**. His eldest sister had attained Class 10 (secondary). She had been married after Class 10 due to the financial situation of the mother at that time and a proposal from a family not requiring a dowry. The second sister was the family **trailblazer** (2.3). She had attained a Masters qualification from MDC. This sister had acted as a source of **inspiration and advice** for Hritik about his educational choices. Hritik's **mother** was also a key source of **support** for her children accessing HE (2.2), as she did not want her own challenging experiences of early marriage and the ensuing lack of opportunities to be repeated for her children. She had striven for her children to continue with their education even during the bereavement period. She had received support from her natal family who facilitated her second marriage. Hritik received pressure from his **step-father** to access HE (2.2), some of which was based on **gendered, caste-related** expectations of a **groom's marriageability** (3.3) and also his **role as a son to financially support the family**. There were also **caste-related** expectations of Hritik's **future employment**, as he was from the merchant caste group and as such was studying Commerce. Hritik was not particularly invested in attending HE, in contrast with his elder sister and Deepika and Jaya. He and his sister received advice and support from many different sources, including seniors, friends and teachers. Hritik's **step-father** was the **decision-maker** (3.2). It is important to note that, although in Hritik's case the enabling factors outweighed the barriers, there was still **limited choice**. Hritik **rationalised attending the nearest college** based on his responsibilities to look after his parents and the family business (3.3). Hritik's mother rationalised choosing the local college based on the fact that hard work produces success, and institutional quality does not matter (3.3).

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5. Conclusions

This in-depth qualitative study has revealed the importance of family decision-making processes in young people's educational trajectories. Arguably, in order to understand how access to HE – and in particular enhanced informed choice about HE options – can be achieved, **it is vital to understand *who* within families is making decisions about HE, *how* these decisions are taken and *why* particular decisions are taken**. Taking these avenues of exploration shows how these decision-making processes are **gendered** and are also affected by other **intersecting factors**.

5.1   The different roles played by the family in educational trajectories

Family members play a variety of roles in facilitating access to HE.

(i)   Family members may **support** young people's access to HE. Support from **parents** was shown to be essential. **Mothers** were sources of support in particular due to their own hardship and lack of opportunities growing up and the desire to see different futures for their children. Parents provided **gendered support**, showing different expectations of **sons (future breadwinners)** and **daughters (future wives in other families)**. The **mother's natal family** and in particular **maternal uncles** played a role in influencing the educational choices of young people, including where paternal support was not forthcoming. Support was linked with **academic performance**, leading to young women in particular playing the role of **ideal daughter/model student** in order to gain support for accessing HE.

(ii)   Family members **inspire** young people's access to HE. **Trailblazers**, i.e. first members of a family and/or community to access HE, are very important in first-generation families. Often these figures are older siblings or cousins who have already accessed HE. They become beacons of aspiration for young people in families without a history of HE, also inspiring parents to consider HE for their children. Young people who have been inspired by trailblazers then can become trailblazers for others. Trailblazers can inspire across genders, but more often there are **gender-specific trailblazers**. Because of the dominant norms of masculinity and femininity, often it is the case the young women forge the path for other young women, and likewise for young men.

(iii)   Family members **provide information** that facilitates young people's access to HE. Information is provided by **parents**. However the nature of this information is often based on informal advice and hearsay, based on parents' own lack of direct experience of HE. Parents often **recommend the nearest college**, irrespective of institutional quality. **Other family members** may provide more accurate information. **Trailblazers** are important sources of more accurate information, based on their direct experience of HE. There is a **gendered transfer of information**, based on the fact that young people follow patterns of **gender segregation**, which then influences the transmission of information. Young men have access to more sources of information due to leading more public lives.

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(iv) **Cybercafes** are an **important yet gendered public space** where families access information and make educational decisions. Young men, who experience relatively fewer restrictions in public spaces than young women, are able to actively interact in this gendered public space to make informed decisions, whereas young women are usually accompanied by fathers or brothers who significantly influence their educational decisions.

(v) Family members **influence decisions**. This takes a number of different forms. Young people are **aware of the collective family economy** and negotiate HE options based on consideration of the expenses of the family as a whole. Young people **cultivate family members' support** to access HE by locating **advocates** who can represent their cause to their parents, and by **making compromises** about HE choice in order to guarantee HE access. **Emotional attachments** also influenced decisions within families. **Young women** expressed not wishing to live away from home. **Young men** also stated this, but based on their family responsibilities.

5.2   How educational decisions are taken within families

Educational decision making within families depends on family dynamics and also how families rationalise their decisions.

The role of **key decision maker** tended to be occupied by **fathers and sometimes brothers**. Final approval from the father was shown to be essential in order for access to HE to be secured. The involvement of the mother in this varied. **Mothers** tended to be more involved in **everyday decision making** within the family.

Decisions taken within the family about HE were rationalised based on a number of factors. **Choosing the nearest college** was rationalised based on **cost, distance and commute**. Practical concerns were raised as the basis for choosing the nearest college. However, rather than admitting that this lowered the quality of the HE that young people were accessing, families tended to **cover over the compromise** and state that **success depends on hard work, irrespective of institutional quality**. HE choices were also rationalised based on **aspirations for marriage and employment**. **Marriage** was a **limiting factor for women**, as the expected age of marriage conflicted with the period of HE study. For **men**, marriage was either a **limiting factor** (for men from lower-income families where they needed to earn sooner) or an **enabling factor** (for men where HE was an expectation for marriageability). **Employment** was mainly a concern for young men, where again employment aspirations were either a **limiting factor** (for men from lower-income families HE would conflict with earning sooner) or an **enabling factor** (for men where HE was an expectation for the type of job aspired for).

Decision making within families about educational prospects involves **strategic actions** by different family members. For **young people**, they often engaged in **indirect actions** because they lacked agency in their families for direct action. Actions included: **selective use of information, locating an advocate, performing the 'model student' role, seeking support from e.g. maternal family members to counter paternal family members.** These actions were particularly engaged in by **young women**. Decision making was influenced by **strategic voices and silences**. Young men and women alike were **strategically silent with their fathers**, choosing other ways to influence these key decision makers due to the

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impossibility of directly opposing fathers. **Fathers were also strategically silent**, leaving others (often mothers) to act as intermediaries and absenting themselves from a negotiating process.

5.3 How HE decision making is influenced by intersectional factors

Each young person who is making decisions about their future educational trajectory faces **potential barriers to HE access** and **enabling factors that facilitate HE access**. These barriers and enabling factors also affect **HE choice**.

Deepika (Case 1) faced a number of barriers as a young woman located in a traditional rural community with strong gendered expectations of young women's behaviour. She was also from a marginalised caste group (OBC) and a family who worked in farming and had low educational attainment in the parental generation. She was the first in family to complete secondary school. Enabling factors included that she lived in a joint family, and was preceded by her cousin as an HE trailblazer. Other enabling factors were the mother's support, Deepika's model student image, and the fact that there was a college in the same village. The local college was selected out of consideration of the family economy. The father was the decision maker and he accompanied Deepika with the enrolment process. Deepika was herself becoming a trailblazer for other siblings.

Jaya (Case 2) faced a number of barriers. She was also based in a rural community, from a lower-middle class, farming family and OBC caste group. Her parents had also not completed secondary school. She was the third child but the first in family to access HE. She had experienced a change in fortunes as her father passed away. Her maternal uncle stepped in and then her mother re-married. Jaya mentioned gendered differences of freedom for sons and daughters in her family. Jaya's own position in the birth order meant she had more favourable experiences than her older sisters. She was firmly located in her mother's new marital home and received private education. She mobilised support from her paternal aunt and her husband, and also received substantial support from her school teachers. She used the model student strategy. She also accepted compromise and chose the nearest college, in part based on consideration of the family economy. She was also becoming herself a trailblazer for others.

Mohan (Case 3) faced relatively fewer barriers than other participants. The family was from a Dalit caste background but had significant social networks within the village and a history of being members of the local village panchayat, which enabled them to experience upward social mobility. Though Mohan's parents had not attended HE, and his mother had received no formal education, his father had completed class 12. Moreover, Mohan was the fourth child after three older sisters who had attended HE, so he was not the first in family to access HE. Mohan and his brother had personal motorcycles, which facilitated his commute to college, and the family was able to afford sending three daughters to private colleges. Mohan's access to higher education was greatly influenced by his father's wishes and the family dynamics, including his father influencing his HE choices.

Hritik (Case 4) faced fewer barriers. He experienced a change of fortunes when his father died and experienced a disruptive change of home state and also a switch from private English-medium school to government Hindi-medium school. His mother and step-father had not accessed HE. Many enabling factors appear in Hritik's case. He resided in the same urban centre as the college, he was not from a marginalised caste group, and his family were

relatively wealthy and ran their own business. His mother had completed Class 12 and his step-father had completed secondary school. His birth father had attended HE. He was also the youngest child and the only son, and he followed from an older sister who had played the trailblazing role before him. His mother was also very supportive. His step-father had actively pressured him to attend HE based on caste-related expectations of his marriageability and employment prospects. He himself was not highly invested in attending HE. Despite all the favourable conditions, he still experienced limited choice and chose the nearest college based on his responsibilities towards his parents and the family business.

5.4 Final conclusions

The study shows that it is vital to understand the multiple, gendered roles that families play in supporting – and opposing – young people's educational trajectories. Young people are unable to access HE without family support. **Many HE interventions are based on the idea that young people make HE decisions themselves. This is clearly not the case for these first-generation families and communities in Haryana, North India.** It is essential to understand the roles that families play, and the roles of different family members, in order to design programmes to enhance equitable HE access that are based on the decision-makers as well as the young people. For targeted programme design, it is also necessary to understand how decisions are made – for instance understanding the mediating role of mothers even when fathers take the final decision. It is also necessary to understand that each individual faces different barriers and enabling factors that affect educational decisions. These are social inequalities but also personal circumstances and changes of fortune. Planning for equitable HE access needs to recognise that not all young people and their families are making decisions in the same circumstances, and moreover that gendered social norms affect all decisions pertaining to HE. Finally, it is noteworthy that **most young people in this study were not making HE decisions based on informed choice.** They were often not aware of the different HE options and nor were their families, and it was difficult to locate sources of accurate HE information. Even young people who were comparatively privileged were still making choices of e.g. institution or course based on hearsay and gendered stereotypes.

6. Recommendations

The recommendations from the Phase 2 study focus on recognising the role of families and parents in young people's educational trajectories. Based on this focus, the recommendations target two outcomes:

- All family members need to be aware of the educational options for young people. Given that different family members access different spaces and different sources of information, this needs to be recognised in terms of building a holistic approach to informed choice for HE.

- Young people themselves need to be more informed of their options and better equipped with reliable information about HE and negotiating skills in order to participate in decision making within their families about their educational futures.

6.1   The role of the government and the NGO sector

- In the Phase 1 report, it was recommended that state-funded educational schemes and interventions should be disseminated widely in a variety of means, including directly to young people.
    - o The Phase 2 study clarifies that this information should be shared with all members of the family (through appropriate means), for the purposes of collective informed decision making.

- In the Phase 1 report, the role of Aanganvadi workers and other localised services such as village panchayats was mentioned including the need for schools and colleges to join up with these.
    - o The Phase 2 study highlights the need for these services to consider parents, grandparents, other relatives and community members as recipients of information on higher education, in addition to the young people as targeted recipients.
    - o Moreover, it would be beneficial for public service employers to store information about higher education to disburse to employees, as the workplace has been identified as one means of parents from disadvantaged groups learning about information.

- In the Phase 1 report, it was identified that information about higher education should be disseminated to community groups and to schools. The Phase 2 study helps to refine these points as discussed below.
    - o Phase 1 recommended that families need to have access to readily available information about school choice and higher education choice (including subject choice) and employability options, and connecting these to envision educational trajectories for young people.
        - ▪ Phase 2 highlights that different family members may have different types of involvement and may benefit from the provision of information about HE in different locations and formats. For instance, fathers and mothers occupy different physical spaces in the community, so

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information targeting different parents needs to be provided in appropriate spaces.

- ▪ Phase 2 recommends that audio or video information is particularly important for family members who have not attained high levels of formal education. This needs to be a key consideration as the government develops and supports technology and as HEIs follow the NEP recommendations to provide outreach.

- o Phase 1 recommended that information should be included about costs of HE, including fees but also supplementary costs, as well as scholarships and bursaries (including of competitive HEIs which may be located further away).

- ▪ Phase 2 highlights the need for advice for low-income families for budgeting for HE and information to be presented in a clear and accessible manner including for parents who may have doubts about the worth of HE.

6.2 The role of colleges

- Phase 1 highlighted that colleges need to engage with families more directly, through visits to communities and through guided visits of the colleges, and that mothers and fathers as well as sisters and brothers have different roles and these need to be respected and explored.

  - o Phase 2 highly recommends that colleges interact with young people's relatives, including parents and other family members, as well as the young people. It is important for all those who have a say in decision making to access more information and understanding about HE. Just targeting one family member e.g. young person or father does not reflect the way in which educational decisions are taken within families.

  - o Phase 2 showed that some families do contact e.g. a college principal for advice, and that this can be extremely helpful. However many parents would not be aware that this is possible nor be aware of how to go about seeking advice from the college. Colleges could usefully discuss how they wish to be contacted and for which types of questions, and should then display this information on any materials circulated about the college.

  - o Phase 2 also recognises the strong role that other family members e.g. maternal uncles may play in young people's education so the concept of the family needs to encompass potential input from other relatives.

- Phase 1 recommended that colleges should formalise the role of current students acting as ambassadors for the colleges in disseminating information about higher education in their communities and giving guided visits of the college.

  - o Phase 2 notes the importance of 'trailblazer' students and their potential contribution to spreading accurate, reliable and experience-based information about HE in local communities who do not have a history of HE. Phase 2 reinforces the notion that formalising this role in the form of student ambassadors will enhance informed choice.

  - o Phase 2 further notes that trailblazer influence is gendered, i.e. that young women are more likely to influence other young women and likewise with young men. This should be borne in mind when establishing the role of student ambassador including in terms of gender balance of ambassadors.

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- Phase 1 recommended that colleges should provide step-by-step guidance on the admissions process and ensure this is available at schools, internet cafes and at the college itself, and available online.
  o Phase 2 extends this recommendation to suggest that this information is also made available to employees in government jobs, and also that locations where the parental generation frequent are identified and stocked with this information.

6.3   The role of schools

- Phase 1 recommended that schools should work with colleges and college ambassadors to facilitate the spreading of reliable, accurate information about higher education options to young people and, where possible, their communities.
  o Phase 2 extends this recommendation further to suggest that, when parents are called to school for parent-teacher meetings or other occasions, information about HE is provided and clearly signalled.
  o Phase 2 showed that some families face misfortune which severely affects their quality of life and livelihoods. Particularly of note is single-parent households including those affected by bereavement. Schools are more likely to be aware of these cases than e.g. targeted colleges, so, in cases like these, schools may need to pay additional attention to HE advice (especially on the systems and processes) for young people in families facing these situations.

- Phase 1 recommended that young women in particular (as well as men) need to receive more training at school level in negotiation skills, so that they can have more involvement in discussions of their futures within the family.
  o Phase 2 reinforces this recommendation, with the emphasis on how to engage in participatory discussion within the family and also on confidence building of young women.

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A Fair Chance for Education:
Gendered Pathways to Educational Success in Haryana

Phase 3 Report: Institutional Initiatives to Support Informed Choice in Accessing Higher Education: Implementing a Taster Day in Government Colleges in Haryana, India

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Accompanying resources for the project

In addition to this report, other resources about the project are available on the project website: www.warwick.ac.uk/haryana. This includes various Project Outputs such as project reports and presentations, as well as other information about the project and the people involved.
The project can also be found on Twitter and Instagram as @FCFHaryana.
The project Team can be contacted at fcfharyana@warwick.ac.uk.

Report compiled with support from Active4Research Ltd.

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List of abbreviations

IAS	Indian Administrative Services
CG	Consultative Group
FCF	Fair Chance Foundation
FCF Project	A Fair Chance for Education: Gendered Pathways to Educational Success in Haryana
FD	Fieldwork Diary
HE	Higher Education
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
HSSC	Haryana Staff Selection Commission
MDC	Mahendragarh District College (pseudonym)
NCC	National Cadet Corps
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PI	Principal Investigator
RQ	Research Question
SDC	Sonipat District College (pseudonym)
SiDC	Sirsa District College (pseudonym)
WCPRS	Warwick Collaborative Postgraduate Research Scholarships

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Preface

This report presents the development and findings from Phase 3 of the 5-year 'Fair Chance for Education' project, funded by Fair Chance Foundation (henceforth referred to as the FCF project) which focused on gendered trajectories to Higher Education (HE) in Haryana, India.

Phase 1 revealed that most of the participants in the study identified their family as a key factor, and the home as a key space, where educational decisions were made and supported (Henderson et al., 2021). It was found that gendered access to HE was influenced by multiple factors, such as distance between home and college, family composition, and family background. However, there was very limited understanding shown in the literature of *how* educational decisions leading to HE were made within families.

Phase 2 therefore sought to explore the social and family background of this cohort of students in more depth, to establish how educational decision making was undertaken within families. It was carried out by Dr Anjali Thomas as her doctoral thesis entitled 'Role of Families in the Gendered Educational Trajectories of Undergraduate Students in Haryana, India' (Thomas, 2021). The Phase 2 findings report presents the findings from the doctoral study in an accessible way for a wider audience (Thomas and Henderson, 2022).

This report presents the findings from Phase 3 of the research. It builds on the previous research but shifts the focus to the institutional response. The research was carried out by Nikita Samanta as her doctoral project. It raises the question of whether there is an outreach culture within Government Colleges which recognises and responds to the context in which educational decision making is undertaken. The research also examines the role of Government Colleges in mitigating the lack of accurate, relevant, formal knowledge and information available to young women and men and their families, which had emerged as a major factor that affects educational choices in Haryana.

The doctoral research studies (for Phases 2 and 3) were funded by the Fair Chance Foundation (FCF) in collaboration with the Warwick Collaborative Postgraduate Research Scholarships (WCPRS) scheme as well as additional funding from the Warwick donor community and the Department of Education Studies (Phase 2) and School of Law (Phase 3) at Warwick.

Executive summary

Introduction

Phases 1 and 2 of the FCF project identified the social inequalities that influence educational choices and the decision of whether to access HE (Henderson et al., 2021; Thomas and Henderson, 2022). They highlighted the key role played by families in Haryana in influencing the HE choices of young women and men.

These earlier phases also established that Government Colleges in Haryana are providing educational opportunities for first generation students whose parents (and wider family members) have little or no experience of HE and access to very limited sources of information within their social settings. Students thus often lack reliable information and support in navigating HE choices.

The need for HE policy responses which recognise that these social, cultural, and economic disadvantages deeply affect access to HE is now widely recognised. 'Widening Participation' programmes conducted within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have a key role to play as policy interventions to ensure greater diversity and inclusion among the student body. Evidence from a number of countries suggests that open-days are one of the most effective outreach strategies to enable knowledge of and access to HE (Connor et al., 1999; Briggs and Wilson, 2007; Reay, 2016).

This Phase 3 study examined the role of Government Colleges in mitigating the lack of accurate, relevant, formal knowledge, and information available to young women, young men, and their families. In particular, it involved working in partnership with local colleges to develop, implement, and evaluate a 'Taster Day', as a specific form of outreach activity.

The research asked four research questions:

1. What role do public institutions currently play, if any, in enabling gendered access to higher education in Haryana?

2. What are the institutional attitudes towards carrying out outreach in Haryana?

3. Does the development and delivery of an outreach activity contribute towards the development of an institutional culture of outreach and if so how?

4. What impact does the delivery of this outreach activity have on differently positioned young women and men and their access to higher education?

The study therefore explored the role of Government Colleges as local hubs of knowledge about HE for first generation of students and their families and consequently as facilitators of informed choice.

Research design

The research used a range of methods: participatory; document analysis to understand the current institutional context relating to access; observation and journaling to study the institution in the process of organising the taster day; questionnaires administered immediately prior to and post the taster day to student attendees; and semi-structured interviews with selected student attendees prior to and after the event to measure the impact of the activity.

The bilingual (Hindi and English) tools for this study were developed by Nikita Samanta at the University of Warwick. She conducted the fieldwork at the three colleges between September 2019 and November 2019. Data was also collated, coded, and analysed by Nikita Samanta at the University of Warwick.

Key insights

- There have been few requirements for state funded HEIs to undertake outreach activities and therefore there was little formal outreach carried out by these institutions in Haryana.

- Outreach had been confined to printed prospectus and newspaper advertisements announcing admissions, which did not provide the students with much information on the mechanisms to access HE or the choices available.

The transition to online university application systems

- The move to online admissions, and a reliance on college websites as the main source of formal information, since 2012 had reduced opportunities for prospective students and their families to visit colleges and to make contact with staff.

- Online admission increased the challenges faced by first generation students from disadvantaged backgrounds whose families lacked resources to support informed decision making during the admissions process.

- Because of a lack of appropriate technology at home, students and their families relied upon the resources offered by cyber cafés. The resultant errors in the applications had to be addressed by college staff. Predominate gender conservative cultural assumptions were reinforced through this application process.

College attitude towards outreach

- Senior college staff had a positive attitude towards the idea of carrying out institutional outreach and recognition of its role in improving informed choices about access to HE. This was evidenced by staff undertaking informal outreach on social media, assisting parents and counselling prospective students.

- There were considerable constraints on the staff capacity to undertake outreach. The colleges were under resourced, lacking their full complement of permanent staff and were required to undertake a range of additional non educationally related responsibilities.

- Senior college staff at all three colleges were willing to undertake a taster day when suggested by the researcher.

- The level of engagement in the taster day reflected different institutional contexts within the three colleges. One saw the taster day as a way of increasing numbers; another saw it as a way of addressing issues relating to inclusion and the third, an oversubscribed institution, was willing to take part but less inclined to take responsibility for implementation.

- The project was designed to evaluate the extent to which college staff had the capacity to plan and then implement such an event. A staff 'champion' who understood the objectives and was willing to work with the researcher greatly assisted the planning and implementation this process.

- Two events were conducted, hosted by the colleges, demonstrating support for and ability to undertake such an event (while the planning for the event took place in the third college, ultimately it was not possible to conduct it due to external constraints). The event was well received by staff.

Outcome of the taster day

- The study demonstrated therefore that the taster day events were successful in building the colleges' capacity to carry out such events in the future.

- Analysis of the pre- and post-event surveys and interviews evidenced that the taster days assisted young women and men from disadvantaged backgrounds in learning more about the choices available to them and to navigate the online application and admission process.

- There was a very significant increase in the number who now felt they had the information necessary to choose a HE institution.

- More young women than young men now felt confident in this decision making.

- There was also evidence of increased confidence in navigating the admission process and making informed choice about subjects to be studied.

- Overall, the analysis revealed a very high level of participants reporting that the event was useful and such an event should be adopted by colleges.

- The data from the evaluation conducted 10 months later (drawn from a limited response rate due to the Covid pandemic) established that the taster day had been very valuable in helping them to navigate the HE admission process and to make informed choices.

- One year later the two colleges who participated in the study reported an increase in application numbers. One had not carried out a precise quantitative evaluation, but the other reported a 15% increase in numbers. It is important to remember that by this time India was experiencing the full effects of the Covid pandemic.

Overall, the study demonstrated the effectiveness of carrying out institutional outreach, especially by colleges that were identified in Phase 1 as being at the frontiers of access to HE (because they are low cost and situated locally and often accessed by first generation students).

Recommendations

The recommendations for Phase 3 draw on and extend the recommendations of Phases 1 and 2. This is displayed in the table below.

