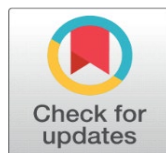
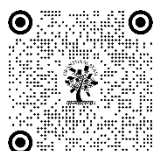


A STUDY OF GENDER ENROLMENT IN SCHOOL EDUCATION WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO UDHAMPUR DISTRICT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR

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ABSTRACT

Universalization of Secondary education is viewed as a priority task in the context to enable young people to acquire the knowledge and skills for further education. The Gross enrolment Ratio in higher secondary has made significant improvement from 53.8% in 2020-21 to 57.6% in 2021-22 in order to make this goal fulfill. The existing literature mainly focuses on differences in enrolment rates in government and private schools however, there are few studies exploring the enrolment rate differences between rural and urban areas of the nation. The paper analyzed status of gender enrolment in school education with special reference to urban and rural areas of Udhampur district in Jammu and Kashmir. The study reflects increasing trend in enrolment patterns of school education at higher secondary stage in urban areas while as improvement in enrolment trends at higher secondary stages in rural areas. In addition, various factors like infrastructural facilities in school and aggregate deprivation of parents also influence gender enrollment decisions that affect the enrolment pattern in school education. The results of the study can be helpful in reducing disparity, dropout rates and enhancing enrolment among urban and rural areas. The study will be helpful to educators, policy makers, researchers, and NGO's to explore the different factors that hinder the survival, transition, and participation of urban and rural children in school education.

Keywords: School Education, Secondary Schools, Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER), Gender Parity Index (GPI), Human Resource Development



1. INTRODUCTION

Education's inherent value in uplifting individual lives and its practical value in developing a country's human capital make it widely valued. Investing in children's education has been proven to have high social and private returns. The private returns are associated with enhanced productivity and earnings in adulthood, and non-pecuniary gains arising from the greater efficiency due to which educated individuals are capable of acquiring and processing information. The social gains from education over and above the private gains include productivity increases arising from knowledge spillovers, health gains that flow from one generation to another generation, and the improved functioning of democracy and civic society.

In India's pre-independence period, Gurukuls are the traditional institutions that provide education. The Gurukul system of education is one of the oldest in which teachers orally give the knowledge of spirituality, history, philosophy, warfare, scriptures, medicine, and astrology. After completing the study, a student has to provide a voluntary contribution as Gurudkashina to his teacher. In the 19th century, Britishers introduced the present system of education

in Western style and content. After independence, both the central and state governments actively worked to provide access to education for every child, since education became a fundamental right in the Indian constitution (Kumar 2012).

In light of various policy programs by the Indian government, including free meal programs, the construction of new schools, and the distribution of free textbooks to girls, the gender gap has decreased. Between the 6th and 7th All India School Education Surveys, a positive change has been observed: the enrolment of girls in rural areas has increased. The 7th All India School Education Survey revealed that the enrollment of girls in rural areas increased to 44.89%, compared to 39.80% during the 6th All Indian School Education Survey. In the 7th All India School Education Survey, it has been noted that the girls' enrolment recorded 45.31% in the different stages of schools out of total enrolment. The percentage of girls' enrolment in the total enrolment in rural and urban areas is 44.89 % and 46.29% respectively. The total enrolment in school education has jumped to 32.31% from the 6th All India School education survey girls' enrolment has risen to 44.68%. In rural areas, this growth reached 33.84 % (50.99%) and 67.29%(84.50%) in urban areas. The girls' enrolment has found an improvement over total enrolment concerning their participation in rural as well as in urban areas.

