

# Gender Disparity: A Challenge before India

## Abstract

The trend in recent years is narrowing the gap between man and women in this regard but the speed of narrowing the gap is very low. In this paper we show that increase in enrolment has been more significant at the upper primary level as compared to primary level, progress has been made.

**Keywords:** Education, Domestic, Household.

## Introduction

On one level, gender disparity can be narrowly defined as the purely descriptive observation of different outcomes between males and females. However, the move beyond the descriptive level to ask what might cause gender disparities reaches into the complex interplay of the possible sources. Discrimination, biological differences, individual and societal beliefs and attitudes about appropriate gender-specific roles, and the choices of individuals and households based on all of these factors play a role in determining gender disparities. The ranges of gender-related development indicators that can be identified are numerous, but the feasibility of calculating or measuring them quantitatively is limited by availability of data. Therefore, in this paper we examine gender disparity with reference to education. The government of India has recognized the pivotal role of education in development. The constitution of India also has resolved to provide elementary education free to everyone. It stated that the state shall endeavor to provide, with in a period of ten years from the commencement of this constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years.

Education is an effective tool for women's empowerment and reduction of gender disparities. It enhances self-esteem and confidence and builds a positive image of women by recognizing their contribution to the society, polity and economy. It helps in developing ability to think critically and fostering decision making and action through collective processes. It provides information, knowledge and skill which play an important role in economic independence. Education enhances access to legal literacy and information related to their rights and entitlements in society with a view to enhance their participation on an equal footing in all areas. The externalities attached to female education have been talked about ad nauseam and not always without a critical interrogation of assumed, often linear, outcomes in terms of reduced fertility or enhanced status and so on. However, there is little disagreement that gender inequality in this sphere reflects unequal level of actual functioning and therefore unequal realization of one's potentials (Nussbaum 1995). As pointed out by Amritya Sen (2001) the afflicted world in which we live is characterized by deeply unequal sharing of burden of adversities between women and men ..... Indeed, gender inequality is not a homogeneous phenomenon, but a collection of disparate and interlinked problems. Sen identifies seven types of inequalities – in mortality, natalitvey, basic facility, special opportunities, professional ownership and household.

From the beginning of the planned era, education along with health and social welfare were accepted as crucial services for women's development. Allocations through the FYPs and special programme for women's education together with efforts to reduce gender inequalities in school enrolment and dropouts have been undertaken by the state Gopalan (2002). Female education has long been acknowledged to have strong correlations with other dimensions of human and social development. As Mehrotra (2006) notes, low level of education significantly affect the health and nutritional status of women. Involvement of grassroots organizations, especially for developing services in informal education and evolving ways of mainstreaming women have been underway. Reasons for



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parental under-investment in female education are diverse and well-known (Subrhmian, 2005). The deeply embedded undervaluation of female labour, identified primarily with the reproductive or household sphere, underlines the belief in many communities that educating females bring low returns, as skills required in the reproductive sphere require domestic socialization and not many years of schooling.

Jha and Jhingran's (2002) detailed study of schooling in communities across 10 districts of India shows the continued beliefs in the importance of marriage for girls at an early age, and of maintain asymmetries between men and women in educational attainment as a marker of relatively greater male social status. Sudarshan (2000) argues that the two driving motivations for education in India are linked to aspirations for salaried occupations and to the marriage market, where wide gaps between the educational qualifications of males and females are considered to constitute a risk to the stability of marriage. Ramachandran (2003) reports on the factors that enable or constrain female schooling through a "snakes and ladders" analysis, where a significant set of factors pertains to the home environment, and particularly the relationship between the parents, the mother's commitment to and interest in her child's (daughter's) schooling, and the mother's long hours of work.

Policy documents like the report of the Kothari Commission (GoI, 1964-66) and the National Policy on Education 1986 and its POA in 1992 (GoI) have put enormous emphasis on promotion of gender equity in education by reducing the gender gap in access, retention and transition from one stage to other. However, despite such policy recognition of the importance of female education, dedicated programmes with in Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and efforts at 'gender mainstreaming' within the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) data shows a continuing gender gap in relation to attendance and dropout.