The role of the government and the NGO sector		
Phase 1: state-funded educational schemes and interventions should be disseminated widely in a variety of means, including directly to young people.	Phase 2: this information should be shared with all members of the family (through appropriate means), for the purposes of collective informed decision making.	
Phase 1: Aanganvadis and other localised state services such as village panchayats, government schools and colleges should collaborate in this effort.	Phase 2: the need for these services to consider parents, grandparents, other relatives and community members as recipients of information on HE, in addition to the young people as targeted recipients. It would be beneficial for public service employers to store information about HE to disburse to employees, as the workplace has been identified as one means of parents from disadvantaged groups learning about information.	Phase 3: Staffing shortages should be addressed to facilitate the role of staff in important activities such as outreach. Faculty members' additional duties that are not related to higher education (e.g. assisting with elections) should be reduced to allow further concentration on core duties.
Phase 1: families need to have access to readily available information about school choice and higher education choice (including subject choice) and employability options, and connecting these to envision educational trajectories for young people.	Phase 2: different family members may have different types of involvement and may benefit from the provision of information about HE in different locations and formats. For instance, fathers and mothers occupy different physical spaces in the community, so information targeting different parents needs to be provided in appropriate spaces. Audio or video information is particularly important for family members who have not attained high levels of formal education. This needs to be a key	Phase 3: The application process should be made multimodal (offline and online) to make it easier for rural students (or with disadvantaged backgrounds) to apply to HE.

	consideration as the government develops and supports technology and as HEIs follow the NEP recommendations to provide outreach.	
Phase 1: information should be included about costs of HE, including fees but also supplementary costs, as well as scholarships and bursaries (including of competitive HEIs which may be located further away).	Phase 2: the need for advice for low-income families for budgeting for HE and information to be presented in a clear and accessible manner including for parents who may have doubts about the worth of HE.	Phase 3: Funding should be made available for colleges to organise taster days and other outreach activities.
The role of colleges		
Phase 1: colleges need to engage with families more directly, through visits to communities and through guided visits of the colleges, and mothers and fathers as well as sisters and brothers have different roles and these need to be respected and explored.	Phase 2: it is highly recommended for colleges to interact with young people's relatives, including parents and other family members, as well as the young people. It is important for all those who have a say in decision making to access more information and understanding about HE. Just targeting one family member e.g. young person or father does not reflect the way in which educational decisions are taken within families. Some families do contact e.g. a college principal for advice, and this can be extremely helpful. However many parents would not be aware that this is possible nor be aware of how to go about seeking advice from the college. Colleges could usefully discuss how they wish to be contacted and for which types of questions, and should then display this information on any materials circulated about the college. Other family members e.g. maternal uncles may also play a strong role in young	Phase 3: Families should be invited and involved in the outreach efforts.

3.12

	people's education, so the concept of the family needs to encompass potential input from other relatives.	
Phase 1: colleges should formalise the role of current students acting as ambassadors for the colleges in disseminating information about higher education in their communities and giving guided visits of the college.	Phase 2: 'trailblazer' students have potential to make a significant contribution to spreading accurate, reliable and experience-based information about HE in local communities who do not have a history of HE. Formalising this role in the form of student ambassadors will enhance informed choice. Trailblazer influence is gendered, i.e. young women are more likely to influence other young women and likewise with young men. This should be borne in mind when establishing the role of student ambassador including in terms of gender balance of ambassadors.	Phase 3: It would also be useful if there were members of staff hired to solely look after the admission process who could be responsible for outreach and improving access. Colleges should recognise and reward existing outreach practices that are occurring and faculty members' endeavours in relation to outreach When colleges organise events such as taster days, they need to consider: • Appointing a key in-charge faculty member to oversee the event. • Including a number of other faculty members in the planning. • Plan for bus transport and refreshments. • Arrange the programme. • Ensure the venue has audio-visual equipment. • Work with local schools to attend. • Consider using a questionnaire to evaluate the success of the event. • Try to invite parents and other family members as well as school students.
Phase 1: colleges should provide step-by-step guidance on the admissions process and ensure this is available at schools, internet	Phase 2: this information could also be made available to employees in government jobs. Locations where the parental generation frequent can be	Phase 3: Colleges, especially public colleges, should carry out some form of outreach to bridge the gap in information and

cafés and at the college itself, and available online.	identified and stocked with this information.	knowledge and make access to HE easier. Informational brochures should be distributed in hard copy to give students all the necessary information about a particular college.
The role of schools		
Phase 1: schools should work with colleges and college ambassadors to facilitate the spreading of reliable, accurate information about higher education options to young people and, where possible, their communities.	Phase 2: when parents are called to school for parent-teacher meetings or other occasions, information about HE should be provided and clearly signalled. Some families face misfortune which severely affects their quality of life and livelihoods. Particularly of note are single-parent households including those affected by bereavement. Schools are more likely to be aware of these cases than e.g. targeted colleges, so, in cases like these, schools may need to pay additional attention to HE advice (especially on the systems and processes) for young people in families facing these situations.	Phase 3: Schools should work with local colleges to support their students attending taster days or invite faculty members to the college to provide information on HE.
Phase 1: young women in particular (as well as men) need to receive more training at school level in negotiation skills, so that they can have more involvement in discussions of their futures within the family.	Phase 2: the training can have an emphasis on how to engage in participatory discussion within the family and also on confidence building of young women.	

1. The Phase 3 study

1.1 Introduction: the role of institutional outreach in accessing higher education

Phases 1 and 2 of this project identified the social inequalities that influence educational choices and the decision of whether to access HE (Henderson et al., 2021; Thomas and Henderson, 2022). They highlighted the key role played by families in influencing the HE choices of young women and men. Families in Haryana make these choices for women in particular based upon gendered assumptions which relate to the maintenance of family honour and reputation. These underpin the social practices in northern India (Chakravarti 1993, Kandiyoti 1988, Karve 1953, Dube 1988, Chowdhry 2011a and 2011b). More specifically, the expectation of feminine chastity ensures that safeguarding the safety and reputation of young women when they access public spaces, including HEIs, is of prime importance to families. As a result, choices are informed by distance from home, the availability of safe public transport, the social reputation of the HEI, and, if applicable, the safety and quality of hostel accommodation. In contrast, for young men the decisions are more informed by subject choice, academic reputation, and employability prospects due to the role of young men in providing financial support for their families.

These earlier phases also established that Government Colleges in Haryana are providing educational opportunities for first generation students whose parents (and wider family members) have little or no experience of HE and access to very limited sources of information within their social settings. Wider literature confirms that young people from marginalised groups often face a range of challenges in accessing HE, such as lack of social and cultural capital (Bandyopadhyay and Subrahmanian, 2008), financial difficulty, social sanctions on movement (Chowdhry, 2009; Bandyopadhyay and Subrahmanian, 2008), logistical challenges such as lack of transportation, lack of awareness about the process of applying, and lack of knowledge about the various courses and avenues available to them in HE (Chanana 2007).

The need for policy responses which recognise that social, cultural, and economic disadvantages deeply affect access to HE is now widely recognised. This is rooted in the important understanding that a society's success is reliant on access to HE for all:

> A successful learning society is one in which everyone obtains high-quality general education, leading to a comprehensive post-school education and training system in which everyone has access to suitable opportunities for lifelong learning, including a university within reach of everyone (Gorard et al., 2006, p. 9).

'Widening Participation' (WP) programmes have a key role to play as policy interventions to ensure greater diversity with HEIs and can lead to positive outcomes for individuals, for the economy, and for society more generally (Gorard et al., 2006; HEFCE, 2007; Moore et al., 2013; Osbourne, 2003; Younger et al., 2018; Harrison and Waller, 2017; O'Donnell et al., 2009). The forms of these widening participation interventions vary across countries and reflect the different inequalities (race; caste; sex/gender) or injustice being addressed (Hasan and Nussbaum, 2012). These may be government or institution led. Such interventions have been classified into three broad categories:

- in-reach programmes for 'getting people in', which aim to recruit students into an institution (e.g. summer schools);

- out-reach programmes 'going out to people', which include partnerships with external players such as schools, employers, and the wider community; and

- systematic rather than discrete provisions (e.g. accreditation of prior learning, distance learning or part time provision) (Osbourne, 2003).

At a governmental level India has a long standing, constitutionally sanctioned, affirmative action policy. It is implemented primarily through the reservation of places, in publicly funded or supported HEIs, for groups based upon caste and tribal origins. It recognises the historical and structural disadvantages faced by these groups. Over time initiatives which address other forms of disadvantage, such as those based upon sex/gender and disability, have been added. Additional measures include the provision of targeted scholarships, fee exemption, and provision of hostel accommodation (Deshpande, 2012; Hasan, 2012; Deshpande, 2017).

Reliance on this long-established 'top down' approach to WP has meant that there have been few institution-based initiatives within Government-supported HEIs, particularly those serving these disadvantaged communities. Evidence from South Africa and USA suggests that adding other forms of WP activities such as outreach can enhance the efficacy of these affirmative action policies (Hasan and Nussbaum, 2012). While there is a wide body of literature addressing issues relating to the implementation of the reservation system (Deshpande and Zacharias, 2013; Deshpande, 2017; Kumar, 2017; Kumar, 2021), there is little or no systematic evaluation and no research which focuses specifically on institutional outreach initiatives within the Government sector.

Phase 3 of the research focused on the potential for institutional responses within Government Colleges in this context. What role do Government Colleges play, if any, in enabling young women and men, and their families, from predominately disadvantaged backgrounds, to make *informed choices* about their educational futures?

The research questions (RQs) were as follows:

1. Is there a need for outreach in public colleges in Haryana? If so, what role do public institutions currently play, if any, in enabling gender-equitable access to higher education in Haryana?

2. What are the institutional attitudes towards carrying out outreach in Haryana?

3. Does the development and delivery of an outreach activity contribute towards the development of an institutional culture of outreach and, if so, how?

4. What impact does the delivery of this outreach activity have on differently positioned young women and men and their access to higher education?

Evidence from a number of countries suggests that open days are one of the most effective outreach strategies to enable knowledge of and access to HE (Connor et al., 1999; Briggs and Wilson, 2007; Reay, 2016). They provide prospective students with the experience of being an 'actual' student at the institution. This Phase 3 study involved developing, implementing, and evaluating the use of a 'Taster Day' as a specific form of outreach activity. Ferrier, Heagney, and Long (2008) define 'Taster

days' as a programme whereby participants are able to 'sample' university life for a short period. A 'taster day' is therefore a more targeted form of open day in that it is only 'open' to invitees (Smith, 2016; Harrison and Waller, 2017).

1.2 Research design

The research adopted a **participatory action research methodology**:

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is a collaborative research approach that engages the active participation of those affected by the research to identify and address real-world problems. It is a process-oriented and democratic research method that involves close collaboration between researchers and participants to generate knowledge and take action towards positive social change. This approach emphasizes the importance of empowering marginalized or underrepresented groups and ensuring that their voices and experiences are heard and integrated into the research process (Brydon-Miller et al., 2003; Somekh, 2005; McNiff, 2014; Vaughn and Jacquez, 2020).

A key aim of the research was to assess the willingness and capacity of the institutions to carry out an event as a pilot outreach activity. The researcher, building on discussions with key actors within the colleges (and past interactions with the earlier phases of the FCF project), proposed a taster day. The proposal put to the key actors included (1) an offer of modest financial support provided by the FCF Project to cover the costs of the event (such as hiring of transport and provision of refreshments for attendees) and (2) logistical support from the researcher (provided within the fieldwork timeframe). The nature and extent of the researcher role itself was part of the assessment of the institutional willingness and capacity to undertake the activity. This required establishing agreement on the role and tasks to be undertaken by the researcher. The aim was to encourage the colleges to take ownership of the event and run it as their own event, while assessing their response to this externally suggested initiative. The researcher took responsibility for the evaluative elements relating to the impact of the taster day on the student attendees, which involved the administering the pre- and post-event questionnaires, as these formed the basis for the second part of the doctoral research. The project design took account of the role of hierarchy within the institutional context of Haryana and India more generally. It therefore built in a visit to the colleges by the FCF Project Principal Investigator (PI) and established the willingness of key local contributors to the FCF Project to mediate relationships if this proved necessary.

The study focused on three colleges, and this enabled the researcher,

- to develop and evaluate interventions (Baxter and Jack, 2008);

- to identify links between events and processes over time (Fusch et al., 2017);

- to identify the similarities and differences in the experience of implementing outreach in the various colleges as well as the perceptions of the participants who attended the event.

Overall, there were therefore two elements to this study. The *first part of the study* constituted the observational element, and aimed to evaluate the processes and attitudes adopted within the HEIs when planning and implementing a taster day. It aimed to assess the willingness and ability of government college staff members to undertake such an activity when initially proposed by the researcher. It also sought to

assess the extent to which such an activity built awareness of the value of outreach activities within the institution.

The *second part of the study* focused on evaluating the taster day from the students' perspective. Did the students who experienced the taster day consider themselves more ready to access HE and make informed choices, due to the added support provided?

Thus, the study followed the trajectory of implementing an outreach activity in public institutions in Haryana from its inception through to evaluating its effectiveness.

The study used the following **methods** to collect data:

- **document analysis** to understand the current context for enrolling students including any evidence of outreach activities;

- **observation** and **researcher journaling** to study the institution in the process of organising the outreach activity, complemented by **questionnaires;** and

- **semi-structured interviews** with students before the event to understand the current level of knowledge and willingness to access HE, and after the event to evaluate the impact of the activity on the students.

Thus, to answer research questions about the process and feasibility of implementing an outreach event in a public college in Haryana, the research adopted observation and journaling along with document analysis. In order to better understand the experiences of students in participating in an outreach activity and its impact on their access to HE, the research used questionnaires and semi-structured interviews.

The research study followed codes of research integrity practice, and ethical approval was granted from University of Warwick before the study. The colleges and all study participants were carefully anonymised. More specifically, the colleges were given the same pseudonyms as used in Phases 1 and 2: Sonipat District College (SDC), Sirsa District College (SiDC), Mahendragarh District College (MDC). All participants were provided with information about the research project, and they voluntarily consented to be participants of this study with an option to withdraw at any time. Written informed consent was also sought from student participants prior to undertaking the questionnaires.

1.3 District, college, school, and student selection

The study was conducted in the same three districts and colleges chosen for the first two phases. Access to the field was therefore facilitated by the previous interaction with key resource persons in these districts and in the three colleges.

The first part of the study was carried out in all three districts and three colleges. Two local public high schools (one boys' school and one girls' school) from each district were identified and invited to participate in the outreach activity. Each school selected approximately 50 Class 12 (final year of high school) students from across disciplines to represent the school.

The first part of the study involved the conduct of the taster day. Two colleges, SDC and SiDC, held such events. One was a co-educational college, and the other was in the process of converting into a single-sex women's college. However, both colleges hosted both young men and women participants for the taster day from the local

schools. It remained beneficial for the newly women-only college to also host young men students as this would still allow the school students to better understand the HE context application process and 'taste' a college. It was not possible to carry out the event at MDC due to external administrative issues.

A total of 194 (115 women and 79 men) Class 11 and 12 students from the various public schools in the districts attended the two events. These participants came from a variety of rural and urban locations and were from different Scheduled Caste, Backward Class (divided into A and B group in Haryana) and Non-marginalised Caste categories.

1.4 Fieldwork implementation

The fieldwork was implemented in the three months between September 2019 to November 2019.

Fieldwork visit 1 in September 2019 consisted of one week in each district including 2-3 visits to each college to build rapport with the college staff and Principal;

- to observe the normal day-to-day functioning of the college and provide insight into the culture of the college, in particular whether there was evidence of an outreach culture or the potential to develop this (RQs 1 and 3);

- to obtain secondary documentation relating to HE outreach, access to HE in Haryana, and in relation to government colleges (RQs 1 and 3);

- to conduct semi-structured interviews with officials and institutional heads to ascertain if there were any institutional efforts to improve enrolments that secondary literature may have failed to capture (RQs 1 and 3);

- to initiate informal discussions with previously identified faculty contact persons relating to hosting a taster day in the college and to observe the reception of such a proposal (RQ 2);

- to identify public schools from each district whose Class 12 students would be invited to attend the taster day (RQs 2 and 4).

In addition, the researcher had the opportunity to conduct a formal session with current students at SiDC to ask about their experience of accessing HE, which gave the researcher first-hand insight into some of the challenges they had faced.

Fieldwork visit 2 in October 2019 consisted of a return visit to all 3 colleges (to focus primarily on RQ 2), accompanied by the FCF Project PI,

- to solidify the plans for the taster day including practical and logistical issues;

- to meet the Principal in MDC to obtain support and buy-in for the event; and

- to visit the schools to discuss logistical issues involved in attendance at the event.

Fieldwork visit 3 in November 2019 consisted of a visit to two districts and colleges (SDC and SiDC),

- to facilitate and assist with the preparation for the taster days in the two colleges and to visit the invited schools (3 days) (RQ 2);

- to confirm the agreed tasks to be undertaken by the researcher (RQ 2)

- to facilitate and observe the conduct of the two taster days (RQs 2 and 4);

- to administer pre and post event questionnaires to the predominately Class 12 participants (RQ 4); and

- to administer in-person, in-depth post event interviews with randomly selected Class 12 participants (RQ 4).

District	Participants	Grade		Stream			Interviews conducted
		Class 11	Class 12	Science	Arts	Commerce	
Sirsa	Govt. Sr. Sc. Girls School	0	56	21	21	14	4
	Govt. Sr. Sc. Boys School	0	32	0*	26	6	3
Sonipat	Govt. Sr. Sc. Girls School	8	51	19	20	20	4
	Govt. Sr. Sc. Boys School	2	45	12	29	6	2
	Total Participants	194 (88 participants in Sirsa and 106 participants in Sonipat)					

Figure 1: Data about the taster day participants

*Note: There was no science stream in the school

The **evaluation in September 2020** (10 months after the events) involved carrying out telephone follow-up interviews with the Class 12 attendees who filled in questionnaires, to understand the effect of the event on students' perception, knowledge, and willingness to access HE as well as to understand the challenges they face in accessing HE (RQ 4).

The take up for this phase was 17% of the original cohort because of the challenges of contacting participants in the Covid-19 pandemic. The planned in-person interviews with Class 12 attendees had to be replaced by these telephone calls. There were substantial practical challenges identifying appropriate telephone numbers (often via family members) and then obtaining access to student attendees via these numbers.

Throughout the research, adequate time was allocated to cover important steps including seeking and receiving voluntary informed consent, building rapport, and conducting interviews during the working hours of the colleges.

1.5 Data analysis

The interviews and questionnaires were administered to the student participants using a bilingual (English and Hindi) format. The qualitative data from the interviews were verbally transcribed into separate Word files and were not translated into English except when quoted in research and reports. The quantitative data from the questionnaires were entered into an Excel file and then analysed to produce demographic profiles of the student attendees (gender, caste, religion, and class) and to describe the experience of most (if not all) of the attendees. These data provided the context to findings from the smaller number of individual interviews and from analysis of the fieldwork observational notes.

The pre- and post-event questionnaires and data from the interviews with Class 12 attendees were also thematically coded using Nvivo (for which the researcher was trained). The responses from the free text box were entered verbatim and analysed for the themes that emerged.

The observation and journal records were also thematically coded in NVivo. The themes enabled the researcher to analyse and interpret the data to assess the effectiveness of taster days as a tool of institutional outreach in improving access and changing mindsets about HE. The gendered aspects relating to access were also identified.

Document analysis was also undertaken on the limited number of documents. This included a brochure and poster on outreach, as well as other materials that the colleges used to encourage access to HE. The brochure and poster were both outdated. The lack of documents was in itself a finding of the study.

2. Current role played by public HEIs in enabling access

The following two sections provide general findings based on the researcher's observations and informal interviews with college staff and principals recorded in a fieldwork diary (henceforth FD). These observations and interviews were supplemented by informal conversations with students in all three colleges, plus notes taken in a meeting with students organised by college staff at SiDC, recorded in the FD.

2.1 Conducting outreach in an era of online admissions

Prior to the National Education Policy 2020 (MHRD 2020), access to HE was framed primarily through the implementation of reservation quotas, supplemented with additional measures such as scholarships. There were few requirements for state funded HEIs generally to undertake outreach activities and therefore there was little formal outreach carried out by those institutions in Haryana. Outreach was confined to printed prospectus and newspaper advertisements announcing admissions, which did not provide the students with substantial information on the mechanisms to access HE or the choices available.

Until 2012, colleges were required to print a prospectus which detailed courses, the admission process, and scholarships and funding specific to the college. However, this policy was discontinued when the government in Haryana introduced online admissions in 2012, to coincide with a national push towards digitalisation (Tribune India 2013; Vij 2018). As a result, the application process for admission to HE moved online along with information about colleges and courses.

After 2012, college websites became the main source of information for potential applicants. However, during the time of the fieldwork, it was observed that the college websites were not updated with the most relevant information about courses. It was therefore a challenge for the researcher, and therefore any prospective students, to find in-depth information about the colleges anywhere on the internet.

Prof. P[1]—a faculty at the college and our point of contact—and his colleagues at SiDC thought that the disappearance of print prospectus curbed prospective students' opportunities to visit colleges and obtain information and advice from the college staff first hand. When the application process was conducted using hard-copy forms, parents and students were required to visit the colleges to collect the forms, which often doubled as an opportunity for an informal campus visit/tour as well as informal information sessions with the staff where students could have their questions and concerns addressed (source: FD).

Prof. S commented on the advantage of having a printed prospectus: "students isko ghar le jate to mummy, daddy, dada, dadi sab dekhte aur decide karte. Abhi to kisi ke pas aise koi information nahi hai" (Students would take it home and their mother,

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[1] This designation, and any other ones that follow, are pseudonyms, in line with the ethical approval process.

father, paternal grandfather, paternal grandmother would all have a look and decide. Now no one has any of this information available).

Colleges are seen as safe spaces where information can be found. College leaders in all three districts thought that these avenues had served to demystify the often complex application process (source: FD).

2.2 Challenges of online admissions system for applicants and colleges

The colleges' online application systems do not allow for errors to be rectified easily. As a result, students often made many mistakes in their application forms. The potential for error was exacerbated by the fact that students rarely filled out the application forms themselves as they did not have access to computers at home.

During an informal conversation with a group of four students of SDC, while the researcher was waiting outside the college Principal's office, the researcher asked about their experience of the application process to the college:

> At first, they [the students] all said that the process was easy. Last year was the first year all admissions had been done purely online. On probing, one student said that she had no idea what she wanted to study or how to fill the forms and which course to select and that it was in fact her friend's father and brother who had filled hers, and the forms for two other friends to this college, without consulting her or them on the specifics. The father assumed all the friends would want to go to the same college and study the same course. (FD SDC, September 2019)

Families also rely on 'cyber cafés'[2] where the proprietor or staff of the café would take the student's information down and fill the application on their behalf. This is rarely done in real time. During her interaction with the students at SiDC, the researcher noted:

> Every single girl in the room said that they or their family or acquaintance had visited a "shop" or internet café to fill out their forms. No one had access to or understood how to actually use a computer, so they just left the actual filling-in of the form to the person who ran the café.

> Later conversations with Prof. P and his colleagues, confirmed the role of cyber cafés. Students visit a café and just give the person all their details and then leave. The person in the café fills out their forms in their own time. Often, they make mistakes in filling out the college preferences and end up signing the student up to a college quite far away from their homes. With hundreds of students accessing these cyber cafés, and only a few cafés existing in each area, the sheer volume of forms that these cafés assist with, often leads to errors in filling the forms or omissions. (FD SiDC, September 2019)

The use of cyber cafés thus leads to serious challenges for the applicant such as entering the wrong name, applying to the wrong college or to the wrong course. The form currently does not have the option to 'edit' so once something is entered, it is set

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[2] Cyber Cafés are businesses which provide access to computers and the internet for a fee. This is a popular business in India, especially in small-towns and rural parts of the country where the population do not have access to personal computers and the internet.

in stone. These errors then have to be rectified by the college staff who identified this a great inconvenience (Summary from FD).