Presently, our education system revolves around school education where students grow, evolve, learn and develop. India's school education system consists of different stages, starting with pre-primary, followed by primary (classes I to V), upper primary (classes VI-VIII), and finally secondary education (classes IX and XII). The secondary education includes classes IX to X and the senior secondary stage includes classes XI to XII. After independence, educational policies and programs primarily focused on primary and upper primary education. Following the constitutional commitment, the government primarily directed its efforts toward achieving universal primary and upper primary education. However, secondary and higher secondary education received less attention. Recently, various policymakers and planners have started focusing on strengthening secondary education for quality education to create a suitable environment. Secondary education plays a significant role in bridging the gap between primary, upper primary, and higher education. Mere eight years of primary and upper primary education is incapable to develop necessary skills and knowledge for competing in the job market. Secondary education is a crucial stage in the educational hierarchy which prepares students for higher levels of education and for the world of work. Nowadays, quality education in schools is a major issue closely linked to providing a sound base for the prospects of a child. (Kapur 1978).

According to Census 2011, the proportion of youth in the age group of 16-18 not enrolled in educational institutions was only 56% which highlighted the need for more attention on secondary education in India. Secondary education covers children from the age group of 14 to 18, a group comprising about 10 crore population. India has made significant progress in raising the level of education and expanding literacy and attendance rates to approximately three-quarters of the population. As per the annual Status of Education Report (ASER 2018), 96% of rural children between the age group of 6-14 years were enrolled in school while only 57.4% of rural children between the age group of 15-16 were enrolled in schools. According to the report on the United Information System for Education Plus, the Gross Enrolment Ratio increased to 77.9%(from 76.9 %) at the Secondary Level; and 51.4% (from 50.1%) at the Higher Secondary Level from the period to 2018 -2020. According to the report, enrolment of girls from primary to higher secondary in 2019-20, is comparatively more than 12.08 crore. Gross Enrolment Ratio of girls has increased to 90.5% (from 88.5%) at Upper Primary level, 98.7 %(from 96.7%) at Elementary Level, 77.8%(from 76.9%) at the Secondary Level and 52.4%(from 50.8%) at Higher Secondary Level in 2019-20 (from 2018 to 19). The Gender Parity Index (GPI) at both Secondary and Higher Secondary levels has improved between 2012-13 and 2019-20(ASER 2020).

Education is regarded as a specific form of human capital which has a significant contribution towards the economic development of a country. Sustained economic growth in developing countries is possible only if developing countries focus on the quality and higher education of their human capital. Developing nations should invest in quality education to concentrate on human resource development for positive outcomes leading to economic growth and development. (Savitha and Sundar 2016). Education is a significant component of the construction of human resources. It is very challenging for the country to achieve economic growth and development without investing judiciously in education (Salgur 2013).

There is a direct relationship between the quality of education and government expenditure and as more expenditure is incurred on education brings more and more improvement in the quality of education. Thus, developing nations should focus on educational policy, which pays more attention to raising enrolment ratios and government expenditure directed at quality education for more and more growth outcomes in the education sector (Cooray 2009).

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Rosenzweig (1982) in his study highlighted that in India, girls are found helping in the household from childhood by fetching water, cleaning, cooking, and looking after their younger siblings. Girls spend their time performing domestic duties. Boys on the other hand, is likely to help on the farmland or work for pay, which tends to be more seasonal than household duties. Intra-household discrimination in education seems to be an important reason for lower returns to education for girls. Male labor force participation in India is comparatively higher than that of women, so having an educated son may lead to better old-age support for the parents and large wage increases. It is believed that the income returns from being literate are substantial and educated sons also increase the social status of the family. Subramanian (1996) examined that traditionally, girls are seen as ceasing to be part of the family when they marry, thus, the benefit of education accrues to the husband's family instead of her family. Intra-household discrimination in the allocation of resources is identified as a significant reason for poor educational outcomes of girls in most anecdotal and descriptive evidence. Srivastava (1997) analyzed that in rural areas, there is less demand for girls' education as girls are kept busy with domestic work and the care of siblings. The various reasons responsible for the low demand for girls' education included the low economic condition of parents, the distance location of the schools from home, rigid school timings, and tough curriculum. Various methods are suggested for improvement in girls' education such as income-generating schemes for improving the economic status of low-income groups, flexible school timings, strengthening transport facilities in rural areas, and the practical nature of the curriculum. Fentiman (1999) in his study highlighted that the increased schooling costs result in more work for women resulting in more pressure on girls to stay at home instead of participating in school. The girls felt the impact of poverty more as compared to the boys. The value of girls' labor time resulting from poverty in household duties by comparison with boys leads to girls dropping out of school. In rural areas, it becomes worse where the schooling girls also work as child laborers. Gender-sensitive programs should be adapted to enable school girls to continue schooling with their work responsibilities. Fullan and Mascall (2000) highlighted that most of the educational issues focus on girls' enrolment, student outcomes, access to quality education, educational funds, etc. which have a greater impact on the development of human resources. In the modern era, various educational issues are becoming challenges for human resource development; such issues should be reduction in class size, addition of new technologies, advancement in curriculum, and addition of newly certified teachers for creating new opportunities of development policies for human resource development of a country.

