



## E-MENTORING AS A TOOL TO REDUCE GENDER DISPARITY IN EDUCATION, POSTCOVID 2019.

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### Abstract :

*“Let’s give tomorrow women better choices than the one we have faced past this year”.*

*Sustainable Development Goals (4) aim to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all by 2030. The goals also put emphasis on reducing gender disparity and empowering all to lead a life of dignity. Education for sustainable development is an effective and only tool for countries like India which aims to achieve SDG goals especially for empowering girls. Although India has performed well in achieving UPE, yet the problem of USE remain a dream especially among adolescence girls. Secondary education in general is a time of gross upheaval in the life of girls especially in relation to their studies and education. Getting educated or pursuing education at this stage becomes a dream for many. The onslaught of Covid-19 helped in expanding this gap further. School closure during covid-19 affected 1.6 billion learners which posed an alarming threat to gender disparity (UNESCO-2030). Girls are more at risk of losing out because they are discriminated against in terms of access to technology, time, household chores, child marriage, sexual exploitation and other related issues. Hence it becomes imperative that girls are provided with strategies and solutions to mitigate this loss of learning. This paper focuses on the use of E-mentoring as a strategy to deal with above crisis and to mitigate the challenges posed by Covid-19 on girl’s education. Keeping in mind the challenges and limitations posed by Covid -19 on education of girls Mentoring could be a step forward. Not only in On-line mode but also when school reopens. This would also be helpful for those who could not access education from formal means.*

*E-mentoring is a new context where the mentoring process between the mentor and protégé operates through online processes. E-Mentoring can be operated through three different modes keeping the means and context of the mentor and mentored in view. It could be fully virtual, blended or face to face. The mentors through E-Mentoring shall not only provide academic support but also emotional and social support to these girls. Hence this paper shall focus on E mentoring as a tool to bridge gender gap in education especially in the post Covid phase*

**Keywords:** Gender Disparity, Post Covid 19, E- Mentoring.

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## Introduction :

There is no doubt that to accept that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.” And there is also commitment to eliminate gender disparities in education by reaffirming the belief that education is a powerful tool in empowering women and enabling them to live a life of dignity.

In pursue of this enormous effort have been made significantly progress in universalizing primary education by improving the enrolment and completion rates of girls in primary and elementary schools has been achieved but still there is challenge with secondary education as the dropout rate of adolescent girls is higher at secondary level (19.8%) than primary (6.3%). Further, while the net enrolment ratio of girls in elementary schools is 91.58% but it declines as they grow older with 52.57% for secondary and 31.42% for higher secondary.

Adolescent, stage of stress and storm a period between the ages 10 – 19 years, is a critical stage especially for every girl’s life worldwide marked by a decision to either transition to secondary school, enter into the labour market, or get married.

However we can deny the fact that to accelerate sustainable development empowering women and promoting gender equality is crucial. With the sheered need for gender equality and for providing education as a platform for the same amplified schemes polices are being framed and implemented are on the path of progress but when on 5 January 2020, when the World Health Organization issued its first Disease Outbreak News report (WHO, 2020) about a cluster of cases of pneumonia of unknown cause. Just eight months later, school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic had affected nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 190 countries (UN, 2020) and which further amplify these barriers and increase the gender gap in education. Numerous studies at global level indicated that the adolescent girls were most targetable as they faced lot of gender disparity in terms of access to digital opportunities. In fact there arise need to tackle with situation and this situation E- Mentoring seems to be of great potential as the mentors through E-Mentoring shall not only provide academic support but also emotional and social support to these girls. Hence this paper shall focus on E-mentoring as a tool to bridge gender gap in education especially in the post Covid phase.

## Covid 19 and Gender Disparity :

The emergence of Corona Virus disease (COVID-19) has led the world to an unprecedented public health crisis. (Saha et al. 2020) Emergency protocols were implemented in India to control the spread of the virus which resulted in restrictions on all non-essential public movements and with the closure of Educational Institutions, the need for a rapid transition from physical learning to the digital sphere of learning emerged (Kapasias et al. 2020). It was surprising that despite efforts of governments and other stakeholders; nearly 500 million learners from pre-primary to upper-secondary school had no access to remote learning, of which three quarters lived in the poorest households or rural areas (UNESCO, 2021b). According to World bank report 2021, educational disruption has far-reaching consequences such as immediate effects are learning loss and school dropout, which have short- and long-term



negative impacts that resonate across every sector. While the full scope of these impacts will not be known for many years – not least because the pandemic is still ongoing and it has suggested that learning loss and school dropout of this magnitude are ‘an inequality catastrophe in the making’ that will affect an entire generation. Moreover, it may have may have pernicious gender specific effects in areas such as health, well-being and protection (UNESCO, 2020a).

