

The Gender Inequality in Education and Employment: A Study in India

Purabi Gogoi^{1*}, Mahendra Hazarika², Manuranjan Gogoi³

¹*T.H.B. College, Assam, India*

²*Madhabdev University, Narayanpur, Assam, India*

³*PDUAM, Tulungia, Assam, India*

Abstract

Purpose - This paper is an attempt to study the gender gap in access to education and employment in India. By collecting data on various education and employment indicators from NSS reports and Periodic Labourforce Survey data.

Design/methodology/approach - The study is based on secondary data collected from various sources including- Periodic Labourforce Survey data, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Govt. of India, reports of UNDP, reports of NSSO, Reports of Ministry of Education, published journal articles, books etc.

Findings and Discussion - This paper is an attempt to study the gender gap in access to education and employment in India. By collecting data on various education and employment indicators from NSS reports and Periodic Labourforce Survey data, the study found that there exists a huge gender gap in access to employment opportunities and in education also. It necessitates the government to search some other underlying causes of gender gap in India in general and in education and employment in particular. Lack of access to education by female compared to male is not only the cause of less access to labour market by female. The study also added that social norms, customs, women's traditional role, people's attitude towards education are also related factors for gender gap in labour market.

Conclusion - The paper attempts to study about the gender gap in education and employment in India. And it has found that in India, females have less access to both education and employment. There was slight improvement in access to education by female particularly in 2018-19 which may be due to the implementation of Samagra Shiksha in India.

Keywords - Gender inequality, Access to Education, Labour force Participation, Women Empowerment

Introduction

Gender equality is a basic requirement of economic development of a country. Empowering women through providing equal opportunities in the labour market enable them to live a better quality of life and thereby ensuring inclusive growth of the economy. As gender discrimination increases over time in India, the country struggles in closing its gender gap (Angeles et. al, 2021). Though India has become one of the fastest growing major economies in the world but still gender inequality is a serious concern for the policy makers. On the Gender Inequality Index (GII) 2022, India stands at rank 108 out of 193 countries with a score of 0.437. India stood at rank 122 out of 191 countries with a score of 0.490 in the Gender Inequality Index 2021. This shows a significant jump of 14 ranks on GII 2022 vis-à-vis GII 2021. India has climbed eight places in the annual Gender Gap

Report, 2023, and is ranked 127 out of 146 countries in terms of gender parity, from 135 last year. Though India has made improvement in GII, but gender inequality is still a crucial issue for economic development as well as inclusive growth in India. There are still gender inequalities in many dimensions like health, education, income and employment. Out of which, this paper only attempts to understand about the gender inequality in education and employment. Because identifying the gender inequality is a prime requirement for improving income, economic opportunities as well as poverty. Gender inequality remained to be the main concern as it continues to rise despite achieving progress in recent years (Sumanjeet, 2016).

Employment along with education is a key tool to improve the condition of women in our society. Gender Inequality in education is a persistent problem within the Indian society, especially for the girls, belonging to economically weaker sections of the society. Gender inequality in employment shows a critical economic challenge. Women in India have been experiencing discrimination in both education and employment due to different factors such as social and cultural practices (Angeles et. al, 2021). It is said that increase in participation in education can raise economic opportunities for the women compared to their male counterparts. Gender gap in education might automatically lead to gender gap in employment particularly in formal sector (Klasen and Lamanna, 2009).

1. Significance of the Study

Though the rapid growth in Indian economy has been taken place but the concept of gender inequality is a serious concern for the viewpoint of economic development of the nation. Though there is gender inequality in many socio-economic dimensions but removal of inequality in access to education and employment is prime requirement for the sustainable and inclusive growth of the country. This study helps to identify gender gap that requires focused intervention which will help the policymakers to promote right policy for reducing gender inequality in case of education and employment in India. This study will also be important for taking proper intervention for empowering women by providing equal opportunities in access to education and employment in India.

2. Objectives

- i) To study the gender gap in access to education in India
- ii) To study the gender gap in access to employment in India
- iii) To suggest some policy measures for reducing the gender inequality in India.