Handa and Sudhanshu (2001) found that the gender composition of the trained teaching staff plays a significant role in determining the household's decision to send children to school. School availability has an important impact on enrolment rates. Reducing the travel time to the nearest school, increasing the household income, the number of trained teachers, etc. will increase enrolment rates for both boys and girls. Kar and Jyotirmayee (2002) revealed that no significant difference was observed between the factors influencing girls' and boys' enrolment at the primary and secondary stages of schooling. In primary school enrolment, an economic variable plays a significant role, while in the secondary stage, various educational factors like the number of schools and literacy rate become predominant. In the educational system, the role of schools is influential in promoting enrolment in secondary schools, but not with enrolment in primary schools.

Ghilani and Khan (2004) highlighted in his study that high schools are facing several challenges in the knowledge and skill gap. The existing structure of the high schools needs evaluation and changes in various areas for sharing information, pedagogy, and experiences to improve and enhance the quality and relevance of secondary education. Thus, there is a need for continuous evaluation and restructuring of the complete education system for the creation of large human resources. Anumberkhi (2005) investigated that child labor and schooling are responsive to opportunities to work, in particular to opportunities provided by parents of children. After controlling for household, parental, regional, and child characteristics, children whose parents are employed or self-employed are more likely to work than children of employees, irrespective of the sector of parent activity. The study highlighted that the occupation of parents plays a significant role in the schooling and enrolment pattern of the children.

Kingdon (2007) examined that India seriously lags in youth literacy rates and terms of secondary school participation with comparison to developed countries. Learning outcomes in secondary education are low, signaling inferior quality of education, inadequate infrastructure in schools, and high teacher absenteeism. Various public educational policies and programs were introduced to raise the educational level of India but the effect of these programs on the educational outcomes needs to be evaluated to know about the cost-effectiveness of various other interventions for better future policy-making for the quality of education. Pajankar (2010) emphasized that school education should

be remodeled by providing basic facilities of school buildings, separate classrooms, school teachers, etc to accommodate the school children in the secondary stages of the school. Access to basic facilities and systematic intervention of government in catering to the needs of rural people should be encouraged to raise the enrolment ratios in school education. Sikdar and Mukherjee (2012) examined that India has made numerous studies that clearly showed that there is slow progress in improving access to quality education in primary and upper primary and in secondary education. Secondary education analysis of the unit level data of the 64th round of the National Sample Survey (2007-08) highlighted that in the age (5-14 years) primary and upper primary school; nearly 15% of the children are enrolled but currently not attending the school. In the secondary stage (15-18 years), half of the children of that age group are enrolled, but currently not attending the school. Financial constraints, household atmosphere, and quality of education are the main principal reasons for rural children not attending school. Interestingly, quality of education is the main reason for dropping out in the secondary stage in all the economic classes in the rural areas. In rural areas, people with lower incomes find it difficult to pay for secondary education which creates various challenges in the completion of secondary education. A disaggregated analysis showed that universal enrolment, retention, and completion in primary, upper primary, and secondary education can only be possible by mitigating financial constraints and improving the quality of education, especially for the lower-income classes in both urban and rural areas. Muthaa (2015) highlighted that enrollment in schools faces a lot of challenges including insufficient educational facilities and equipment. Limited resources create constraints for teachers to manage the teaching-learning process leading to poor achievement of the curriculum objectives by pupils. The government needs to develop various policies and programs to govern enrollment ratios on both human and physical resources to maintain the quality of education. Beattie (2016) highlighted various factors responsible for the low enrollment of girls in schools. From a social perspective, there is a strong belief that girls should stay at home for domestic purposes as there is no point in providing education for girls as they will marry and leave their homes to live with their in-laws. Barriers to accessing government schemes, lack of facilities for girls, teasing by boys, abusive teachers, poor quality of education, etc are also various barriers to girls' attendance in the education system. Quality education, changes in community gender norms, and teaching parents about the value of education play a significant role in enhancing girls' enrolment in school education.