What I is now a growing concern that COVID-19 might amplify these barriers and increase the gender gap in education. Girls are at more risk than boys of being discriminated against in terms of access to technology, household chores, and child marriage. Before COVID-19, India had 30 million out-of-school children, out of which 40% were adolescent girls. It is projected that post COVID-19, close to 10 million secondary school girls might dropout and a large number of these can be from India.

Research studies and surveys made throughout clearly indicated impact of potential impacts of COVID-19 on girls’ education are numerous. The shutting down of schools to curb the spread of the virus. has been through the most direct impact Since then, distance learning facilities (online platforms, TV broadcasting, radio, etc.) have been adopted to facilitate children’s learning during school closures. However, it has failed to reach all students due to the massive digital disparity across wealth, location, and gender. In India, the poorest girls and those living in rural areas have much less access to technology than boys. There exists a 50% gender gap in mobile internet users in India where 21% of women and 42% of men use mobile internet. Moreover, an assessment on issues faced by adolescents during COVID-19 found that more boys than girls had access to digital infrastructures such as mobile phones, internet services, radio, and media. With such low access to technology, digital schooling has further disengage girls from education and widen the educational inequalities among learners. And what the result is girls are left with domestic responsibilities such as cooking, cleaning, sibling care, collecting water, especially since schools, anganwadi, and child care centers are closed. Another impact is of loss of livelihood to most part of the population due to covid and again who is at curse girl child .

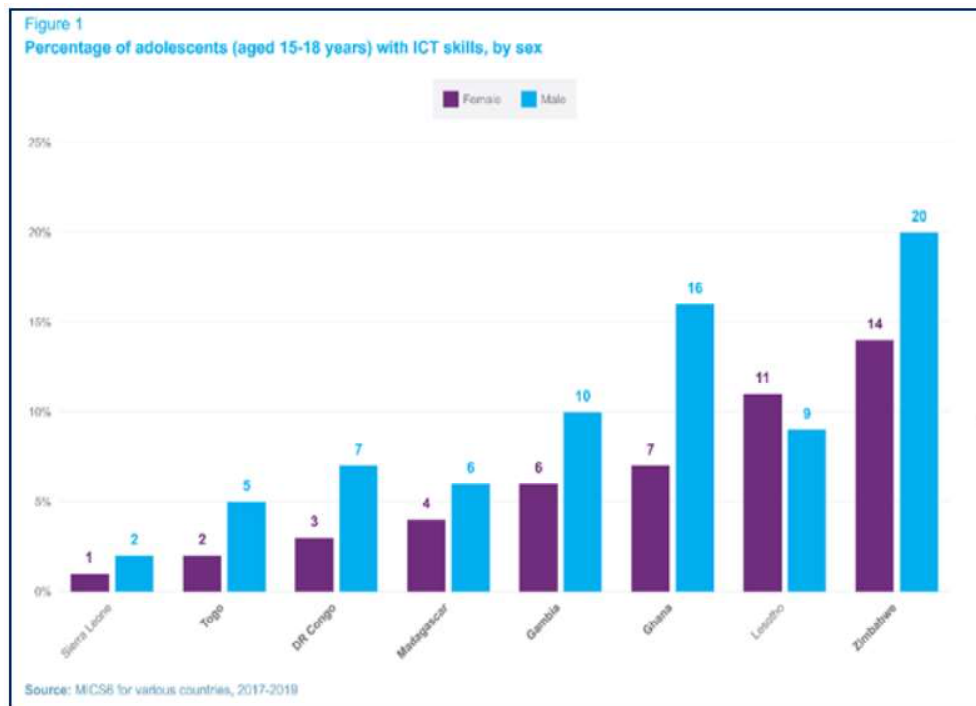
In countries In South Asia, the gender gap in mobile internet use stood at 51 percent in 2019. This gap has translated into lack of access to life-saving information and services for women and individuals with non-normative gender identities. In Bangladesh and Pakistan, 15 percent fewer women than men received necessary information to survive the COVID-19 pandemic. The gap between male and female mobile internet users in the two countries is 52 percent and 49 percent, respectively.

