

# Role of Nanda Gaura Yojana of Uttarakhand in Women Empowerment

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**Abstract -** Women's empowerment is a transformative process that enhances women's ability to make independent decisions regarding their lives. Achieving gender equality and empowering women is vital for sustainable national development, as the participation of both men and women is crucial to overall societal progress. Education plays a central role in enabling women to acquire knowledge, skills, and confidence, particularly in rural and marginalized regions where early marriage and limited access to schooling remain significant barriers. In response, the Government of Uttarakhand launched the *Nanda Gaura Yojana* in 2017, a flagship scheme designed to improve the sex ratio, curb female feticide, encourage female literacy, and prevent child marriages by extending financial incentives to families. This study investigates the role of the scheme in women's empowerment, its impact on the educational, social, and financial dimensions of beneficiaries, and the level of satisfaction among recipients. The research was conducted in Nainital district, drawing on a sample of 100 beneficiaries selected through convenience sampling. Both primary data (via structured questionnaires) and secondary sources (government reports and official websites) were employed. Data analysis was carried out using percentages, tables, pie charts, and a five-point Likert scale to evaluate empowerment dimensions. Findings reveal that the *Nanda Gaura Yojana* contributes significantly to reducing gender disparities and enables girls to pursue higher education through financial assistance, thereby fostering their overall empowerment and development.

**Keywords:** Nanda Gaura Yojana, women empowerment, educational empowerment, social empowerment, economic empowerment.

## INTRODUCTION

“Empowering women is a pre-requisite for creating a good nation. When women are empowered, society with stability is assured. Empowerment of women is essential as their thoughts and their value systems lead to the development of a good family, a good society and ultimately a good nation.” — Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam

Women's empowerment refers to strengthening women's sense of self-worth, their ability to exercise decision-making power, and their right to influence social change for themselves and others. Historically, women in India have been subjected to systemic marginalization, denied fundamental rights such as property ownership and political participation, and often restricted to domestic roles (Kabeer, 1999). While progress has been achieved over time, deep-rooted challenges persist, especially in rural and economically disadvantaged regions where practices like early marriage, limited access to education, and gender-based discrimination remain prevalent (UNICEF, 2020).

Education emerges as one of the most effective tools for empowerment, fostering not only knowledge and skills but also confidence and autonomy. Empowering women through education can dismantle cycles of poverty and exclusion, while simultaneously contributing to national development. In this context, the Government of Uttarakhand introduced the *Nanda Gaura Yojana* in 2017, a targeted intervention aimed at curbing gender inequality by offering financial assistance to girl children from Below Poverty Line (BPL) families.

The scheme provides monetary incentives in two stages: (i) ₹11,000 at the birth of a girl child, and (ii) ₹51,000 after successfully completing Class 12. Its objectives include addressing declining sex ratios, reducing female feticide, promoting female education, discouraging child marriage, and generating positive societal attitudes towards the girl child. By doing so, the scheme aspires to strengthen the educational, social, and financial status of women in Uttarakhand.

## Review of Literature

Kumar and Goel (2023) undertook a study on the implementation of the *Mukhyamantri Kanya Utthan Yojana (MKUY)* in Aurangabad, Bihar. Their findings emphasized that government-provided financial assistance to girls pursuing higher education significantly enhanced their status within society. The scheme not only promoted academic opportunities but also contributed to broader social and economic empowerment, thereby acting as an important instrument of social transformation.

Karim, Palit, and Guha (2021) explored the effectiveness of the *Kanyashree Prakalpa* during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their research examined how the scheme impacted girls' education and capacity building during a period of unprecedented disruption. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, the study observed that enrolled beneficiaries were able to continue their education. The scheme provided girls with a pathway towards self-reliance, thereby strengthening their resilience and capacity for empowerment.

In another study, Nandi and Das (2021) assessed parental attitudes towards the *Kanyashree Prakalpa* and its influence on adolescent girls' education in Bankura district, West Bengal. Using a survey-based approach supported by questionnaires and interviews, the researchers found that parents viewed the scheme positively. The program was particularly beneficial for families living below the poverty line, as it enabled girls to pursue education and avoid early marriage. This highlighted the scheme's contribution to educational advancement among marginalized groups.

