

# CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN IN LEARNING ENGLISH LANGUAGE: A PRISMA STUDY

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*This study reviews the scientific research concentrating on the challenges of women learning English. We followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) framework. Based on the secondary data from an axiological perspective, we explore educational barriers, psychological challenges, cultural values, social position, gender identity, and related issues. We discuss the challenges into two axiological categories: social economics and education. The study indicates that limited access to resources and cultural norms discourage women's education, and economic restrictions further complicate acquiring English. We suggest tailored interventions to help women overcome the challenges of effective English learning.*

**Keywords:** Women's education, English language learning, cultural values, psychological challenges, PRISMA.

## 1. Introduction

We know that learning a language allows the learner to interact in that language. Women in many societies encounter sociocultural restrictions that limit their educational possibilities, including language learning. Traditional gender norms may prioritize domestic chores over educational endeavours, constraining women's time and resources for learning English (Srinivasan & Murthy 2020)). Women encounter obstacles that hinder their ability to learn English.

Articles chosen for this review jointly explore the varied obstacles and opportunities related to women's education, with a particular focus on English language learning, across different cultures and socioeconomic backgrounds.

These studies show the intricate interaction of economic, sociocultural, psychological, and linguistic elements that impact women's educations, particularly in remote regions where

languages such as Bajjika, are spoken. Srinivasan and Murthy (2020) and Patel (2018) describe how conventional gender roles and community norms can substantially hamper women's opportunities for education. They also stated that insufficient educational facilities and a lack of adult education programs are barriers that contribute to the difficulties women encounter while learning English. Kumar (2017) discusses economic constraints, demonstrating how financial obstacles significantly limit women's capacity to obtain education. Additionally, for these women, linguistic and psychological issues such as imbalances in phonetics and grammar and a lack of confidence also significantly impact effective language acquisition (Sharma & Singh, 2021).

These studies show the intricate interaction of economic, sociocultural, psychological, and linguistic elements that impact women's educational experiences, emphasizing the importance of personalized, context-sensitive methods that help them on their educational paths.

Education for women is essential for social progress, boosting economic growth, improving public health, and active civic involvement. Educated women significantly contribute to employment and earn better salaries to maintain healthier, happier and more educated families. However, several obstacles prevent them from obtaining quality education. Social and cultural practices often oblige women from home duties over education, restricting their education opportunities (Norton & Pavlenko, 2004). Economic obstacles, like lack of funds for education and women violence, also limit educational access for women (Tollefson, 2000). Similarly, psychological issues such as low self-confidence and anxiety, along with social pressures, affect their learning progress negatively (Bailey et al., 2008). To ensure fair educational opportunities for women, we must

resolve these obstacles with the help of policies related to women education, adequate community support, economic empowerment of women, and access to technology.

In this context, this study highlights the attention to current research studies that have identified and addressed these obstacles to promoting better educational possibilities and socioeconomic empowerment for women. In addressing these, we need to institute adaptable learning methods with financial support. Moreover, gender-responsive educational methodologies and modern technology significantly promote relevant accessibility and inclusivity in language learning. In this respect, our attention is to seek the answer to the question: What are the major social, economic, and educational obstacles that prevent women from learning English as their second language?

## 2. Scope and significance

We reviewed 13 research papers on women's English language education to explore the challenges women experience when learning English. Our research concentrated primarily on this aspect of women's education. We're interested in this issue since we, too, struggled to learn English. We included diverse research articles on this topic using a global online search and chose to review those published after 2014. The review sought to explore the problems that women face when learning English. These findings could be significant as they can help improve the environment for women learning English.

## 3. Axiology in English language learning for women

The study of values is known as axiology. Axiology provides a unique perspective on the obstacles that women experience while learning English. Several factors contribute to these obstacles, such as social and cultural norms and how people think of the importance of language skills. For example, cultural and social norms do not always encourage women's education, and some communities do not understand the value of learning English. These factors compel women not to see education as a priority, making access to women's education more complex and

hindering women's growth, development and empowerment. Similarly, personal and family-related responsibilities also play an essential role because women generally depend on their families for financial resources for education, and they have to manage time to allocate for their education, which is also one of the challenging tasks.

