

# Economic Development and Female Literacy Rate in Punjab



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## Abstract

India is amongst the fastest growing countries in the world today, with a GDP of 8% during the 11<sup>th</sup> plan period. This high level of growth can however be sustained only when all sections of the society specially women become equal partners in the development process. Women's access to education has been recognised as a fundamental right and increasing girl education at primary, secondary and higher education level, is a main policy of the international development community and governments of most developing country. Education affected women's well being and provides them a greater voice in household decisions and improved opportunities to participate economic activities of country. Women education has direct impact on individuals, families and entire society. Women education is one of the major effective ways to eradicate poverty and other economic issues of the country. This paper highlights the women participation in education in Punjab. The enrolment ratio of girls at the primary school level is greater than the male is continuously increasing and it is nearly as high as that of boys. The Punjab state has achieved gender equity in terms of enrolment of students at the primary level of with age group 6-11. The state as a whole has 80.40 % literate males and on the other hand the female literacy rate is put at 70.70 % which shows large gap of nearly 10 % in the distribution of male-female literacy in the state.

**Keywords:** Education, Enrolment Ratio, Participation, Eradicate Poverty.

## Introduction

There is no dearth of literature indicating that overall educational development to increase in national incomes and its economic development and especially the female literacy. In developing countries generally the male literacy rates are quite high than the female literacy rates. So higher female literacy prove to be a sure bet for increased economic development. In case of India Role of education and particularly female education in the development process is well document; it has already been observed that a year's increase in the usual no of years of primary education of workforce raised about a quarter outputs. Exemplary case of Kerala rightly exhibits how female literacy was useful in reducing poverty in the state. Contrast to Kerala's case is the backward states like Bihar and Jharkhand which are having lower female literacy rates have higher poverty ratios. Positive association between female education and family planning is already verified. Controlled population certainly records for increased economic growth and higher level of development in the long run. Economics of the classical period have also highlighted this association, which is similarly reconfirmed in present times. Besides the social and economic benefits of education, female literacy is considered a bet in improving the health and basic child care. Higher literacy rates show lower poverty ratios amongst different parts of the world. India has also shown a tremendous increase in its literacy rates since independence, but it too holds the largest concentration of poor people in the world. Increasing literacy is considered a harbinger for economic development.

## Aim of the Study

The aim of this study covers the time period from 2001-2012 for found that the percentage of female literacy in primary, middle and secondary school level. This study also found that the overall female literacy rate in Punjab is much lower than the male literacy rate.

Gender equality in education is a critical element of the millennium development goals. Education affects women's wellbeing and provides them a greater voice in household decisions and improved opportunities to participate in economics activities of country. Women's education is essential for social and economic development of country. Spread of

education affected the human resources and country's economic growth. Women education is one of the major effective ways to eradicate poverty and other economic issues of the country. Women education has direct impact on individuals, families and entire society. **Jawaharlal Nehru** said, "If our nation is to rise, how can it do so if the half of the nation, of our women kind lag behind and remain ignorant and uneducated?" Education had started spreading slowly and gradually among girls and women in the last quarter of the nineteenth century in different reasons of India.

#### **Punjab and Literacy**

In Punjab female constitute 47.23% of total population of the state as compared to 48.5% at national level. Although sex ratio has improved from 854 in 1961 to 895 in 2011 in the state yet it still lagged behind the national average which was 941 in 1961 and 943 in 2011. Over the years the sex ratio at birth is also improving constantly in the state. It increased from 754 in 2001 to 852 in 2011. In case of education, as per 2011 population census, the literacy rate in Punjab is 75.8% which is higher than the literacy rate of 69.65% in 2001. In 2011 only 70.7% of females in Punjab were literate compared to 80.4% of men. The male and female literacy rates were 75.6% and 63.55% respectively.

As per census 2011, women constitute only 11.99% of main worker and 6.44% of marginal workers to total workers in the state. The corresponding figures at national level are 18.53% and 12.58% respectively. The work force participation rate of females in Punjab is 13.90% while the male work participation rate is 55.20% as compared to national average where corresponding figures were 25.5% and 53.3% respectively. In other words workforce participation rate of females in Punjab is over four times lower than their male counter parts in the state.

In Punjab, women are relatively invisible in workforce statistics. This is because women's labour, in most cases does not directly produce marketable goods or services. This gendered notion of work hugely undermined women's contribution to the economy, resulting in the non recognition of women as important economic entities. Brigham Young said that

**You educate man,  
You educate a man,  
You educate a woman,  
You educate a generation"**

Although women work for longer hours and contribute substantially to the family income, quite often they are the major earners as the work performed by them is non – monetized; they are not perceived as workers by either the women themselves or by the data collecting agencies and the government itself. The causes of low participation rate of women is repeatedly acknowledged in terms of the invisibility of women's work, domestic chores and other tasks which are viewed as part of a cultural/traditional attitude where man is considered as the primary bread winner.

