

Gender Disparity at Elementary Education Level in Jammu and Kashmir: An Exploratory Study

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Abstract:

This paper is based on a study to explore gender disparity at elementary education level in Jammu and Kashmir. Gender disparity in education refers to differences in outcomes observed between two sexes. Education disparities can be seen in different enrolment rates, dropout rates, and survival rates among the sexes. The central government and state government has developed the flagship programme focusing on the education of the females in the State to achieve gender parity and on the other hand NGO's and local bodies are also jointly working for the elimination of gender disparity in education. The main objective of the study was to explore the gender disparity at elementary education level in Jammu and Kashmir. The data used were taken from the census reports, DISE reports and National Human Development Report of India. The literacy rate and elementary education of the women in Jammu and Kashmir is far lower than their counterparts and also lower than women at national level. The educational schemes and developmental programmes seem have not helped to improve the condition of women education. There is an essential need to make serious efforts by government, NGO organizations and other local bodies to augment the pace of development in education of the women of Jammu and Kashmir.

Key words: Gender Disparity, Education, Exploratory

Introduction:

Nowadays, gender and education are important international issues. These issues are very worth attention in those countries where the rate of gender disparity is very high. In spite of all efforts made so far, disparities of gender in education exist in many countries of world. There are differences among countries and regions (UNESCO, 2000) reported that fifty nine countries out of 176 have achieved the target of equal access to schools while two-third of countries in the world had not achieved the target and gender parity in education.

Education certainly has the capability to play a key role in gender formation and change. Gender is a socially constructed and intersectional identity, it constantly intersects with social class, ethnicity and religion, culture, disability, sexuality, age etc. Education offers real opportunities to challenge gender stereotypes (Ahmad Gul and Khan, 2013).

Providing universal compulsory elementary education has been a long-time goal pursued by all countries as a basic philosophy. This goal received a new direction through the global vision that evolved during the World Conference on Education for All, held in Jomtien 23 years ago. The conference called for treating education as a basic need and a fundamental right of every individual. It was stated: "The most urgent priority is to ensure access to, and improve the quality of education for girls and women, and to remove every obstacle that hampers their active participation (Ahmad, 1987). All gender stereotyping in education should be eliminated." It was further emphasized that education programmes for women and girls should be designed to eliminate the social and cultural barriers that have discouraged or even excluded women and girls from benefits of regular education programmes, as well as to promote equal opportunities in all aspects of their lives.

Taking stock of the situation towards the end of the decade following the Jomtien Declaration, it was observed that gender disparities have persisted. Although great strides had been made, nearly two thirds of children who were denied their right to education were female. Even though girls education had been extensively documented as the investment that offered the greatest overall returns for economic development, national policies did not reflect this insight. It is in view of such an assessment that the Dakar Declaration on Education for All (EFA), as well as the Millennium Declaration, called upon national governments and the international community to pursue more focused action, and to set concrete targets and a time frame for achieving the goal of gender parity in education.

“There is no tool for development more effective than the education of girls ... Without achieving gender equality for girls in education, the world has no chance of achieving many of the ambitious health, social and development targets it has set for itself.” — Kofi Annan, the former UN Secretary-General (2005)

Persisting gender disparities in education have prompted countries to adopt *special policy measures* to promote girls' education (Aggarwal, 1999). India is one of the countries in the world where gender inequality exists in the education system. The literacy rate of female in India especially in Jammu and Kashmir State is lower than aggregate literacy rate, as well as is lower than the literacy rate of males.

Review of Related Literature:

Our literature review focuses on the work on gender disparity and biases in education. The main issue that study focuses is gender disparity at elementary education level in South Kashmir, despite the intervention schemes for promoting gender equity in education. The matter of universal elementary education has been debated time and again in the last six

decades. In 2000 it became the centre of concern once more among policy makers, practitioners, administrators, and the academia circle after the declaration of the Millennium Development Goals (Mishra, 2005). The decade since then has witnessed a considerable increase in the significance accorded to education, especially the education of women, at international, regional as well as national levels, with arguments being made for increasing financial investment and policy focus on education provision (Herz, 2006). Investment in education is regarded as the main way through which nations and their citizens can move towards long-term development goals and improve both social and economic standards of living. Education of the girls and thus the future of women are seen as key to securing intergenerational transfers of knowledge, and hence providing long-term gender equality, enhanced per capita income and social change (DFID, 2005). Global discourses on education highlight the instrumental value of education as central to this debate for securing investments in female education (Subrahmanian, 2005). However, along with the instrumentalist rationale, the intrinsic value of education for girls and women is also discussed (Sen, 2000). Then latter regard the return of education, for individuals as equally important as the social rate of return. Sen, through his capability approach, suggests that both boys and girls should have access to “adequate” education to enable them to develop their capacities for informed and rational choices and to have increased agency. This, Sen (2000) argues, will help individuals to lead the lives they value. Thus girls’ participation in education is considered a first step towards achieving equality.

Objective of the Study:

This paper aims to explore the gender disparity at elementary education level in Jammu and Kashmir with special reference to South Kashmir.