It is vital to provide educational resources to promote social change and effectively address these obstacles to respect and encourage women's academic and personal development. Advocating for cultural reforms that acknowledge and support the value of women's education and language skills is necessary. Moreover, we can also help them overcome this restriction and achieve their educational goals by building an atmosphere that encourages and honours women's learning.

## 4. Research methodology

The main objective of this study is to significantly contribute to women's education in general and language learning in particular. We used the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) method for this study because it helped us to observe trends, identify gaps in the research after clearly understanding the research topics, and recommend areas for future research. The process consists of four major steps, i.e. identification, screening, eligibility, and article quality evaluation.

### 4.1 Identification stage in PRISMA

The study involved a comprehensive identification and selection of relevant research data through a meticulous search process using online sources, including Google Scholar, the Education Resource Information Center (ERIC) and the Tribhuvan University (TU) online library—the criteria for the timeframe for article selection—cover from 2015 to 2021. ERIC is a vast database operated by the United States Department of Education that provides considerable resources for education research. Similarly, Google Scholar gives readers access to scholarly literature from different areas, a crucial resource for researchers. The TU Online Library also adds these resources by providing a digital

library of previous academic materials for students or scholars of the region. This technique helped us access the scholarly materials directly relevant to the study (Smith, 2020).

We carefully selected the keywords "women's education" and "English language education" to obtain a wide range of studies. The search engine Google Scholar, known for its extensive academic archive, provided approximately 2,370,000 items in 0.15 seconds. Similarly, we selected the keywords "women's education" and "cultural values" to access various studies. ERIC, known for its extensive academic database, provided approximately 2,120,000 results in just 0.12 seconds. In the same way, we thoughtfully selected the keywords "women's education" and "cultural psychological challenge" to retrieve a diverse range of studies. Tribhuvan University Library, renowned for its expansive academic database, the search generated approximately 1,151,000 results in 0.9 seconds. For this, we followed Damayanti et al. (2024).

Table 1. *Documents' downloading system from the cloud*

	1	2	3	4	5
1	Google Scholar	X	2,370,000	0.15	104
2	ERIC	Y	2,120,000	0.12	205
3	TU Library	Z	1,151,000	0.9	54
Total			5641000		363

Index: 1: Serial Number. 1: Search Engines. 2: Selected Keywords. 3. Generated Documents. 4: Results Appeared in Seconds. 5: Topic-Based Documents. X: "women's education" and "English language education", Y: "women's education" and "cultural values" and Z: "women's education" and "cultural psychological challenge"

In this systematic review, we identified the most relevant research materials on the basis of the topic, challenges to women's English Language learning (Damayanti et al., 2024). We evaluated

each article based on its alignment with the research.

For further analysis, we selected about 363 studies as most important and relevant to the study during the selection process (Garcia & Patel, 2022). This thorough methodology guaranteed our conclusions were based on excellent quality and appropriate studies, which increased the research's reliability.

#### 4.2 Screening

Screening is the second step in the PRISMA methods that determines if an article is eligible for inclusion in a systematic review. The screening procedure sets up criteria for both inclusion and exclusion for choosing suitable studies for future research (Damayanti et al., 2024). We followed these steps to establish eligibility in our study. Initially, we identified 363 items. We used criteria such as publication date, language, findings focus, and relevant studies from past research. After screening these articles based on these criteria, we eliminated 312 studies and selected 51 studies relevant to our study.