Young women are not always allowed to access cyber cafés and rely on male members of their friends and family to go to the cybercafé and fill out their application. However, previously, they would have been allowed to go, accompanied, to colleges to obtain the forms (Summary from FD).

3. Attitude of HEIs towards outreach and challenges faced

3.1 Positive staff attitudes

Across all the meetings with the college leaders and principals (as noted in FD), the researcher observed a positive attitude towards the idea of carrying out outreach. They all echoed that outreach events were useful for applicants in making informed choices about HE and that they were also useful for colleges to be able to attract students to apply to their college.

Prof P at SiDC indicated that the college had put out a newspaper advertisement announcing the current admission cycle and that this was the only form of formal outreach they carried out in SiDC. When asked if they had ever undertaken other forms of formal outreach, he recounted that in 2017, they had had a circular from the government requesting colleges to visit nearby villages to talk to local communities. The aim was to give them information and motivate them to access HE in order to improve enrolments from rural areas. However, SiDC was unable to participate due to a shortage of staff.

The researcher was able to have several conversations with staff and faculty of the three different colleges to understand the constraints under which the colleges work. One of the biggest concerns they identified was lack of full-time faculty and shortage of staff generally. It became apparent that, even though all three colleges were positive and enthusiastic about undertaking outreach activities, they were already stretched so thinly with responsibilities that conducting outreach events would be a significant additional task to incorporate into their schedules.

3.2 Constraints of staffing

The Principal at MDC reported that there were 123 sanctioned faculty positions, of which only 26 were filled by full time faculty members. There were only four laboratory assistants for the laboratories which supported all the sciences streams across the various degree levels. There were 75 'extension faculty members' hired to fill the gap in the faculty. It was common practice that the colleges were advised to hire staff on short-term contracts to fill the gaps in staffing. The Principal explained the challenges this caused for the college: contractual staff were paid more than full-time staff while not sharing the same workload which at times affected the motivation among the current full-time staff.

Further, the full-time faculty at the colleges had a myriad of responsibilities that stretched far beyond teaching and academia. They were expected to assist with election duties, volunteer for trainings that the state mandated, invigilate state level exams, help organise state sanctioned events at the college to commemorate various occasions, organise cultural events, and assist with several other events and obligations, which left them with limited hours to spend in the classroom.

These calls upon time were observed first hand by the researcher during her time in the field. Faculty indicated in discussions relating to the planning and conduct of a potential outreach activity that their time was going to be taken up with duties relating to the conduct of elections in Haryana.

Nonetheless, the positive attitude of the college Principals and key faculty members towards undertaking outreach activities was demonstrated in their willingness to spend their own time undertaking informal outreach activities with parents and informally counselling prospective students. These activities were taking place outside college hours.

A professor at SiDC said that all teaching staff used informal methods of outreach to communicate with local communities. In this case, they were trying to introduce a new BSc course in the college and had relied on the newspaper advertisement as well as the informal WhatsApp groups to spread the word about the introduction of the course. Similarly, the Vice-principal at SDC mentioned during an initial conversation that many college professors and staff at SDC use WhatsApp groups with local parents to guide their children and provide information.

When asked by the researcher what motivated them to do this, they echoed various versions of the same underlying sentiment, which was that they were in a position to provide prospective students with *reliable* information to which students would not otherwise have access (SiDC and SDC FD).

Recognition of the value of and willingness to undertake outreach activities was demonstrated by the college staff's engagement with the researcher on each of the fieldwork visits and then in planning and hosting the outreach event. The level of enthusiasm varied depending on levels of enrolment and popularity of the college. SiDC was the newest of the three colleges and was still in the process of establishing itself when the study took place. The staff and faculty in this college were very keen to host and plan the event. They explained how such an event would help them increase their application pool. SDC on the other hand was a well-established and oversubscribed college. The college leaders here were less hands on with the planning and organising and wanted more involvement of the researcher to implement the taster day. Similarly, MDC had a good reputation locally and did not struggle to recruit prospective students. The initial planning meetings (for the taster day which eventually did not take place) suggested a willingness to engage but a requirement for more researcher support.

Overall, the existing informal initiatives taken by colleges, coupled with the willingness to undertake the taster day, indicated that there was considerable potential for building a culture of outreach in public colleges. Unlike private universities in India, these public colleges did not have staff dedicated to admissions and outreach, so the responsibility would inevitably fall upon the full-time faculty. Therefore, to realise this potential it would be necessary to provide appropriate support to ease some of the other challenges that college principals face with staffing and scheduling.

4. Delivering an outreach activity

The Phase 3 study was designed to assess,

1. the willingness and capacity of government colleges to undertake a formal institutionally based outreach event; and

2. whether such an event addressed the challenges that Class 12 students from predominately disadvantaged backgrounds experienced in making informed choices relating to access to HE.

This section addresses the first element: an assessment of the development and organisation of a taster day. Each college responded differently to the invitation to host the event reflecting their different institutional contexts. The researcher was able to observe variations in attitudes among the college staff as well as in the material constraints faced by the colleges in trying to plan and organize an outreach event.

4.1 SiDC 'outreach is good for numbers'

Identification of a key college staff member

Prof. P was a professor of physics at the college and a relatively senior member of staff (over 7 years at the college). He was introduced to the researcher by the other doctoral student associated with the FCF Project and arranged a meeting with the staff the prior to the researcher's arrival in Haryana.

Early adoption of the concept by key actors and willingness to proceed

The researcher was able to speak with Prof. P as well as other members of staff on the first day of the first fieldwork visit. Prof. P was immediately enthusiastic about the study and the outreach event. He assured the researcher that he would speak with the college Principal about the event, before the researcher met with him, in order to 'oil the wheels'. In his opinion, the Principal would be on board and the event would be a good idea for the college, to attract more students to apply to the college.

Prof. P's enthusiasm to carry out the event was further evidenced by his willingness to be proactive.

- He reached out to his local friends and colleagues, who worked at various local schools, to check if they had Class 11 and 12 in their schools who could participate in the outreach event.

- He phoned the researcher to let her know about the 'Aarohi School' in a nearby village which could be invited to the outreach event.

- He arranged an appointment with the acting Principal (as the Principal was on long-term leave) during the next visit to the college.

The Acting Principal and other senior staff members were equally enthusiastic about carrying out outreach once the researcher had the opportunity to explain the study. The Acting Principal exclaimed "ye to hamare enrollement ke liye accha hoga!" (This will be good for our enrolment!).

The group had a fully engaged conversation with the researcher about the practicalities of conducting the event and demonstrated their knowledge of the local gendered cultural context. Specifically, Prof. P indicated that parents were reluctant to let their children, especially girls, travel more than a few miles for HE. As a result, one of the faculty present offered to arrange the buses for the students of his own accord.

However, staff members did not offer to make arrangements with local schools because they indicated that they would not have the time to visit the schools. Instead, they provided the researcher with a list of local schools who could be invited to the event, and it was agreed that the researcher would approach the schools on the college's behalf.

The college staff recognised that the event would require funding to support the logistics, such as buses to ferry the students to and from the schools and the refreshments. They indicated that, due to their very modest and fixed budgets to support activities, they would not be able to cover such an unplanned event. As indicated above, the researcher was able to reassure the staff that such funds were available from the FCF Project.

Making and implementing a plan: hosting a taster day

On the second fieldwork visit, the researcher and the project PI met with the college staff, Prof. P, the Acting Principal, and two other senior faculty members. The college staff had put together a programme for the day and had arranged for audio-visual equipment at the college.

In the days before the taster day the agreed role of the researcher was confirmed as,

- providing general assistance with planning and implementation of the day;
- ordering of refreshments;
- assisting college staff in preparing their presentations;
- confirmation of the schools' attendance;
- provision of the printed questionnaires and consent forms; and
- ensuring the completion of the consent forms and pre-event questionnaires.

Prof. P and the researcher discussed the schedule for the event. He indicated where the event would be held – in the multi-purpose hall of the college which had a portable projector.

Prof. P spoke to the bus company to confirm the buses for the day of the event. The bus company wanted the buses back by 12pm so the researcher and Prof. P decided to move the event earlier and start at 10am and end by 11:30am. The researcher then informed the schools of the change in timing for the event.

The researcher informed Prof. P that the schools had agreed and that she was going to meet them to ensure that the questionnaires were filled in.

The researcher found out just before the event that personnel in the participating girls' school had changed. The teacher coordinating the event indicated that the original

school Principal had retired the week before and there was an acting Principal. Nevertheless, her consent for the girls to attend was still secured by the researcher.

As agreed, the researcher collected the snacks from a local bakery where she had placed an order two days prior.

The researcher and Prof. P set up the room for the event with the help of the college students.

On the morning of the event, it became clear that the Acting Principal was not present. However, the deputising Principal and a few senior teachers were in the office. The researcher spoke to them about the schedule for the day and the deputising Principal offered to address the students during the event.

It also became clear that there was some confusion with the transport arrangements, both buses being sent to the boys' school. The researcher called the bus company just in time to redirect one bus to the girls' school, which led to a short delay in the arrival of the students.

In the meantime, some faculty members were briefed by Prof. P and the researcher about what was going to happen in the room set up for the conduct of the taster day. There seemed to be confusion around who was going to cover issues relating to online admissions – with everyone trying to offer the opportunity to someone else. Eventually Prof. P agreed that he would talk to the students about this.

College staff took full responsibility for conducting the activities which included:

- A welcome from Prof. P who briefed the school student participants on the agenda for the day.

- A brief address by the Acting Principal.

- A motivational speech by a senior faculty member (in English). At this point the students seemed distracted, perhaps because most of them were not able to follow a speech of this nature in English.

- An information session was provided by Prof. P, during which he explained the application process. The application form was projected onto a screen so that all students could see what the form looked like, and so that they could familiarise themselves with it. (It later became evident from the researcher's conversation with the participants, as well as from the post-event questionnaires, that most of the students had never filled in an application of any kind, let alone an online application). Prof. P also explained the admission process. He listed the documents needed to complete the application, which was again a matter of which a large number of participants were not aware (this was established by a show of hands).

- An open session for questions, where some students asked about the application process, one asked about scholarships, and another asked a question about college facilities in the sciences.

- A tour of campus by college faculty and college ambassadors who had been selected to help with the event.

- Refreshments distributed.

- In addition, the researcher distributed the post-event questionnaires and conducted seven in-depth interviews.

Meeting objectives: a successful outcome

The event was well-received by staff and the participants (see Section 5)

The early adoption of the concept by Prof P and the recognition by key college actors that the event might increase number of applicants to the colleges underpinned the institutional support for the event.

The Acting Principal appointed Prof. P to be in-charge of the event and enlisted the help of several faculty members to assist with the campus tour and presentation. Additional support from the administrative staff was also enlisted to assist with the audio-visual equipment and distribution of snacks. Almost all staff members were present at the event. The college organised the day to maximise staff convenience, avoiding any other commitments apart from regular classes. The event had been three months in planning, which allowed most staff members to be prepared for the event. Staff indicated that they were happy to be a part of the day and that they did not feel that it was an additional burden or responsibility.

Whilst the key college staff were supportive of the concept of the taster day from the outset, demonstrated by their willingness to plan for and undertake the activity, there was limited organisational capability to implement the activity within the college. The researcher had to step in to assist, such as with the buses, the IT equipment, and the presentation. It was also left to the very last minute to decide whom from the college staff was addressing the students, which created some confusion. More could have been done to cover the planned content. However, the last-minute change in the timeframe resulting from the problems with the buses constrained the time available.

4.2: SDC 'outreach good for inclusion'

Identification of a key college staff member

The identification of a key resource person at the college required facilitation by a member of the FCF Project Consultative Group (CG) – a well-established university academic who briefed the college Principal about the researcher's visit. This enabled the researcher to meet the Principal on the first day.

The researcher's FD recorded that the initial reaction of the Principal to the taster day was rather lukewarm. However, the Vice Principal of the college seemed interested because he understood that the taster day was part of a research study which established ways to better support students from marginalised communities.

The Vice Principal's enthusiasm led to his role as person in-charge of facilitating the activity in the college. The Principal assured the researcher that, "Prof. S dekh lenge sab kuch" (Prof. S will see to everything).

Early adoption of the concept by key actors and willingness to proceed

On the first fieldwork visit, the researcher and Prof. S were able to schedule the taster day for a tentative date two months later in November. Prof. S indicated his understanding of and support for outreach activities in discussions recorded in the FD. The researcher noted feeling encouraged by the increasingly positive response of the

Principal and Vice Principal of SDC towards outreach generally, as well as the taster day.

Consolidation of proactive engagement and building ownership of the event: a plan

On the second fieldwork visit, the PI and the researcher met with the Principal and Vice Principal, Prof. S, to finalise the arrangements and the schedule for the day. As mentioned above, the researcher's FD noted the Principal now seemed very interested and supportive. He expressed his enthusiasm for hosting the taster day at the college. He was happy to make all the arrangements for the event and phoned the schools himself to invite them to the taster day. The Vice Principal reiterated the need for and importance of reaching out to marginalized students through mechanisms such as taster days.

The researcher and PI visited the schools to invite the school students and go over the agenda for the day and the logistics.

The role of the researcher was similar to that of the SiDC event.

Staff capacity to organise the taster day: tackling unexpected obstacles

Prof. S and the Principal of the college were ready to run through the agenda they had prepared for the taster day on the researcher's arrival. They had also,

- organised the IT equipment required;

- enlisted the help of the professor of computing at the college to aid with the presentation; and

- organised the snacks for the students.

The boys' school was closed when *the researcher* arrived to confirm attendance. The state government had ordered the closure due to smog created by the burning of hay nearby. Neither the researcher nor the college staff were aware of this decision or how long the 'holiday' would last. The *college Principal* contacted the boys' school Principal to discuss and was able to convince him to play it by ear as he felt confident that schools would re-open in a day's time. The *college Principal* then called the girls' school and confirmed the details for the taster day. The *college staff and researcher* agreed that the plan was to keep the taster day scheduled for the same day and in case the schools were still closed, the event would be postponed to the following week. Fortunately, the schools reopened the following day.

Staff capacity to conduct and ownership of the taster day

On arrival at the college on the morning of the taster day, the researcher was told by the Principal that Prof. S, who was in-charge of the event, had had to take leave due to a family emergency. This disrupted the plans for the day. The Principal was not comfortable with undertaking Prof. S' presentation and there were no other faculty members who had been prepped for the delivery of the presentation. In the absence of Prof. S, *the researcher* was obliged to,

- adapt the agenda to enable her to step-in and undertake part of the presentation;

- ensure the logistics were as planned; and

- organise the cleaning and seating in the hall.

The college Principal had invited an additional 40 students from a different school who were not part of the study (and therefore were not included in the questionnaires) which made it slightly more challenging to manage the numbers on the day.

College staff took responsibility for conducting most of the activities which included,

- A welcome address by the Principal who also briefly shared a motivation speech about the value of higher education.

- A presentation by the researcher on the admission process, how to fill the online application forms, scholarships.

- A presentation by a senior member of college staff from the college about the facilities available in the college and the history of the college.

- A tour of the campus.

- Refreshments distribution.

- In addition the researcher distributed the post-event questionnaires and conducted seven in-depth interviews.

Meeting objectives: a successful outcome

The event was *well-received by staff and the participants* (see section 5)

The early adoption of the concept by Prof S once identified and the subsequent support of an outreach event to support inclusion underpinned the institutional support for the event.

The Principal appointed Prof. S. to be in-charge of the event. The support for the event was translated into a willingness to engage in planning for the event and to produce a plan. The college was able to take ownership for the plan and actively to engage in its implementation (by contacting schools). This was also evident in the willingness of the Principal to take responsibility in overcoming unexpected obstacles such as the closure of schools.

This enthusiasm resulted in the additional invitations to schools which was not planned and which constituted a challenge for the research element of the taster day.

The researcher noted in her FD the obvious challenges relating to capacity to conduct the taster day that were faced in SDC. This was evidenced in the lack of a backup plan in the absence of the person in-charge of the event and the reluctance of the college staff as result to step in. This meant that the researcher was obliged to be involved with the presentation on the day of the event

4.3 MDC 'we don't need more students'

Identification of a key resource person as champion

This required facilitation by the same member of the FCF Project CG as with the SDC. They were able to secure an appointment with the college Principal.

Adoption of the concept by key actors and willingness to proceed

However, on arrival for the first fieldwork visit it became clear that the Principal had retired and the person in charge was the Vice Principal. FD notes record a short meeting with the Vice Principal with others present. It was difficult in the time and in the context to convey the way in which the taster day might be conducted. The assumption was that this outreach was to increase numbers and MDC did not need more students as a well-established, popular, and oversubscribed urban college.

The Vice Principal suggested a tentative date in November and reassured the researcher that she could carry out 'her' event.

The researcher's FD when documenting engagement with MDC records a lack of enthusiasm for an outreach event among college staff in MDC and the schools in the district. On the researcher's visit to the girls' high school, the school Principal indicated that women in Mahendragarh district are encouraged by their parents to pursue HE and those who score high marks in their 12th exams go outside the state to study in more renowned HEIs in Delhi and Rajasthan. This suggested that there was perhaps a limited understanding of the role of an outreach event.

Consolidation of proactive engagement and building ownership of the event: a plan

In this context, the researcher considered that it would be appropriate to seek the assistance of the local resource person, who would attend, with the project's PI, a second meeting with the Vice Principal to explain the role of college.

This second visit was much more fruitful. The Vice Principal was more inclined to sit down and listen to the researcher's explanation of the aims of the project and the proposed conduct of the taster day, in the presence of the resource person. The Vice Principal expressed his support for the event, agreed to host it in November, and discussed the schedule for the event. The researcher noted in her FD that the presence of the PI and resource person did influence the decision. There was still a lack of engagement with the importance of outreach. The Vice Principal was preoccupied with other issues in the college such as staffing, and election duty.

Translating a plan into its implementation: a taster day

The taster day did not take place. This was not due to unwillingness within the college to undertake the activity. The Vice Principal himself called the researcher a few weeks prior to the scheduled taster day to confirm the event, which showed that the college was engaged with the activity and willing to undertake it. The reason why the event did not take place was due to circumstances relating to unexpected and delayed research approvals which concerned the wider research project.

Meeting objectives: a successful outcome

The taster day did not take place. However, the two field work visits conducted prior to the event indicated that, unlike the other two events, there was no obvious 'champion' among the staff who fully understood the concept of outreach and who was then identified institutionally as the person in charge of planning and implementing the event. The initial motivation varied across the institutions (more numbers, more inclusion, no need of numbers). With no obvious champion and no institutional interest in increased numbers generally at MDC, there was very limited institutional buy-in at the end of these fieldwork stages.

5. Impact of outreach on gendered access to HE

5.1 Assessing the impact of the taster day reach activity on students' perception and knowledge about HE and how this is gendered

Data sources

Participants were asked to complete a questionnaire (194 in total) after attending the outreach event in the colleges. As mentioned previously, participants identified by their schools in each location (7 in SiDC and 6 in SDC) were also interviewed to obtain a more in-depth insight into the effect of the event.

Effect on participants' desire to access HE

The post-event data showed an increased desire to access HE among male participants. In the pre-event questionnaires, 42.4% of male participants from SDC said they wanted to access HE while the remaining 57.6% said they would maybe want to access HE. After the event, 70.2% male participants from SDC said they wanted to enrol in HE. This shows that there was an almost 28% increase in male participants' desire to access HE after attending the event.
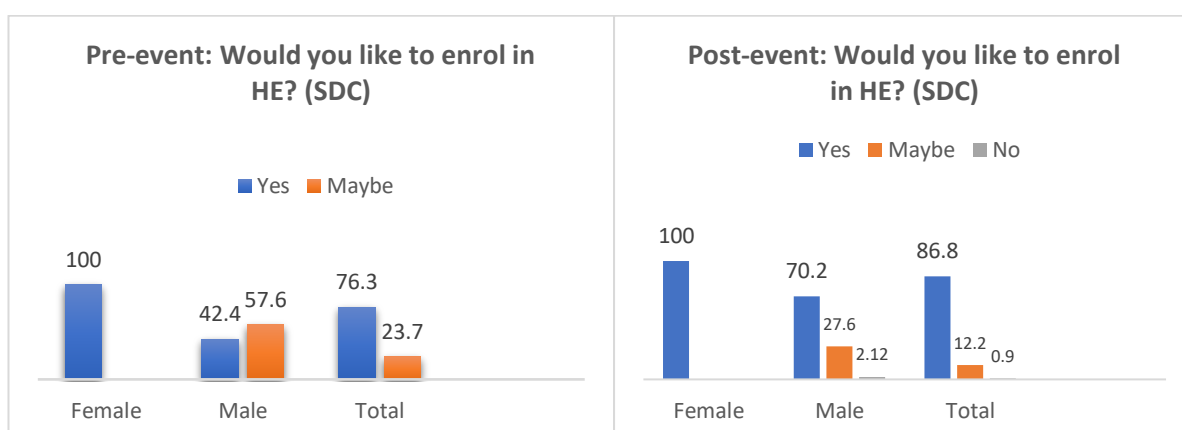
Figure 2: Pre-event and post-event desire to enrol in HE in SDC

Similarly, in SiDC, 87.5% male participants had said they wanted to access HE before the event and 12.5% said they were not sure. After the event, 90.6% male participants said they wanted to access HE. This shows that 3% more participants wanted to enrol in HE after attending the event. 100% female participants maintained that they wanted to access HE before and after the event in both districts.

3.34
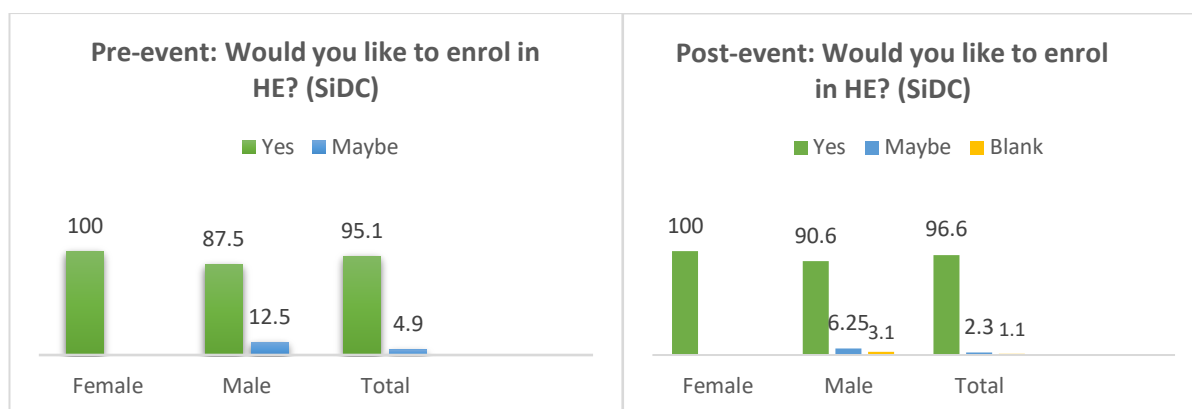
Figure 3: Pre-event and post-event desire to enrol in HE in SiDC

Although it cannot be claimed that the event alone caused this change, the fact that the pre- and post-event questionnaires were filled out just one day apart suggests that the event may have influenced this shift. However, a long-term quantitative evaluation would be necessary to determine if this change is enduring which was outside the scope of this study.