### **Impact of Covid 19 on increasing Gender disparity**

The following statistics will clearly indicate how covid 19 as increased gender disparity

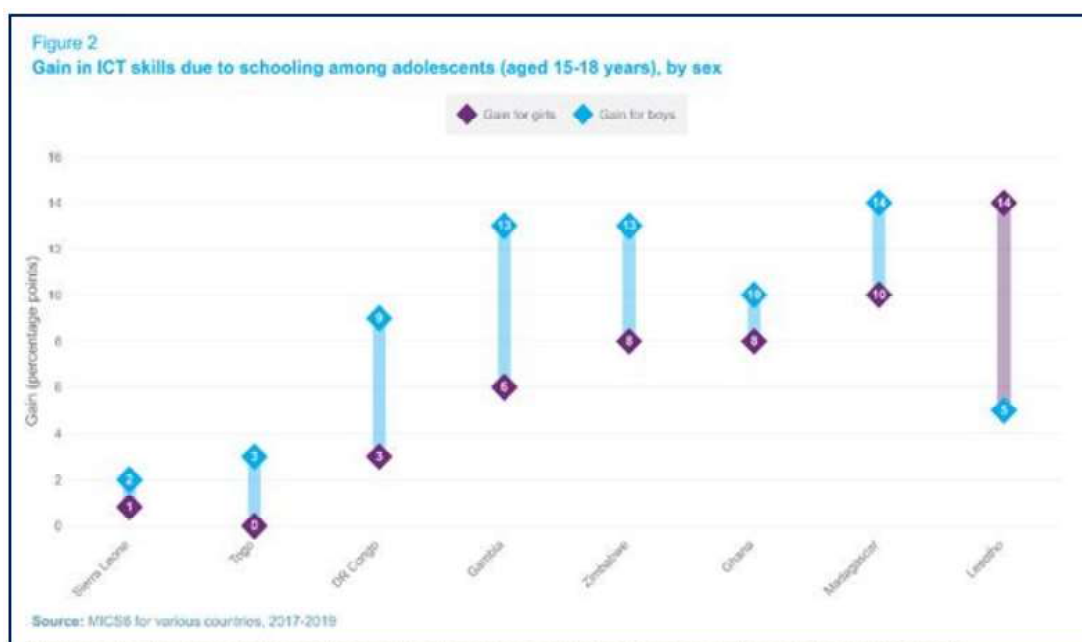
- **Fewer girls than boys possess ICT skills**

From one of the key finding is that in most of the countries analysed, girls face disadvantages in acquiring ICT skills, whether in school or at home. For example, Figure 1 below shows that in Ghana, 16 per cent of adolescent boys possess ICT skills compared to only 7 per cent of adolescent girls.