Biswas (2021) conducted a case study focusing on adolescent girls in Domkal block of Murshidabad district, West Bengal. By applying purposive sampling and studying 20 school-going girls, the research demonstrated that the *Kanyashree Prakalpa* had a strong preventive effect against school dropouts and early marriages. The findings underscored the importance of financial support in ensuring continuity of education and safeguarding girls from social vulnerabilities.

Kamal and Sarkar (2020) investigated the relationship between *Kanyashree Prakalpa* and academic performance among girl students in West Bengal. The study, which involved 400 respondents from both rural and urban colleges in North 24 Parganas, revealed a direct positive correlation between financial assistance and improved academic outcomes. The scheme enhanced students' motivation and strengthened their educational achievements, further validating its role in the empowerment of women.

Siwach and Malik (2017) focused on the *Laadli Yojana* in Delhi, evaluating both awareness levels among beneficiaries and the scheme's overall effectiveness. Their study concluded that the program was largely successful in attracting beneficiaries and improving the child sex ratio through financial incentives. However, they also highlighted shortcomings in implementation and accessibility, pointing to the need for improved monitoring and delivery mechanisms.

Arya (2016) examined the *Gaura Devi Kanyadhan Yojana* in Uttarakhand and found that financial assistance offered under the scheme significantly supported women's education and empowerment. By enabling girls from economically weaker families to pursue higher education, the scheme played an important role in enhancing their confidence, knowledge, and social standing. Arya concluded that such interventions are critical to breaking cycles of inequality and ensuring women's overall socio-economic upliftment.

Collectively, these studies establish that conditional cash transfer schemes, when effectively designed and implemented, play a pivotal role in women's empowerment. They foster educational attainment, reduce instances of early marriage, and improve the economic and social positioning of women, especially those from marginalized communities. However, recurring challenges such as implementation gaps, limited awareness, and administrative inefficiencies often constrain their full potential.

### Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the role of *Nanda Gaura Yojana* in promoting women's empowerment.
2. To analyze the scheme's impact on the educational and social dimensions of beneficiaries.
3. To assess the satisfaction levels of beneficiaries regarding the scheme's implementation.

### Research Methodology

The present research adopts a descriptive-cum-exploratory design, integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The study relied on both primary and secondary data sources.

- **Primary Data:** A structured questionnaire was administered to 100 beneficiaries selected through convenience sampling from Nainital district, a representative location in the Kumaon region of Uttarakhand. The questionnaire captured information on educational, social, and financial aspects of empowerment, along with satisfaction levels regarding the scheme.
- **Secondary Data:** Supplementary information was collected from government reports, official portals of the Department of Women and Child Development, scholarly publications, and other credible sources.
- **Analytical Tools:** The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including percentages and frequency distributions, supported by tables and pie charts for clarity. A five-point Likert scale was applied to measure empowerment levels across educational, social, financial, and satisfaction dimensions.

This mixed-methods approach ensured a comprehensive understanding of both quantitative trends and qualitative insights into the functioning of the *Nanda Gaura Yojana*.

### DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

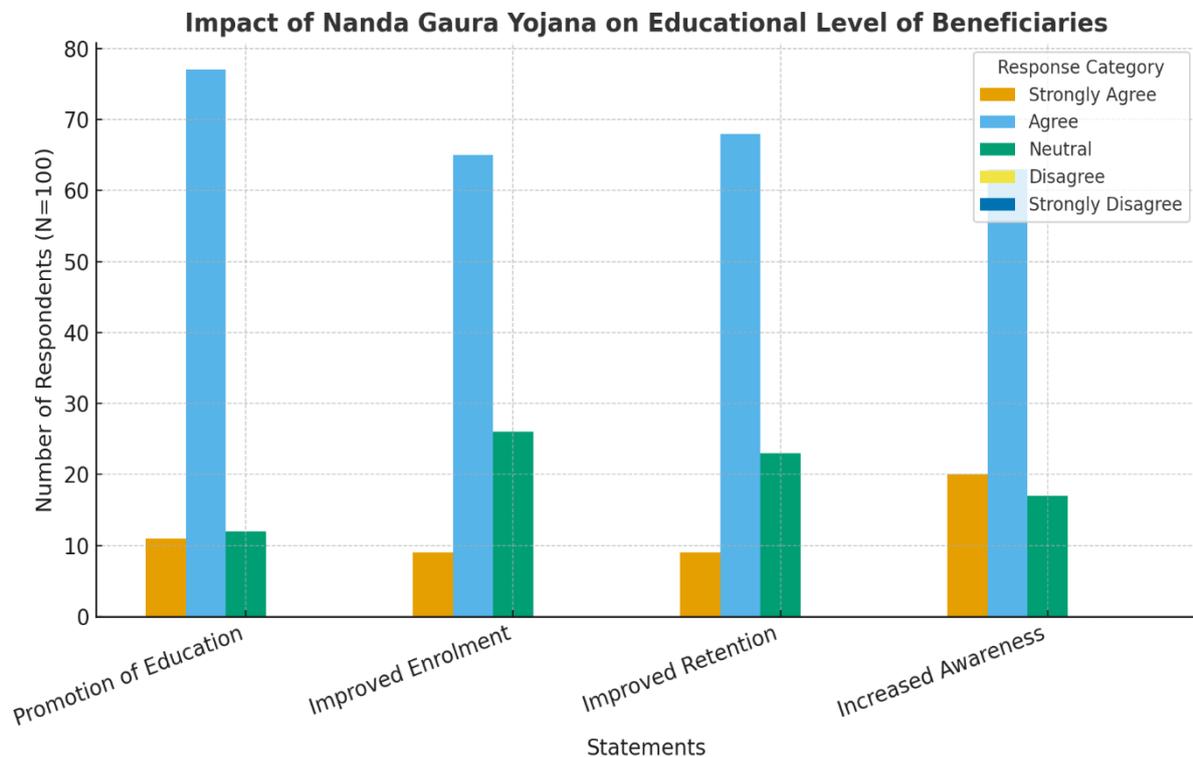
**Table 1.1: Impact of Nanda Gaura Yojana on educational level of beneficiaries (Likert Ranking Scale Point)**

1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree

Statement	5	4	3	2	1	Total
Nanda Gaura Yojana has helped in promoting the education.	11	77	12	0	0	100
Improved enrolment of girl child in school and colleges	9	65	26	0	0	100
Improved retention of girl child in school and colleges	9	68	23	0	0	100
Increase in awareness level	20	63	17	0	0	100

Source: Primary Data

Figure 1.1: Impact of Nanda Gaura Yojana on Educational Level of Beneficiaries



Source: Primary Data

Figure 1.1 presents respondents' perceptions of the educational impact of the *Nanda Gaura Yojana*, assessed through a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). The findings demonstrate an overwhelmingly positive evaluation of the scheme's role in enhancing girls' educational opportunities.

A significant majority of respondents (77%) agreed that the scheme had contributed to promoting education, with an additional 11% strongly agreeing. Only 12% expressed neutrality, while no respondent disagreed. This reflects the perception that financial incentives under the scheme directly support the pursuit of education.

With respect to enrolment, 65% of beneficiaries agreed and 9% strongly agreed that the scheme has facilitated greater participation of girls in schools and colleges. Meanwhile, 26% of respondents remained neutral, which may suggest that while enrolment has improved, other contextual factors such as family responsibilities, geographical accessibility, or socio-cultural barriers continue to influence educational outcomes.

Retention of girls in education also emerged as a positive outcome, with 68% of respondents agreeing and 9% strongly agreeing that the scheme has been effective in minimizing dropouts. However, 23% of respondents reported a neutral stance, indicating that retention may still be influenced by external socio-economic challenges despite the scheme’s monetary support.