**Table 1**  
**Sex Wise Literacy Rate in Punjab from 1971 to 2011**

Year	Literacy Rate		Total	Gap between Male-female Literacy
	Male	Female		
1971	42.23	24.65	34.12	17.58
1981	51.23	34.35	43.37	16.88
1991	65.66	50.41	58.51	15.25
2001	75.63	63.55	69.95	12.08
2011	80.40	70.70	75.80	9.70

The above figures shows that literacy rate in Punjab has increased from 34.12 % in 1971 to 75.80 % in 2011. Male literacy rate increased from 42.23 % in 1971 to 80.40 % in 2011. On the other hand female literacy rate also increased from 24.65 % to 70.70 % in 2011. Female literacy has increased by 46.05 % points from the period 1971 to 2011 and male literacy by only 38.17 % there is gap great between points during same period. The gap between male and female literacy rate decreased from 17.58 % in 1971 to 9.70 % in 2011. During the last decade the female literacy rate has witnessed much higher growth 7.15 percentage points as against 4.77 % for males.

**Table 2**  
**Girls Enrolment Ratio in Punjab**

Years	Class-I-V- primary level(6-11 years)			
	Boys	Girls	Total	Coefficient of Inequality
2001-02	76.49	77.38	76.91	0.012
2004-05	74.49	80.52	77.20	0.078
2006-07	78.07	85.36	81.33	0.090
2007-08	93.51	91.96	92.78	0.017
2009-10	108.56	107.50	108.09	0.010
2010-11	109.1	108.03	108.8	0.010

**Source:** Statistics of School Education, Ministry of HRD, GOI

**Table 3**

Years	Class-VI-VIII-middle level(11-14 years)			
	Boys	Girls	Total	Coefficient of Inequality
2001-02	65.15	64.57	64.88	0.009
2004-05	63.78	67.40	65.42	0.055
2006-07	68.12	70.15	69.03	0.029
2007-08	70.35	67.62	69.09	0.040
2009-10	93.59	89.73	91.84	0.042
2010-11	95.80	91.7	94.00	0.044

**Source:** Statistics of School Education, Ministry of HRD, GOI

**Table 4**

Years	Class I-VIII (6-14 Years)			
	Boys	Girls	Total	Coefficient of Inequality
2001-02	72.41	72.72	72.55	0.004
2004-05	70.30	75.34	72.57	0.069
2006-07	74.13	79.29	76.45	0.067
2007-08	84.45	82.53	83.55	0.023
2009-10	102.84	100.60	101.83	0.022
2010-11	104.1	101.90	103.10	0.021
2011-12	102.19	101.56	101.91	0.0061
2012-13	105.89	105.15	105.56	0.0070
2013-14	100.35	103.39	101.69	0.0298

**Source:** Statistics of School Education, Ministry of HRD, GOI

The enrolment ratio for boys at primary level increased from 76.49 % during 2001-02 to more than 100 % by 2010-11, as compared to 77.38% for girls in 2001-02 and 108 % in 2010-11. Similarly at middle level the enrolment ratio of girls increased from 64.57 % in 2001-02 to 91.7 % in 2010-11, while the enrolment for boys increased from 65.15 % to 95.80 % during the same period. However, it is clear that at both primary and middle level, there is no big difference between girls and boys enrolment ratio in Punjab. The above table also shows that the enrolment ratio of girls at the primary level as well as middle level is continuously increased and it is nearly as high as that of boys. Therefore we can say that Punjab state has achieved gender equity in terms of enrolment of students at the primary level with age group 6-11.

We can briefly summarize the conclusion that emerges from above analysis and the implication that follow, as under:

1. Female literacy rate has increased at higher percentage points than the male literacy rate both in rural and urban areas.
2. The gap between male-female literacy rates has declined in both urban and rural areas. But the gap rate is still higher in rural areas of Punjab. It is a sound indication of more and more females becoming literate and thus reducing male-female gap in literacy rate.
3. Overall female literacy rate in Punjab is much lower than the male literacy rate.
4. Total enrolment (men and women) at primary level has decreased during 2005 to 2012.
5. Girls' enrolment ratio at elementary level continually increased during 2005-06 to 2013-14
6. Women enrolment rate is higher than men enrolment at senior- secondary level.
7. The coefficient of inequality shows that there is no large difference at elementary education level in Punjab.

As it was mentioned before, investing in education provides the foundation for accelerating social and economic development of nations because of its pervasive influence on economically relevant variables such as productivity, health, earnings. Considering the case of female education, increasing women's education not only increases their productivity but also results in greater child health and nutrition. More educated mothers lead to multiplier effect on the quality of nation's human resources for many generations to come. As women carry a

disproportionate burden of the poverty which disturbs developing societies, significant improvement in their role and status of the education can have an important impact on breaking vicious circle of poverty and inadequate education. That education promotes development is a proven fact and female literacy is considered a key instrument in women empowerment and higher social development.

Considering the millennium Development Goals as main plan for development and economic growth in developing countries, broad-based education is among the most powerful instruments known to reduce poverty and inequality. So for individuals and nations, it is the key to creating and spreading knowledge and it is fundamental for the construction of democratic societies. Moreover education-especially girl's education-has a direct and proven impact on the goals related to child and reproductive health and social and gender sustainability.

#### **Conclusion**

Female literacy rate in Punjab is lower than the male literacy rate as many parents do not allow their female children to go to schools. They get married off at a young age instead. Planners must plan programmes of action to improve education conditions in Punjab in general and primary education level in particular. Women should be encouraged particularly at primary level, so that women enrolment increases. For this purpose girl students should get special incentives at primary level to improve educational status. In order to improve their literacy level more educational facilities should be made available to women of Punjab as well as India. For low literacy rate among females than males in all districts of Punjab we should not blame any government officers as they could not forcibly take the girls to school. There is a need of change of attitude.

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