Effect on informed choice of college/university

The pre-event questionnaires of SDC revealed that only 8.6% of female participants and 6.1% of male participants felt they had the necessary information to choose a college/university. However, the post-event data showed that 83% of female and 59.6% of male participants felt they had the required information. This represents a significant increase of 74% for female participants and 53.5% for male participants. Prior to the event, over 76% of SDC participants were uncertain if they had enough information to choose a college, but after the event, 72.6% reported feeling confident in their ability to make a choice.
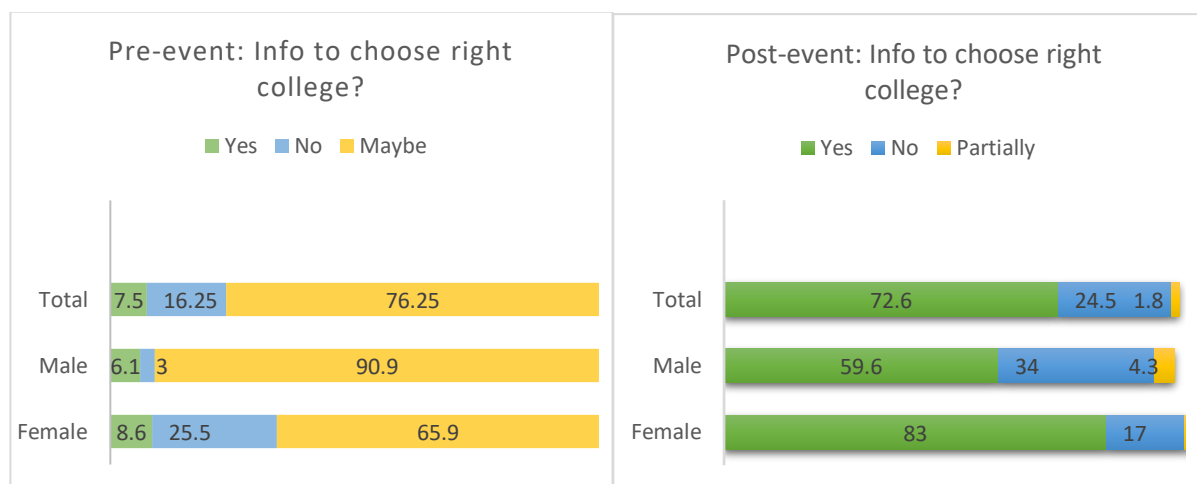
Figure 4: Pre-event and post-event perception of having the necessary information to choose the right college in SDC

In SiDC, prior to the taster day, only 2% of female and 6.25% of male participants felt they had sufficient information to choose a college, with the majority of students (53.1%) reporting partial information. However, after the taster day, 85.7% of female and 78.1% of male participants reported feeling more confident in their ability to make a decision. Before the event, the greatest percentage of students (53.1%) were unsure

if they had access to the information needed to make an informed decision about college. But after the event, the greatest percentage of students (82.9%) reported feeling more confident in their ability to choose the right college.
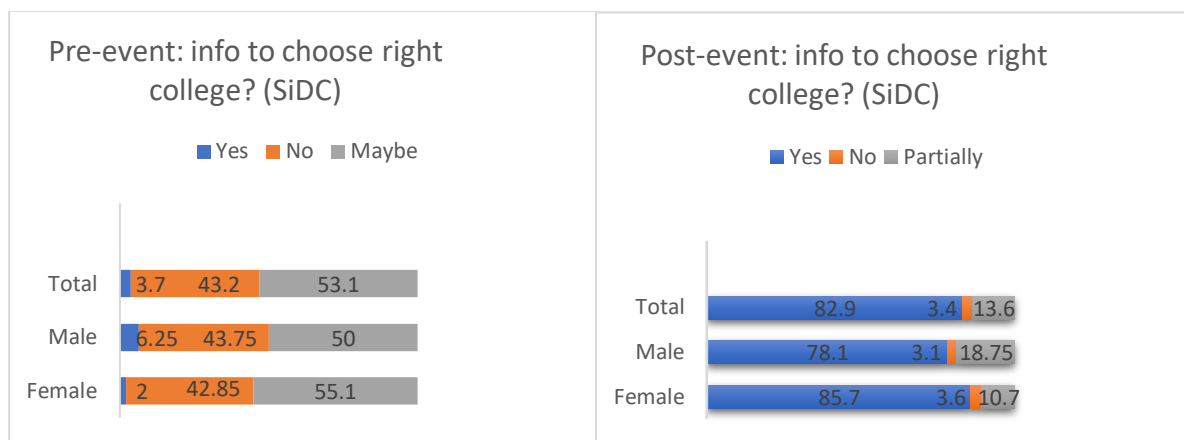
Figure 5: Pre-event and post-event perception of having the necessary information to choose the right college in SiDC

Overall, 77.75% of participants from both districts reported feeling more confident about choosing the right college or university after attending the event. 84.35% of the female participants and 68.85% male participants responded positively.

College Choice Confidence (SDC)

	Yes	No	Partially
Total	82.9	3.4	13.6
Male	78.1	3.1	18.75
Female	85.7	3.6	10.7
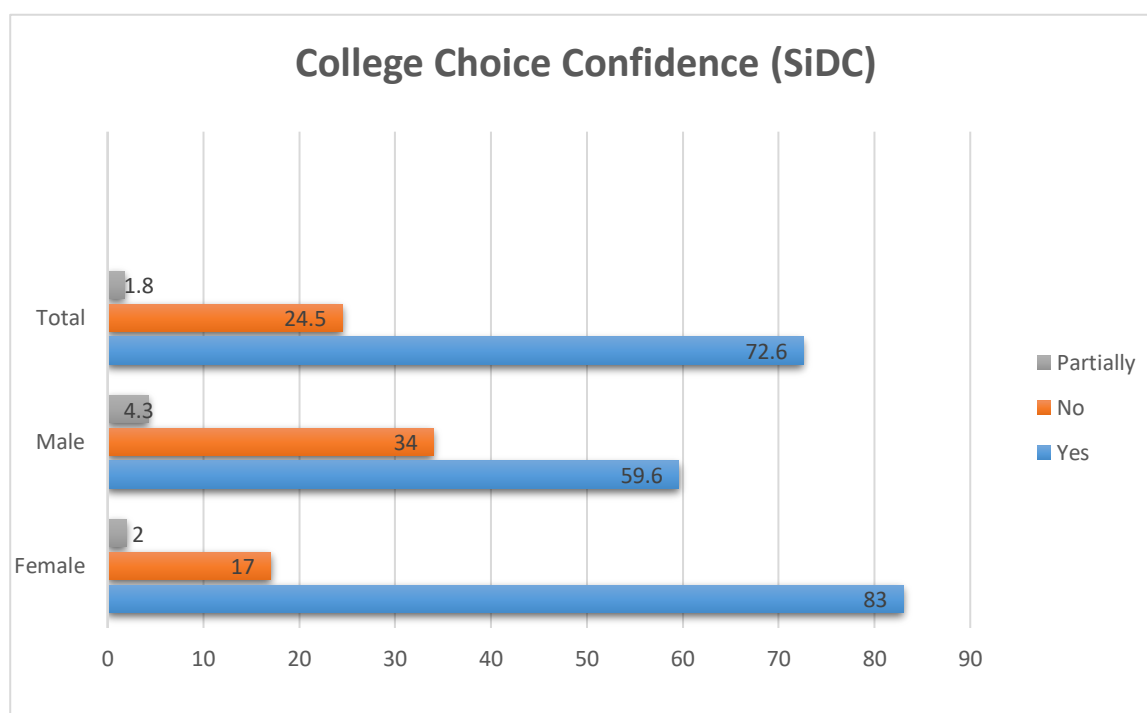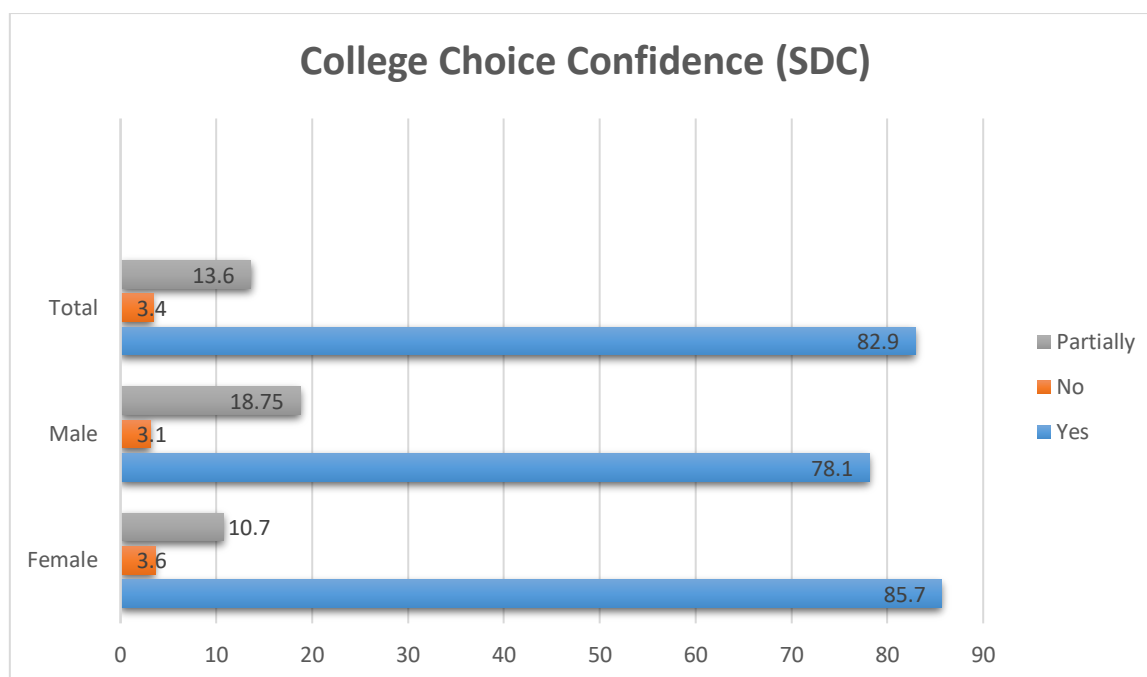
Figure 6: Results from SDC and SiDC for 'Do you feel more confident about choosing the right college/university after the event?'

Effect on confidence about navigating the admissions process

81.75% of the participants also reported feeling more confident about navigating the admission process (identified above as one of the most challenging aspects of accessing HE) after attending the event. 86.25% of female participants and 75.15% male participants responded positively.

Effect on informed subject choices

80.35% reported feeling more confident after the event. 88.7% of female participants and 68.35% of male participants reported feeling positively.

Subject Choice Confidence (SiDC)
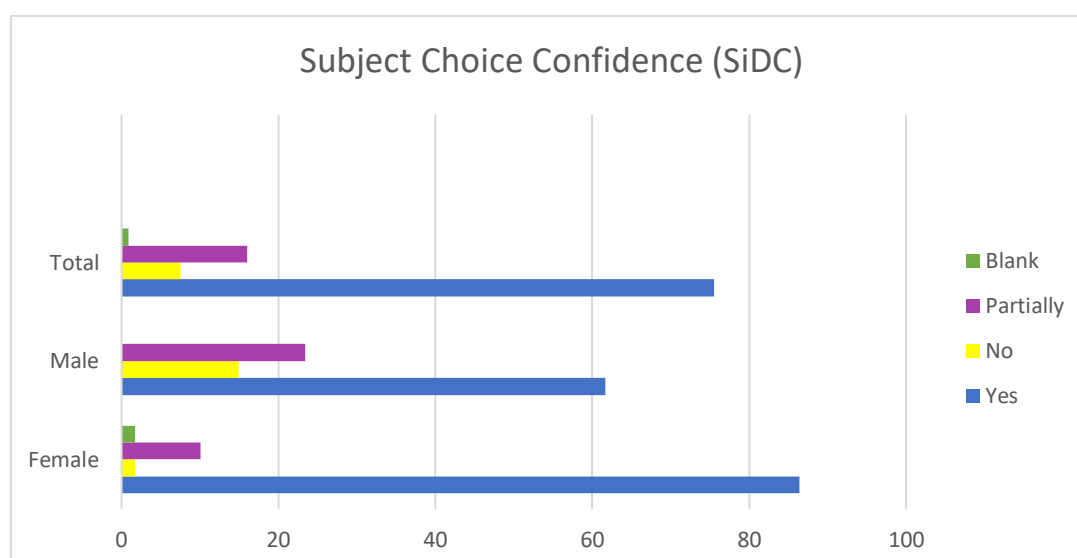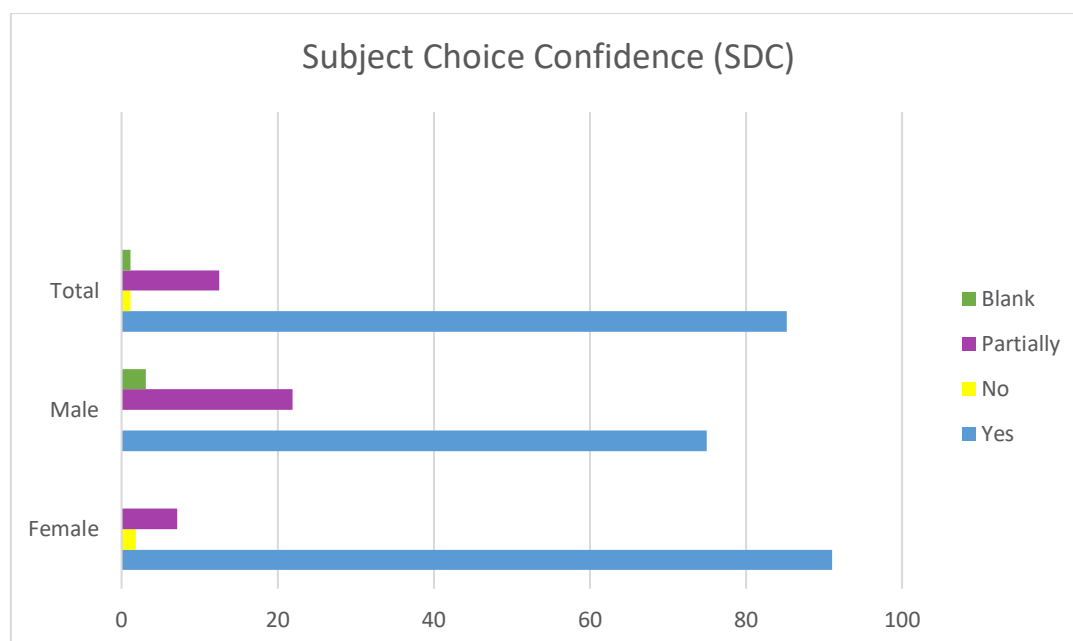
Figure 7: Results from SDC and SiDC for 'Do you feel more confident about which subject/stream to choose after attending the event?'

Overall, the number of participants who felt they had sufficient information to make informed subject choices increased from 12.3% before the event to 75.5% after the event. However, almost 15% of male participants still reported feeling uncertain even after attending the taster day. In-depth interviews revealed that male participants were more interested in specific subjects and career paths, such as the armed forces or NCC, which were not covered in detail during the event, potentially explaining the lower rate of confidence among men compared to women.

Assessment of overall usefulness

When participants were asked if they found the event to be useful, 92.35% of participants from both districts said 'Yes', 5.75% said 'Partially useful', and 0.9% said 'No'. 95.7% of female participants and 88.3% of male participants reported finding the event useful. About 10% of the male participants reported not finding the event useful and some of the reasons cited were lack of information on sports facilities, NCC facilities, information on careers in the armed forces, and public administration.

Addressing lack of formal sources of information

As indicated above, the lack of information about HE was cited as one of the biggest barriers by participants in the pre-event questionnaire. When asked if the event gave participants access to information that they previously did not have, 91.9% of participants said 'Yes' with 93% of female participants and 90.47% male participants saying 'Yes'. Several comments left by the students in the open comments box on the questionnaire stated how useful they had found the event in demystifying the HE admission process and that it had motivated them to access HE.

A need for college outreach

When asked if such outreach events should be carried out by colleges across the state each year, 95.65% of the total participants—with 97.4% female and 93.6% male participants—said 'Yes'.

	Comments SDC
Female students	We got the right guidance about HE// We got to visit the college, talk to the faculty and learn about common errors students make while applying to college// We got a lot of information that we were unaware of before, our assumptions about this college were also corrected// The event has motivated us to access HE, and given us information about admission procedures// We did not have any information about online applications before the event but now I feel confident about it
Male students	the event helped us understand our options for HE better and make more informed decision// cautioning us against errors in filling admission forms and choosing the right subject and motivation// Information about college and courses// Information about online admission// Information about various departments in college and how we should select a stream

	Comments SiDC
Female students	We learnt from this program how to fill online form and admission (*most cited*), what documents we need to fill it// everything was great because we did not have information about this stuff before this// I got a lot of information about college which I had very little information about previously// info on HE// This program will help me access HE more easily.
Male students	Information about admissions, filling the form and info about documents needed. // This event helped us making the right decision and also gave us information from college faculty// More clarity on choosing college after school// selecting streams and college.

Figure 8: Summary of SDC and SiDC questionnaires open box for 'What did you find most useful about the event?'

Analysis of the responses from the in-depth interviews reinforced these results

Participants said that they had never had access to an opportunity like this event. They confirmed that it was extremely difficult to obtain what they now identified as 'objective' advice or reliable information about HE or career related topics. Male participants reported using the internet on their phones to research these areas but not being able to find the right sources of information.

5.2 Longer term impact of the taster day

Data source

The evaluation phase of the study that was carried out 10 months after the event, once the admission cycle for undergraduate courses was over. The purpose of this was to measure the longer-term impact of the event by tracking how many participants ended up accessing HE and to what extent participating in the event had an effect on their access. This research was designed prior to the onset of the Covid pandemic, so the original plan was to conduct the evaluation in person. However, this stage had to be implemented during the pandemic via phone calls instead. All participants who filled

in the general questionnaires were telephoned with the aim of securing a phone interview.

The pandemic had changed the circumstances of many of participants. In addition, it was more difficult to reach the participants via phone calls than it would have been in person. Despite repeated attempts to contact participants, it was only possible to undertake 12 interviews in SDC and 21 in SiDC. Thus, the researcher was able to reach 25% of the original 194 participants and to undertake telephone interviews with both men and women from both districts.

Who accessed HE?

One year later, the two colleges who participated in the study reported an increase in application numbers. SDC had not carried out a precise quantitative evaluation, but SiDC reported a 15% increase in numbers. It is important to remember that, by this time India was experiencing the full effects of the pandemic.

It was also observed that women accessed HE in higher numbers than men. Men chose to either find employment or enrol in coaching centres, with the hope to clear the administrative exams and find employment in the near future. A few men had been actively preparing to join the armed forces as well. Most women interviewed were either enrolled or in the process of enrolling to HE. Analysis of interviews indicated that women were more informed than before the event about the timeline for admission and the process. They were more confident than before the event in seeking out the right information as a result of the event and having had the exposure to college faculty and staff.

Overall, both men and women who accessed HE shared that the taster day was very valuable in helping them in navigating the HE admission process and choices.

6. Conclusion

This third phase of the study explored the role of the institution in enabling young people's access to HE. This was accomplished by looking at what existing structures and policy were in place to encourage or aid students' access and by implementing an outreach activity in government colleges to gauge the effectiveness of outreach in bridging the gap in information about HE.

Institutionally, the three colleges in the study implemented seat reservation and relaxation of admission criteria based on the reservation policy. But beyond reservations, the colleges did not carry out any other form of activities officially that would aid students' access to HE. There were provisions to make students' experience during HE easier. This included allowing them to earn money by taking up small jobs at the college, making women's transport free, and providing students with access to sports and other recreational activities. However, there was no provision to facilitate the *getting-in* process. Since the vast majority of students who access these government colleges are first generation learners, with extremely limited access to reliable and objective information, and with little support in accessing and navigating HE admission and choices, the role of the institution, as an objective and reliable source of information becomes even more salient.

The study found that government colleges in Haryana are at the frontiers of access, which makes their role critical in enabling access and bridging the gap between them and the students. However, India's push towards massification of education, coupled with the move to make India go digital in all spheres including education has meant that those who live in rural/semi-urban areas and lack necessary infrastructure and resources, like the participants in this study, suffer. Lack of computers at home and more importantly, lack of digital literacy has caused several additional challenges for both students and colleges. Students and their families struggle to find avenues to gain reliable information about HE in the first instance and then struggle to find ways to complete the application process, which has been made completely digital, despite most of the population not having access to computers or the internet. It transpired through the research that, previously, both access to information about colleges and the application process was carried out offline using prospectus and brochures which allowed for space to have face-to-face interactions and information sharing between the students, families, and the colleges. Prior to the transition to online information and applications in 2012, colleges were able to reach out to motivate students to apply and ensure a good fit between the students' aspirations and the colleges facilities by having conversations and informational sessions. Distribution of prospectus along with the application forms were also seen as an effective way to contact the applicant pool and provided the students and families an opportunity to visit the college and speak to the staff. However, students the researcher spoke to revealed that the online system had forced them to enlist the assistance of 'cyber cafés' in order to fill in the application forms. However, due to the large number of applications being completed by the limited number of cafés in each area, colleges reported dealing with a high rate of errors in the application, which delay or in some cases suspend the application process, and hence affects the ability of the student to gain admission. As a result, college staff often have to assist the students and their families in rectifying these errors. This adds to their workload, despite the study finding that many colleges face significant staff shortages, with sometimes only a fraction of sanctioned faculty

positions being filled. The faculty shared that, although no formal outreach was in place, they still try to carry out outreach informally, using WhatsApp and other social media within their communities

The research established that the colleges who participated in the study were positive about carrying out outreach in the form of a taster day.

Despite some organisational challenges, particularly in relation to staff shortages, the event itself proved to be a success in the two district colleges, out of the three originally planned which were able to undertake the taster days. In total, the study recorded and surveyed 194 participants attendings the taster days across both districts, although one of the colleges unexpectedly invited an additional group of students which was not part of the study. The researcher did however note in her FD that there was not always a full ownership of the event from the colleges, as the researcher had to step in, for both events, to provide various type of support from assisting with organisation to delivering a presentation.

The measured impact of the taster days, however, was very positive. In particular, the colleges who ran the taster day both reported an increase in their applications the following year. Additionally, the post- and pre-event surveys and interviews conducted by the researcher highlighted that students who attended the event were overwhelmingly positive about participating in the event and that the information shared during the event was useful to the students who did apply to HE. The survey data clearly showed that participants prior to the event overall felt that they did not have the necessary information to make informed decisions about HE—although some differences were noted across genders and caste groups. In contrast, after the event, participants declared feeling more confident about choosing the right college and course, as well as with navigating the admission process. Finally, in interviews 10 months after the event, the researcher found that more women had accessed HE than men—due to men opting for the employment route—and that women were more informed regarding the admission process and more confident in finding the relevant information as a result of the event. Of the women who were able to be interviewed, most did carry on to HE,almost all of them joining public colleges in the same area or close by. Only men seemed to have been able to travel to other districts or cities to prepare for or participate in employment in some form.

Women's access to local public colleges makes it extremely important for those colleges to be high quality institutions of education as, in a lot of cases, they are the students' only option to enter HE. Furthermore, it also becomes important for these colleges to be active participants in enabling students' access to HE by providing reliable information and guidance to students and their families. Outreach can be an effective tool in ensuring the role of the institution in helping students navigate these choices and building their confidence to make leaps and fulfil their potential. This research has found that colleges are equally enthusiastic about being able to provide this type of support to students.

7. Recommendations

7.1 The role of the government

- The application process should be made multimodal (offline and online) to make it easier for rural students to apply to HE.

- Funding should be made available for colleges to organise taster days and other outreach activities.

- Staffing shortages should be addressed to facilitate the role of staff in important activities such as outreach. Moreover, faculty members' additional duties that are not related to higher education (e.g. assisting with elections) should be reduced to allow further concentration on core duties.

7.2 The role of colleges

- Colleges, especially public colleges, should carry out some form of outreach to bridge the gap in information and knowledge and make access to HE easier.

- Families should be invited and involved in the outreach efforts.

- Informational brochures should be distributed in hard copy to give students all the necessary information about a particular college.

- It would also be useful if there were members of staff hired to solely look after the admission process who could be responsible for outreach and improving access.

