



Gender Parity in Indian Education – Progress and Problems

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Abstract- Gender is a critical cross-cutting equity issue which implies that women are enabled to keep pace with boys in achieving equal educational access. In India, poverty and cultural practices play a key role in creating gender disparity in education. Literacy rate of female in India is 65.46% as compared to that of males which is 82.14% as per Census of India 2011. The Covid-19 pandemic induced lockdown further seems to aggravate the disparity scenario in the country. In this paper, an attempt is made to analyse the gender disparity in the education system of India at a disaggregate level i.e. at different stages of education. The stages of education considered here are primary, upper primary, secondary and higher secondary stage. We have also categorised students into scheduled castes and tribes in order to see if there exists any disparity in social groups. Also the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic in achieving gender parity is discussed. The Gender Parity Index (GPI) is further used to examine the extent of disparity in the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) between boys and girls of India.

Keywords- disparity, education, gender, gross enrolment ratio, gender parity index.

I. INTRODUCTION-

The dynamics of education has its key role in the social transformation and overall national development of each economy. It is essential that the education programmes and policies are continuously reviewed and renewed in order maintain its relevance in the changing socio-economic scenarios. In India, providing free and compulsory education is enshrined as a Fundamental right in the Indian Constitution itself. As such, India has been undertaking various programmes and strategies for achieving The Education for all (EFA) goals. The EFA goals are a set of goals that comprises of the areas of early childhood care in education, primary education, gender equality in education, youth and adolescent education, adult education and quality of education. India has undoubtedly strived and made substantial progress in achieving EFA goals to a certain extent during the past few years. But, despite making progress towards the goals, Indian education faces several challenges in case of gender parity and quality related deficiencies.

Gender inequality in access to education affects career prospects and equality in work opportunities. Gender gaps in career expectations are related to deeply in-grained gender-stereotyped norms about which careers are suitable for men and women. They are passed on to children by families, teachers and wider societies (OECD, 2017). In rural areas of many low- and middle-income countries, girls are expected to get married and take on domestic roles, which impede their education, (Bonfil, 2020).

India, being the largest democracy in the world, has a population of 1.21 billion out of which 48.86% of population happens to be women (Census Report of India, 2011). The goal of 'Education for all' has been priority agenda of the government of India since the adoption of the Indian constitution. However, large gender gap in literacy rate and quality related deficiencies also remains a major concern. The present study is an attempt to review the progress made by India in case of bridging the gender gap that exists and providing quality education and the challenges that needs to be addressed.

II. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY-

The objective of the present study is to analyse the gender disparity in education of India (if any). By education, we mean the primary, upper primary, secondary and higher secondary stages of education. The study is descriptive in nature and based on secondary data. The time period of the study is 2000-01 to 2013-14 based on the availability of data. Percentages, ratios, averages etc. are used to analyse the objective. We have analysed the disparity in education using the Gender Parity Index (GPI).

Analysis-

School education in India broadly has been categorised into four stages- the primary, upper primary, secondary and higher secondary stage. The primary and upper primary stages together constitute the

elementary stage. The primary stage constitutes Classes I-V. Upper primary education is from Classes VI-VIII. Both these stages together constitute the elementary stage of education i.e. from class I to VIII. Secondary stage of education is classes IX and X and XI and XII is considered higher secondary education in India.

In this section of the study, we analyse the enrolment percentage and ratio of girls to boys in each stages of education i.e. in primary, upper primary (elementary), secondary and higher secondary education during the study period.

Table 1 shows girls enrolled as percentage of total enrolment and ratio of girls' enrolment to boys' enrolment by level of education (primary, upper primary, elementary and secondary education) during the time period 2000-01 to 2013-14. It is seen from the table that the enrolment of girls as percentage of total enrolment in primary education (Classes I-V) increased from 43.8 per cent in 2000-01 to 48.4 per cent in 2012-13. The enrolment of girls as percentage of total enrolment in primary education (Classes I-V) then marginally declined to 48.2 per cent in 2013-14.

The overall increase in the enrolment of girls as percentage of total enrolment in primary education was 4.4 percentage during the period 2000-01 to 2013-14 as evident from table 1. The improvement in the enrolment ratio of girls has been more pronounced at the upper primary stage.

