

Rural - Urban And Genderwise Literacy Gap In Uttarakhand: A Comparative Study (2001-2011)

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ABSTRACT

Literacy is an important social indicator of development and one of the major components in calculation of human development. Men and women both play an equal and vital role in the development of the society. According to HDR-2003-UNDP report there are around 879 million adults in the world who are illiterate out of which two third are women. Now taking the case of India, we can see that in terms of literacy and education women are trailing way behind men. Presently India is one of the topmost countries in the world which has the highest adult illiteracy levels and has a sluggish female illiteracy rate which is a matter of great national concern. If we see the gender education gap it was highest in 1981 (26.62) which shows the differential in gender literacy but in last few years it has been declined but still cannot be said satisfactory.

This paper is an attempt to analyse the trends of differential in literacy rate between rural-urban persons and as well as gender gap in literacy among the thirteen districts of newly carved state, Uttarakhand in India. The study shows that there is much difference in the literacy of rural-urban areas and as well as between female-male literacy (gender gap) in study area. Secondary data from census 2001 & 2011 has been used to perform the study.

Key words: literacy, gender gap, rural-urban

INTRODUCTION

Literacy and educational attainment are powerful indicators of social and economic development among the backward groups in India (Mitra *et.al.*) In developing countries like India, low literacy and illiteracy are the biggest and most difficult issues and grave disparity is visible among rural-urban populations and male-female populations in terms of literacy. Today literacy is the measure of prosperity and modernization and has become a significant indicator for human development. It acts as a catalyst for social upliftment enhancing the returns on investments made in almost every aspect of development efforts, be it population control, health, hygiene, environmental degradation control, empowerment of women and weaker sections of the society. Illiteracy, on the other hand takes away from man his dignity, perpetuates, ignorance, poverty and mental isolation, deters peaceful and friendly international relations and free democratic processes and hampers social advancement, economic growth and political maturity (Shafiqullah :2011). Therefore literacy is not only an influential factor for the development of societies but for a country like India it is the most indispensable factor for development as according to the Census of 2011 about 74.4% of its population resides in the heart of villages.

THE STUDY AREA

The newly carved state of Uttarakhand which was formed on November 2000 is a hilly state with typical geographical and living conditions. About 80 percent part of the state is hilly and rest is in the plains which consist of Dehradun, Udham Singh Nagar and some part of district Nainital. Due to its typical geographic conditions the state is administered under two regions i.e. Garhwal Mandal and Kumaon Mandal. The state consists of 13 districts out of which 07 lie in Garhwal (Pauri Garhwal, Chamoli, Tehri Garhwal, Dehradun, Uttarkashi, Rudrapur, Hardwar) and 06 lie in Kumaon (Nainital, Almora,

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Bageshwar, Champawat Pithoragarh, Udham Singh Nagar). The state has 116 towns (74 statutory and 41 census towns) and 16793 villages according to Census 2011. 30.55 percent of the state lives in urban parts and 69.45 percent population lives in rural areas. The decadal population growth was recorded as 19.17 percent in last decade out of which 11.34 percent in rural and 41.86 in urban areas of state. The overall sex ratio of state is 963 while in urban Uttarakhand it is 883 and in rural Uttarakhand it is 1000. The total literacy rate of state is 79.63 (88.33 males and 70.70 females). The literacy rate among rural population is 77.11 (87.62 male and 66.79 females) while in urban Uttarakhand it is 85.20 (89.78 males and 80.02 females).

If we consider the economic condition of the state and especially the hilly rural areas, we shall find that it is totally based on agro-economy and has very low returns due to various economic, geographic and other factors. Besides this, outmigration of the rural population to the plains is a regular feature as there are less opportunities and livelihood prospects in the hill districts of the State. Poor infrastructure, less or lack of educational and medical facilities, rainfed low productive land, marginal fields are some other barriers in the development of the hill remote areas.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Studies have been conducted from time to time to highlight the issue by different authors. *Tarique & Samreen* (2013) in their study raised the issue of gender inequality in education and its effect on women empowerment. *Gupta* (2013) tried to unfold the methods of attaining gender equality through gender statistics and women education and *Beri* (2013) discussed the gender education discrimination in Uttar Pradesh.

DATA COLLECTION AND METHODOLOGY

The present study is conducted with the help of literacy data for the year 2001 and 2011 of different districts in the state to find out the decadal performance of the state in reducing the disparity between rural urban areas and male-female persons. For this purpose the data has been collected through different secondary sources especially through Census of India-2011.

The main objectives of the study are -

- 1- To find out the gender gap in literacy.
- 2- To find out the gap in rural-urban literacy.

DISCUSSION

URBAN-RURAL GAP IN LITERACY

If we go through the table it shows that the urban-rural gap in literacy among the residents of Uttarakhand has reduced from 13.37 to 8.09. Uttarkashi has bridged the rural -urban gap in literacy by reducing the gap from 22.77 (2001) to 14.22 (2011) followed by district Champawat and Hardwar. The lowest improvement has been recorded in Rudraprayag 8.85 (2001) to 8.15 (2011) followed by Chamoli and Pauri Garhwal. If we look at it region wise, then in Kumaon region, District Champawat secures the highest rank in reducing this gap from 11.43 (2001) to 3.28 (2011) while district Nainital shows least improvement in reducing this gap i.e. from 5.84 (2001) to 2.11 (2011). Similarly in Garhwal region, district Uttarkashi is at the highest position while district Rudraprayag ranks lowest.