- Colleges should recognise and reward existing outreach practices that are occurring and faculty members' endeavours in this regard.

- When colleges organise events such as taster days, they need to consider:
  o Appointing a key in-charge faculty member to oversee the event.
  o Including a number of other faculty members in the planning.
  o Plan for bus transport and refreshments.
  o Arrange the programme.
  o Ensure the venue has audio-visual equipment.
  o Work with local schools to attend.
  o Consider using a questionnaire to evaluate the success of the event.
  o Try to invite parents and other family members as well as school students.

For futher guidance on setting up a taster day, please see the FCF Project's Outreach Activity Resource.[3]

7.3 The role of schools

Schools should work with local colleges to support their students attending taster days or invite faculty members to the college to provide information on HE.

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[3] Find the FCF Project Outreach Activity Resource at:
https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/law/research/projects/rlaaa3083/output/fair_chance_for_education_outreach_activity_resource_published.pdf

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A Fair Chance for Education: Gendered Pathways to Educational Success in Haryana

Phase 4 Report: The Contribution to Educational Policy Development of the Fair Chance for Education Research on Gendered Access to Higher Education

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https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/law/research/projects/rlaaa3083/output/

Disclaimer
The views expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the University of Warwick.

Accompanying resources for the project

In addition to this report, other resources about the project are available on the project website: www.warwick.ac.uk/haryana. This includes various Project Outputs such as project reports and presentations, as well as other information about the project and the people involved.
The project can also be found on Twitter and Instagram as @FCFHaryana.
The project Team can be contacted at fcfharyana@warwick.ac.uk.

Report compiled with support from Active4Research Ltd.

4.2

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List of Abbreviations

BPSMV	Bhagat Phool Singh Mahila Vishwavidyalaya
CG	Consultative Group
CPRHE	Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education
FCF	Fair Chance for Education
HE	Higher Education
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
NEP	National Education Policy
NIEPA	National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration
OAR	Outreach Activity Resource
PB	Policy Brief
RAG	Research Advisory Group
SD	Sanatan Dharma
TISS	Tata Institute of Social Sciences
UGC	Universities Grants Commission

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FCF Phase 4: The Contribution to Educational Policy Development of the Fair Chance for Education Research on Gendered Access to Higher Education

4.6

Executive Summary

This Phase 4 Report focuses on the contribution that the Fair Chance for Education (FCF) Project has made to HE policy making within the framework provided by India's National Education Policy 2020 and to the development of gender and Higher Education (HE) research agendas. It documents the impact and dissemination activities undertaken between 2020 and 2021 (with additional funding from the United Kingdom Economic and Social Research Council Impact Acceleration Award scheme). Phases 1 to 3 established,

- that developing an outreach culture in HE colleges is both possible and desirable in order for more young people from often disadvantaged backgrounds to access HE and make informed choices about accessing HE, in the context of the prevalent gender conservative culture, and

- while Western outreach strategies are often primarily focused on individual young people, culturally appropriate HE outreach in Haryana needs to involve families.

The contribution to HE policymaking was achieved through two impact objectives. The first involved developing an *HE outreach culture* in Haryana (and beyond) which was based upon the nuanced, evidence-based understanding of issues, *provided by the FCF research,* that young women and men from marginalised backgrounds face when exploring HE options, thereby resulting in *enhanced informed decision making* within families. This involved developing *HE outreach facilitation skills* in HE colleges in Haryana.

This objective was achieved through,

- co-development and publication of a **Policy Brief** (PB) on 'Supporting Gender-sensitive Higher Education Access and Choice in Haryana, India' containing a range of policy suggestions, which was endorsed by relevant regional and national actors, and

- co-production with local partners and publication of the 'Fair Chance for Education **Outreach Activity Resource** (OAR) for Higher Education Institutions. This guide, on how colleges can organise and evaluate a 'taster day' for students and family members, was based primarily upon Phase 3 research findings.

The second impact objective focused on gaining buy-in for outreach from local actors and national actors to ensure active participation in outreach activities within HE colleges in Haryana and to develop leadership in outreach at the district, state, and national levels.

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This objective was met by the co-development with FCF project partners and partner institutions of the PB and OAR and co-facilitation of three targeted events:

- The first event was hosted by Central University Haryana and shared the key findings of the FCF project as well as drafts of the PB and OAR. Three colleges agreed *to pilot the OAR* by organising taster days.

- The second event was hosted Bhagat Phool Singh Mahila Vishwavidyalaya (BPS Women's University) heard reports of the hugely successful piloting of the OAR from the three college Principals.

- The third event was hosted by the Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education at the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration. In this event, the *policy relevance of the project findings suggestions encapsulated in the PB and OAR ('road tested' through three successful pilot events)* for the development of an HE outreach culture was acknowledged by leading national education policy makers.

The FCF Project has contributed its *collaborative and participative methodology* to developing HE research agendas in India and beyond. It has built capacity among but also learned from HE scholars including within its Consultative Group. Its academic conference 'A Fair Chance for Education: Problematising Access and Mapping Gendered Pathways to Higher Education in India' jointly hosted by TISS Mumbai and the University stimulated and enhanced academic scholarship.

4.8

1. Introduction

This report documents the impact and dissemination activities associated with the Fair Chance for Education (FCF) Project. Its main focus is on the policy-oriented activities planned for the final year of the project (2021), which result from the culmination of the previous three research phases (Sections 2-9). It also documents the research-focused events which have taken place over the course of the project along with the published and planned academic outputs (Section 9).

A key factor affecting our plans for 2021 was the Covid-19 pandemic. Travel restrictions prevented the members of the team, based at Warwick University in the UK, from travelling to India to work with our partners and collaborators. They too were facing extremely difficult circumstances. Fortunately, the primary research gathering phases had almost been completed before the pandemic began. As a result of the pandemic, we were obliged to adapt our plans. We managed, with the significant assistance provided by our Indian partners and collaborators, to still achieve many of the planned impact activities in 2021. We extended the time scale for the project which enabled us to complete all these activities successfully in 2022.

We sought to supplement our original funding from the Fair Chance Foundation in order to undertake a more extensive programme of impact events and add value to the overall project. We were successful in obtaining approximately £42,000 from the United Kingdom Economic and Social Research Council Impact Acceleration Award scheme (see Fair Chance for Education Project, 2022). Moreover, we obtained additional funding from the Fair Chance Foundation to support a post-doctoral fellowship for Dr Anjali Thomas to work on the planned activities.

In sum, this report,

(a) documents the shift from analysis of the Phases 1-3 research findings (see Henderson et al., 2021; Thomas and Henderson, 2022; Samanta and Stewart, 2023) to the activities and outputs associated with this dissemination and impact phase.

(b) describes the way in which we focused on a *range of audiences* with the aim of highlighting our contribution,

- to Higher Education (HE) *policy making* within the framework provided by India's National Education Policy 2020
- to the development of gender and HE *research agendas*

(c) outlines the contribution that we consider our research has made to these two agendas.

4.9

2. Background context and summary of previous phases' findings

The five-year funded FCF Project (01/01/2017 – 31/12/2021, extended due to Covid pandemic circumstances until 31/12/2022) explored gendered access to HE in Haryana, India. Specifically, it focused on gendered social relations and differences in choices, obstacles, and opportunities for young people. The project sought to devise a programme of actions leading to positive social change. Among the key characteristics of the research were its evolutionary methodology and participatory design, where each phase built on learning from the previous one.

Phase 1 (2018) involved baseline research in state-funded HE colleges in Haryana, which established that families are heavily involved in HE decision-making (Henderson et al., 2021). The vast majority of students in government colleges had no history of HE in the family and many did not have sufficient information to make informed choices about HE. This resulted in gender inequalities in, for instance, the selection of HE college. The basis for gendered family decision making needed further exploration. **Phase 2** (conducted by Dr Anjali Thomas for her doctorate 2017 – 2021) established that family group decisions about young people's educational trajectories would benefit from tailored information about HE options, particularly relating to addressing gendered assumptions (Thomas and Henderson, 2022). **Phase 3** (conducted by Nikita Samanta for her doctorate 2018-2023) established that currently there is a limited culture of HE outreach for access and that government colleges catering specifically to students from marginalised backgrounds produce little or no information for prospective students. Colleges are engaging in plentiful *community outreach* activities, but for the most part this concept does not encompass *HE outreach*, i.e., activities aiming to improve HE access and choice for disadvantaged groups. At present, there are no government policies which support institutional level initiatives relating to active outreach for HE access – although colleges may undertake these informally. However, the research demonstrated that there is a willingness to engage in forms of active outreach for HE access including conducting 'taster days (designed to give young people a taste of campus life while providing them with additional information to enable them to make informed choices) (Samanta and Stewart, 2023).

The research project has established that,

- developing an outreach culture in HE colleges is both possible and desirable in order for more young people from often disadvantaged backgrounds to (a) access HE and (b) make informed choices, about accessing HE in the context of the prevalent gender conservative culture;

- while Western outreach strategies are often primarily focused on individual young people, culturally appropriate HE outreach in Haryana needs to involve families.

3. Influencing Higher Education policy making within the framework provided by India's National Education Policy 2020: a summary
_____

Our first, and key, *target audience* was local and national HE policy makers. The immediate local impact enhancement was set within a wider aim of contributing to efforts to expand access to HE in India. India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 includes outreach as a new target for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) (para 14.4.2c). Therefore, we sought to demonstrate the relevance of our research to the development of this target through a practical demonstration of the way in which our findings could make a contribution.

Objective 1: to contribute to developing an HE **outreach culture** in Haryana, India (and beyond)

> 1.1 To achieve a *more nuanced, evidence-based understanding* of issues that young women and men from marginalised backgrounds face when exploring HE options, in local and national debates.
> 1.2 To enhance *informed decision-making* that families from marginalised backgrounds engage in when making decisions about young people's HE options in Haryana.
> 1.3 To develop the *HE outreach facilitation skills* of HE colleges in Haryana.

We met objective 1 through,

- the co-development and publication of a **Policy Brief (PB)** on 'Supporting Gender-sensitive Higher Education Access and Choice in Haryana, India'[1] containing a range of *policy suggestions*, which was endorsed by relevant regional and national actors (through the processes and events described in detail below).

  Initially we had intended to produce three policy briefs based on the three phases of the FCF Project (outlined in Section 2). Working with our collaborators and, in particular, learning from the expertise of our partners at the Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education (CPRHE) at the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA), we produced one **substantial PB covering all three phases**.

- the co-production with local partners and publication of what was initially described as an outreach toolkit. Taking advice particularly from our local partners in Haryana, we renamed the toolkit the 'Fair Chance for Education **Outreach Activity Resource (OAR)** for Higher Education Institutions:

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[1] Find the FCF Project PB at:
https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/law/research/projects/rlaaa3083/output/policy_brief_published.pdf

Organising a College Visit 'Taster Day' for Potential Higher Education Applicants'[2]. This was a guide for colleges on how to organise and evaluate a college 'taster day' for students and family members based upon our Phase 3 research findings. The OAR included templates for the organisation, conduct, and evaluation of such an event, and it was successfully piloted with 3 colleges (through the processes and events described below).

<u>Objective 2: to gain **buy-in** for outreach from local actors and national actors</u>

2.1 To gain *buy-in for the need for outreach* on the access to HE agenda, both at state and national levels.
2.2 To gain *buy-in for active participation in outreach* by HE colleges in Haryana.
2.3 To *develop leadership in outreach* at the district, state, and national levels.

We met objective 2 through,

- the **active involvement of FCF project partners and partner institutions –** working with them to co-develop the PB and OAR and to co-facilitate **targeted events.**

- Endorsement of the research findings and suggestions encapsulated in the PB and OAR built through engagement with local, regional, and national policy makers at **three phased events** and the piloting of the OAR in government colleges.

Event 1: A one-day online (due to the Covid-19 pandemic) *state-level workshop*, organised by Dr Yadav at Central University Haryana (September 2021) for local education policy makers, (i) presented the draft PB and consulted on its policy suggestions and the draft OAR, and (ii) recruited colleges to pilot the OAR.

Four government colleges offered to pilot the OAR at a 'taster day' which they agreed to organise, however, only three were able to run the taster day. They reported back on their experiences at our second workshop.

Event 2: A one-day online *state-level workshop,* organised by Dr Panwar at BPS Women's University (December 2021) for local education policy makers where (i) a finalised PB was presented; (ii) the very successful outcome of piloting the OAR was reported (over 1000 school students and some parents attended college taster days, in very challenging circumstances due to the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions); and (iii) the adoption by education policy makers of a taster day based on the OAR was supported.

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[2] Find the FCF Project OAR at:
https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/law/research/projects/rlaaa3083/output/fair_chance_for_education_outreach_activity_resource_published.pdf

Event 3: A *national-level blended webinar* organised by Dr Sabharwal at CPRHE in NIEPA presented the research findings, policy suggestions (encapsulated in the PB), and OAR to national policy makers and obtained their endorsement. The college principal from one of the colleges who piloted the taster day further presented the college's experience of and support for the taster days.

Thus, *key local stakeholders* endorsed the PB at the first workshop in Haryana. *Key national policy makers* at the national webinar (Event 3) recognised the contribution and value of the research and its suggestions (encapsulated in the PB) to national policy making as well as the value of taster days/outreach events (supported by the OAR).

The following sections document in more detail the development of the outputs of the fourth phase of the FCF project.

4. Development of the Policy Brief

The PB was developed over 2021. In January 2021, the team convened reading meetings which considered different policy briefs on gender and education, especially policy briefs from India. The following policy briefs were selected and discussed in the group:

- Equalising Access to Higher Education in India by CPRHE, India (2017)

- Towards Gender Inclusive Development in Odisha: Some Policy Prescriptions by Oxfam India (2018)

- Education and Skills: Improving the Quality of Education and Skills Development by OECD, India (2014)

- The Internationalisation of Higher Education: Developing Global Graduates by the University of Warwick, UK (2018)

This reading meeting led to the development of a first draft of the PB by the team at Warwick. The team consulted its Indian partner Dr Nidhi Sabharwal during the reading meeting and for the initial drafts that were developed. During the meeting it was felt that the PB developed by the project should respond to and resonate with the NEP (2020) published by the Indian government. Apart from the strategies to enhance the collaborative development of the PB, the team agreed that,

- There would be one principal PB (following the format adopted by CPRHE/NIEPA for its policy briefs) directed towards HEIs because the main aim is to encourage colleges to develop ways of interacting with school and families.

- The PB needs to recognise that education is a pathway which extends from elementary education to HE, and thus there needs to be an understanding of the interaction between schools and HE and of how students take this path rather than a vocational one.

- The PB would set out the core findings from each stage in the project, identifying thematic points for each part and proposing suggestions for appropriate policy makers.

Following this reading exercise, the team put together a document which collated the project's findings and recommendations. This was visualised in the form of the following image:
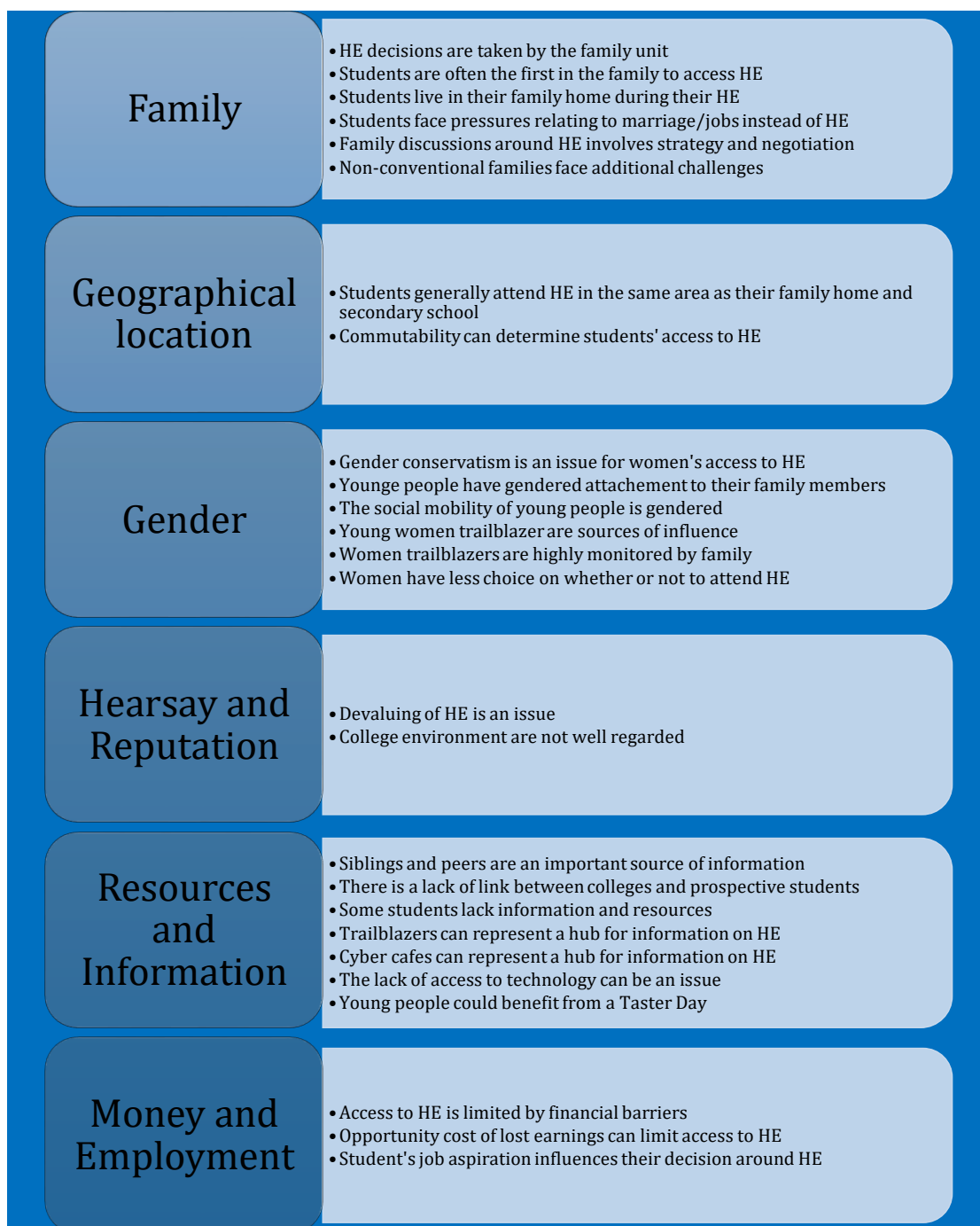
Family	• HE decisions are taken by the family unit • Students are often the first in the family to access HE • Students live in their family home during their HE • Students face pressures relating to marriage/jobs instead of HE • Family discussions around HE involves strategy and negotiation • Non-conventional families face additional challenges
Geographical location	• Students generally attend HE in the same area as their family home and secondary school • Commutability can determine students' access to HE
Gender	• Gender conservatism is an issue for women's access to HE • Younge people have gendered attachement to their family members • The social mobility of young people is gendered • Young women trailblazer are sources of influence • Women trailblazers are highly monitored by family • Women have less choice on whether or not to attend HE
Hearsay and Reputation	• Devaluing of HE is an issue • College environment are not well regarded
Resources and Information	• Siblings and peers are an important source of information • There is a lack of link between colleges and prospective students • Some students lack information and resources • Trailblazers can represent a hub for information on HE • Cyber cafes can represent a hub for information on HE • The lack of access to technology can be an issue • Young people could benefit from a Taster Day
Money and Employment	• Access to HE is limited by financial barriers • Opportunity cost of lost earnings can limit access to HE • Student's job aspiration influences their decision around HE

Figure 1: Summary of Project Findings and Recommendations

4.15

The team collaboratively drafted the PB over the following months. Once the team had developed the first draft, it was shared with the FCF project Consultative Group (CG) of early career academics and researchers from Haryana and India. Their recommendations and suggestions were incorporated into a second draft.

This second draft was then presented at the first event organised by Dr Renu Yadav at Central University of Haryana (see Section 6). Feedback from the first event was reviewed and incorporated into the third draft of the PB by the team. This third draft was circulated to the participants attending the national webinar organised at NIEPA and used as the basis for the project findings presentation. Its content received endorsement from key national policy makers (see Section 8).

5. Development of the Outreach Activity Resource

The OAR was initially called 'the toolkit'. During the development of the toolkit, one of the project partners and members of the project's CG shared with the team that the terms 'toolkit' may not be advisable in the contemporary social and political climate in India. This led the team to develop the term Outreach Activity Resource or OAR which was approved by Indian partners and members of the CG in India.

The team replicated the practices used in the development of the PB to develop the first draft of the OAR. The team convened a reading meeting which explored toolkits from India and different parts of the world in April 2021. The team reviewed the different formats, identifying how they engaged with particular audiences. The team explored the following four toolkits:

- Advancing Human Rights Policy and Practice in the Agribusiness Sector: An Implementation Toolkit by Global Agribusiness Alliance (2020)

- Higher Education Support Toolkit: Assisting Students with Psychiatric Disabilities by Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation, Boston University, USA (2009)

- Assessing Unpaid Care Work: A Participatory Toolkit by the Institute of Development Studies (2021)

- Covid-19 Response Toolkit for Indian Higher Education Institutions: Institutional Resilience for Academic Planning and Continuity by O.P. Jindal Global University, India (2020)

The team collaboratively wrote the first draft over the following months. The OAR, like the PB, drew on the findings of the first three phases of the project. However, the OAR is especially influenced by the third phase of the project and Nikita Samanta's experience of organising taster days in Haryana in 2019. Once the team had developed the first draft, it was shared with the FCF project CG of young academics and researchers from Haryana and India. Their recommendations and suggestions were incorporated into a second draft.

This second draft was presented at the first impact event, organised by Dr Renu Yadav at Central University of Haryana (see Section 6). Feedback from the first event was considered and incorporated into the third draft of the OAR by the team. Further changes were made on the basis of the feedback and suggestions presented by college representatives of government colleges in Haryana who had piloted the OAR in their respective institutions in the second event (see Section 7). This collaboration of piloting, sharing of experiences, feedback, and suggestions from various stakeholders in Haryana and in India contributed to the development of the fourth draft of the OAR which was presented in the third national event (see Section 8).

4.17

6. The first event: workshop at Central University of Haryana

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Developing an outreach culture through engagement with key project findings encapsulated in PB and OAR

The first workshop for the project was organised under the leadership of Dr Renu Yadav, a member of the project's CG, at Central University, Haryana. Dr Yadav was supported by the team in developing, planning, and organising this workshop. Representatives of the state, different HEIs, the Indian partners, and members of the CG in India were individually invited by the Indian partner institution to this online workshop. The main objective was to share the key findings of the FCF project and drafts of the PB and OAR. Different college representatives, who had been identified prior to the workshop, presented their response to the two drafts (which has been shared with them prior to the workshop). Their responses were recorded and subsequently reflected in the content of the workshop report.