Table 2. *The inclusion criteria*

.	Criteria	Inclusion
1.	Year of Publication	2015- 2021
2.	Publication Type	Articles and Thesis
3.	Language	English
4.	Type of Findings	Empirical
5.	Focus of Findings	Challenges to Women in Learning English

#### 4.3 Eligibility

In this phase, the remaining 51 articles underwent a secondary screening process, termed the eligibility check. This step is crucial to confirm that the selected studies are pertinent and accessible for systematic review. The eligibility assessment involves a thorough examination of the full text of each study. Initially, we carefully read the title and abstract to ensure relevance. In cases where these are inconclusive, we scrutinize

the methodology, results, and discussion sections to determine that the selected studies align with the inclusion criteria.

Moreover, only studies that directly addressed the research question were included, with a focus on the challenges on women in learning English, especially the sociocultural influences, flexible and digital learning models, gender identities and multilingual challenges and cultural and psychological aspects as well (Damayanti et al., 2024). We ensured the consistency of the selected studies with the selected themes on language learning, frequently citing well-known scholars. We removed studies that did not meet our theoretical framework to provide clarity and uniformity. The primary purpose was to carefully study and debate the findings to answer the research question thoroughly.

#### 4.4 Inclusion

In this step, we included the articles that satisfied the parameters and keywords of the study selected for this study. The study mainly focused on women's education in English language learning. The study included just full-text articles. The main factor for including the selected articles was the relevance of the chosen articles to the study's objective (Damayanti et al., 2024). These research projects analyzed various issues affecting women's English education, such as sociocultural effects, language and psychological obstacles, adaptable and online educational frameworks, gender identity, and multilingual difficulties.

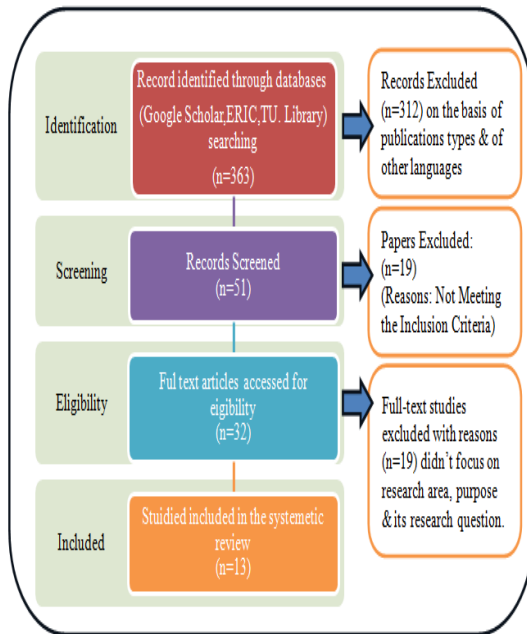
Table 3. *The final inclusion and exclusion criteria*

	Search Sites	Screening II	Inclusion	Exclusion
1.	Google Scholar	13	6	7
2.	ERIC	12	5	7
3.	TU Library	7	2	5
		32	13	19

In the first three steps, we ended up with 32 studies: 13 from Google Scholar, 12 from ERIC and seven from TU Library. We excluded seven from Google Scholar, seven from ERIC and five from TU Library after an in-depth evaluation of 32 studies. Finally, we ended up with 13 studies directly relevant to the research. We thoroughly

evaluated these publications to ensure their appropriateness to the research goal, i.e. women's education in English. We represent the complete selection process visually represented in Figure 1.

Fig 1. *Flowchart: Research methodology*



The study incorporates what these studies indicate for sociocultural impacts on women's education. How do these women control their learning? What inspires them? And what sort of difficulties women encounter (Jha, 2020). We also understand equal rights for mothers and homemakers; these selected articles document women's educational inequalities. A detailed analysis of these carefully selected articles systematically investigates women's English language learning. They also provide significant insights and offer solutions for dealing with identified obstacles.