Research Methodology:

The study is mainly based on secondary data. The main sources of data are the Census reports (2001 and 2011), DISE reports (2006-07, 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11, and 2011-12), Websites, Research articles and Books.

Results / Analysis:

Gender Disparity in Education in Jammu and Kashmir with Special Reference to South Kashmir

Gender disparity have persisted in Jammu and Kashmir's elementary education despite deliberate and specific government intervention schemes such as NPEGEL, KGBV and other initiatives. According to Census 2011, the literacy rate in Jammu and Kashmir is 78.26 percent for males and 58.01 percent for females. The female literacy rate is less than the male literacy rate. The literacy rate for rural females is 53.36 percent and 70.19 percent for urban females. Earlier in Census 2001, it was 36.7% and 61.9% at rural and urban level, respectively thus there is a large gap in the male and female literacy rates. Though both the centre and the state governments are committed to provide education to the children in Jammu and Kashmir, there are still many challenges before the universalization of education in the state which is faced with a conflict since past 24 years. Though situation is improving in Jammu and Kashmir, yet the prolonged violence in the state since from last 24 years have prevented the girls from going to schools and colleges, as their parents are worried about the physical security of their girls. There is a large gap in the male and female literacy rates.

In this aspect, education of girls is mandatory to check female illiteracy. It is important to understand the situation of literacy levels of male and female population in Jammu and Kashmir in comparison with National literacy rate.

Table 1 Comparative Literacy Rates of J&K and India

Literacy Rate	2001				2011			
	Male	Female	Total	Gender Gap	Male	Female	Total	Gender Gap
National	75.85	54.16	65.38	21.69	82.14	65.46	74.04	16.68
J & K	66.60	43.00	55.50	23.60	78.26	58.01	68.74	20.25

*Source: GoI census, 2001 and 2011

It can be seen from the above table 1 that the state increased in the female literacy rate from 43% to 58.01% in the span of 10 years (2001 to 2011). The state female literacy is lower than the national average as per the recently concluded Census and also the gender gap (20.25) is higher than the gender gap at national level (16.68). The analysis has brought this fact to fore that the efforts put in by the Government through various interventions to reach to the far-flung areas and bring down literacy gap has materialized at ground level yet there is tremendous scope for bringing further improvements with focused attention.

Table 2 Decadal Differential Rates in Literacy for the Period

2001-2011				
Literacy Rate	Male	Female	Total	Decrease in Gender Gap
National	6.29	11.3	8.66	5.01
Jammu and Kashmir	11.66	15.01	13.24	3.35

*Source: GoI census, 2001 and 2011

As per above table 2 the State's decadal differential growth rate in female literacy rate (15.01%) is higher than that of national (11.30%). This is due to higher base of female illiteracy rate in the State. It was 43.0% in 2001 in the State while it was 54.16 % at all India level. Furthermore table shows that during the span of ten years the state became able to reduce the gender gap of only 3.35%, whereas at national level it is 5.01%.

Table 3 Literacy Rates by Sex in South Kashmir: 2001 and 2011

District Code	District Ranking	Literacy					
		Persons		Males		Females	
		2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011
Pulwama	13	47.76	65.00	59.24	75.41	35.40	53.81
Shopian	15	47.76	62.49	59.24	71.86	35.40	52.77
Anantnag	14	44.10	64.32	55.56	74.13	31.51	54.15
Kulgam	16	44.10	60.35	55.56	70.59	31.51	49.74
Total South Kashmir		45.93	63.04	57.40	72.99	33.45	52.61

*Source: GoI census, 2001 and 2011

The South Kashmir consists of four districts- Anantnag, Kulgam, Pulwama and Shopian. The total literacy rate of the South Kashmir is 63.04 per cent, which is low to the national literacy rate of 74.04 per cent and also state literacy rate 68.74 per cent. While, female literacy rate has considerably improved over the last decade in South Kashmir, even then there is great disparity persists in the literacy rate of males and females in South Kashmir.

Table 4 Literacy Rate by Sex and Gender Gap in South Kashmir as per Census 2011

District code	Total literacy	Male literacy	Female literacy	Gender gap
Pulwama	65.00	75.41	53.81	21.6
Shopian	62.49	71.86	52.77	19.09
Anantanag	64.32	74.13	54.15	19.98
Kulgam	60.35	70.59	49.74	20.85
Total South Kashmir	63.04	72.99	52.61	20.38

*Source: Census of India, J&K 2011

The above table 4 shows the district wise gender gap of South Kashmir. The gender gap in literacy rate in South Kashmir is 20.38% (Pulwama 21.6%, Shopian 19.09%, Anantanag 19.98%

and Kulgam 20.85%)) is higher than the gender gap of the state (20.25%) and the National level (16.68%).

Table 5 Comparative District wise Female Literacy Rates (FLR) of South Kashmir – 2001 & 2011

Sl. No	District	FLR as per 2001 Census	FLR as per 2011 Census	Decadal Increase in FLR
1	Pulwama	35.40	53.81	18.41
2	Shopian	35.40	52.77	17.37
3	Anantanag	31.51	54.15	22.64
4	Kulgam	31.51	49.74	18.23

*Source: GoI census, 2001 and 2011

It can be concluded from the above table 5 that the female literacy rate (FLR) in South Kashmir has increased from 33.45% to 52.61 % in the period of 10 years. As per census 2011, all the four districts have literacy rate lower than the state and the national literacy rate of female. All districts registered average progress in female education; this is due to the NPEGEL, KGBV & other Girls education activities.