The workshop report was uploaded to the project webpage.[3]
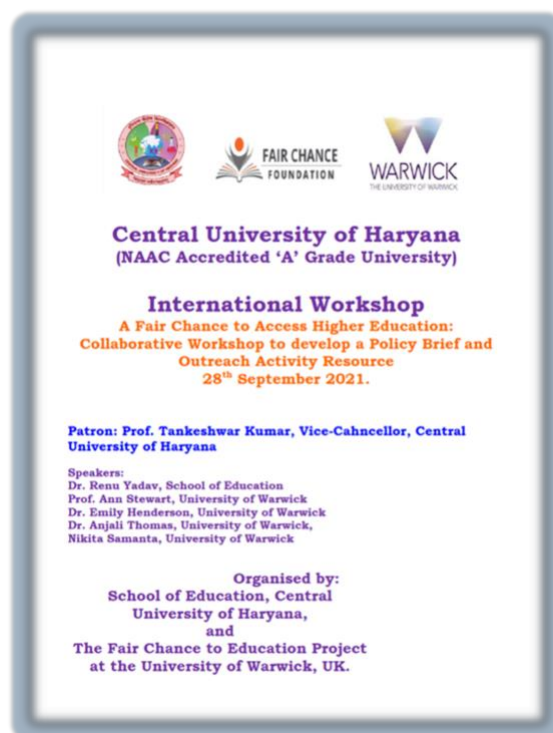
Figure 2: The Front Page of the Brochure

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[3] Find the first event report at:
https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/law/research/projects/rlaaa3083/output/workshop_report_final.pdf
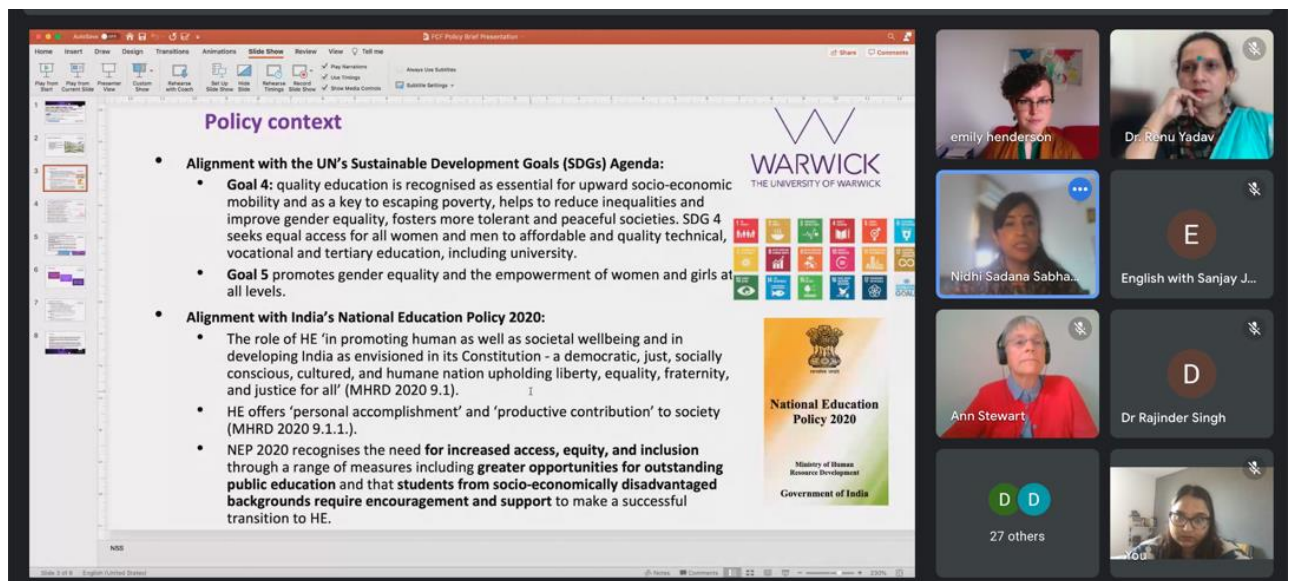
4.18

Figure 3: Screenshot of the Central University Workshop

Developing outreach facilitation skills; gaining buy-in for active participation; piloting the OAR in Haryana

The team sought to test support for the OAR through the willingness of college representatives to volunteer *to pilot its use to hold an open/taster day* in their respective HEIs. Initially four college representatives volunteered, facilitated by the leadership of Dr Renu Yadav. However due to the Covid-19 restrictions in Haryana, only three out of the four volunteering colleges were able to organise open days within the time scale. These three college representatives, from different rural and urban government colleges in different districts across Haryana also committed to sharing their experiences in organising the event. They agreed to feedback suggestions relating to its further development and that of outreach practices in Haryana at the second workshop.

4.19

7. The second event: workshop at Bhagat Phool Singh Mahila Vishwavidyalaya (BPS Women's University)

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The second online workshop was organised under the leadership of Dr Manju Panwar, a member of the project's CG at Bhagat Phool Singh Mahila Vishwavidyalaya (BPSMV). Similar to the first workshop, Dr Panwar was supported by the team in developing, planning, and organising this workshop. The event was attended by representatives of different universities, academics, college representatives of the three colleges which piloted the OAR, the project's CG, the Indian partners, and students of BPSMV.

Extending buy-in for outreach; demonstrating facilitation skills; endorsing the OAR regionally

A range of speakers at the workshop provided the social and historical context of HE outreach in Indian universities and shared their experiences of organising activities. The key focus for the workshop was to share the experiences of the three college representatives who had used the OAR to organise open/taster days in Haryana and to hear their assessment of the processes involved and the event itself. Each representative provided a detailed account of their activities, the challenges they had faced, their evaluation of the usefulness of the activity, and their general assessment of the value of this form of outreach. All three considered the exercise very valuable, reporting considerable support for this form of outreach, with the outcome that over a 1000 young women and men had attended these taster days. The event was recorded and the content subsequently reflected in the workshop report.

The workshop report has been uploaded on the project webpage.[4]

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[4] Find the second event report at:
https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/law/research/projects/rlaaa3083/output/workshop_report_22.06.20.pdf

4.20

Figure 4: Flyer for the Workshop

Figure 5: Screenshot of the BPSMV Workshop

4.21

The proceedings of this workshop were covered in local newspapers in Haryana on 29th January 2022. Both clippings (Figures 6 and 7) talk about the international online workshop organised by BPSMV. The clippings briefly describe the focus and discussions between the workshop participants such as the needs and benefits of inclusive and equitable access to HE, the need for outreach to young women and students from different deprived groups, and the social responsibility of HEIs to engage with communities.

Figure 6: Source Ujaala Aaj Tak

Figure 7: Source Ajit Samachar

4.22

8. The third event: national webinar at CPRHE, NIEPA

The CPRHE/NIEPA and University of Warwick Webinar on 'Gendered Pathways to Higher Education Access and Choice' was organised under the leadership of Dr Nidhi Sabharwal, one of the project's partners, at CPRHE, NIEPA on 5th April 2022 as a blended event. Dr Sabharwal was supported by the team in developing, planning and organising this event. Dr Henderson, Professor Stewart, and Ms Nikita Samanta from the Warwick team were able, due to removal of travel restrictions, to attend in person.

Demonstrating national policy relevance of project findings for the development of an HE outreach culture

The purpose of the event was to communicate national relevance of the project findings and the importance of an HE outreach culture. The pre-circulated concept note encapsulated key elements of the PB research findings, which were presented in more detail by Dr Henderson on behalf of the project team.

4.23

Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education (CPRHE)
National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA), New Delhi
and
The University of Warwick, United Kingdom

Invites you to Webinar
on
A Fair Chance for Education: Gendered Pathways to Higher Education Access and Choice
Tuesday 05 April 2022 | 11:00 - 13:00 hrs (IST)

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set new global values centred around inclusion - leaving no one behind. The SDG4 recognises access to quality education as essential for upward socio-economic mobility. Importantly, eleminating gender disparities in access to quality higher education (HE) is at the heart of the SDG4. Access to quality educational pathways to higher education (HE) is crucial in influencing informed decision-making pertaining to choice of HE studies and shaping careerpaths. Globally, there has been progress in achieving gender parity (in favour of women) in access to HE. In India too, the Gender Parity Index (GPI) reached 1.01 in 2019-20. However, there exists wide variations among states across India. The GPI varies from 0.83 in Bihar to 1.36 in Kerala. Even though gender parity of enrolment is being achieved, social and gender barriers remain for women and also for young men from disadvantaged groups, in relation to accessing quality educational pathways to HE and making informed decisions about post-schooling choices.

The empirical evidence generated by the 'A Fair Chance for Education: Gendered Pathways to Educational Success in Haryana' study (a five-year collaborative research project of University of Warwick and research partners in India, 2017-2021), together with other related studies, show that many young people entering HE in India come from families and communities where there is little or no prior experience of HE, or of higher levels of secondary schooling. Students from socially and economically disadvantaged groups are often the first in their families and communities to access HE, so they lack adequate information regarding HE options and the admission process. As such, choices are being made without access to sufficient or accurate information. Informed choices about HE are thus limited. (Please find the link of the research brief here:https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/law/research/projects/rlaaa3083/output/policy_ brief_published.pdf).

Furthermore, young people are arriving at HE with different levels of gendered dis/advantage. Families play a key role in educational decision making about HE futures of young people, and gender mediates many aspects of family decision making about HE. These gender influences include: whether and how a young person is able to go on to study; who is listened to and relied upon for information; choice of institution, particularly their location; how family resources are assessed to support young people's study; what the desired outcome of a HE degree may be. For women, college and subject choice are more likely to be based on the college being close to home and/or with a safe reputation, as opposed to availability of subjects or academic reputation. Thus, while there may be gender parity, there are still many gender-based assumptions which affect the HE choices which are available to both young women and young men. They lack access to informed, gender-sensitive information and support.

Government colleges are key institutions providing HE to young people who are first generation higher education learners, from lower socio-economic backgrounds and/or rural or semi-urban areas. Government colleges have the potential to play a greater role in the communities where they are located, to provide greater information and promote gender-sensitive decision-making in families. Government colleges can serve as college knowledge hubs within local areas, to provide knowledge on choice of college, course of study and career prospects. With appropriate support, colleges can become important agents of change in improving HE informed choice.

These research findings, supported by wider research on ways of facilitating access to HE based upon informed decision making, have resulted in the development of a resource pack – an 'Outreach Activity Resource' (OAR) to support colleges in organising a 'taster' day (an outreach programme, in the form of a college visit day, to provide information about HE) for school students, and their families where possible, to visit the campus, meet staff, learn more about the range of courses and the admissions process. (Please find the link of the same here: https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/law/research/projects/rlaaa3083/output fair_ chance_ for education_ outreach_ activity_ resource_published.pdf). This latter phase of the project involved working closely with college principals and academic partners in Haryana, India. The colleges used the OAR to organise taster days, which proved hugely successful in both urban and rural colleges, in spite of ongoing pandemic restrictions.

Promoting a culture of widening participation and informed HE choice is a priority which is shared by the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. NEP 2020 recognises the need for increased access, equity, and inclusion through a range of measures, including conducting outreach programmes on HE opportunities among the socially and economically disadvantaged groups to support their successful transition to higher education.

Keeping this context in mind, this webinar aims to initiate a dialogue on the role of HE access outreach efforts by government colleges to promote gender equality in terms of HE access and informed choice. The objectives are to discuss the ways in which educational pathways to HE are gendered in terms of HE access and choice; to discuss factors which affect access to HE opportunities and informed choice, and which therefore contribute to gender inequalities, and to discuss institutional strategies to promote gender equality relating to access to HE opportunities and informed choice.

Figure 8: Concept Note

4.24

The meeting was chaired by the Vice Chancellor NIEPA, Professor Varghese. The invited speakers were key national policy makers: Dr Archana Thakur, Joint Secretary, Universities Grants Commission (UGC); and Shri Harshit Mishra, Deputy Advisor, Education at the NITI Aayog (the apex public policy think tank of the Government of India with a remit to catalyse economic development and to foster cooperative federalism using a bottom-up approach). Both key speakers and the Vice-Chancellor NIEPA acknowledged the direct policy relevance of the content of the PB.

Figure 9: Concept Note Webinar Speakers

Demonstrating local and regional buy-in for conduct of outreach activities

Dr Rajinder Singh, Principal of Sanatan Dharma (SD) College, Ambala Cantt, Haryana was the third key speaker. SD College was one of the three colleges to pilot the OAR. Dr Singh shared with the audience the process and outcome of the 'taster day' activity, thereby providing the participants with a lived example of the value of undertaking OAR and demonstrating the facilitation skills built through the process.

Wider dissemination and engagement in outreach development

The webinar was attended by over 100 participants from India and the UK. It included a very lively and engaging question and answer session chaired by Prof Varghese, where several topics were discussed such as the role of teachers in enabling access; the role of social capital in choice making; the role of trailblazers in promoting education for women. Prof Stewart then reflected on the wider significance of the contribution made by the project and shared the UK context in relation to outreach and widening participation.

4.25

The Vice-Chancellor of NIEPA concluded the event by confirming that the project and its findings have been relevant at various levels: the project has aided colleges in Haryana and has contributed to the academic research, and the policy community in India, which was evident from the attendees and speakers at the webinar.

A recording of the webinar is publicly available on the NIEPA website.[5]

The workshop webinar report has been uploaded on the project webpage.[6]

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[5] Find the NIEPA webinar recording at:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M8eWCVx0dek&ab_channel=NIEPANewDelhi

[6] Find the third event report at:
https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/law/research/projects/rlaaa3083/output/workshop3_niepa_report_final_17oct22.pdf

4.26

9. Contributing to the development of gender and Higher Education research agendas

To date, the focus of this report has been on demonstrating the influence of our research to local and national education policy makers. We now turn to our contribution to the development of HE research agendas.

Knowledge creation through research methodology

A key objective for the project as a whole was to work collaboratively with our Indian partners to develop and implement each stage. We also adopted a participatory methodology which entailed seeking advice and comments from a range of other local actors. We sought to use this participatory process to contribute to the development of scholarship on gender and HE, including research focusing on issues of diversity and inclusion.

Our partners have contributed in different ways over the course of the project. Professor Nandini Manjrekar (Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS)) and Dr Manish Jain (Ambedkar University Delhi) contributed significantly to the early shaping of the project through the provision of a background scoping report and subsequently through attendance at other events over the course of the project. Dr Nidhi Sabharwal (CPRHE, NIEPA) has played a key role in the developing and implementation of every stage of the overall project. In addition, CPHRE at NIEPA has enabled us to present our work in ways that engage with contemporary Indian HE debates.

We established the following review bodies for the project,

- **Research Advisory Group (RAG)** for the project consisting of senior Indian researchers with expertise in HE and/or gender. We have presented our research for discussion at yearly meetings as well as circulating elements of our research by email in the interim. RAG members have assisted the team with the development of the project, providing invaluable comments and suggestions.
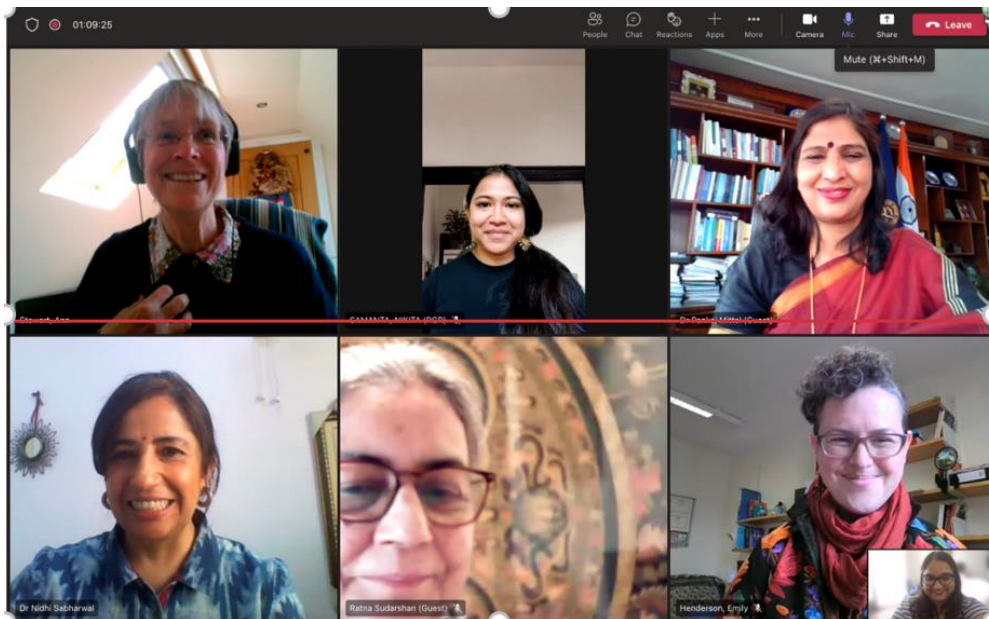
Figure 10: Screenshot of RAG Meeting, 2022

- **Consultative Group** of predominately early career academics and researchers who shared an interest and expertise in gender and education particularly in Haryana. Through the CG, the FCF Project team sought to create a mutually beneficial network of gender and HE scholars. On the one hand, the group members gained a greater understanding of the organisation of a transnational research project, and on the other, they aided the project team in its learning about the Indian context. This collaboration was facilitated through visits by two members Dr Yadav and Ms Rathee (along with Dr Sabharwal) to Warwick, funded by Warwick University's Institute of Advanced Study. During this visit they presented their work at an event hosted by the International Research and Researchers Network at the Society for Research into Higher Education.[7] The team gained a great deal from their expertise. The group also contributed to the project research with its collaborative and evolutionary methodology, for example, by piloting research instruments and providing comments on initial findings.

  Members of the CG, as indicated above, have played a key role in developing expertise in and contributing leadership to the development of outreach in Haryana (through Dr Yadav and Dr Panwar hosting the two workshops and Dr Yadav's substantial contribution to the piloting of the OAR).

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[7] Find details of the presentation at:
https://srhe.ac.uk/civicrm/?civiwp=CiviCRM&q=civicrm/event/info&reset=1&id=379

4.28

Capacity building of the doctoral researchers

Both doctoral students funded by the project have played key roles in the development of the research, and gained skills in the conduct and presentation of policy-oriented research, including workshop organisation, report writing, and meeting facilitation. They gained skills relating to the overall development, management, and implementation of a substantial multifaceted international research project.

Stimulating and enhancing academic scholarship: the project's academic conference

The conference, 'A Fair Chance for Education: Problematising Access and Mapping Gendered Pathways to Higher Education in India' (15th -16th July 2021) was jointly hosted by TISS Mumbai and the University Warwick (and funded by the Fair Chance Foundation). Our original plan was to hold the event at TISS Mumbai, facilitated by our project partner, Prof Manjrekar, but due to the pandemic we shifted to an online format.

Figure 11: Conference Report

4.29

The aims of the conference were,

- to share the project's research findings including the policy focus relating to developing a research informed outreach culture,
- to discuss conceptualisations of access, gender, intersectional inequalities, unequal choices in HE in India,
- to bring together practitioners, academics and researchers from across India and internationally to discuss the various facets of HE in India, with a focus on gender, access and choice in HE, HE policy and methodologies to research access to HE, and
- to add to and encourage robust knowledge production and sharing within Indian HE research.

Themes of the conference were,

- Problematising access, choice, affirmative action, widening participation and outreach activities within HE
- Gender, social class, Dalit communities, religious minorities and access to HE
- Families and communities and educational pathways to HE
- Policy on HE and gender
- Methodologies for researching gender and HE

The call for papers resulted in a large number of submissions, itself evidence of the influence and status of our research. The organising committee selected 14 papers for presentation at the conference. The conference itself drew a large number of attendees, with 113 delegates participating on Day 1 and 86 on Day 2. In total, 144 delegates participated in the conference across both days.

The conference report can be found on the project website.[8]

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[8] Find the conference report at:
https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/law/research/projects/rlaaa3083/output/fcfconference_report_final.pdf

4.30

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Appendix 1

The Team at Warwick

Prof Ann Stewart, School of Law

Dr Emily Henderson, Education Studies

Dr Anjali Thomas, Education Studies now Evaluation Researcher, Prosper Project, University of Liverpool

Nikita Samanta, School of Law

Dr Julie Mansuy, School of Law, now Founder and Director of Active4Research Ltd.

Indian Project Partners

Dr Nidhi Sabharwal, NIEPA, CPRHE, New Delhi

Prof Nandini Manjrekar, TISS, Mumbai

Dr Manish Jain, Ambedkar University, New Delhi

Research Advisory Group Members

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Farida Khan, Professor (Retired), Department of Education, Jamia Millia Islamia University, New Delhi; Member, National Minorities Commission

Pankaj Mittal, Doctor, Additional Secretary, University Grants Commission; Former Vice Chancellor and Professor at Bhagat Phool Singh Mahila Vishwavidyalaya

Claire Noronha, Doctor, Founding Member and Director of Collaborative Research and Dissemination (CORD)

Ratna M. Sudarshan, Doctor, Former National Fellow, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration; Trustee: Institute of Social Studies Trust New Delhi

Asha Singh, Professor, Faculty of Social Sciences (Emerita), Principal Magadh Mahila College, and Former HOD of Economics (Emerita), Patna University, Patna

Consultative Group Members

Dr Renu Yadav, Central University Haryana

Dr Manju Panwar, Bhagat Phool Singh Women's University

Dr Kamlesh Narwana, University of Delhi

Dr Sharmila Rathee, University of Delhi

Dr Manika Bora, Jindal Global Law School, O.P. Jindal Global University

4.33

FCF Phase 4: The Contribution to Educational Policy Development of the Fair Chance for Education Research on Gendered Access to Higher Education

Dr Lovitoli Jimo, Ambedkar University Delhi

Dr Anima Mali, Vidyanagar College, West Bengal

Dr Anjali Tiwari, University of Delhi

Dr Laksh Venkataraman, TERI University, New Delhi

Dr Shubhra Nagalia, Ambedkar University Delhi

Rachna Chaudhary, Ambedkar University Delhi

4.34

Supporting Gender-sensitive Higher Education Access and Choice in Haryana, India: Policy Brief

Empowering young women – and young men through quality higher education (HE)

Quality education is recognised in the UN's Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 as essential for upward socio-economic mobility and as a critical element in escaping poverty. It helps to reduce inequalities and improve gender equality. It fosters more tolerant and peaceful societies. Prior to Covid-19, enrolment in educational institutions, particularly for young women, was growing steadily across much of the world. SDG 4 seeks equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university, and to eliminate gender disparities and ensure equal access to all levels of education for vulnerable groups. SDG 5 promotes gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls at all levels.

These aspirations are shared by India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 (MHRD 2020) which highlights the role played by HE 'in promoting human as well as societal wellbeing and in developing India as envisioned in its Constitution—a democratic, just, socially conscious, cultured, and humane nation upholding liberty, equality, fraternity, and justice for all' (MHRD 2020: 9.1). HE offers 'personal accomplishment' and 'productive contribution' to society (MHRD 2020: 9.1.1.). As India moves towards becoming a knowledge economy and society, many more young people are aspiring to HE.

The NEP 2020 recognises the need for increased access, equity, and inclusion through a range of measures including greater opportunities for outstanding public education and that students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds require encouragement and support to make a successful transition to HE.

A major challenge – gender inequality

There is a *new generation of young people entering HE in India.* Many of these young people come from families and communities where there is little or no prior experience of HE, or of higher levels of secondary schooling. Choices about HE are being made without access to sufficient or accurate information. While gender parity of enrolment has been achieved, gender inequalities persist, for example in relation the choice of institution and courses. Gender influences the expectations and experiences of all young people, whenever and wherever decisions are being made about accessing HE, in Haryana and in India more widely.

This policy brief sets out the specific challenges relating to gendered barriers faced by young people and their families. It goes on to explore the ways in which HE institutions can take the lead in supporting new generations of young women and men to make informed choices about what is best for them, so that they can become active and engaged citizens who contribute fully to national development.

Challenges faced by families in educational decision-making

Families play a key role in educational decision-making about HE futures of young people. In Haryana, gender influences many aspects of family decision-making about HE (Sahu et al. 2017, Mukhopadhyay 2019): whether and how a young person is able to go on to study; who is listened to and relied upon for information; choices of institution particularly their location; how family resources are assessed to support young people's study; and what the desired outcome of a university education may be.