A particularly notable finding is the increase in awareness levels: 63% of respondents agreed and 20% strongly agreed that the scheme had enhanced their understanding of the importance of girls’ education. Only 17% were neutral, and none expressed disagreement. This highlights the scheme’s role not only in providing financial assistance but also in reshaping attitudes towards female education within beneficiary families.

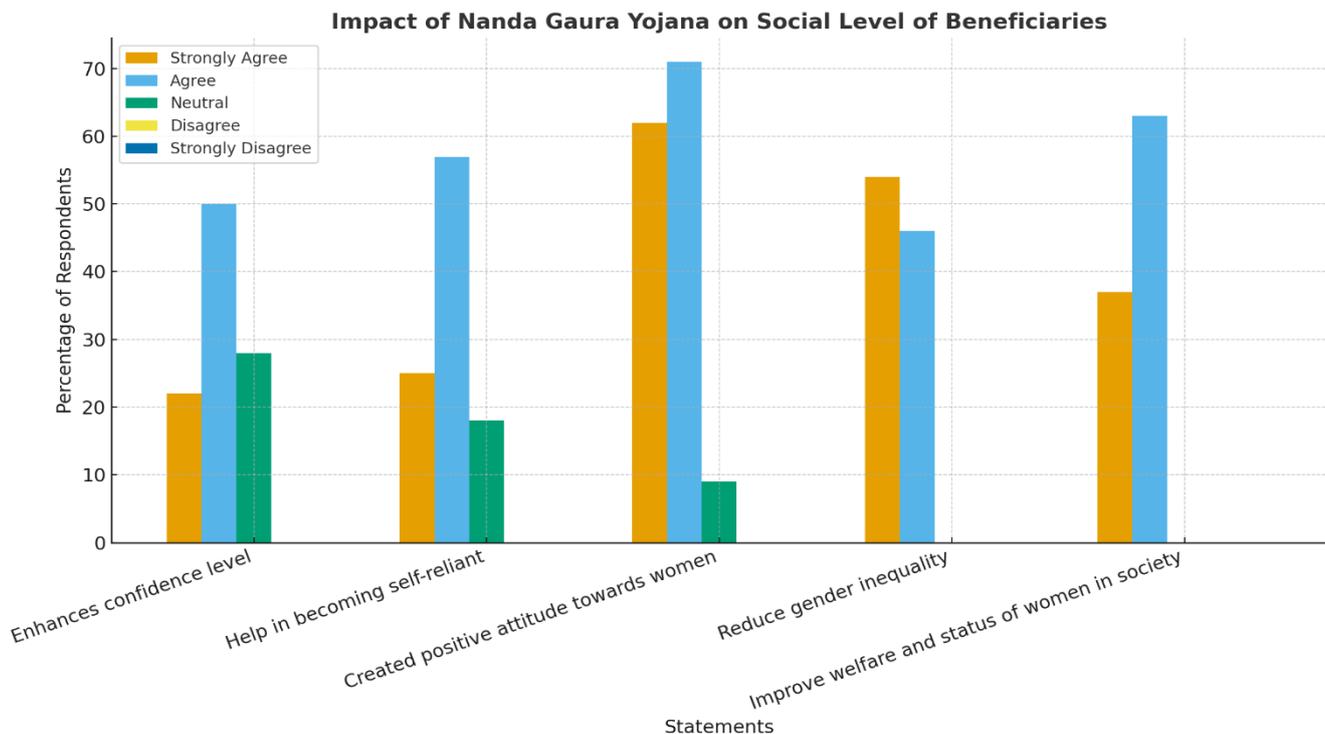
Overall, the analysis underscores that the *Nanda Gaura Yojana* has had a substantial positive impact on beneficiaries’ educational trajectories. While the majority of respondents affirmed improvements in enrolment, retention, and awareness, the presence of neutral responses indicates that complementary interventions such as awareness campaigns, counselling, and community engagement are necessary to maximize the long-term educational outcomes of the scheme.