Methods, Data, and Analysis

The study is based on secondary data collected from various sources including- Periodic Labourforce Survey data, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Govt. of India, reports of UNDP, reports of NSSO, Reports of Ministry of Education, published journal articles, books etc. This study utilizes descriptive methodology in order to explain the gender disparities in case of education and employment in India. In order to do so various descriptive tables, figures and percentage etc. are used. For the analysis of gender gap in education

various indicators such as literacy rate, gross enrolment ratio, dropout rates and for employment some labour market indicators such as Labourforce Participation Rates, unemployment rate and distribution of workers in various categories of employment etc. have been used in the study.

Results and Discussion

1. Gender Gap in Education

Education is the most powerful tool for the empowerment of women. Women’s consciousness of their social and legal rights, financial independence, decision making capability and better social communication skills could improve their position in society. There is no other way than education to fulfill these.

Table 1: Literacy rates for Persons aged 7 years and above.

Years	Rural			Urban			Total		
	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person
1981	49.6	21.7	36.0	76.7	56.3	67.2	56.4	29.8	43.6
1991	57.0	30.2	36.0	81.1	64.1	67.2	64.1	39.3	52.2
2001	71.4	46.7	59.4	86.7	73.2	80.3	75.3	53.7	64.8
2011	77.2	57.9	66.8	88.8	79.1	84.1	80.9	64.6	73.0
2017	81.5	65.0	73.5	92.2	82.8	87.7	84.7	70.3	77.7
Increase in 2017 over 2011(%)	5.6	12.2	10.1	3.9	4.7	4.3	4.7	8.8	6.5

Source: Census of India, Office of the Registrar General of India
NSS 75th Round-July, 2017-June, 2018, National Statistical Office, Ministry of
Statistics and Programme Implementation

The above table shows that both in rural and urban areas male literacy rate is higher than female literacy rate in India. Though female literacy is less than male literacy in every census year but the impressive thing is that female literacy is gradually increasing. According to NSSO data also, same situation was found in the year 2017. If we compare the literacy rate from 2011 to 2017, we can observe that over the years increase in female literacy rate is 8.8 percent while for male it was only 4.7 percent. In urban area, increase in female literacy is 4.7 percent and male literacy rate was increased by 3.9 percent. Over the years, increase in female literacy rate was higher (12.2 percent) in rural area compared to urban area.

Table 2: Gross Enrolment Ratio in Different Stages of Education

Year	Primary (I-V)			Upper Primary (VI-VIII)			Secondary (IX-X)		
	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person
2012-13	106.8	109.1	107.9	82.2	86.2	84.1	69.2	68.2	68.7
2015-16	106.6	107.3	106.9	87.9	91.1	89.4	77.4	77.0	77.2
2018-19	100.8	101.8	101.3	87.0	88.5	87.7	76.9	76.9	76.9
2021-22	102.1	104.8	103.4	94.5	94.9	94.7	79.7	79.4	79.6

Source: UDISE Plus, Ministry of Education

Female enrolment ratio in primary as well as upper primary education is slightly higher than male enrolment ratio. But in secondary level of education, female enrolment ratio is slightly less than male enrolment ratio in 2012-13, 2015-16 and 2021-22. In the year 2018-19, it was equal as male enrolment ratio. It may be due to the launch of Samagra Shiksha by Govt. of India with effect from 2018-19 which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education at all levels of school.

Table 3: Gross Enrolment Ratio in Different Stages of Education

Year	Higher Secondary (XI-XII)			Higher Education (Graduation and above)		
	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person
2012-13	40.8	39.4	40.1	22.8	20.2	21.6
2015-16	48.4	48.3	48.3	24.2	23.0	23.7
2018-19	49.5	50.8	50.1	24.4	25.5	24.9
2021-22	57.0	58.2	57.6	-	-	-

Source: UDISE Plus, Ministry of Education

In the year 2012-13 and 2015-16, Female enrolment ratio in secondary education is slightly less but in the year 2018-19 and 2021-22, it was slightly higher than male enrolment ratio. Same picture is observed in case of higher education also. After all, there is no significant difference between the enrolment ratio of male and female.