FEMALE URBAN-RURAL GAP IN LITERACY

The female literacy gap between rural and urban residents in the state shows that it has reduced from 20.07 (2001) to 13.23 (2011). District Uttarkashi has reduced it with highest rate 33.13 (2001) to 20.87 (2011) followed by district Champawat 21.29 (2001) to 9.85 (2011). The lowest score was recorded for the last decade by district Pauri Garhwal 18.61 (2001) to 15.26 (2011) followed by district Chamoli. If we analyse it region wise then in Kumaon region district Champawat recorded the highest while district

Nainital recorded the lowest score and in Garhwal region district Uttarkashi has top in position while district Pauri Garhwal is at lowest.

GENDER GAP IN LITERACY (URBAN)

The gender gap in the literacy rate in rural and urban areas can be seen through the table. If we discuss the gender gap in urban areas of the state it has reduced by 2.52 i.e. 12.28 in 2001 to 9.76 in 2011. The districtwise analysis shows that in district Rudrapur and Tehri Garhwal the females are ahead of males in terms of literacy rate. District Pithoragarh has made an improvement in bridging the gender gap in literacy and it is the highest scoring district in the state i.e. from 11.42 (2001) it has reduced the gap to 5.86 (2011) followed by district Pauri and Chamoli. Trailing districts with lowest score in bridging the gender gap are District Bageshwar followed by Almora.

GENDER GAP IN LITERACY (RURAL)

The rural areas among districts in state show that the gap has reduced with a good rate in rural areas in comparison to urban areas of districts of state by 6.24. District Champawat and Uttarakashi are among the highest scoring districts in reducing disparity between male and female residents while district Nainital shows the lowest improvement by 20.46 (2001) to 16.41 (2011) followed by district Pauri Garhwal.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The male-female gap in literacy and educational attainment among the society is significant although this is a common trend among population. This trend reflects the social and cultural trends and degrees of gender inequality in India. The above study clearly shows that disparity in literacy exists in the state of Uttarakhand either gender wise or region wise and in some areas in both respects. The literacy rate is trailing in rural Uttarakhand as well as female literacy is far behind male literacy.

Women education is highly correlated to women empowerment and all other dimensions of gender equality will be fulfilled automatically after educational attainment by the women. So government should focus on the improvement of women literacy by providing them special assistance i.e. economic or other kind to help them in being literate or getting education. One of the main causes behind this discrepancy which deprives women from being literate in the hilly rural areas is the backbreaking household drudgery in which rural women are engaged in. Besides this there are many socio-economic reasons also which obstruct the path of realizing female literacy.

It is therefore suggested that planners and policy makers must take necessary steps to develop educational facilities especially for the rural hilly areas. To encourage female literacy, economic assistance should be given to the related families. Programmes through various organizations (Govt. or Non-Govt.) should be organized time by time to educate the people towards the importance of female education. Media too (print and electronic) can play a great role in spreading awareness about female literacy and can organize special campaigns and programs from time to time for these areas. If implemented efficiently, all these efforts can definitely help decrease the gender gap in literacy in the study area.

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LITERACY GAP										
	Persons Urban-rural		Male Urban- rural		Female Urban-Rural		Male-Female Urban		Male-Female Rural	
	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011
Uttarakhand	13.37	8.09	5.27	2.15	20.07	13.23	12.28	9.76	27.08	20.84
Uttarkashi	22.77	14.22	10.57	6.71	33.13	20.87	15.71	13.81	38.27	27.97
Chamoli	14.17	11.38	3.15	2.86	21.74	17.74	11.42	7.91	30.01	22.79
Rudraprayag	8.85	8.15	-7.00	-1.17	21.57	13.6	1.96	9.76	30.53	24.53
Tehri Garhwal	21.59	14.59	5.77	3.74	32.00	22.1	11.32	11.47	37.55	29.83
Dehradun	15.68	9.23	11.17	6.41	20.32	12.08	10.24	8.15	19.39	13.82
Pauri Garhwal	11.88	8.36	1.71	-0.66	18.61	15.26	10.13	6.40	27.33	22.32
Pithoragarh	16.45	11.21	6.23	2.25	24.20	19.14	11.42	5.86	29.39	22.75
Bageshwar	15.89	11.08	3.25	2.70	25.27	17.65	9.16	9.14	31.18	24.09
Almora	19.86	15.32	5.95	4.47	29.64	23.2	6.46	5.92	30.15	24.63
Champawat	11.43	3.28	-0.98	-4.13	21.29	9.85	13.96	11.94	36.23	25.92
Nainital	5.84	2.11	0.67	-2.37	11.16	6.64	9.97	7.40	20.46	16.41
Udhamsingh Nagar	9.18	4.11	5.49	1.37	12.83	6.81	16.86	13.23	24.20	18.67
Hardwar	20.23	12.79	14.53	8.90	26.44	17.05	13.51	11.25	25.42	19.40

Source : Computed by author from Census-2011.