

# Barriers to Higher Education: A Study on the Challenges Faced by Matua Women Students in North 24 Parganas

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**Abstract:** *The Matua community, an important socio-religious group in West Bengal, continues to grapple with socio-economic marginalization and educational disadvantages. This study investigates the challenges faced by Matua women students in accessing and completing higher education in North 24 Parganas, West Bengal. Despite the growth of educational institutions and affirmative action policies, Matua women encounter multiple barriers such as socio-cultural restrictions, financial constraints, inadequate institutional support, and gender-based discrimination. The research adopts a mixed-methods approach, utilizing surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions with Matua women students enrolled in higher education institutions. Findings reveal that systemic biases, lack of awareness about government schemes, and patriarchal attitudes further impede their educational aspirations. The study highlights the urgent need for community-based interventions, gender-sensitive educational policies, and targeted support mechanisms to improve higher education outcomes for Matua women.*

**Keywords:** Matua community, women's education, higher education, socio-cultural barriers, North 24 Parganas, gender discrimination, marginalized communities