#### **Aim of Study**

A Detailed Study of Gender Disparity in India.

#### **Review of Literature**

In India, Rao (2018), Rao and Singh (2007), Isaac and Chakraborty (2008), Chakraborty (2017), Chakraborty (2016), Chakraborty and Chakraborty (2016) have examined fiscal federal relations and the subnational state finances in the context of India. Only a few of the existing studies on IGFT in India have incorporated gender equity concerns. Chakraborty (2010) and Anand and Chakraborty (2016) examine how integrating gender criteria/principles in the IGFT formula can improve horizontal equalization across jurisdictions. Chakraborty et al. (2018) look at how conditional transfers can alter gender equality outcomes.

The impact of gender budgeting on gender outcomes is a new area of economic research. Stotsky and Zaman (2016) analyse the impact of gender budgeting on gender equality outcomes in the context of India and found that gender budgeting has a positive effect on gender equality in education at the

primary and secondary levels. Chakraborty, Ingrams and Singh (2017) analyse the effectiveness of gender budgeting on sectoral gender outcomes in the context of the Asia Pacific region. They find that gender budgeting has a positive and significant effect on education and health outcomes; but there is no impact on labour force participation rates. This reinforces the view that care economy policies to augur the female work force participation have been meagre in the region.

Jayachandran, S. (2014), has presented the roots of gender inequality in developing countries. This paper also discussed the several mechanisms through which the economic development could improve the relative outcomes of women & gender gaps can be reduced as country grows.

Raju, E. (2014), has examined the gender discrimination in India on the basis of demographic, social, economic and political context. The paper has broadly discussed the issue of gender inequality, women empowerment & reproductive health among women of India. Some measures under taken by the International and national organizations were also discussed in this paper.

Thomas, R.E. (2013), has highlighted his paper with the state of gender based inequality in the modern India. It has presented gender inequality with the help of some facts & figures and representing the inequality practiced in India & its comparison with other Asian & Western countries.

Chaudhary, & Sarkar, D. (2012), has tried to find out some factors i.e. educational status, work participation, level of gender inequality, of the Cooch Behar, a district of West-Bengal, India and suggested some relevant strategies implication for reducing this gender inequality to promote the deprived women of this district.

Gender discrimination is considered as a tremendous constraint towards the development process and it is found as a causal factor of violence against women. (Jannatul Ferdaush, K. M. Mustafizur Rahman, 2011).

#### **Gender Disparity in Literacy**

Does woman education lead to a positive impact on gender development? Will improvement in female literacy ensure greater gender equality? While it can be stated with a certain degree of certainty that improving the education of women will lead to gender development, it is difficult to affirm that improvements reflected through this variable of female literacy alone will be sufficient to bring about women's equality.

Literacy is the most generally used indicator of educational development in any country. While the government aims at reaching 100 per cent literacy according to census 2001, the effective literacy rate of the population age group 7 years and above in India was 65.4 per cent. It was 52.2 per cent in 1991 and 43.6 per cent in 1981. Despite various efforts initiated by the government, one third of the population is still illiterate. Gender and spatial disparities are high. Despite rapid growth in literacy in post-independence India, gendered deprivation still exists and needs to be overcome despite progressively increasing gains for females in literacy and education resulting in

declining disparities (Table1). In 2001 slightly more than half of the female population was literate (54.1 per cent) as against the three-fourth of males (75.8 per cent). The gender disparity in literacy, which was 0.48 in 1961, declined to 0.21 in 2001. It may be seen that it took almost five decades for male-female

disparity to reduce to half of what it was in the 1960s. Following the same logic, one can argue that if the present trend continues it will take another five decades to finally close the gender gap in terms of literacy attainment.