Table 1: Girls enrolled as percentage of total enrolment and ratio of girls' enrolment to boys' enrolment by level of education (primary, upper primary, elementary and secondary education) (2000-01 to 2013-14)									
Year	Enrolment of girls as percentage of total enrolment (%)			Ratio of girls' enrolment to boys' enrolment			Enrolment of girls as percentage of total enrolment (%)	Ratio of girls' enrolment to boys' enrolment	
	Primary	Upper primary	Elementary	Primary	Upper primary	Elementary	Secondary and higher secondary	Secondary	Higher secondary
2000-01	43.8	40.9	43.0	0.78	0.69	0.75	38.8	63	63
2001-02	44.2	41.7	43.5	0.79	0.72	0.77	39.7	65	66
2002-03	46.8	43.9	46.0	0.88	0.78	0.85	41.3	70	70
2003-04	46.7	44.1	46.0	0.88	0.79	0.85	41.1	70	70
2004-05	46.7	44.3	46.0	0.88	0.80	0.85	41.5	71	71
2005-06	46.6	44.6	46.1	0.87	0.81	0.85	41.9	73	72
2006-07	46.9	45.2	46.4	0.88	0.83	0.87	42.4	73	74
2007-08	47.5	45.8	47.0	0.91	0.85	0.89	43.4	77	77
2008-09	48.0	46.9	47.7	0.92	0.88	0.91	43.7	78	78
2009-10	47.8	46.5	47.4	0.92	0.87	0.90	44.6	81	81
2010-11	47.9	47.2	47.7	0.92	0.89	0.91	44.7	82	81
2011-12	48.4	48.6	48.4	0.94	0.95	0.94	--	--	--
2012-13	48.4	48.8	48.5	0.94	0.96	0.94	46.9	89	88
2013-14	48.2	48.6	48.3	0.93	0.95	0.94	47.1	89	89
Source- Source: Statistics of School Education, 2007-08, MHRD, GOI; Educational Statistics at a Glance, 2011, MHRD, GOI; Statistics of School Education, 2010-11; U-DISE, NUEPA									

The enrolment of girls as percentage of total enrolment in upper primary education (Classes VI-VIII) increased from 40.9 per cent in 2000-01 to 48.8 per cent in 2012-13. The figure then marginally declined to 48.6 per cent in 2013-14. In upper primary education the overall increase in the enrolment of girls as percentage of total enrolment was 7.7 percentage during the period 2000-01 to 2013-14. The enrolment of girls as percentage of total enrolment in elementary education (Classes VI-VIII) increased from 43 per cent in 2000-01 to 48.5 per cent in 2012-13. The enrolment of girls as percentage of total enrolment in elementary education (Classes VI-VIII) thereafter declined to 48.3 per cent in 2013-14. In case of elementary education, the overall increase in the enrolment of girls as percentage of total enrolment was 5.3 percentage points during the period 2000-01 to 2013-14.

III. GENDER PARITY IN EDUCATION- THE GPI INDEX

The gender parity index (GPI) is an index designed to measure the relative access of male and female to education calculated from the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER). In simple words, the GPI is used to measure the gender disparity in education. The index was given by UNESCO. A GPI value of 1 indicates equality between males and females in case of access to education while a GPI value of less than 1 indicates inequality in access to education. In this section of the study, we used the GPI from various reports of the Statistics of School Education, MHRD, GOI to analyse the gender parity scenario in case of Primary, Upper primary and Elementary education in India. The time period that we have considered is from 2000-01 to 2013-14. In India, lack of access to education is also visible in case of backward social castes and tribes. Thus, in our analysis, we have taken the GPI for SC as well as ST students as well.