**Table 1.2: Impact of Nanda Gaura Yojana on social level of beneficiaries. (Likert Ranking Scale Point)**

Statement	5	4	3	2	1	Total
Enhances confidence level	22	50	28	0	0	100
Help in becoming self-reliant	25	57	32	0	0	100
Created positive attitude towards women	62	71	9	0	0	100
Reduce gender inequality	54	46	0	0	0	100
Improve welfare and status of women in society	37	63	0	0	0	100

Source: Primary Data

**Figure 1.2: Impact of Nanda Gaura Yojana on the Social Level of Beneficiaries**



Source: Primary Data

Figure 1.2 illustrates the perceptions of respondents regarding the social impact of the Nanda Gaura Yojana. Using a five-point Likert scale, beneficiaries were asked to indicate their level of agreement with a set of social indicators such as confidence, self-reliance, gender equality, and societal status.

The findings suggest that the scheme has significantly contributed to enhancing confidence levels among women, as 22% of respondents strongly agreed and 50% agreed with this statement, while 28% remained neutral. Similarly, in relation to self-reliance, 25% of respondents strongly agreed and 57% agreed, indicating that the scheme is enabling women to move towards greater independence, although 18% expressed neutrality, possibly reflecting contextual or individual variations in benefits received.

A particularly notable outcome is observed in the creation of a positive attitude towards women, with an overwhelming 62% strongly agreeing and 71% agreeing. Only 9% remained neutral, highlighting the scheme’s role in shifting societal perspectives towards gender inclusivity. Likewise, the dimension of reducing gender inequality received very strong support, with 54% of respondents strongly agreeing and the remaining 46% agreeing. The complete absence of neutral or negative responses under this indicator underscores the scheme’s potential in addressing entrenched gender disparities.

Finally, in terms of improving the welfare and social status of women, 37% of respondents strongly agreed and 63% agreed, once again revealing unanimous recognition of the scheme’s positive role in elevating women’s standing in society.

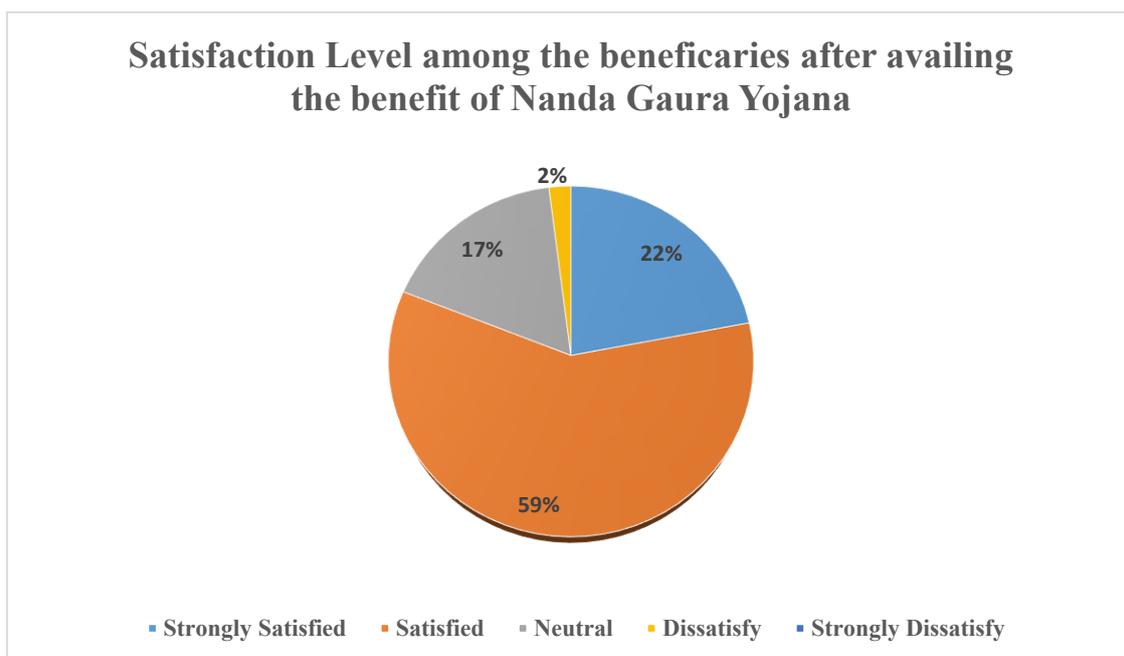
Overall, the data illustrates that the Nanda Gaura Yojana is not only supporting educational advancement (as seen in earlier analysis) but also making substantial contributions to social empowerment, particularly in boosting confidence, fostering self-reliance, promoting gender equality, and improving the status of women in Uttarakhand.