Table 4. *PRISMA Methods*

Themes	Studied
Sociocultural influences on women's education	Srinivasan & Murthy (2020), Patel (2018), Shah (2015), Ray (2015)
Linguistic and psychological challenges	Sharma & Singh (2021), Kumar (2017), Jha (2020)

Flexible and Digital learning models	Gupta (2018), Mishra & Rao (2019)
Gender identities and multilingual challenge	Rind (2015), Rasheed et al., (2017), Alqefari (2015)

A careful application of the four-step technique resulted in an efficient choice of 13 academic articles, each looking at the junction of "women's education" and "English language learning." A pattern arose concerning characteristics that hamper women's ability to master English. These included linguistic and psychological barriers and social and cultural variables. Other scholars, such as Srinivasan and Murthy (2020) and Patel (2017), emphasize how educational barriers hamper the progress of women's education and, therefore, enhance their problems in mastering a language. Educational barriers constrain meaningful educational development. The findings indicate that we need targeted efforts to reduce these barriers and further open up educational opportunities for women.

It also extends our knowledge of the complex processes in language acquisition while at the same time providing crucial input for educators and policymakers. It requires an extensive plan to solve these multidimensional, deep-rooted obstacles while developing educational frameworks for women learners so that both linguistic and psychological factors are considered (Gupta, 2018; Mishra & Rao, 2019).

##### 5. Socio-cultural influences on women's education

The social and cultural conditions influence women's education significantly in traditional and patriarchal societies. Cultural norms and gender roles like expectations of early marriage, domestic responsibilities, or economic restraints have a more significant impact on women's access to education. Societies that prioritize educational opportunities for men over women's education encourage gender inequality that results in lower levels of literacy and academic achievement for women.

Srinivasan and Murthy (2020), Patel (2018), Shah (2015), and Roy (2015) discuss the way traditional roles based on gender, community norms, and conservative attitudes limit women's educational opportunities. These studies emphasize that community involvement and altering cultural attitudes are necessary to promote women's education. Furthermore, the paper comprehensively covers a wide range of obstacles, which is informative.

Women's education for those women who are residing in rural Terai has unique issues since their cultural background interacts with the larger sociocultural restrictions on women's education. The previously stated authors' views stress the need for community engagement and cultural attitude changes to boost women's education (Shah, 2015; Ray, 2015). However, we expect to modify these approaches to accommodate specific cultural traits and constraints. We must include local dialects and cultural norms in community participation activities to be effective.

However, in communities that value education as a tool for empowerment, women are more likely to break through these barriers, achieving higher education levels and contributing to societal development. Progressive shifts in attitudes toward gender equality, driven by awareness, policy interventions, and role models, are crucial for transforming the sociocultural landscape and promoting women's education (Srinivasan & Murthy, 2020). Furthermore, it could benefit from further elaboration on how these barriers affect women in rural India and Nepal.

##### 6. Linguistic and psychological challenges on women's education

Linguistic and psychosocial difficulties experienced by women within the learning environment hamper women's education and empowerment. In those cases where formal schooling is minimal, most women experience linguistic barriers due to a lack of capacity to speak a national language or an internationally adopted language used within the schools. Since gendered languages tend to reinforce stereotyped roles, educational materials might have the effect of discouraging women from aspiring to leadership or scientific professions. Internalized

preconceptions, family-related pressures, and societal expectations psychologically affect the self-confidence of women and bring down both performance and goals. Sharma and Singh (2021) explores rural women's psychological and linguistic barriers in learning English, including a lack of confidence. They propose bilingual education programs and confidence-building activities to address these challenges. These scholars emphasize that policy interventions or successful case studies would provide a more actionable perspective when discussing digital literacy and flexible learning solutions.

These provide arguments for both opportunities and challenges in the context of most communities. Bilingual education may help to make learning relevant to women's lives more effective. Confidence-building activities localized in the community may address relevant psychological barriers. A sensitive introduction to this concept may expand available learning resources. However, cultural norms, resource constraints, and general scepticism are deeply entrenched in these communities to overcome obstacles (Kumar, 2017& Jha, 2020). We can liberate these women through policy interventions and community participation. Drawing upon case studies from similar communities where they executed implementations successfully could also assist in this education campaign, as would be the involvement of local leaders during the planning and actual implementation stages, thus ensuring their sustainable success.

