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Explaining gender parity in India's higher education

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Abstract

The researcher has examined the imbalance gender representation in India's higher education. The study has conducted on India's different state based on secondary data published by AISHE (2018) report, Government of India. The study sought to analyze India's Gender Parity and correlate its relation to India's sex ratio. The study has found an imbalance distribution of GPI among India's other states. There is a discernible difference in GPI among economically forward and backward states, general category students, S.C. and S.C. in higher education. Research has also shown that GPI has increased over the past nine years among higher education institutions. The female choice-based course (B.Ed., Nursing, M.Com, M.A., M.Sc.), where female students are substantially higher than male students, has been established. On the other hand, women's participation in such technical courses (B.C.A., B.B.A., L.L.B., B.Tech., M.Tech., M.B.A.) is abysmal. A strong negative correlation (-.64) was observed at a level of .001 between the GPI and the sex ratio.

Keywords: Gender Parity Index, Higher Education, Sex ratio, Programs of study, Female.

Introduction

In India, people live in a vibrant community which gives it a unique identity. Religion, literature, and intellectual achievements have contributed to this country's growth and cultural development. India's diversity has increased manifolds due to several different groups' invasions. It has mainly contributed to the Indian culture. People in this country have been practicing rituals for over a thousand years. Religion, culture, and customs have a great deal of impact on everyone's life in India. Therefore, it is very natural to be part of it (religion, practice and custom) logically or illogically. When people adopt religious and social customs illogically, a new domain of blindness is born. People are relentlessly turning to modernity, yet they are simultaneously upholding their traditions, where many of them are still practicing their enormous number of prejudices. The people have been nourishing superstition as religious, social and cultural principles that are stereotyped. As a result, these stereotypes narrow down others' perception, thus creating disparity and discrimination in society.

Gender is a social construct, and the discrimination between women and men are constructed and not natural. However, women worldwide have been the victims of social, political and economic injustices. Historically, the challenges faced by the Indian women have suppressed their evolution due to the conventional, male-dominated power structure. It is well known that women in India do not enjoy the same status as men despite being given equal rights in the constitution. The age-old traditions and practices of patriarchal structure, heir to property and the fear and responsibility of dowry continue to dictate both the urban and rural to favour and pamper the male child. According to an official census report (2011), there are 943 females for every 1,000 males in India. Despite laws against sex determination and sex discrimination, parents continue to go to all lengths to avoid having a girl child (47 Indian women out of 1000 commit abortion per year). Women in India have lower literacy rates (65.64%) as compared to men (82.14%)[1]. It is expected that a girl's ultimate destiny is to get married and to do household chores, so the Right to Education is still not accessible to an uncountable number of women in the society. Not only this, but the violence against women has been increasing at an alarming rate which is both shameful and appalling culture of violence against women is prevalent in society. The male chauvinistic Indian society has aggravated this discrimination against women. As a result, most women struggle to recognize their independence and rights. However, the civilized and educated communities' condition is a little better in urban areas. Also, in urban areas, people are acquainted with the laws against dowry, domestic violence, sexual harassment, etc., which safeguard women's rights. However, the condition of the women in the uneducated sector, especially in rural areas is of great concern. The government has been taking several steps, such as equality of education, irrespective of gender through promotions, subsidies etc. Also, low-income parents of a single girl child are provided with many aids. More progress is, however, needed in this field. "Access to education for girls has decreased gender inequality within school enrolment, and many countries now have female enrolment exceeding that of males"[2]. "Despite this development, there are still marked disparities in male and female students' choices to study and subsequent career choices"[3]. The higher education is very advance growing field in every country now a days[4]. A study has found that the in every 2/3 countries, the girls outperformed boys[5]. Females have significantly increased their participation in all education levels and now surpass males in

higher education (HE) enrolments in India. However, this deficit has not yet been reflected in human capital attainment[6]. The Gender Parity Index calculates gender imbalance in education (GPI), the metrics used widely by UNESCO, which measures the percentage of females enrolled in the rate of males enrolled in different education levels.

What is the Gender Parity Index?

Parity is a philosophical idea and a measuring process or policy[7,8]. As a concept, parity focuses on the equal value of gender representation in decision-making and democratic structure[9,10]. For the sake of equality, fair treatment laws can be passed. Parity policies usually use quotas as their main tool for achieving gender equality[11-13]. "The Gender parity Index is a socio-economic index generally intended to measure men and women's access to education"[14]. It determines the number of female's students per 100 males' students from elementary school to higher education. Gender parity index represents the male and female ratio at the institution. GPI, 'one' explains the equal participation of male and female. A GPI of more than 'one' shows more female participation than male and vice versa. The closer a GPI is to 'one', the closer a nation is to men and women having equal access. International organizations use it to measure the progress of developing countries in particular. A more general definition of GPI is also used by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics: for any development indicator. GPI can be defined by dividing its value for women by its value for men on that indicator. It provides an analysis of developments over the past decades in the gender diversity of the student population[4]. Another concept, the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) ranks countries according to the percentage of their girls and women are under- or behind their male counterparts on 14 factors[15]. The present study is confined to the state-wise analysis of gender parity in higher education. It also analyses the cause of gender imparity and how it is correlated with sex ratio. This paper examines gender differences in the pattern of student participation in higher education.