Shah (2016), during the past years, India has made noteworthy progress towards the goal of education for all by keeping in view the pace of progress achieved till 2000. Various programs have been implemented since 2001 to advance the goal of education for all. Several policies and programs have been formulated and implemented through the collaborative efforts of government, local bodies, and district-level decentralized management structures. Universalization of secondary education is a most significant task in the effort to enable young children to acquire the knowledge and skills for their further education. In the period from 2000-01 to 2013-14, the enrolment in secondary education has increased from 27.6 million to 59.6 million. The gross enrolment ratio in secondary education has increased from 51.7% to 76.6%. On the other hand, the gross enrolment ratio in higher secondary education increased from 27.8 % to 52.2 %.

Mittal (2020) examined that the Net attendance ratio has a direct relationship with the Gross Enrollment ratio. Analyzing the differences in various states, attendance remains to be a crucial factor for enrolment. It has been observed that with the increasing number of qualified teachers in the schools, the enrolment ratios in secondary schools seem to increase in various states.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study is conducted in the Udhampur district of Jammu and Kashmir i.e. the Udhampur district. As per the 2011 census, out of the total population of Udhampur, 19.50 % live in urban areas, and 80.5 % live in rural areas of the Udhampur district. The literacy rate in Udhampur district, as per the census 2011, is 68.49 % of which males and female literacy are 78.36 % and 57.10 % respectively. In the Udhampur district, the average literacy is 87.96% in urban areas with 92.56% male literates and 81.21% female literates. On the other hand, the average literacy rate for rural areas is 63.42% with 74.14% male literates and 51.8% female literates. In the present study, the sample collected is based on educational criteria i.e. zone wise rather than population. The study includes 3 higher secondary schools of urban (Udhampur) and 3 rural (Panchari) blocks i.e. zones, therefore, 6 schools are selected in totality. The primary sources of data collection are higher secondary schools in urban and rural areas of the district. The respondents of the study are the students and principals of the respective schools. While, the secondary data is collected from the Chief Educational Officer, Zonal Educational Officer, existing literature, magazines, journals, newspapers, censuses, books, surveys, and

many other authentic sources. For the analysis of data, the statistical technique of calculating percentages with tables is used.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. GENDER ENROLMENT OF STUDENTS IN URBAN AND RURAL HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Enrolment is a process in which students are enrolled or registered in a school or institution in different classes to make them plan and active participants in that school or institution. Enrollment is compulsory for all students as it includes detailed information about every student who is admitted to the school. In gender-wise enrolment, information on total male and female students enrolled in the schools is given. The table shows the information for the year 2021-2022 regarding the gender enrolment of students in surveyed urban and rural govt. higher secondary schools of urban and rural blocks of Udhampur.