While these arguments are mainly complete in presenting barriers to women's education, they further reveal how these barriers uniquely affect women. Many of them go through imposter syndrome in doubting their achievements, while others face trauma from gender-based violence that disrupts their ability to learn. An inclusive and supportive environment enables these women to overcome these barriers through linguistic access and psychological resilience, encouraging them to seek education confidently. The positive aspect of these arguments is their emphasis on the need for change in society and the participation of a community, which is so important if there is ever to be any sustainable real improvement in women's educational opportunities.

However, the downside is that barriers are generalized without regard for different communities' specific linguistic and psychological contexts. Blindness to this fact might lead to interventions failing to respond appropriately to the unique challenges these women face.

#### 7. Flexible and digital learning models on women's education

These flexible learning models of Women's English Language Education are essential in addressing specific difficulties and challenges women go through to have access to education. They offer room for flexible learning, considering the different roles, responsibilities, and needs among the women. In this vein, flexible learning entails part-time study, online courses, or community-based programs, which would be more appropriate for women who manage family and work commitments with personal commitments. The role of technology and flexible learning models is to provide better educational opportunities for women (Gupta, 2018; Mishra & Rao, 2019). This study confirms flexible learning schedules and additional childcare services to cover the responsibilities carried by women. Such supportive, non-threatening models allow women a chance at higher education and developing skills for economic independence. Improvement in lives that this approach brings about contributes not only to individual development but also to gender equality and socioeconomic development.

They highlight the advantages of digital literacy and flexibility in scheduling for women's commitments. Similarly, we can overcome obstacles using digital resources and flexible learning time. They also say it is straightforward to address this challenge with digital literacy and an opportunity for flexible learning. The same authors, however, qualify this assertion by stating that similar measures would need to carefully address issues such as cultural resistance, logistics, and program sustainability if they are to succeed.

They argue that digital literacy, along with flexible schedules, is necessary to accommodate responsibilities taken on by women, making education more feasible and accessible. They recommend digital resources and support services, such as childcare, to create an enabling

environment to balance education against domestic and family responsibilities. Such flexible learning schedules would enable women to learn at their own convenience and thus accommodate household compulsions; this may perhaps reduce dropout rates. Supportive services, like childcare, would relieve these extra burdens and allow them to concentrate more on education (Mishra & Rao, 2019). They advocate English education for women who find it difficult to access conventional educational facilities due to severe cultural and logistical reasons.

However, each of these options may well have its authentic, negative side in all communities: traditional gender roles and a general suspicion of new kinds of educational methods influence a lack of infrastructure, including limited access to technology, particularly in rural areas, can inhibit successful digital learning through cultural resistance to change in the community. Substantial investment to ensure the initiative's sustainability and continuous support for long-term success are often difficult to guarantee.

While technology and flexible learning models appear as hopeful solutions to overcome educational barriers for women, such initiatives customize for the unique context in which the community exists: infrastructural obstacles, the building up of local leaders to gain confidence, and sustained support that can provide a promising learning environment.

#### 8. Gender identities and multilingual challenges on women's education

In many cases, gender identities and multilingual challenges are intertwined in affecting women's English language education, especially where traditional gender roles and limited linguistic access point to a merged relationship. Cultural expectations or a lack of schooling opportunities can limit women's, especially those in patriarchal societies, access to education in the English language. Multilingualism further complicates these issues, where women navigate across their mother tongues into English and usually find less support and resources for them when compared to their male counterparts. Rind (2015), Rasheed et al. (2017) and Alqefari (2015) focus on the role of gendered identities and multilingual settings that

shape female students' higher education experiences. They reveal the persistent influence of cultural norms and the need for better teacher training and culturally sensitive approaches to support female students in diverse educational contexts. The study highlights the importance of culturally sensitive approaches for women from conservative backgrounds.