**Table 1 Gender Disparity in Literacy in India**

Year	Male literacy	Female literacy	Disparity
1961	40.3	15.2	0.48
1971	49.4	18.5	0.38
1981	56.3	29.6	0.35
1991	63.8	39.4	0.28
2001	75.8	54.1	0.21
2005	77.1	57.3	0.20

Source: Census of India,(2001), Gol (2006b,NSSO)

**Table 2 State-wise Gender Disparity in India in Literacy**

State	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001
A.P.	0.440	0.372	0.345	0.289	0.202
Assam	0.418	0.347	NA	0.214	0.159
Bihar	0.699	0.615	0.529	0.440	0.331
Gujrat	0.398	0.332	0.306	0.254	0.211
Haryana	NA	0.463	0.425	0.318	0.224
Kerala	0.211	0.134	0.109	0.065	0.056
M.P.	0.658	0.535	0.483	0.389	0.270
Maharashtra	0.474	0.365	0.244	0.176	0.172
Karnatka	0.469	0.360	0.251	0.179	0.184
Orissa	0.676	0.508	0.438	0.342	0.253
Punjab	0.418	0.229	0.193	0.162	0.116
Rajasthan	0.654	0.588	0.584	0.524	0.337
Tamil Nadu	0.470	0.352	0.309	0.228	0.160
U.P.	0.642	0.549	0.519	0.426	0.297
West Bengal	0.430	0.343	0.288	0.255	0.160
India	0.485	0.385	0.352	0.281	0.216

Source: Census of India, 2001

It may be seen that there is a regional variations in gender disparity (Table 2). The Kerala is the state where one can see males-females are almost at parity. But so called (BIMARU) states of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh are lagging behind in female literacy and gender disparity is huge. Even Orissa have performed better in reducing the gender disparity. Gujrat and Haryana are the state where gender disparity in literacy is almost nearby to national average. Gender disparities are found to be the maximum in those very states that are grouped as low literacy states.

#### **Gender Disparity in Elementary Education**

There has been spectacular growth in elementary education in India during post-Independence period. The enrolment in elementary education (primary and upper primary) constitute the constitutional goal of elementary education have increased by more than seven times from 2.2 crore in 1950-51 to 16.9 crore in 2002-03. But according to

survey (IIPS 2000) in 1998-99 only 79 per cent of the children in age group 6-14 years were reported to be attending schools. About one third of the children of the age group 5-9 years in rural areas and 28 per cent in urban areas are not attending schools. The retention ratio of the school system is also at a very low level: out of 100 children enrolled in class I, about 47 reach to class VIII, and 37 to class X, according to rate of drop out estimated for 2002-03.

The gross enrolment ratio (GER), with a few exceptions, may be seen gradually increasing. In 1950-51 it was 46.4 and 17.7 for the boys and girls respectively which has moved up to 90.7 and 82.4 for boys and girls respectively. Over the years, the gender gap seems to be closing. The early decades of Independences saw huge disparity between boys and girls at the primary level. Undoubtedly, the gender disparities over the years have come down, yet substantial gender gap in enrolment at the elementary level still persists (Table 3).

**Table 3 Trends in Gross Enrolment Ratio in Elementary Education in India**

Years	Primary (I-V)		Upper primary (VI-VIII)		Elementary Education (I-VIII)	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1950-51	60.6	24.8	20.6	4.6	46.4	17.7
1960-61	82.6	41.4	33.2	11.3	65.2	30.9
1970-71	95.5	60.5	46.5	20.8	75.5	44.4
1980-81	95.8	64.1	54.3	28.6	82.2	52.1
1990-91	114.0	85.5	76.6	47.0	100.0	70.8
2000-01	104.9	85.9	66.7	49.9	90.3	72.4
2004-05	110.7	104.7	74.3	65.1	96.9	89.9

Source: Ministry of HRD, Statistics of School Education

**Table 4 School Enrolment of Girls Aged 6-14 years in Selected States Enrolment Rates**

State	1992-93 (NFHS-I)	1998-99 (NFHS-II)	Point Increase in Enrolment Rate
A.P.	54.8	70.5	15.7
Assam	66.0	75.0	9.0
Bihar	38.3	54.1	15.8
Gujrat	68.4	72.8	4.4
Haryana	74.7	85.5	10.8
Kerala	94.8	97.4	2.6
M.P.	54.8	70.8	16.0
Maharashtra	76.6	86.9	10.3
Karnatka	64.4	77.6	13.2
Orissa	62.0	75.1	13.1
Punjab	77.8	90.0	12.2
Rajasthan	40.6	63.2	22.6
Tamil Nadu	78.7	88.5	9.8
U.P.	48.2	69.4	21.2
West Bengal	62.9	76.7	13.8