TABLE: GENDER ENROLMENT OF STUDENTS IN URBAN AND RURAL HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOLS

BLOCK: UDHAMPUR	GENDER ENROLMENT		
URBAN HR. SECONDARY SCHOOLS	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL
	F (%)	F(%)	F (%)
• GOVT. HR.SEC SCHOOL GARHI	374 (57.89)	272 (42.10)	646
• GOVT. HR. SEC SCHOOL SALMERHI	85 (52.14)	78 (47.85)	163
• GOVT. HR. SEC SCHOOL CHAK	148 (50.16)	147 (49.83)	295
TOTAL	607 (54.98)	497 (45.01)	1,104
BLOCK : PANCHARI			
RURAL HR. SECONDARY SCHOOLS			
• GOVT. HR. SEC SCHOOL , PANCHARI	236 (51.52)	222 (48.47)	458
• GOVT. HR. SEC SCHOOL , MOUNGRI	176 (44.78)	217 (55.21)	393
• GOVT. HR. SEC SCHOOL , LANDER	267 (56.68)	204 (43.31)	471
TOTAL	679 (51.36)	643 (48.63)	1,322

The gender enrollment data for students attending urban and rural higher secondary schools in the Udhampur and Panchari blocks is displayed in the table. According to the table, girls make up 45.01% of students in urban higher secondary schools, while boys make up 54.98%. It demonstrates that there are more boys enrolled in urban higher secondary schools than girls. Availability of government girl's model school makes the school first choice for the female students of the area. Compared to the other government's higher secondary schools, the girls' model school of urban block lies in the middle of town and is the top choice for female students. This is because the school offers a range of course options and camps specifically designed for students, including subjects like music and home science for girls. Comparing the government model girl's higher secondary school to the schools listed in the above table, students who live in nearby areas of town can also easily access it.

Compared to 48.63% of girl's students, 51.36% of boys are enrolled in higher secondary schools located in rural areas. Inaccessibility to schools was observed as the biggest challenge for having a low enrollment of female students in higher secondary schools of rural block. Kutchra Road, with a lack of means of transportation, creates a lot of challenges for female students in accessing the schools. Lack of means of transportation makes students to walk miles to reach

school and come back from school. Lack of availability of resources like inadequate transportation, large distance of schools from home, inadequate infrastructure facilities in school, insufficient staff, etc. makes people think that girls should stay at home for domestic purposes.

In addition, most of the families in rural areas depend on agriculture as their primary source of income, so they prefer that their daughters stay at home to take care of household chores. As a result, girls in comparison to boys receive less time for study and more time for domestic work, which negatively affects their exam scores and causes the majority of them to fail school, which lowers the number of girls enrolled in schools. Compared to urban blocks, the people living in the surveyed rural area are less aware of girl education. Several socioeconomic problems, including a lack of knowledge about the value of education, a lack of financial resources, involvement in household duties, financial limitations, etc., are to various factors responsible for the low enrollment of girls in rural schools.

When comparing rural higher secondary schools to urban higher secondary schools, it's fascinating to see that enrollment for girls is higher in the former. The data indicates that the percentage of girls enrolled in higher secondary schools in rural areas is 48.63%, while the percentage in urban areas is 45.01%. It's interesting to note that the educated parents of urban girls' students select a private educational institution for their daughters with the reason of have enough resources to choose appropriate institution for the harmonious development of their daughters along with their academic success.

Apart from one higher secondary school, there is no other private higher secondary school in rural areas run by the local authority. Additionally, as there is no other higher secondary school in rural areas, many students enrolled overall in single rural higher secondary schools than in urban higher secondary schools. It is important to notice that, despite having convenient access to schools, all students attending urban higher secondary schools travel no more than 7 kilometers to get to class in comparison to students of rural higher secondary schools where half of the students of rural higher secondary school covers the distance of more than 13-14 km. It is evident that there are seven government senior secondary schools in the Udhampur block that are accessible within a distance of 7-8 km with sufficient transportation, whereas there are five higher secondary schools in the Panchari block that are accessible within a distance of 14-15 km with the Kutcha road and limited transportation options. This disparity has a significant impact on enrollment. One of the biggest issues that girls in rural regions confront is financial restraints. Most parents work mostly as farmers, so their daughters don't receive enough financial support. Additionally, it is difficult for the students who reside in the area with the upper terrain to manage to descend and complete the distance without any means of transportation.