Table 2 Gender Parity Index (GPI) for GER in primary, upper primary and elementary education (2000-01 to 2013-14)

Year	GPI (All categories of students)			GPI (SC students)			GPI (ST students)		
	Primary	Upper primary	Elementary	Primary	Upper primary	Elementary	Primary	Upper primary	Elementary
2000-01	0.82	0.75	0.80	0.80	0.70	0.78	0.73	0.66	0.72
2001-02	0.83	0.77	0.81	0.80	0.72	0.78	0.80	0.70	0.77
2002-03	0.96	0.86	0.93	0.88	0.77	0.85	0.88	0.74	0.85
2003-04	0.95	0.86	0.93	0.89	0.80	0.87	0.93	0.79	0.90
2004-05	0.95	0.88	0.93	0.87	0.79	0.85	0.90	0.81	0.88
2005-06	0.94	0.88	0.92	0.87	0.80	0.86	0.92	0.84	0.91
2006-07	0.94	0.89	0.93	0.88	0.76	0.86	0.92	0.85	0.91
2007-08	0.98	0.91	0.96	0.99	0.95	0.98	0.96	0.87	0.94
2008-09	1.00	0.96	0.99	1.00	0.96	0.99	0.97	0.90	0.96
2009-10	1.00	0.93	0.97	1.01	0.96	0.99	0.98	0.90	0.96
2010-11	1.01	0.95	0.99	1.01	0.97	1.00	1.00	0.96	0.99
2012-13	1.02	1.05	1.03	1.02	1.07	1.03	0.98	1.03	0.99
2013-14	1.03	1.08	1.04	1.02	1.07	1.04	0.98	1.02	0.99

Source: Statistics of School Education, 2007-08; MHRD, GOI; Educational Statistics at a Glance, 2011, MHRD, GOI; Statistics of School Education, 2010-11, MHRD, GOI; U-DISE, NUEPA

Table 2 shows the Gender Parity Index (GPI) for GER in primary, upper primary and elementary education. It is seen from the table that the Gender Parity Index (GPI) for GER in primary, upper primary and elementary education has been improving steadily from 2000-01 to 2013-14. In case of primary education (Classes I-V), the GPI for GER is seen to improve from 0.82 in 2000-01 to 1.03 in 2013-14. In case of upper primary education (Classes VI-VIII), the index value improved from 0.75 to 1.08 during the time period 2000-01 to 2013-14. While the GPI for GER in elementary education (Classes I-VIII) improved from 0.80 to

1.04 during this period. In case of ST and SC students also, the GPI has been increasing over time which is a good sign. Overall the GPI has been improving over time in case of all the categories- primary, upper primary, and elementary, secondary and higher secondary as well as in case of ST and SC students as well. Which means that the number of girls/female enrolment has been increasing over the years relative to boys.

IV. COVID 19- THE ADDITIONAL BARRIER TO GENDER PARITY CHALLENGE

As the deadliness of the Covid-19 led governments around the world to impose stringent lockdowns, 91% of the global student population was affected in 194 countries. This has fuelled multiple forms of inequality in education with inherent gender roots and implications. Social and cultural factors affect parents' attitudes to girls' education (Opoku, 2020). The first of these implications is concern that the extended periods families spent at home during lockdown increased gender-based violence (Chandan et al., 2020; IRC, 2020; Taub, 2020). Such implications makes it clear that the ability of a girl continuation of studying is deeply affected thereafter. Another such implication is that the shift of learning to online mode proved to be a disadvantage for girl student more than that of boys. This is because, in low and middle income countries, women are less likely to have access to mobile phones or use the internet. Finally, school, colleges and university closures led to increase in household chores which affected girls more than boys. There is a cut in the study time due to household responsibilities for girls. A study of secondary school students in Ecuador during lockdown showed boys and girls were equally likely to continue their education in the morning but more girls did chores in the afternoon, while boys were engaged in leisure activities (Asanov et al., 2020).

V. CONCLUSION

In this study we attempted to make an analysis of the gender differences in access to education at all the different stages of education in India. Starting our analysis with the Girl's Enrolment Ratios to total enrolment ratio and to boy's enrolment ratio at different stages of education, we observed that India has made significant improvement in the enrolment ratio of girls over the study period that is from 2000-01 to 2013-14. Then, using the Gender Parity Index (GPI) for GER, we analysed the parity in education for all stages of education as well as for different social groups-scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. The GPI values over the study period showed that there has been improvement in the GPI values. All these indicates that India has been making satisfactory progress in bridging the gender gap in access in education and providing for equity and equality in education.

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