Lack of resources faced by families from lower socio-economic backgrounds (financial and college-going knowledge): Fathers, mothers and other relatives are increasingly encouraging their children to take up HE opportunities. But parents (particularly single parents) generally do not have the resources (which are acquired through higher levels of education or through employment in professional occupations) to help them make informed choices about HE. They may not have personal experience or access to reliable sources of information; and their communities may have conservative views on gender. They also have limited financial resources.
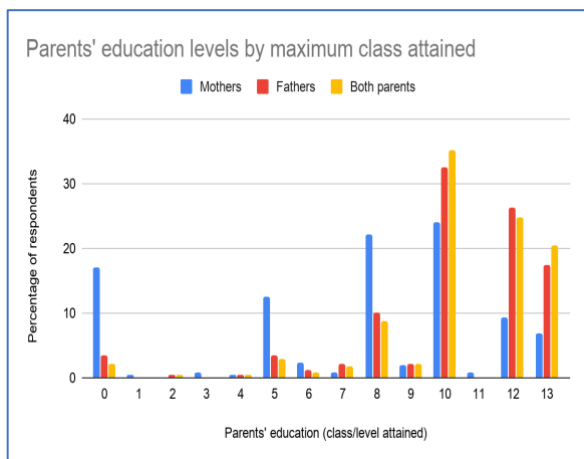

Figure 1: Parents' education levels by maximum class attained among students in sampled Haryana government colleges

Source: (Henderson et al. 2021, p 21)

Note: '13' signifies any higher or further education attained beyond class 12.

Gender conservatism in educational decision-making: Parents seek advice from many sources within extended family networks, including older children, but also from colleagues, teachers, proprietors of cyber-cafes/internet shops. Parents may be particularly sensitive to neighbourhood rumour and hearsay about the value of and behaviour in HE institutions. They do not want their daughters' reputation undermined. They may be fearful of their daughters and sons leaving a local area which is familiar to them and in which they think they can, to some extent, control behaviour.

> **Gender conservatism: marriage and jobs**
>
> Young men may prefer employment over HE, particularly seeking government posts, in the military, or relating to sport (in Haryana). They face pressure to 'skip' HE to earn immediately and contribute to siblings' weddings and education and/or to prepare for their own marriage. For young women, HE can support conservative assumptions relating to marriageability, rather than be valued for the wider social and economic opportunities it offers. The challenge is to ensure that the advantages (social and economic) of HE are fully appreciated by young people and their families in decision-making processes.

Families make choices about the feasibility and value of HE based upon practicalities and assumptions, which are different for daughters and sons, relating to commutability, i.e. the ability to negotiate the time taken to reach college, distance to travel, forms of transport and concerns of safety while travelling to college.

The proximity to home of rural and semi-urban colleges can be significant in encouraging students, particularly from socially and economically disadvantaged communities in rural locations, to access HE. But such considerations of commutability can also constrain educational aspiration and choice.

Supporting young people and their families in decision-making

Making informed decisions is challenging for family members when they lack reliable sources

of information. There is little *informed publicly provided support* available to families. Young people struggle with navigating admission processes. They use informal means to gather information about HE because specific institutional sources of information are not produced. They are not able to rely on institutional resources, such as websites, teachers, or college staff. Lacking access to a computer at home, they use cyber cafes to assist them. This advice may not be based on reliable and informed sources of information. The advice can reflect or reinforce the conservative gender values of the local communities.

Government colleges are very important

Government colleges are key institutions providing HE to young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds and/or rural or semi-urban areas (Varghese et al. 2019, Tierney and Sabharwal 2016). They have lower fees than other institutions (such as private colleges) and thus are more affordable. Local colleges, where provided, enable students to study nearer home thereby avoiding hostel fees. However, there is still an urban bias in the location of public and private HEIs (Varghese et al. 2018). In areas where there are low levels of community knowledge about HE, government colleges can serve as knowledge hubs within local areas.

Limited awareness of their own potential to serve as HE knowledge hubs: Currently, government colleges have limited interactions with the local areas in which they are situated. There is a reliance on formal mechanisms of recruitment, on the reservations policy and other state schemes (e.g., no fees for women) to ensure equality of access. There is limited information released about the colleges through, for example, web pages or brochures. Young people are making decisions often without setting foot in a college, reinforcing the influence of informal sources of information and increasing the likelihood of receiving unreliable information about college processes including admissions.

This also results in gendered inequalities: for example, more young men have direct access to outside sources of knowledge, such as internet cafes, than young women who must send a brother or other relative or be accompanied by a chaperone.

Consequences

Young women as well as young men from disadvantaged backgrounds are now aspiring to and accessing HE. While there may be gender parity, there are still many gender-based assumptions which affect the choices available to and made by both young women and young men (Henderson, Sabharwal and Thomas, submitted). They lack access to informed, gender-sensitive information and support. This leads to gendered inequalities of opportunities and a reduction in life chances, particularly for young women.

Families of potential first generation HE students want to be – and are already – involved in every stage of the educational experiences and expectations of young women and men. Recognising the need for and providing support to all members of families to make informed decisions about HE will widen educational opportunities for young people and contribute to gender-sensitive and inclusive policy making on HE.

Government colleges are facilitating educational choices and access for first generation learners, but they have the potential to play a greater role in the communities where they are located, to provide greater information and promote gender-sensitive decision-making in families. Colleges can develop and implement measures designed to widen access (*see the blue textbox on page 5 and the Outreach Activity Resource referred to on page 6 of this policy brief)*. With financial support from state funding bodies, and assistance with developing this role, colleges can become even more important agents of change.

Strategies for consideration

To support the NEP 2020 widening participation objectives, **state-level policy makers** can:

Address challenges of gender inclusion in HE expansion by developing and adopting gender audits (Halvorsen 2019) to assist policy making on inclusive HE expansion.

Address challenges faced by families and young people in making informed choices through provision of good quality publicly accessible information.

This can be achieved by

a. providing this information to community groups and to schools to address the need of families to have access to readily available information about school choice, HE choice (including on subjects), and job prospects. Importantly, this should cover aspirational educational trajectories for all young people, and in particular offer young women positive options and futures.

b. ensuring that state-funded educational schemes and interventions are more widely publicised, e.g., producing short videos/podcasts on the range of HEIs, including their facilities and courses, and the range of supportive measures available.

c. supporting HEIs to organise consultation with young people and different stakeholders in the community, thereby connecting families, schools and colleges.

d. connecting *Anganwadi* workers and other localised services with schools and colleges to promote informed educational choices from an early age.

Address challenges of commutability.

This can be achieved by the Department of Higher Education

a. further liaising with the Department of Transport and Infrastructure, students and colleges to consult on bus routes, bus stand locations and bus requirements for college access (e.g., to ensure that bus personnel are trusted by families and provide a positive environment for women students; continued maintenance of donated buses), and treat consultation with students and mapping of the catchment area as *essential* in this process.

b. considering provision of more colleges where there are no colleges within an appropriate catchment area: 1 hour of travel and/or 70-100km distant from students' homes. In the absence of nearby colleges, ensure that good, safe, affordable, and quality hostel facilities are available as an alternative to long commutes.

Address challenges of supporting good quality local HE provision, particularly for first generation HE learners.

This can be achieved by

a. providing sufficient funding and resources to further develop *the role of local colleges* to recruit high-quality teachers on permanent contracts; maintain and develop facilities; develop a high-quality offer for students (e.g., extra activities, prizes and scholarships); in line with the NEP, develop greater institutional autonomy to facilitate and expand outreach activities dedicated to HE access and choice.

To recognise the importance of **local colleges** as potential agents of change, **college principals and HE teachers** can:

Address challenges faced by families and young people in making informed choices.

This can be achieved by colleges

a. engaging with families more directly, recognising the impact on decision-making of the relationships between young people and the various members of their family and that young people accessing HE need both emotional as well as informed support from their families.

b. building a more public (and attractive for students and their families) presence in catchment areas: through regular visits to, or even 'adopting' villages to increase understanding of and trust in HE, and consultation between college teachers and local leaders, such as village sarpanches, in local communities.

c. undertaking guided visits of the colleges for students and their families.

d. liaising with schools to ensure that young people are receiving the information they need and that young people are aware of their options.

e. formalising the role of student ambassador (in colleges): to support HE information dissemination in their communities and schools; and guided visits to the college.

f. developing *an outreach office* with responsibility for overseeing and conducting all outreach activities. Such activities could include working with student ambassadors and their equivalents in schools; producing materials (e.g., short videos on facilities and courses; leaflets; newsletters) and actively supporting information and marketing campaigns via different channels including those used by young people (social media) and those used by family members (newspapers, television, radio); liaising with local internet cafes to ensure that young people applying from these settings have access to up-to-date information; overseeing admissions process; training personnel involved to be informative and welcoming to applicants and their families; providing step-by-step guidance and ensure wide availability of the guidance (online, at schools, internet cafes, college itself) particularly assisting unsupported young people who are making decisions about HE; using college ambassadors (in collaboration with schools) to provide support on applications (*see the Outreach Activity Resource referred to on page 6 of this policy brief*).

To recognise the importance of schools in supporting informed and gender-sensitive decision-making by young people and their families, **schools** can:

Address challenges faced by young people (and their family members) in making informed choices.

This can be achieved by

a. supporting schools to designate a specific member of staff to collaborate with the college outreach office and ambassadors to facilitate dissemination of reliable, accurate information about HE options to young people and, where possible, their communities.

b. provide *counselling* for students, at appropriate times e.g., well before public school examinations, to provide young people with awareness of their HE options; encourage them to identify reliable sources of information including on the range of support available. Schools should be aware that young women need to receive negotiation

skill training at school to enable them to be more involved in discussions of their futures within the family. Schools can recognise the potential contribution of *student ambassadors*. They can organise for students and their families to attend *school-based fairs* with *colleges, providing information 'help desks'.*

Improving informed decision-making: a government college 'taster' day

A co-ed government college in rural Haryana organised a 'Taster Day' for the students of nearby government schools to allow high school students to experience the atmosphere of a college; to give students access to important information on how to access college (admission, application forms, fees, documents needed), what courses are available in this college, what scholarships can students apply for as well as what facilities are available to students upon enrolling (NCC, NSS, Sports, Computers). The majority of students said it helped them in choosing the right course for them and completing the admission process without errors.

Conclusion

Access to HE is unequal and based on gendered inequalities, which are often mediated at home as families are involved in making educational decisions. This gendered inequality based on socio-cultural gender conservatism is simultaneously influenced by social class, caste, religion and regional inequalities. Policy makers, schools and HEIs, especially government colleges, can make positive contributions to enhance how families and students make informed choices to access HE though outreach activities and community engagement. This will help students, families and communities to overcome different kinds of social and economic deprivations, gain personal achievements and productively contribute towards society.

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PB.6

Fair Chance for Education Outreach Activity Resource for Higher Education Institutions:
Organising a College Visit 'Taster Day' for Potential Higher Education Applicants

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FAIR CHANCE
FOUNDATION

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OAR.1

Introduction

This Outreach Activity Resource has been developed, under the Fair Chance for Education academic research project, to provide support to higher education (HE) colleges in India for the organisation of 'taster days'.

Taster days are a beneficial activity for colleges as they enable prospective students to get a 'taste' of what attending college might be like, by welcoming them on site. This can lead to a greater number of students wanting to enrol in college, but can also increase the number of applications received by the college having provided the taster day.

As decisions about HE in India are made by young people who may be first generation students and therefore may not know what college involves, taster days can inform their choice on whether to attend college and ensure that decision is made based on merit and aspiration.

The Fair Chance for Education Project

'A Fair Chance for Education: Gendered Pathways to Educational Success in Haryana' was a five-year collaborative project (2017-2021) that aimed to determine the gendered factors that contribute to young people's HE access and choice in Haryana, India.

The first phase of the project explored the social, economic, and educational backgrounds of students accessing co-educational government colleges in Haryana, in relation to gender. Two key findings emerged: that families are heavily involved in decisions about HE, and that there is very limited institutional outreach available to first-generation students and students from marginalised communities.

The second and third phases of the project focused on the role of family members in the educational choices of young people (Phase 2) and explored the ways in which outreach activities organised by colleges can influence the way in which young people access HE (Phase 3).

The key conclusion is that developing an outreach culture in government colleges is both possible and desirable so that,

i) more young people access HE, and
ii) young people and their families make more informed choices about accessing HE.

Because decisions regarding HE are made within families, as a family group, it is important that outreach activities engage with individual young people, and with their family members.

OAR.2

<u>Understanding the Context</u>

As HE is massifying, there are a variety of ways in which countries and educational institutions are encouraging and improving participation of students from disadvantaged and marginalised groups and communities. These efforts include three kinds of activities: (a) inreach activities, which involve recruiting students to enrol in a particular institution, (b) outreach activities, which often involve participation with stakeholders such as schools and communities and (c) structural reorganisations such as distance learning and using information and communications technology (Osborne 2003).

In the Indian context, the larger structural efforts involve: the caste-based affirmative action policy which is institutionalised through the system of reservations, and a variety of scholarships and student loans which are available to students from socially and economically disadvantaged groups such as young women and students from marginalised communities and students with very low family incomes.

Lack of information and relevant knowledge about HE options is a significant barrier to students and families who are contemplating post-schooling state-funded HE choices in Haryana. Students and families require information about HE institutions (HEIs), scholarships, educational loans, cost of HE and the courses provided; they also require relevant and up-to-date information regarding application and enrolment procedures to be provided in a timely manner. Since many students are the first generation in their families to access HE, they often do not have the benefit of inter-generational primary experience, knowledge and informed expectations of HE.

The NEP 2020 has recognised the need to develop an institutional culture of inreach and outreach to complement the existing reservation policy. It identifies the need for support for students from socio-economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs), and the importance of developing a supportive culture with schools and communities. It recommends that:

> Universities and colleges will thus be required to set up high-quality support centres and will be given adequate funds and academic resources to carry this out effectively. There will also be professional academic and career counselling available to all students. (NEP 2020: 39)

NEP 2020 highlights the need to support HEIs in

> their development, community engagement and service, contribution to various fields of practice, faculty development for the higher education system, and support to school education. (NEP 2020: 35)

An outreach programme which involves a range of stakeholders—colleges, schools and family members—will address these the NEP requirements. A programme of this kind will help students and families to have more primary information about HE choices, experiences and expectations, and will assist more young people, especially first-generation students, to access HE and to make more informed educational decisions.

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We present here an Outreach Activity Resource to assist stakeholders to meet the NEP 2020 requirements. It is based upon the research findings from the Fair Chance for Education project, but also developed collaboratively with local partners.

<u>How to Use this Outreach Activity Resource</u>

This Outreach Activity Resource has been developed for stakeholders in Indian HEIs, particularly government colleges. This includes but is not limited to HEI leadership teams and faculty members.

This Outreach Activity Resource is structured as follows. First is the above **Introduction**. Secondly, this Outreach Activity Resource offers four **Open and Taster Day Options** which can be chosen according to the resources available to each institution. Third, the Outreach Activity Resource includes a **Case Study** for a taster day which was organised by the Fair Chance for Education Project, and the activities included in this event. Finally, the Outreach Activity Resource provides several **Templates** which may be useful in order for HEIs to organise a taster day. This includes

- checklist for the organisation of the taster day,
- sample letter inviting students and families to the taster day,
- evaluation form for students to fill in to provide feedback on the taster day
- college profile form which can be filled in by the HEI and distributed to students at the taster day (to provide a record of the key characteristics of the college),
- reflective activity to encourage discussion between staff organising the taster day.

Finally, the Outreach Activity Resource provides additional **Resources** which may be useful to consider for the preparation and planning of a taster day.

If you do decide to use this Outreach Activity Resource, we would very much like to hear about your experiences of organising a taster day. You can also get in touch with questions and feedback about this Outreach Activity Resource. You can contact us at FCFHaryana@warwick.ac.uk .

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Open and Taster Day Options

This table presents four different options, displayed from the more complex option necessitating more resources, to the simplest option requiring fewer resources.

Resources	Open Day	Open Day *light*	Taster-Day	Taster-Day *light*
Time	Full day (4-6 hours)	Half day (2-3 hours)	Half day (2-3 hours)	(2 hours)
Staffing	Requires substantial staffing: **core committee** with representation from staff, faculty and students	Requires low staffing: **one person in charge**	Requires a medium amount of staffing: **one to three people in charge**	Requires low staffing: **one or two people**
Activities	Informational sessions, taster lectures and campus tour	Informational sessions and campus tour	Informational sessions, taster lectures and campus tour	One or two taster lectures with Q&A and short campus tour
Invitation	Open to any class 12 students and family members	Open to any class 12 students and family members	Selective invitation	Selective invitation
Transport	Buses to ferry students/families to and from school or village	Students/ families travel by their own means	Buses to ferry students/families to and from school or village	Students/ families travel by their own means
Refreshments	Water and snacks	Water and snacks (optional)	Water and snacks	Water
AV	✔	✔	✔	✔
Campus tour	✔	✔	✔	✔
Marketing	Marketing for event: posters in public places/WhatsApp groups/in-person invitation to schools, village panchayats/ newspaper advertisements	Marketing for event: WhatsApp groups/in-person invitation to schools, village panchayats	In-person visit to schools/villages who are being invited to the event	In-person visit or calls to schools/ villages who are being invited to the event
Material	Print out fliers/ college prospectus	Print out fliers/ college prospectus	Print out fliers/ college prospectus	Redirect students to college website
Feedback	Print feedback forms	Print feedback forms (optional)	Print feedback forms	Verbal feedback

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A Taster Day Case Study

A co-educational government college in a rural part of Haryana organised a 'Taster Day' for the students of nearby government schools, to allow high school students to experience the atmosphere of a college and also to give students access to important information on how to access college. The objectives of the event were to give students information about:

1. The admission process (admission dates, application forms, fees, documents needed)
2. Courses and streams available in this college
3. Scholarships and bursaries
4. College facilities (NCC, NSS, Sports, Computers, etc.)

In addition, the event aimed to provide students the opportunity to ask questions from the faculty and staff and seek guidance about accessing HE.

Since the college wanted to limit the number of students attending, and also would conduct a pre-event and post-event evaluation of the level of information students had accessed about HE, the college decided to host a 'taster day', which is an invite-only event, instead of an 'open day' (see previous page for options).

The college first put together a team who were responsible for organising the event; the team consisted of two faculty members who were active with the local parent community, the principal and an external researcher who was to evaluate the event. The faculty members were to facilitate taster sessions for the students, the principal was to facilitate the informational session for the students about admission and scholarships and the researcher's role was to organise the logistics for the event as well as to evaluate the event.

A month prior to the event, the researcher, on behalf of the college, contacted the girls' and boys' high schools in the area surrounding the college to set a date for the event that would suit the schools' and college's schedule. A week before the event, the researcher printed copies of the pre-event and post-event questionnaires to be distributed among the high school students who were to participate in the event. The college organised for a private bus to ferry students and the accompanying school teachers to and from the college for the taster day. Snack boxes were ordered for the participants from a local sweet shop. The team responsible for the event put together a brief PowerPoint presentation with information on the admission process, fees, scholarships and course options. The college already had their own projector and screen along with microphones, so did not need to organise for this to be in place.

A few days before the event, the college confirmed the date and time with the schools, and double-checked the timings with the bus operator and the catering shop. They also conducted a dry-run of the presentation with audio. They set up the hall where the event was to take place.

On the day of the event, as the students arrived into the college, the researcher collected the pre-event questionnaires from the students. The principal and some other faculty members conducted an informational session for the students for an

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hour, with a question-and-answer session where students were able to clarify doubts and ask for more information from the college staff. Then the students were taken on a campus tour and shown the facilities of the college. The students also briefly were able to sit in on lectures to give them a feel of what it would feel like to be a college student. After the event, the students were requested to fill out a post-event questionnaire. Following this, the snack boxes were distributed, and the students departed from the college by bus.

The college staff, faculty and researcher participated in a brief reflection session about the event which helped to highlight steps to further improve the next event in the following year, as well as to acknowledge the elements that went well and could be replicated. The feedback forms indicated that the majority of students felt they had gained more information about admissions, courses, scholarships and facilities from attending the event.

Templates

The below templates are provided to support colleges with the organisation and evaluation of a taster day event. These may not all be relevant, or may need adjusting to fit your institution's event.

1. Checklist with timeline and suggested tasks for organising the event (page 9).
2. Sample letter to invite Class 12 students and families to the event (page 11- English; page 12- Hindi).
3. Evaluation form for students and families attending the event (page 13).
4. College profile document to fill in and photocopy in order to distribute to students and families. This will enable them to have a record of the key characteristics and strengths of your institution (page 15).
5. Reflective activity providing some points of discussion for the Taster Day organising committee (page 16).

1. Event Checklist

The following table outlines some of the tasks which may be necessary in order to organise a taster day. This list is not exhaustive, so please use your discretion to alter the list to suit your college. The table allows for the date of completion of the task, and the initials of the person who completed the task, to be noted for organisation purposes. Some spaces have also been left blank for any other tasks that may be missing.

Pre-Event:

Timeline	Task	Date	Initials
Tasks to complete **5 weeks** before the event	Identify a coordinator in charge of the event.		
	Staff reflective activity (see page 16).		
	Choose type of event being organised (see options page 5).		
	Set up a core committee (if applicable, depending on the type of event chosen). Include college student ambassadors, including trailblazers (students who are the first in their family to access HE).		
	Set a date for the event in consultation with schools and the holiday calendar to ensure maximum attendance.		
	Make a list of all the schools/ groups/ areas you want to invite to the event.		
	Inform the respective principals/ in-charge/ authority about the event and obtain their buy-in.		
Tasks to complete **4 weeks** before the event	Put together an agenda for the day with details on who will speak when and about which topic; campus tour; Q&A; etc.		
	It would be a good idea to invite any existing students (college ambassadors/trailblazers) to speak as well.		
	Inform and invite any relevant local authorities.		
	Promote the event through various channels such as WhatsApp, newspaper, fliers, word-of-mouth, or any other appropriate channels.		
	Organise a space where the event will take place (eg: AV room, exam hall) keeping in mind that the room should be equipped for audio-visual equipment (eg: projector and speakers), should you choose to use PPt slides or videos.		
Tasks to complete **3 weeks** before the event	Organise the audio-visual equipment for the event (eg: microphone, projector, screen, laptop, clicker).		
	Organise food for the event, if applicable.		
	Organise transportation for the event, if applicable (eg: buses to transport school students).		
Tasks to complete **1 weeks** before the event	Organise stationery (pens, notepads) for the event.		
	Organise training for college ambassadors/trailblazers.		
	Print out the handouts, pre-event questionnaire, post-event questionnaire, along with any other material that may be relevant.		
	Create the slides, video etc. if applicable.		

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Tasks to complete in the week of the event.	Send a reminder to the schools/groups a day or two before the event.		
	Confirm the AV equipment/ transportation/ food or any other material that is being sourced, one day before the event.		
	Distribute consent sheets and pre-event questionnaires to the schools/ groups a day or two before the event.		
	Set up the space where the event is taking place.		

On the day of the event:

Task	Date	Initials
Do a dry-run of the presentation and test any technical/AV equipment to ensure smooth functioning.		
Run the event as planned. Ensure some time for a Q&A.		
Hand out the informational fliers/booklets to the participants.		
After the event, distribute and collect the post-event questionnaires/feedback forms from the participants.		

Post-event:

Task	Date	Initials
Go through the post-event questionnaires/ feedback forms and reflect on the event. Consider putting together a brief report on the event, based on the feedback.		

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2. Sample Letter to Families

<College Address>

<Date>

Subject: Invitation to Open Day Event <or another name of your choice> at <name of college> on <date>

Dear <name of parents>

We recognise that your child is a student at <name of school> and will be soon graduating from class 12. After finishing class 12, there are several educational and career opportunities available to children today. Higher Education in college and university is a very good route through which your child can develop their knowledge and skills. This will provide better employment opportunities for your child in the future. The knowledge and experiences in college would help your child in their future life and endeavours.

We would like to invite you and your child to <name of college> for an open day event where you will be able to see/experience/participate in <list activities>.

This will help you understand what your child will experience if they enrol in college and university. This will also be an opportunity for you to observe the college campus and its environment and interact with the wonderful staff and faculty who provide knowledge and different kinds of educational services to the boys and girls enrolled in the institution.

This event will be held on <date> between <time>.

We look forward to you and your child coming to this event and engaging with the staff and faculty who will be present to answer all your questions and concerns.

Yours sincerely,
<Name and Address of the Organiser>

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<कॉलेज का पता>

<दिनांक>

विषय: ओपन डे कार्यक्रम के लिए निमंत्रण <या आपके पसंद का दूसरा नाम>, <कॉलेज का नाम >, <दिनांक>

प्रिय <माता-पिता का नाम >

हम जानते हैं कि आपका बच्चा < स्कूल का नाम > के 12 वीं कक्षा का विद्यार्थी है। 12वीं कक्षा पास करने के बाद आजकल बच्चों के लिए कई शैक्षिक और रोज़गार अवसर उपलब्ध हैं। कॉलेज और विश्वविद्यालय में उच्च शिक्षा एक बहुत अच्छा मार्ग है जिसके द्वारा आपका बच्चा अपने ज्ञान और कुशलता का विकास कर सकता है। इससे आपके बच्चे को भविष्य में रोजगार के बेहतर अवसर मिल सकते हैं। कॉलेज का ज्ञान और अनुभव आपके बच्चे को उनके भविष्य के जीवन और प्रयासों में मदद करेगा।

हम आपको और आपके बच्चे को <कॉलेज का नाम> एक खुले दिन के कार्यक्रम के लिए आमंत्रित करना चाहते हैं, जहां आप <सूची गतिविधियों> को देख/अनुभव/भाग ले सकते हैं।

इससे आपको यह समझने में मदद मिलेगी कि यदि आपका बच्चा कॉलेज और विश्वविद्यालय में दाखिला लेता है तो उसे क्या अनुभव होगा। यह आपके लिए कॉलेज और उसके वातावरण को देखने, और कॉलेज के कर्मचारियों और शिक्षकों के साथ बातचीत करने का एक अवसर होगा।

यह कार्यक्रम <दिनांक> को <समय> के बीच आयोजित किया जा रहा है।

हम इस कार्यक्रम में आपकी और आपके बच्चे की भागीदारी की आशा करते हैं। आपके सभी सवालों का जवाब देने के लिए शिक्षक और कर्मचारी यहां मौजूद रहेंगे।
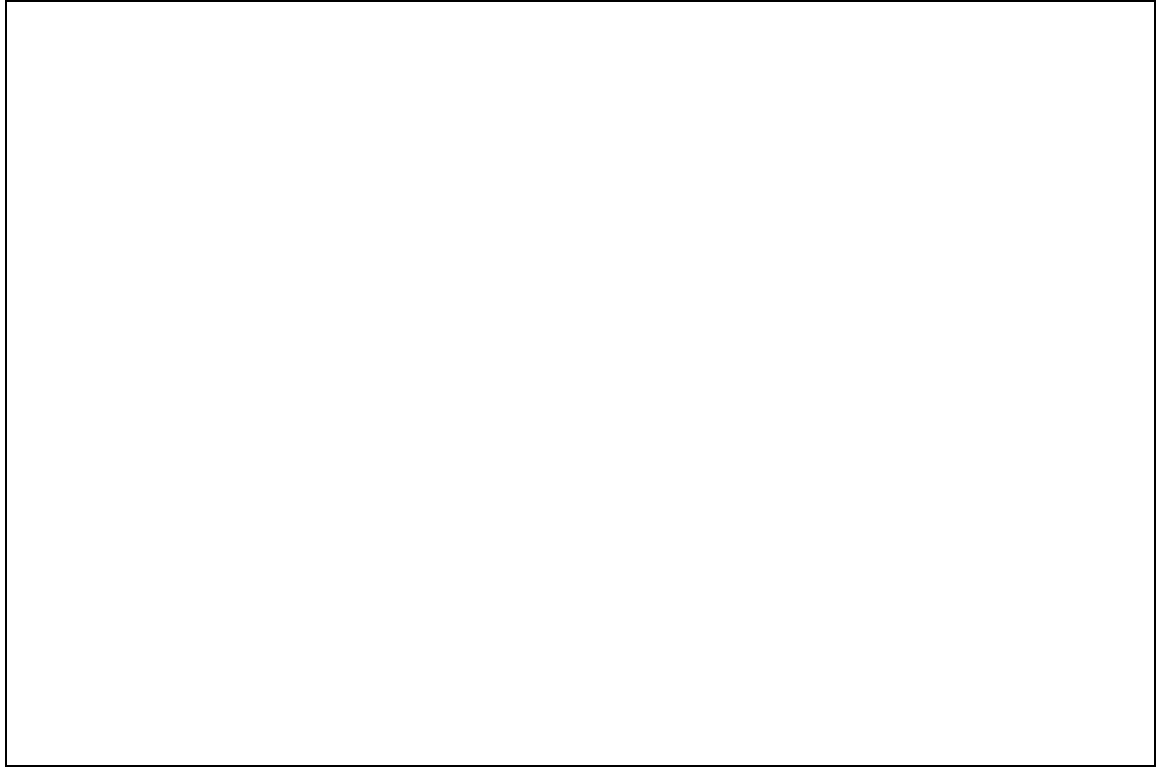
सादर,
< आयोजकों का नाम और पता>

OAR.12

3. Evaluation Form

कृप्या निम्नलिखित प्रश्नों का उत्तर दें (Please answer the following questions) :

1) पूरा नाम (Full Name) _____

2) लिंग (Gender) _____

3) फ़ोन नंबर (Phone number)_____

4) कक्षा (Class) _____

5) क्या इस कार्यक्रम के बाद, आप किसी कॉलेज/विश्वविद्यालय में दाखिले के लिए होने वाली प्रवेश प्रक्रियाओं के बारे में अधिक आश्वस्त महसूस करते हैं? (Do you feel more confident about the admissions procedures to enrol in a college/university after the event?)

   a. हाँ (Yes)   b. नहीं (No)   c. शायद (Maybe)

6) क्या इस कार्यक्रम के बाद आप विषय / संकाय को चुनने में अधिक आश्वस्त महसूस करते हैं? (Do you feel more confident about which subject/stream to choose after attending the event?)

   a. हाँ (Yes)   b. नहीं (No)   c. कुछ कुछ (Partially)

7) क्या आप स्नातक स्तर पर किसी भी / सभी छात्रवृत्ति / सीट-आरक्षण या आपके लिए उपलब्ध योजनाओं से अवगत हैं? (Are you aware of any/all the scholarships/studentships/seat-reservation or schemes available for you at the bachelor level?)

   a. हाँ (Yes)   b. नहीं (No)   c. शायद (Maybe)

8) क्या आपको लगता है कि आज का कार्यक्रम आपके लिए उपयोगी था?
   (Was today's event useful for you?)
   a. हाँ (Yes)   b. नहीं (No)   c. शायद (Maybe)

9) आपको इस कार्यक्रम के बारे में सबसे उपयोगी क्या लगा?
   (What did you find most useful about the event?)

_____

_____

10) इस कार्यक्रम को अधिक उपयोगी बनाने के लिए हम क्या बदल सकते हैं या जोड़ सकते हैं?
    (What can we change or add to make the event more useful in future?)

_____

_____

OAR.13

11) आज के कार्यक्रम पर कोई अतिरिक्त टिप्पणी या विचार?
(Any additional comments or thoughts on today's event?)

OAR.14

4. College Profile

Name of College-_____

Place- _____ District- _____

Name of Principal-_____

Type of college- Government/ Government aided/ Private/ Other_____

Affiliated University-_____

Year established-_____

Medium of Instruction-_____ Number of students-_____

Approx. student body makeup- SC _____ BC _____ General _____

Number of full time staff-_____ Number of contract staff-_____

Student-teacher ratio-_____

Streams offered- _____

Average fees for UG- Without practicals_____ With practicals- _____

Are fees different for women and men, if so state here-_____

Facilities _____

Other comments:

Principal Signature _____ Date _____

OAR.15

5. Reflective Activity

The purpose of this reflective activity is to provide some discussion points for **HEI leadership teams and faculty members** wanting to organise a taster day. It aims to assist with the development of an ethos or culture of outreach through self-reflection. It should be undertaken as a preliminary step to the organising the taster/open day.

These discussion points will provide the team with a deeper understanding of why they might want to run a taster day and which activities may be beneficial.

What was your experience of making decisions about going to college?

When did you decide that you would go to HE? At which age?

How did you find out about your HE options?

Who was involved in the decisions about your HE choices? Why did you make your final choice of institution/course?

Did you face any opposition during the decision-making about HE options? Did you overcome this? (Reflect on factors: family, personal, financial, institutional, geographical, logistical)

Did you experience any challenges in going through the HE application and admissions process?

What are other challenges that young people face in making HE choices?

How might an open/taster day improve young people's HE options, particularly from marginalised backgrounds and young women? (e.g.: via resources, information, assistance in filling application)

OAR.16

Resources

Information on outreach in UK:

- UCAS:
  https://www.ucas.com/providers/good-practice/emerging-cohorts/students-who-participated-wp-and-outreach-activities#the-shape-and-size-of-outreach-activities-and-programmes-in-the-uk-

- Office of Students:
  https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/ddd39369-6072-4b11-b07d-8f3dfdf1da2a/perceptions-of-higher-education-outreach-and-access-activity.pdf

- Sutton Trust Summer Schools:
  https://summerschools.suttontrust.com

- Brilliant Club:
  https://thebrilliantclub.org

- Aim Higher Progression framework:
  https://aimhigherwm.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Progression-Framework.pdf

  https://aimhigherwm.ac.uk/teachers-advisers/

- University of Bath:
  https://www.ucas.com/providers/good-practice/emerging-cohorts/students-who-participated-wp-and-outreach-activities#the-shape-and-size-of-outreach-activities-and-programmes-in-the-uk-

- University of Birmingham:
  https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/teachers/primary/index.aspx

- Imperial College London:
  https://www.imperial.ac.uk/be-inspired/schools-outreach/secondary-schools/stem-programmes/stem-potential/

- Swansea University:
  https://www.swansea.ac.uk/the-university/inclusivity-and-widening-access/outreach/

- Perceptions of Outreach and Access activities:
  https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/ddd39369-6072-4b11-b07d-8f3dfdf1da2a/perceptions-of-higher-education-outreach-and-access-activity.pdf

OAR.17

- Advance HE:
  https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/higher-education-outreach-widen-participation-toolkits-practitioners

- University of Warwick:
  https://warwick.ac.uk/study/outreach/

  https://warwick.ac.uk/study/outreach/wpatwarwick/app/theuniversityofwarwick_app_2020-21_v1_10007163.pdf

  https://warwick.ac.uk/study/outreach/wpatwarwick/app/impact_report_2018.pdf

USA example of an advertising campaign aimed at providing ways to inform students about what is necessary to gain access to college:

- KnowHow2Go:
  http://knowhow2go.acenet.edu/

Academic Resources:

- Osborne M (2003), Policy and practice in widening participation: a six country comparative study of access as flexibility, *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 22 (1), pp. 50-69

- Hasan, Z. and Nussbaum, M.C. (eds) *Equalizing Access: Affirmative Action in Higher Education in India, United States, and South Africa*. New Delhi, India: Oxford University Press 2012.

OAR.18

Appendix: Online Open Day

This appendix provides an alternative to the Open Day presented in this Outreach Activity Resource, in order to cater for the limitations of the Covid-19 Crisis.

It is emphasised that an in-person Open Day is preferable as our research shows that setting foots on campus grounds is more beneficial.

Resources	Open Day (already presented above)	Online Open Day Alternative
Time	Full day (4-6 hours)	Full day or half day
Staffing	Requires substantial staffing: **core committee** with representation from staff, faculty and students	A range of staff and students to present the different sessions
Activities	Informational sessions, taster lectures and campus tour	Online informational sessions with Q&A, online taster lectures, and online presentation of campus facilities with pictures
Invitation	Open to any class 12 students and family members	Open to any class 12 students and family members
Transport	Buses to ferry students/ families to and from school or village	N/A – The open day takes place as an online event
Refreshments	Water and snacks	N/A
AV	✓	✓
Campus tour	✓	✓ (virtual)
Marketing	Marketing for event: posters in public places/ WhatsApp groups/ in-person invitation to schools, village panchayats/ newspaper advertisements	Marketing for event: on social media/ WhatsApp groups/ in-person invitation to schools, village panchayats/ newspaper advertisements (if possible)
Material	Print out fliers/ college prospectus	Digital fliers and college prospectus
Feedback	Print feedback forms	Online feedback form

OAR.19

Final Project Outputs

Project Reports

Henderson, E. F. and Mansuy, J. (2018). *Introduction to and Progress Report on the Implementation of the Research Project: A Fair Chance for Education: Gendered Pathways to Educational Success in Haryana*. Coventry: University of Warwick.

Henderson, E. F., Thomas, A., Mansuy, J., Sabharwal N. S., Stewart, A., Rathee, S., Yadav, R., Samanta, N. (2021). *A Fair Chance for Education: Gendered Pathways to Educational Success in Haryana: Phase 1 Findings Report*. Coventry: University of Warwick.

Mansuy, J. and Henderson, E. F. (2020). *Project Development Summary (2016-2020): A Fair Chance for Education in Haryana Project*. Coventry: University of Warwick.

Samanta, N. and Stewart, A. (2023). *Phase 3 Report: Institutional Initiatives to Support Informed Choice in Accessing Higher Education: Implementing a Taster Day in Government Colleges in Haryana, India*. Coventry: University of Warwick.

Samanta, N., Thomas, A., Mansuy, J., Stewart, A., Henderson, E. F., and Sabharwal, N. S. (2022). *Fair Chance for Education Outreach Activity Resource for Higher Education Institutions: Organising a College Visit 'Taster Day' for Potential Higher Education Applicants*. Coventry: University of Warwick.

Stewart, A. (2023). *ESRC Impact Acceleration Account Round 2: End of Project Narrative – Enhancing Informed Choices for Higher Education: Building Outreach Culture in Haryana, India*. Coventry: University of Warwick.

Stewart, A., Henderson, E. F., Mansuy, J., Thomas, A., Samanta, N., Sabharwal, N. S., Rathee, S., and Yadav, R. (2023). *A Fair Chance for Education: Gendered Pathways to Educational Success in Haryana Final Project Report*. Coventry: University of Warwick.

Stewart, A., Henderson, E. F., Sabharwal, N. S., Thomas, A., Samanta, N., and Mansuy, J. (2022). *Supporting Gender-sensitive Higher Education Access and Choice in Haryana, India: Policy Brief*. Coventry: University of Warwick.

Stewart, A., Mansuy, J., and Thomas, A. (2023). *FCF Phase 4: The Contribution to Educational Policy Development of the Fair Chance for Education Research on Gendered Access to Higher Education*. Coventry: University of Warwick.

Thomas, A. and Henderson, E. F. (2022). *Phase 2 Report: The Role of Families in the Gendered Educational Trajectories of Undergraduate Students in Haryana, India*. Coventry: University of Warwick.

4.35

Workshop/Conference/Visit Reports

Henderson, E. F., Mansuy, J., and Stewart, A., and Thomas, A. (2018). *A Fair Chance for Education: Gendered Pathways to Educational Success in Haryana, India – February 2018 Visit Report (Abridge Version)*. Coventry: University of Warwick.

Henderson, E. F., Thomas, A., and Mansuy, J. (2019). *A Fair Chance for Education: Gendered Pathways to Educational Success in Haryana, India – February 2019 Visit Report*. Coventry: University of Warwick.

Henderson, E. F., Stewart, A., Mansuy, J., Thomas, A., and Samanta, N. (2019). *A Fair Chance for Education: Gendered Pathways to Educational Success in Haryana, India – October 2018 Visit Report*. Coventry: University of Warwick.

Samanta, N., Henderson, E. F., and Stewart, A. (2022). *A Fair Chance for Education: Gendered Pathways to Educational Success in Haryana, India – April 2022 Visit Report*. Coventry: University of Warwick.

Samanta, N. and Stewart, A. (2020). *A Fair Chance for Education: Gendered Pathways to Educational Success in Haryana, India – October 2019 Visit Report*. Coventry: University of Warwick.

Samanta, N. and Stewart, A. (2022). *CPRHE/NIEPA and the University of Warwick Webinar on A Fair Chance for Education: Gendered Pathways to Higher Education Access and Choice*. Coventry: University of Warwick.

Thomas, A. and Mansuy, J. (2021). *A Fair Chance for Education: Problematising Access and Mapping Gendered Pathways to Higher Education in India (15th-16th July 2021)*. Coventry: University of Warwick.

Thomas, A. and Mansuy, J. (2021). *A Fair Chance to Access Higher Education: Collaborative Workshop to Develop a Policy Brief and Outreach Activity Resource on 28th September 2021*. Coventry: University of Warwick.

Thomas, A. and Mansuy, J. (2022). *A Fair Chance to Access Higher Education: Collaborative Workshop to Develop a Policy Brief and Outreach Activity Resource on 28th January 2022*. Coventry: University of Warwick.

Presentations

April 2017

Ambedkar University Delhi, Delhi, <u>India</u> (<u>invited</u>)

'Taking a position on gender and intersectionality through blogging: a participatory workshop' (Emily Henderson and Ian Abbott).

April 2018

'Order/Disorder: Self and Society in Modern South Asia', University of Warwick, Coventry

'Deconstructing Haryana: Dis/order in representations of gender, caste and education' (Emily Henderson and Anjali Thomas).

June 2018

CEID (Centre for Education and International Development) Conference, UCL Institute of Education, London

'Gendering access to higher education in Haryana, India: a comparative case study of two government colleges' (Emily Henderson & Anjali Thomas).

CEID Pre-Conference workshop on 18th June 2018 at Institute of Education, UCL, London

'Activism, Gender and Higher Education: decolonising the research agenda' (Emily Henderson and Anjali Thomas).

The Global Research Priorities on International Development Postgraduate Conference 2018, on Reassessing Poverty and Inequality: Theories, Representations and Approaches at the University of Warwick

'Inequalities of Access: Intersectional barriers to higher education in the Indian and the International context' (Anjali Thomas).

February 2019

International Seminar, Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration and British Council, <u>India</u> (<u>invited</u>)

Seminar title: 'Employment and Employability of Higher Education Graduates'; discussant for the panel entitled 'Education and Employment of Higher Education Graduates' (Emily Henderson).

April 2019

International Institute for Higher Education Research and Capacity Building and the Centre for Comparative and Global Education, O.P. Jindal University, Sonipat, Haryana, India

'Inequalities of Access: Intersectional barriers to higher education in the Indian and the International context' (Anjali Thomas).

May 2019

Centre for Education Studies 7th Annual Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Conference on Education in Unequal Societies, at University of Warwick

'A Qualitative researcher's positionality in higher education spaces: Reflections from the field in government colleges in Haryana, India' (Anjali Thomas).

June 2019

The Global Research Priorities on International Development Postgraduate Conference 2019, on The Politics of Hope – Reviving the dream of Democracy and Development at the University of Warwick

'Democratic Access to Higher Education: A study of how students and families perceive and access higher education in Haryana, India' (Anjali Thomas).

September 2019

The 12th EASAS (European Association of South Asian Studies) PhD Workshop at the University of Stuttgart

'Families Accessing Higher Education in Haryana, India' (Anjali Thomas).

December 2019

Symposium on 'Inequalities in Indian Higher Education: Critical Perspectives' supported by British Council India and Fair Chance for Education Project, SRHE (Society for Research into Higher Education) Annual Conference, Newport, Wales

'Student diversity and challenges of inclusion: Understanding experiences of students from socially excluded groups in campuses of higher education in India' (Nidhi S. Sabharwal); 'Hidden Social Exclusion in Indian Academia: Gender, Caste and Conference Participation' (Emily Henderson, Nidhi S. Sabharwal, and Roma Smart Joseph in absentia); 'Gendered Trajectories and an expansive concept of Access to Higher Education in Haryana, India' (Anjali Thomas and Emily Henderson); 'Higher Education and Social Stereotypes: Exploring Indian Women's Perspectives' (Anjali Tiwari).

July 2020

UKIERI SPARC Webinar 'Sociology, Psychology and Gender Studies' (<u>invited</u>)

'India UK collaborative project on "A Fair chance for Education: Gendered pathways to Educational Success in Haryana"' (Emily Henderson, Ann Stewart, and Nidhi S. Sabharwal).

University Grants Commission and Centre for Policy Research on Higher Education, NIEPA Webinar on 'Advancing Gender Equity and Women Empowerment through Education'

'Rights or High-Level Policy?' (Ann Stewart).

October 2020

Department of Education Studies Research Seminar Series, University of Warwick (<u>invited speaker</u>)

'Gendered catchment areas for higher education choice in Haryana, India' (Emily Henderson).

February 2021

School of Education Research Seminar Series, University of Durham (<u>invited speaker</u>)

'Gendered catchment areas for higher education choice in Haryana, India' (Emily Henderson, Nidhi S. Sabharwal, and Anjali Thomas).

May 2021

AHRC GCRF Minorities on Campus Virtual Workshop 2, Coventry University

'Deciding to access Higher Education: role played by families in the educational trajectories of undergraduate students in Haryana, India' (Anjali Thomas).

June 2021

'**Education, the global South, and Beyond' Seminar Series, Department of Education, Brunel University (<u>invited speaker</u>)**

'Gendered catchment areas for higher education choice in Haryana, India' (Emily Henderson, Nidhi S. Sabharwal, and Anjali Thomas).

November 2021

'Law for All: Widening Access to Legal Education in the UK and Ireland' Online Workshop, School of Law, Queen's University Belfast

'Pathways to Educational Success in India' (Ann Stewart and Nidhi Sabharwal).

March 2023 (forthcoming)

Celebrating Social Science Impact, University of Warwick

'Enhancing Informed Choices for Higher Education: Building Outreach Culture in Haryana, India' (Ann Stewart).

4.39

Academic Contributions: Journals and Books

Stewart, A., Sabharwal, N.S., and Yadav, R. (Submitted 2022). 'Building an Outreach Culture for Fairer Access to Higher Education in Haryana, India: A 'Bottom up' Contribution to Policy Implementation'. *Policy Futures in Education Special Issue: Considering the Global-local Relationship in Education.*

Henderson, E. F. (2019). 'Starting with Gender: Definitional Politics in International Higher Education Research'. In Henderson E. F. and Nicolazzo, Z. (Eds.) *Starting with Gender in International Higher Education Research: Conceptual Debates and Methodological Considerations*. London; New York: Routledge. (12-28)

Henderson, E. F., Sabharwal, N. S., and Thomas, A. (In press). 'From Gender Parity to Gender Prism: Looking Beyond Enrolment Parity to Explore Gendered Conditions of Access to Higher Education in Haryana, India'. In Varghese, N. V. and Sabharwal, N. S. (Eds). *Indian Higher Education Report.* Routledge.

Henderson, E. F., Sabharwal, N. S., Thomas, A., Mansuy, J., Stewart, A., Rathee, S., Yadav, R., and Samanta, N. (Under contract). *Gendered Frontiers of Higher Education Access and Choice in India*. Routledge.

Sudarshan R. and Thomas A., (Submitted). 'Gendered Academic Trajectories through Research and Publication: Influences and Implications'. In Sabharwal, N. S. and Varghese, N. V. (Eds) *India Higher Education Report 2022 on Women in Higher Education*.

Thomas A. (2018) 'Why Higher Education Requires an Intersectional Lens'. *University World News.* 13 July 2018, <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20180711100836157>.

Thomas, A. (2022). 'Addressing Educational Inequalities in Southern Contexts'. Review of Rose, P., Arnot, M., Jeffery, R., and Singhal, N. (Eds) (2021). *Reforming Education and Challenging Inequalities in Southern Contexts: Research and Policy in International Development*, Oxford: Routledge. *Human Rights Education Review,* 5(1), 159–161.

Thomas, A. (Working paper). **'**Trailblazing First-generation Women Accessing Higher Education: Negotiating Gendered Dynamics within Families in Rural and Semi-urban Haryana, India'.

4.40