Source: IIPS (1995) and IIPS (2000)

The school enrolment of girls takes a varied from across the states. In many states there has been a significant improvement in girls' enrolments during six years between NFHS-I and NFHS-II (Table 4). In particular, significant increases in girls' enrolment took place in Rajasthan, U.P., M.P., A.P., and Bihar. These

states had lower initial enrolments in 1992-93 and still require significant increases in enrolment. Some states had higher levels of enrolment initially, but still increased enrolment level from 1992 to 1999. These included Haryana, Maharashtra, Punjab, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

**Table 5 Trends in Gender Disparity in Elementary Education**

Years	Primary (I-V)	Upper primary (VI-VIII)	Elementary Education (I-VIII)
1950-51	0.49	0.69	0.49
1960-61	0.43	0.52	0.42
1970-71	0.32	0.42	0.33
1980-81	0.29	0.35	0.30
1990-91	0.05	0.31	0.26
2000-01	0.17	0.18	0.16
2004-05	0.13	0.15	0.12

Source: Ministry of HRD, Statistics of School Education

**Table 6 Drop-Out Rates (%) at Primary and Middle Stages from 1980-81 to 2004-05**

Years	Grades (I-V)		Grades (I-VIII)	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1980-81	56.2	62.5	68.0	79.4
1990-91	40.1	46.0	59.1	65.1
1999-2000	38.7	42.3	52.0	58.0
2000-2001	39.7	41.9	50.3	57.7
2004-2005	31.8	25.4	50.4	51.2

Source: GoI (2007a)

Table 6 highlights the trend in drop-out rate of girls and boys at the primary and upper primary levels. It indicates that while girls now have lower drop out at primary level, they remain higher if upper primary is taken into account. High dropout rates, along with those who never enrol at all, explain the

persistently high rates of out-of-school children. The Tapas Majumdar Committee Report (GoI, 1999) estimated the number of out-of-school children to be about 60-70 million. However, data from national survey reports a decline in the number of out-of-school children over the years. According to NFHS-I

in 1992-93 around 67.5 per cent of 6-14 age children were attending schools, while at the time of NFHS-II in 1998-99 this percentage had increased to 79 per cent.

Thus, there has been considerable decrease in the population of out-of-school children in recent years. These statistics indicate the increasing demand for education, leading to the increase in enrolment of children and the expansion of schools.

#### Conclusion

Various plans and committees have stressed the need for greater participation of women in elementary education, but the disparate levels for men and women are gap between man and women in this regard but the speed of narrowing the gap is very low. It took five decades for male-female disparity in literacy reducing from 0.48 to 0.21 if rate remains same, it will take another five decades to reduce from 0.21 to zero. So, there is a need to boost the rate to achieve the target.

There has been considerable improvement in participation of girls during the post-Independence, yet it continues to be below 50 per cent both primary and upper primary levels of school education. Although the increase in enrolment has been more significant at the upper primary level as compared to primary level, progress has been made. The GER of both boys and girls have shown steady increase at the primary and upper primary levels, but considerable gender gaps remain, particularly at the upper primary level. Despite such impressive gains in the participation of children in schooling, a large number of girls still face difficulties in entering school and continuing their studies. The states which need serious attention are Bihar, U.P., Rajasthan, M.P., and West Bengal, where more girls than boys tend to remain out of school. Provision of schooling facilities of good quality is more important that could attract and retain the girls' student equally. Schooling facilities seem to be both quantitatively and qualitatively inadequate. Adequate provision of qualified and trained teachers is critically important. It has direct impact on quantity and quality of schooling. There are needs to look into all those factors also which are hurdle creator for schooling and retention of a girl.

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