Table 4: Dropout Rate by Sex and Level of School Education

Year	Primary			Upper Primary			Secondary		
	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person
2013-14	3.27	2.66	2.98	4.78	6.02	5.38	20.35	20.93	20.63
2015-16	3.31	2.89	3.10	4.10	5.21	4.64	18.93	18.75	18.84
2018-19	4.59	4.30	4.45	4.26	5.14	4.68	18.68	17.05	17.90
2021-22	1.60	1.40	1.50	2.70	3.30	3.00	13.00	12.30	12.60

Source: UDISE Plus, Ministry of Education

In primary level of education dropout rate of female is less than male dropout rate. But in upper primary level, female dropout rate is higher than male dropout rate. But in case of secondary education, female dropout rate in the year 2013-14 and 2021-22 is higher than the male counterparts.

2. Gender gap in Access to Employment in India

Gender inequality in the labour market, particularly in the context of developing countries, is one area of concern that still poses a great challenge (Mehta & Awasthi, 2019). Existing labour markets continue to be characterized by gender inequality (ILO, 2019). To study the gender gap in employment, the study uses some indicators such as Labour force Participation, unemployment rate, distribution of workers in different employment categories etc. Among them Labour force Participation is a significant indicator of labour market. Women's labour force participation is an important and necessary element of an inclusive and sustainable development process (Sheikh et. al, 2019).

Table 5: Labour force Participation Rate in Usual Status for 15 years and above

Year	Rural			Urban			Total		
	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person
2017-18	76.4	24.6	50.7	74.5	20.4	47.6	75.8	23.3	49.8
2018-19	76.4	26.4	51.5	73.7	20.4	47.5	75.5	24.5	50.2
2019-20	77.9	33.0	55.5	74.6	23.3	49.3	76.8	30.0	53.5
2020-21	78.1	36.5	57.4	74.6	23.2	49.1	77.0	32.5	54.9
2021-22	78.2	36.6	57.5	74.7	23.8	49.7	77.2	32.8	55.2

Source: Annual Reports, Periodic Labourforce Survey (PLFS), National Statistical Office, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation

In every consecutive year, the total female labourforce participation is less than its male counterparts. Similarly, in both rural and urban areas, male labourforce participation is higher than female labourforce participation. The female labourforce participation rate is less than half of the male labourforce participation rate in both rural and urban areas.

Table 6: Unemployment Rates in Labourforce according to usual status

Year	Rural		Urban	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
2017-18	5.8	3.8	7.1	10.8
2018-19	5.6	3.5	7.1	9.9
2019-20	4.5	2.6	6.4	8.9
2020-21	3.8	2.1	6.1	8.6
2021-22	3.8	2.1	5.8	7.9

Source: Annual Reports, Periodic Labourforce Survey (PLFS), National Statistical Office, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation

The above table shows that in rural area, female unemployment rate is less than the male unemployment rate. Because most of the women are engaged in agriculture sector that needs unskilled labour in rural area. But in urban area, it requires skilled and trained labours to get employment opportunities. As females are less skilled and less expertise, they cannot find job opportunities easily in urban area. So, female unemployment rate in urban area is higher than its male counterparts.

Table 7: Percentage distribution of workers in usual status (ps+ss) by broad status in employment, 2021-22

Area	Worker	Self -Employed	Regular Wage/Salary	Casual Labour	All
Rural	Male	58.6	14.7	26.8	100
	Female	67.8	8.1	24.1	100
	Person	61.5	12.5	25.9	100
Urban	Male	39.5	47.1	13.4	100
	Female	39.4	50.3	10.3	100
	Person	39.5	47.1	13.4	100
Total	Male	53.2	23.6	23.2	100
	Female	62.1	16.5	21.4	100
	Person	55.8	21.5	22.7	100

Source: Periodic Labourforce Survey (PLFS, July, 2021-June, 2022), National Statistical Office, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation

In the self-employed category, the percentage distribution of female worker is higher than the male worker as most of the women are engaged in agriculture sector in rural area. In urban area, there is no significant difference between the percentage of male and female worker. The total self-employed female worker is 62.1 percent while it is 53.2 percent for male counterparts in the year 2021-22. Women are mostly engaged in home based jobs (Banerjee, 2019). A study conducted by UNDP has found that women are mostly engaged in sectors like

beauty and wellness, textile and clothing and travel and hospitality etc. But the percentage of regular wage or salaried female is less (16.5 percent) compared to male (23.6 percent). It is also less in both rural and urban areas. It clearly indicates that females have less access to employment opportunities.