The most intriguing statistic is that 25% of female students in rural areas live with their siblings far away from their native place to attend the school, by paying rent. Surprisingly, those who cannot pay for their rent and other educational costs can never complete their higher secondary education, which is the foundation for their hopes for the future. The lack of teachers in the classroom also contributes to the low enrollment in higher secondary schools in rural areas. In addition, urban higher secondary schools have 71 persons as teaching staff members compared to 31 teaching staff members in rural higher secondary schools.

Based on the comparison analysis, it can be inferred that while the absolute values indicate higher enrollment in the rural higher secondary schools, the urban higher secondary schools inside the urban block have a larger student enrollment. The higher secondary schools in the urban block that is located in the main town have a large enrollment with the benefit of a pucca road, easy accessibility, reasonable transportation costs, good infrastructure, and an adequate staffing level, which contributes significantly to the quality of teaching. However, because there aren't many transport options in a rural block, there is only one Government Higher Secondary School nearby, which is 14-15 km away. The primary causes of schools' inability to enroll as many students as a single urban higher secondary school are kutcha Road, terrain areas, lack of transport options, lack of funding, parents who lack literacy, lack of awareness, and a shortage of teaching staff in the existing schools. Although there isn't a private school in the rural block, there aren't any other government schools with enough students enrolled within 7 km of the rural higher secondary government schools. Thus, to close the larger gap that hinders quality education in rural areas, the government should take various steps for raising enrolments in rural schools.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper reveals that the total enrolment of students is higher in urban higher secondary schools in comparison to rural higher secondary schools. Although in surveyed urban higher secondary schools, the total absolute value of total enrolment of students is comparatively low in comparison to rural higher secondary schools, overall enrolment of students is higher in urban higher secondary schools because of the availability of a higher number of government higher secondary schools with good infrastructure and quality education. In rural areas, kutcha road, inadequate transport facilities, gender discrimination, a lack of awareness, financial constraints, etc. are very important factors affecting gender enrollment in schools. The data analysis showed that, despite relatively high participation in increasing the enrollment at higher secondary schools in urban areas, an effort would have to be made to remodel the enrollment pattern in rural areas by providing facilities such as transport facilities, infrastructural facilities, trained teachers, etc. to accommodate the school children in the rural areas to fill the gap for the attainment of higher education in the country, which might be a priority area in the coming decades for the Government of India. Overall, the results in this paper are consistent with parents of rural areas systematically discriminating against girls in the household by sending their sons to school and only enrolling their daughters in school if they can financially afford to do so. Because of financial constraints, girls tend to be out of school. So, there is a dire need for various policies and programs that help girls and their families to close the gender gap in school enrollment. Special needs must be focused on the schools in rural areas, as they are lacking in many resources and in their proper utilization. Then, they need reformation for the development of human resources.

Policy implications

- From the findings of this study, it is necessary for the government at village, ward, district, state, and national levels to enforce regular visits by higher authorities to know loopholes creating a gap in major differences in the enrollment of students in rural and urban government schools.
- Infrastructural facilities are the key hindrance in the enrolment ratios of government schools. Lack of basic infrastructural facilities such as lack of means of transport, school buildings, classrooms, electricity, sanitation facilities, etc. forces the parents to get their children enrolled in private schools rather than government schools. There should be the availability of infrastructural facilities, i.e. school buildings, enough classrooms, furniture and mats, blackboards, electric lights and fans, drinking water facilities, and clean toilets in the schools.
- Low enrollment rate of students in school affects enrollment and participation in education. Thus, it is necessary to establish a counseling center in higher secondary schools. A counselor should be assigned to deal with the students showing any signs of poor school attendance.
- Awareness creation plays a key role in ensuring the successful implementation of various policies and programs of government for school education. Government and NGOs should organize various workshops and seminars to make the rural people more aware of the value and importance of education in the modern era.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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