They highlight the persistent influence of cultural norms and emphasize the necessity for improved teacher training and culturally sensitive approaches to support female students. The studies underscore how deeply ingrained cultural norms can limit educational opportunities for women, particularly in conservative societies, and argue for educational strategies that respect and navigate these cultural dynamics (Rasheed et al., 2017). The approaches entail special teacher training, which will have them adequately equipped to handle gender-sensitive issues and realize pedagogically more responsive methodologies for women from diverse backgrounds.

These authors' claims are of immense significance. The conservative nature of the community and adherence to traditional gender roles often deny women their right to receive adequate education. Educators can promote a more accepting and supportive learning environment for women in English language training using culturally sensitive approaches. Teacher training programs focusing on gender issues and highlighting the specialized language needs of multilingual learners can prepare teachers and, thereby, help females at an appropriate level (Alqefari, 2015). These might reduce the effects of social and cultural impact, which prevent women from pursuing higher studies.

However, gendered languages constrain women's freedom and the lack of native inclusive and empowering terminology for women in their languages. To meet these challenges, we should encourage women's empowerment by promoting equal access to language education within gender-inclusive, linguistically diverse educational environments (Rind, 2015). Cultural resistance to shifting gender roles and teaching methodologies can be strong and may therefore tend to retard the

scale-up and effectiveness of pedagogical innovations. Moreover, the relatively scarce resources and capacity-building amongst the teachers in rural settings will also likely limit the scale and impact of such initiatives. Successfully addressing these issues calls for sustained commitment, resources, and collaboration between policy, educators, and community leadership so that education programs are culturally responsive yet viable.

Lastly, it is essential to note that culturally responsive educational methodologies and increased teacher preparation are necessary for the practical education of women. However, we must carefully construct such strategies to address women's cultural and logistical challenges. Indeed, Alqefari (2015) notes that for such programs to be truly viable, they require engagement with the community, the gathering of adequate resources, and a continuous development/evaluation and adjustment of programs as female learners' needs evolve.

Evidence suggests that multilingual environments restrict women's access to higher education due to sociocultural norms. The studies effectively investigate the barriers to women's education on a global basis: however, additional solid evidence and real-life examples would substantially increase the depth and practical relevance for policymakers and practitioners working in this field. These studies together contribute to building the case for tailored, context-sensitive approaches that surmount multidimensional barriers facing women in education.

## 9. Conclusion

In conclusion, women's educational challenges across different communities require a customized and context-sensitive approach. They face unique challenges from sociocultural conventions and psychological and linguistic barriers. Social expectations about traditional gender roles, along with a general lack of emphasis on girls' education, remain major obstacles to development in Nepal's rural areas. Community engagement and a shift in societal attitudes are crucial, but efforts must be designed with an understanding of the local dialect and cultural practices. By implementing culturally relevant programs and

providing targeted financial aid such as scholarships and subsidies, it is possible to reduce the economic barriers limiting these women's educational access.

Integration of technology and flexible learning frameworks thus presents a workable solution, but the lack of proper infrastructure and limited access to digital materials in rural areas may be a serious barrier. In realizing these initiatives, substantial funding and long-term support are needed, while at the same time engaging with local communities to build up trust and diffuse resistance to innovative schooling methodologies. In sum, the combination of community participation, economic support, and the use of technology can help create a more enabling environment within the community that assists in long-term achievement and empowerment through education for women.

Women's education faces many barriers in rural settings due to cultural norms, language differences, and psychological issues. We need community support, financial aid, and tailored education programs that scaffold women's education. Digital literacy and flexible learning models can make a big difference. Lastly, we have to recognize gender and cultural factors. These strategies would, therefore, act to improve the educational conditions of women and others in similar situations.

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