Conclusion

The paper attempts to study about the gender gap in education and employment in India. And it has found that in India, females have less access to both education and employment. There was slight improvement in access to education by female particularly in 2018-19 which may be due to the implementation of Samagra Shiksha in India. Many literatures have found that less access to education by female is the root cause of less access to labour market. Education gap against women undoubtedly affect both labourforce participation and gender wage gap (Mohapatra and Luckert, 2014). Though there is no significant difference in access to education between male and female but in case of all the selected labour market indicators, there is vast gender gap. Therefore, it needs to search some other underlying causes of gender gap in employment in India. Traditional norms and customs relegate women to a secondary status within the household and workplace (Sumanjeet, 2016). Moreover, traditional understanding of woman's role in Indian society has discouraged women from gaining autonomy, independence and voice (Costagliola, 2021). On the other hand mobility, safety and security of women are also key factors which are linked to the female workforce participation rates. The gender gap should be given proper attention by the policymakers as it creates many other issues and thereby it leads to reduction of females' empowerment.

Recommendation

Based upon the findings of the paper, the present study tries to recommend the following policies: (1) Though there are various government policies for promoting women's education in India, but the govt. should be alert for effective implementation of those policies. The govt. should give importance to make an adequate curriculum so that more females can be involved in education. NEP, 2020 has proposed various steps to increase access of women into schools. These include creating special education zones, gender inclusion funds, the targeted scholarships, to address the problem of sexual harassment etc. The education policy needs to be more inclusive to ensure girls right to education and their right to be free from discrimination within educational institutions. Also, education policy should target young men and boys to positively change their attitudes towards girls and women. (2) In order to make women self-dependent, there is need to promote skill development among women in non-traditional works like electricians, plumbers etc. Though govt. of India lunched skill India Mission for inclusive skill development with the objective of increased women Participation for better economic productivity. Under this, women should be provided skills on situation and region demanding activities. (3) To increase education among females, the parents should be organized through the initiative of govt. as well as non-governmental organizations so that they can be provided proper awareness and knowledge on educating female which will change the cultural and social

norms by changing their attitude towards female education. (4) To increase participation of women in labour market, they should be made as skilled and trained person equally fit as men. The govt. should provide skill for non-traditional roles or technology based roles. For that ICT services are to be provided to women. (5) There should be adequate childcare facilities and gender-responsive workplace policies. (6) Showcase real life examples of successful working women and how a supporting family has helped them to make this journey easier.

References

- Annual Reports, Periodic Labourforce Survey (PLFS) (2023-24), National Statistical Office, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation
- Angeles, A. C., Donaire, S. J., Reyes, R. B., & Cabauatan, R. (2021). The effect of gender inequality in education, labor force participation and economic opportunity on the income distribution of India. *Jurnal Studi Guru dan Pembelajaran*, 4(3), 781-794.
- Banerjee, M. (2019). Gender equality and labour force participation: Mind the gap. *ANTYAJAA: Indian Journal of Women and Social Change*, 4(1), 113-123.
- Costagliola, A. (2021). Labor participation and gender inequalities in India: Traditional gender norms in India and the decline in the Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR). *The Indian Journal of Labour Economics*, 64(3), 531-542.
- Global Gender Gap Report (2023) by the World Economic Forum, 91-93 route de la Capite CH-1223 Coligny/Geneva Switzerland
- Human Development Report 2023-24, By the United Nations Development Programme 1 UN Plaza, New York, NY 10017 USA
- Mohapatra, S., & Luckert, M. K. (2014). Educational returns beyond the mean: Differences along wage distributions of men and women in India's formal labor market. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 36, 22-32.
- NCERT Annual Report 2022-23, National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2023, Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi – 110 016
- Mehta B.S., & Awasthi, I.C., (2019). "Persisting Gender Inequality in Indian Labour Market", Centre for Gender Studies Perspective-Research, Policies and Action, Institute for Human Development.
- Sheikh, S.M., Tripathi, A. K., & Dr. Koka, A. A. (2019). "Gender Inequality in Labour Market: Case of India", *JETIR*, 6(5)
- Sumanjeet, S. (2016). The state of gender inequality in India. *Gender Studies*, 15(1), 139-157.
- Unit Level data & Report on NSS 75th Round, 2017-June, 2018, National Statistical Office, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation