



Inter-District Disparities in Literacy With Reference to Gender and Location: A Study of Rajasthan

KEYWORDS

Literacy, Inter-district, Gender, Disparities,

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ABSTRACT *Despite numerous initiatives in improving the education scenario, accounts of national and international analysis suggest the dubious status education possesses in India-being the most hyped yet extremely devalued. With rapidly growing education system on one hand and largest adult illiterate population on the other, India is yet to achieve universal literacy. Rajasthan is one such state that has shown marked improvement in literacy levels but still plagues from massive inequalities. The present paper aims to examine the extent of inter-district, gender and location disparities in Rajasthan to highlight the areas that need urgent consideration through focused policy planning and robust implementation.*

Introduction

After six decades of campaigning for universalization of elementary education (UEE) and ten years of pronouncing the right to education (RTE) a fundamental right, the national and international reports put India in category of countries falling short of achieving the target yet again. Education was declared a fundamental right around a decade back but socio-economic status and location continues to influence the provision of educational opportunity and its outcomes in terms of literacy and elementary education in India. According to Global Monitoring Report (GMR) 2013/14, India houses 37 per cent of the global illiterate population. The female constitute almost half of the Indian population and yet 35 per cent of female are still illiterate as compared to 18 per cent of male (Census of India, 2011). Notably, in 2011, 63 per cent of the total illiterate population is female. Though the efforts and growth is commendable, the 12th Five Year Plan once again underlines the wide disparities across gender, location, region and caste. It highlights decline in education inequality across gender and social groups, but simultaneously acknowledge the variations across states as a challenge. The literacy rate across states/UTs ranges from as low as 61.8 per cent in Bihar to 94 per cent in Kerala (Census of India 2011). Similarly, vast disparities exist within a state among different districts. The historical differences between north and south region of India continue to exist. Southern part of India has done better on progress in economic development than the northern states. In terms of literacy too north India lags behind south where average literacy in north is low than in south. Amidst this dismal scenario, persistent inequality in education indicators across India's social and geographical dimension have generated much apprehension and uncertainties regarding the policy planning and implementation. In order to formulate focused policy initiatives, there is a need to identify the problem and its magnitude.

Methodology

The present paper aims to highlight inter-district variations within Rajasthan along with gender and spatial disparities in terms of literacy. For this, secondary data from Census of India 2011 has been used. Disparities are calculated using Modified Sopher's Disparity Index.

Rajasthan: A Brief Profile

Rajasthan is the largest state in India with total area of 3,42,239 square kilometers with 33 districts, 244 tehsils, 44,672 villages and 185 towns (Census of India, 2011). It constitutes 5.67 per cent of India's total population with 200 people living per square kilometers. Three-fourth of Rajasthan's population resides in rural areas. In 1951 Rajasthan recorded 8.5 per cent literacy rate that was lowest among the states. Since then Rajasthan's literacy rates have improved significantly to 66.11 per cent in 2011. However, it still remains one of the least literate states in India and women comprise more than 60 per cent of the total illiterate population in Rajasthan.

Analysis and Discussion

Out of 33 districts, six districts have literacy rate above 70 per cent, only one below 55 per cent and rest 26 districts fall in the range of 55-70 per cent. Total 31 districts have male literacy rate above 70 per cent and only 2 districts have male literacy rate between 55-70 per cent. Eight districts have female literacy rate in the range of 55-70 per cent. Interestingly, none of the districts have male literacy rate below 55 per cent and female literacy rate above 70 per cent. Most of the districts (26) have rural literacy rate in the range of 55-70 per cent, seven districts have rural literacy rate less than 55 per cent, whereas all the 33 districts have urban literacy rate above 70 per cent (Table 1).

Table 1:
Distribution of Districts w.r.t Total, Male and Female Literacy Rate, 2011

	Total Literacy Rate	Male Literacy Rate	Female Literacy Rate	Urban Literacy Rate	Rural Literacy Rate
Above 70 %	6	31	0	33	0
55%-70%	26	2	8	0	26
Below 55%	1	0	25	0	7

Table 2 shows literacy profile of Rajasthan. The total literacy rate in Rajasthan is 66.11 per cent with district Kota (76.56 per cent) having highest and Jalor (54.86 per cent) lowest literacy rate. Out of 33 districts, 14 districts have literacy rate higher than and 19 districts have literacy rate lower than the state average. Comparing the districts with India's literacy rate (72.99 per cent), only three districts Kota, Jaipur and Jhunjhunun are ahead of national average. (Table 2 shows

district-wise literacy profile of Rajasthan).

In terms of female literacy, Rajasthan is only better than Bihar. Though Rajasthan has come a long way from 2.66 per cent in 1951 to 52.12 per cent in 2011, female literacy still remains a matter of utmost concern. Among the districts, Kota ranks highest in female literacy rate (65.87 per cent) and Jalor is at the bottom (38.47 per cent). Twenty-one districts are below the state average in female literacy rate. Rajasthan has shown notable increase in female literacy (Bandyopadhyay and Subrahmanian (2011); Varshney, 2002; Ramachandran and Saihjee, 2002; Mehta, 2002). Despite numerous initiatives by the state government involving different departments to improve women education, huge disparity within Rajasthan that are still evident.

Rajasthan's rural literacy rate is 61.44 for areas where 75 per cent of Rajasthan's total population resides. Urban literacy rate (79.68 per cent) is 18.24 per cent higher than rural. Fourteen districts have rural literacy rate higher than that of Rajasthan.

Table 2:
Literacy Profile of Rajasthan:
Literacy Rates, District Ranking, Disparity (M/F, R/U), 2011

Districts	2011		Literacy Rate		M/F Disparity	Literacy Rate		R/U Disparity
	L.R.	Rank	Male	Female		Rural	Urban	
Rajasthan	66.11		79.19	52.12	26.95	61.44	79.68	17.42
Ajmer	69.33	8	82.44	55.68	25.95	37.63	12.83	23.58
Alwar	70.72	5	83.75	56.25	26.51	29.51	14.67	14.39
Banswara	56.33	30	69.48	43.06	28.78	30.97	10.44	30.29
Baran*	66.66	13	80.35	51.96	28.18	31.22	18.63	13.66
Barmer	56.53	29	70.86	40.63	33.29	34.78	20.21	23.10
Bharatpur	70.11	6	84.1	54.24	28.98	32.27	17.67	10.43
Bhilwara	61.37	26	75.27	47.21	29.07	33.79	15.63	24.04
Bikaner	65.13	17	75.9	53.23	22.70	28.26	14.78	19.29
Bundi	61.52	24	75.44	46.55	30.03	33.94	18.63	20.11
Chittaurgarh	61.71	22	76.61	46.53	31.13	36.08	14.86	24.98
Churu	66.75	12	78.78	54.04	22.61	26.04	20.89	7.92
Dausa*	68.16	10	82.98	51.93	30.58	32.46	19.60	13.44
Dhaulpur	69.08	9	81.22	54.67	25.95	28.44	17.36	4.40
Dungarpur	59.46	27	72.88	46.16	28.12	29.56	12.74	25.59
Ganganagar	69.64	7	78.5	59.7	18.14	20.41	12.78	11.84
Hanumanagar*	67.13	11	77.41	55.84	21.22	22.85	15.36	9.91
Jaipur	75.51	2	86.05	64.02	20.52	30.40	12.69	13.79
Jaisalmer	57.22	28	72.04	39.71	35.65	39.10	19.62	24.01

Jalor	54.86	33	70.67	38.47	36.07	37.24	26.12	18.07
Jhalawar	61.5	25	75.75	46.53	30.34	34.15	15.77	22.65
Jhunjhunun	74.13	3	86.9	60.95	24.38	25.46	20.70	2.88
Jodhpur	65.94	15	78.95	51.83	27.06	36.06	14.11	20.21
Karauli*	66.22	14	81.41	48.61	33.00	35.07	22.85	7.43
Kota	76.56	1	86.31	65.87	18.92	27.63	13.71	12.19
Naqaur	62.8	19	77.17	47.82	30.09	32.26	22.08	9.59
Pali	62.39	20	76.81	48.01	29.53	32.18	21.58	17.06
Pratapgarh*	55.97	31	69.5	42.35	29.72	32.03	13.42	30.76
Rajsamand*	63.14	18	78.42	47.95	31.08	34.44	16.96	21.44
Sawai Madhopur	65.39	16	81.51	47.51	34.40	38.85	20.64	16.29
Sikar	71.91	4	85.11	58.23	25.61	27.42	20.01	4.23
Sirohi	55.25	32	69.98	39.73	33.67	38.84	20.52	30.15
Tonk	61.58	23	77.12	45.45	32.92	38.91	17.02	15.61
Udaipur	61.82	21	74.74	48.45	27.10	33.22	10.74	31.28

Source: Census of India 1991, 2001, 2011

Male-female disparity in literacy is as high as 26.95 in Rajasthan. Highest male-female disparity is recorded in Jalor (36.07 per cent) and lowest is in Ganganagar (18.14 per cent). Total 22 districts have male female disparity higher than that of Rajasthan as a whole.

Rural-urban disparity in terms of literacy rates stands at 17.42 per cent with Udaipur at the top (31.28 per cent) showing highest disparity and Jhunjhunun with least rural-urban disparity (2.88 per cent). Only 14 districts have rural urban disparity higher than that in Rajasthan and male-female disparity is higher in rural areas (as high as 39.10 per cent) than in urban (highest 20.41 per cent).

Conclusion:

From the above observations it is clear that progress in literacy is far from satisfactory in Rajasthan. Despite of schemes like Saakshar Bharat, Sarv Shikha Abhiyan (MDM), District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), Lok Jumbish Pariyojana, Mahila Samakhya and decentralisation of education, Rajasthan's performance in literacy is still discouraging. Progress in literacy and education is a complex interplay of number of socio-economic and developmental factors that are both, common as well as exclusive for different regions and states. Education being in concurrent list of Indian constitution is responsibility of state and center government. However, there is need to see literacy and education in context of local socio-economic details and to plan region-specific policies in education, as a common policy idea may not lead towards the attainment of desired goals.

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