**Table 1.3: Satisfaction level among the beneficiaries after availing the benefit.**

Strongly Satisfied	22
Satisfied	59
Neutral	17
Dissatisfy	2
Strongly Dissatisfy	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Primary Data

**Figure 1.3 Satisfaction level among the beneficiaries after availing the benefit.**



Source: Primary Data

Above figure 1.3 highlights the degree of satisfaction expressed by beneficiaries after receiving support under the Nanda Gaura Yojana. The data suggests that the scheme has been largely well-received. A considerable proportion of respondents (22%) reported being *strongly satisfied*, while a majority (59%) expressed being *satisfied*. Together, these two categories represent more than four-fifths of the beneficiaries, reflecting a high level of acceptance and appreciation of the scheme's impact.

At the same time, 17% of respondents indicated a *neutral* position, suggesting that while they did not express dissatisfaction, they may not have experienced substantial or transformative benefits. A small minority (2%) reported being *dissatisfied*, and notably, none of the respondents marked themselves as *strongly dissatisfied*.

Overall, the findings underline that the Nanda Gaura Yojana has achieved a broad base of satisfaction among its beneficiaries. The high proportion of satisfied respondents signals the scheme's effectiveness in addressing the intended objectives, particularly in providing financial support and promoting social and educational upliftment. However, the presence of neutral and dissatisfied responses also points towards areas that may require policy-level refinements and better implementation mechanisms to ensure equitable and consistent benefits for all.

## CONCLUSION

The Nanda Gaura Yojana, introduced by the Government of Uttarakhand, stands as a significant initiative aimed at advancing women's empowerment through education and financial assistance. By extending targeted support to adolescent girls, the scheme not only facilitates their pursuit of higher education but also contributes to reducing gender inequalities and enhancing the overall welfare and social status of women. Fundamentally, the policy seeks to eliminate discriminatory practices such as female feticide and gender bias while simultaneously encouraging a more positive societal outlook toward the birth of a girl child.

The present study, conducted in the Nainital district with a sample of 100 respondents selected through a convenient sampling technique, explored the effectiveness of this policy framework. Data were collected through a well-structured interview schedule to capture beneficiaries' perceptions and experiences. The findings reveal that the financial support provided to girls after the completion of their 12th standard plays a crucial role in enabling them to pursue higher education, thereby fostering self-reliance and expanding opportunities for personal growth.

Furthermore, the scheme has been effective in improving enrolment and retention rates of girls in schools and colleges, while simultaneously addressing issues of early marriage and school dropout. The evidence indicates that once girls are married, continuing education becomes significantly challenging; hence, the intervention of the Nanda Gaura Yojana at this critical juncture has proven timely and impactful.

Beyond educational outcomes, the policy also exerts influence on broader social transformation, as it contributes to shifting societal perceptions of women from being perceived as a burden to being valued as assets to their families and communities. By fostering confidence, promoting self-reliance, and creating an environment supportive of gender equality, the scheme provides a robust foundation for sustainable women's empowerment in Uttarakhand.

In conclusion, the study affirms that the Nanda Gaura Yojana is not merely an educational support program but a multidimensional empowerment initiative. It holds substantial potential to reshape gender relations by enabling girls to access higher education, delay early marriages, and participate more meaningfully in the socio-economic development of the region. Nevertheless, for the scheme to achieve its maximum impact, continued attention to implementation challenges and equitable distribution of benefits is essential.

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