Table 6 Number of Female Teachers in Elementary Schools in the State

Elementary Schools			
Male	Female	Total	% of Female Teachers
31,720	23,350	64,978	35.90

Source: DISE, 2011-12

As per above table 6 the proportion of the female teachers in elementary schools is only 35.90% this shows the State is not comfortably placed in terms of functioning of female teachers in schools are concerned. As per the national norms, there should be 40% female teachers. The State is having only having 35.90% female teachers.

Table 7 Enrolment of Girls in Elementary Schools in the State

Elementary Schools			
Boys	Girls	Total	% of Girls Enrolment
1008516	899714	1908230	47.14

Source: DISE, 2011-12

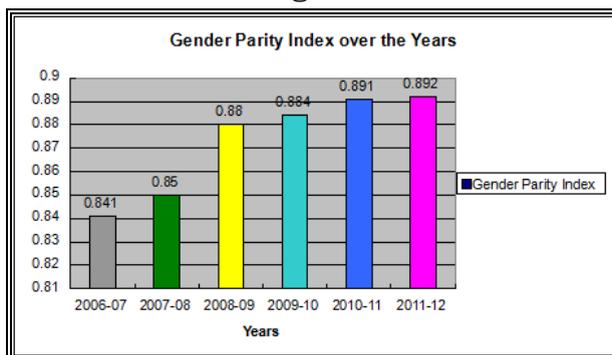
As indicated in table 7 the total enrolment of girls as a whole is 899714 (47.14%), whereas for boys it is 1008516 (52.85%). It shows gender inequality in elementary education as for as enrolment of girl is concerned.

Table 8 Gender Parity Index in Elementary Education over the Years

Details	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Gender Parity Index-Elementary Level	0.841	0.850	0.880	0.884	0.891	0.892

Source: DISE, 2006-07 to 2011-12

Diagram I



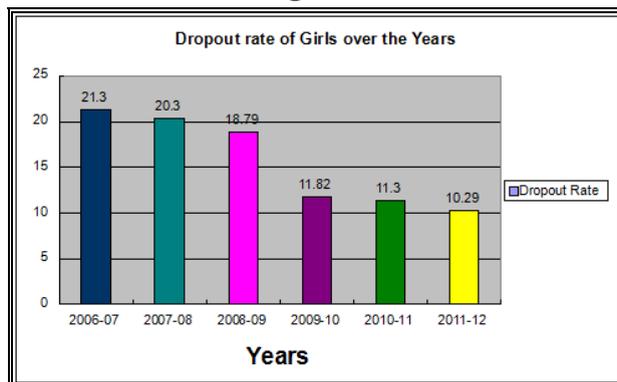
The above table 8 and diagram shows the gender parity index from 2006-07 to 2011-12. It can be interpreted that there is continuous increase in gender parity. The gender parity index at elementary level is far away from the target of 1 which is still a negative sign.

Table 9 Dropout rate of Girls in Elementary Education over the Years

Details	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Drop Out- Elementary Level	21.3	20.3	18.79	11.82	11.3	10.29

Source: DISE, 2006-07 to 2011-12

Diagram II



It is unmistakable from the above tables that there is a positive change in the dropout of girls at elementary level. It can be interpreted from the above table 4.1.9 and diagram 4.1.9 that drops out rate of girls has been reduced from 21.30% to 10.29% during the span of 2006-07 to 2011-12.

Conclusion:

Education is a key indicator of socioeconomic development. It also increases the knowledge and vision of a person. Equally, it is considered as an essential element in bringing change in social, political, economic fields in a society. Emancipation and upliftment of people can be achieved only through education. Indeed, the country’s progress and development largely depend upon the educational attainment of its people. Despite considerable progress, sharp disparities continue to exist between male and female literacy levels in Jammu and Kashmir. There is an urgent need to bridge the gender gap in education in the State because no society and civilization can

move forward without the education of its half population as well said by Swami Vivekanand, “There is no chance of the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved”. From the above analysis, it can be concluded that the position of women education in Jammu and Kashmir especially in South Kashmir reflects pathetic scenes. Their rate of education is very low. Girls of Jammu and Kashmir are educationally backward when compared to women at national level. It is a matter of serious concern and problem for the entire country as it affects every individual of the society. The constitution of India promises every support and assistance in mainstreaming the disadvantaged sections of the society and to eliminate histories of discrimination. However, in reality, given the opportunities were not exploited fully. Gender disparity exist in all the four districts of South Kashmir- Pulwama, Shopian, Kulgam and Anantnag. This can be endorsed to a number of factors like Social dogmas, engagement of girl child in domestic activities and other agricultural activities etc. To conclude, education is an important avenue for improving the social and economic condition of the women of Jammu and Kashmir especially in south Kashmir. Hence, there is a need for quick checks and proper supervision of implementation of the education policies in the State.

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