- ICT skills are associated with attending school – but less so for girls

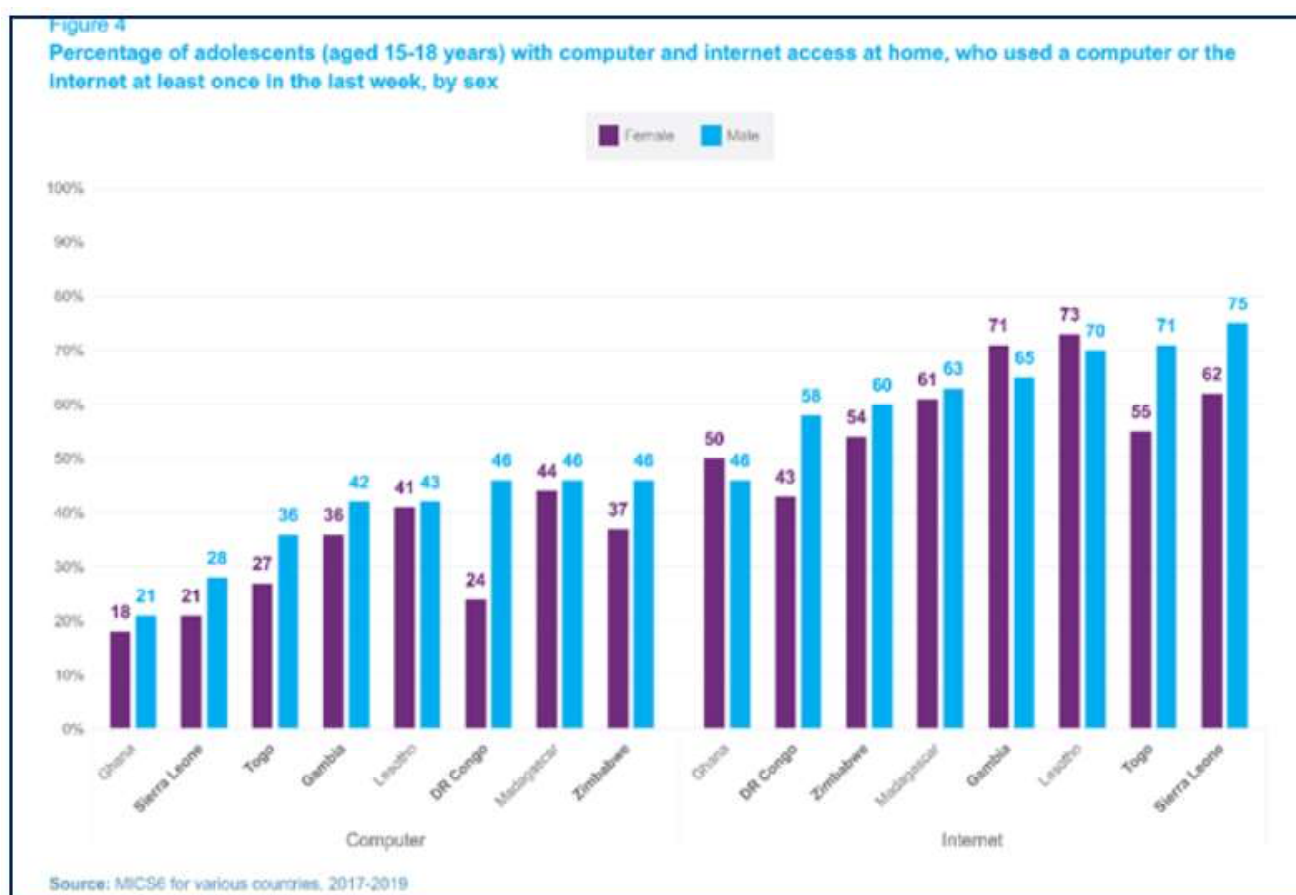
In all countries except for Sierra Leone, the prevalence of ICT skills is significantly higher among adolescents who attend school than among those who do not. In Madagascar, for example, 13 per cent of adolescents in school have ICT skills, compared to only 1 per cent of their out-of-school peers.





### Girls benefit less from having a computer in the home

In addition to school, the home environment can be a critical space for developing and practicing ICT skills. In all countries analysed, both adolescent girls' and boys' ICT skills are greater among individuals who have computers at home and it was revealed that the presence of a computer in the home doesn't erase the digital gender divide. For example, among households with computers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Ghana, girls have lower levels of ICT skills than boys. And the gender gap in ICT skills is wider than among adolescents in households without computers



It can be concluded that as according to **Mariscal, J., Mayne, G., Aneja, U., & Sorgner, A. (2018). Bridging the gender digital gap**, "...a stark gender inequality is pervasive in terms of access, ownership of digital devices, digital fluency as well as the capacity to make meaningful use of the access to technology. Even though affordability is a key source of exclusion, there are also significant socio-cultural norms that restrict access for women.

So the absence of gender-sensitive COVID-19 response policies and programs risks aggravating and amplifying structural inequalities and undermining progress towards gender equality, socio economic progress, and the achievement of the UN SDGs but certain strategies can help to overcome the situation such as **E-mentoring**



### **E- Mentoring as a tool to reduce gender disparity in education, Postcovid 2019**

E-mentoring can be rewarded as away to expand social and professional network (Headlam Wells, Gosland, & Craig, 2005; Whiting & de Janasz, 2004), their knowledge base, access to resources, and job opportunities (Higgins & Thomas, 2001; de Janasz, Ensher, & Huen, 2008).

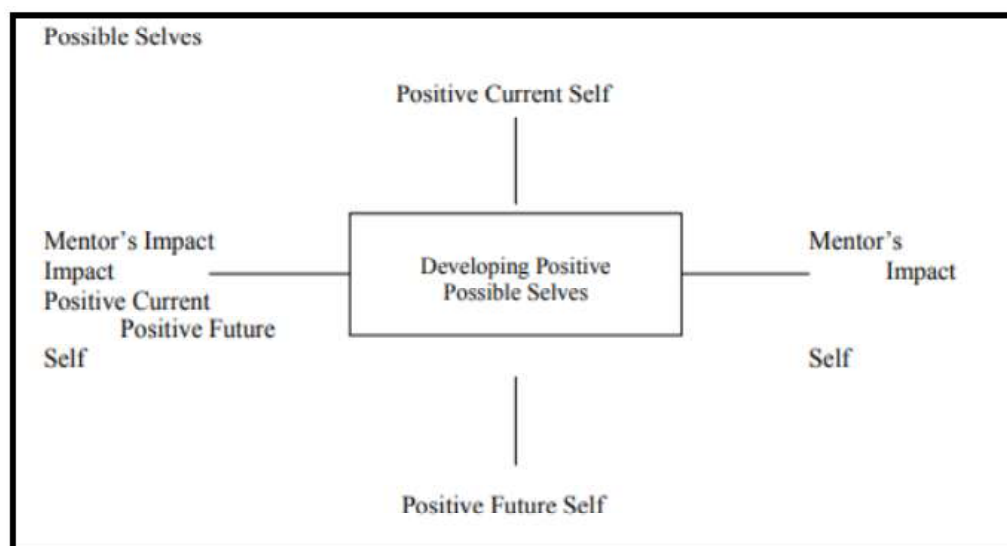
E-mentoring can increase interpersonal communication skills (Adams & Crews, 2004), written communication skills (Brown & Dexter, 2002; Fodeman, 2002; Haas, Tully, & Blair, 2002), and teamwork skills (Fodeman, 2002). So this seems to be a vital to reduce gender disparity as When asked to participate in an e-mentoring program, stated there can be gained in personal and career development, greater clarity of career goals, and greater confidence (Headlam-Wells, Gosland, & Craig, 2006). E-mentoring relationships can also increase self-esteem and self efficacy as it provides platform to adolescent girls to cope up with their problem (Adams & Crews, 2004). In their study of underprivileged youth protégés and their e-mentors, DiRenzo, Weer, and Linnehan (2013) found that e-mentoring relationship quality was positively related to general and caree based self-efficacy, which, in turn, was positively related to enhanced career aspirations.

When during covid peak time girls were being most vulnerable E- mentoring can be a platform where they can cope up with psychological stress. As researches has also demonstrated that mentoring is most effective for women when they are mentored by women. Female mentors can act as role models and have experienced the difficulties and challenges their mentees face (Cooper & Hingley, 1983; Tharenou, 2005). Female mentees have less difficulty mirroring "female behaviors" than the "male behaviors" exhibited by their mentors (Cooper & Hingley, 1983). Women mentored by women report greater interpersonal comfort than do women with male mentors (Allen, Day, & Lentz, 2005; Maccoby, 1990) and receive more psychosocial support and career-development support than do women mentored by men (Fowler, Gudmundsson, & O'Gorman, 2007; Okurame, 2007; Ragins & McFarlin, 1990; Scandura, 1992; Scandura & Williams, 2001; Tharenou, 2005; Thomas, 1990).

Further it has been examined the impact of young girls indicates mentoring relationships yielded enhanced feelings toward the relationship, a greater valuing of the relationship, enhanced identification with the other, and the building of affection (Lucas, 1999) and positive self concept (Ryan & Olasov, 2000). As a select population, the impact of mentorship with adolescent girls has yet to be explored as related to the building of the self-concepts that attribute to a positive future self.

As adolescents girls are at greater risk related to the health and education, depression, delinquency, substance abuse, and pregnancy and especially during pandemic when they have no one to help out where they are facing so many disparities at this time E- mentoring can be a useful intervention . If we look at the goal of mentorship is to build positive relationships with adult role models in an effort to foster social competencies, promote academic motivation, and build a positive image of self (Lee & Cramond, 1999; Tierney, et al., 1995).

Hence it can be concluded that E- Mentoring Therefore, it is necessary to provide information on the mentoring process and outline the characteristics of children who most benefit from the program and foster up relationship and boost up confidence of adolescent girls.



**Structural Description of Mentee Major: Developing Positive**

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