Results and discussion

This study analyzes the gender parity index of general (all), S.C. and S.T. category students in higher education. Figure-1 shows the graphical presentation of GPI of the general category students. The data (GPI) has been classified into five categories (very low to very high GPI). The Bihar has found lowest GPI in a general category (.79). A total of eight states have scored very low GPI (.79-.94), Five states have score low GPI (.94-.99), seven states have achieved a medium GPI (.99-.1.06), six states have scored a high GPI (1.06-1.23), and only seven state-ranked in very high GPI (1.23-2.37) category in higher education (Figure-1). Figure-2 shows that the states have been categorized into five groups by their gender parity index among the S.C. students. Bihar has the lowest GPI (.58) among S.C. students in higher education. The analyses of the Figure-2 show seven-states have very low GPI (.00-.85), six states have low GPI (.85 -.95), Seven states have scored medium GPI (.95-1.03), six state have acquired high GPI (1.03-1.20), and six states have achieved very high GPI (1.20-1.85). Kerala has been found to have the highest GPI (1.85) among S.C. students in higher education. Figure-3 represents the GPI classification of S.T. students in higher education from different states. The study has found that the seven-states have come under the deficient group of GPIs (.00-.75), four states have scored under low groups (.75-.90), eight states have ranked medium GPI (.90-.97), eight states come under the high category of GPI (.97-1.11) and five states have achieved very high GPI (1.11-1.52) (Figure-3). Bihar has been found to have the lowest GPI score (.67), and the union territory of Daman has scored highest GPI (1.52) among S.T. students in higher education. Data source from AISHE Report (2018-19), P-T-20, G.O.I.[16] and figures has prepared by using QGIS (2.14.14 version) Software[17].

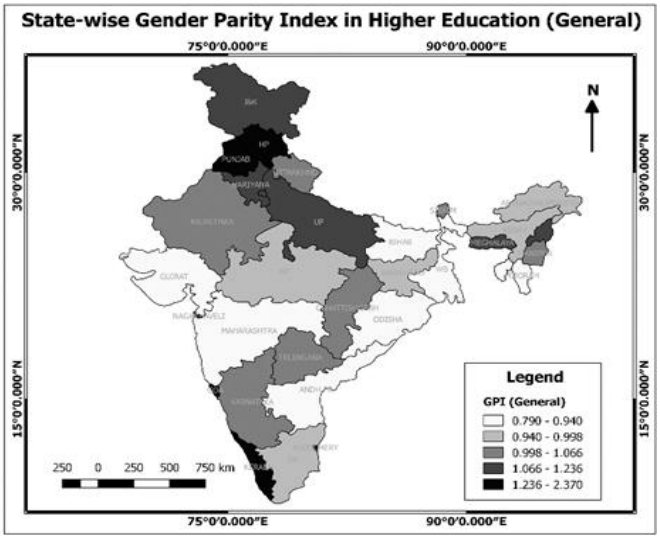

Figure-1: State-wise Gender parity Index in Higher Education (General)[16].

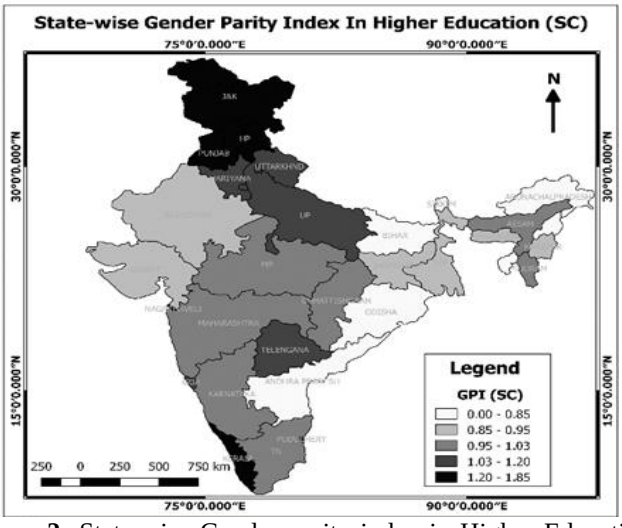

Figure-2: State-wise Gender parity index in Higher Education (SC)[16].

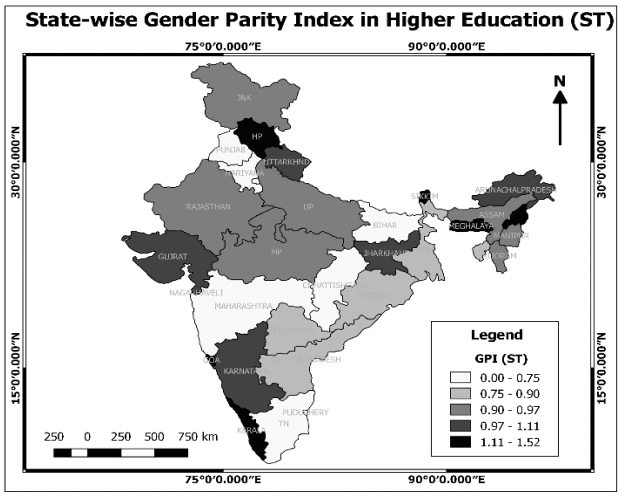

Figure-3: State-wise Gender parity index in Higher Education (ST)[16].

Time-series data analysis has been conducted to know the trend of gender parity in India (Figure-4). A total of nine years (2010-2019) data of GPI has been collected from the students of general, S.C. and S.T. categories in higher education. The study has found that 14% of GPI has increased among all students, and 18% of GPI improved among the S.C. and S.T. category students in higher education. Figure-4 graphically represents the trend of gender parity. Figure-4 shows that India's present GPI among all categories is 'one'. It means both the male and female students participate equally in higher education. The study also found higher GPI among SC (1.02) than national level GPI (Figure-4). On the other hand, a low GPI has been found among S.T. (.92) which is lesser than both the GPI of the nation and that of S.C.

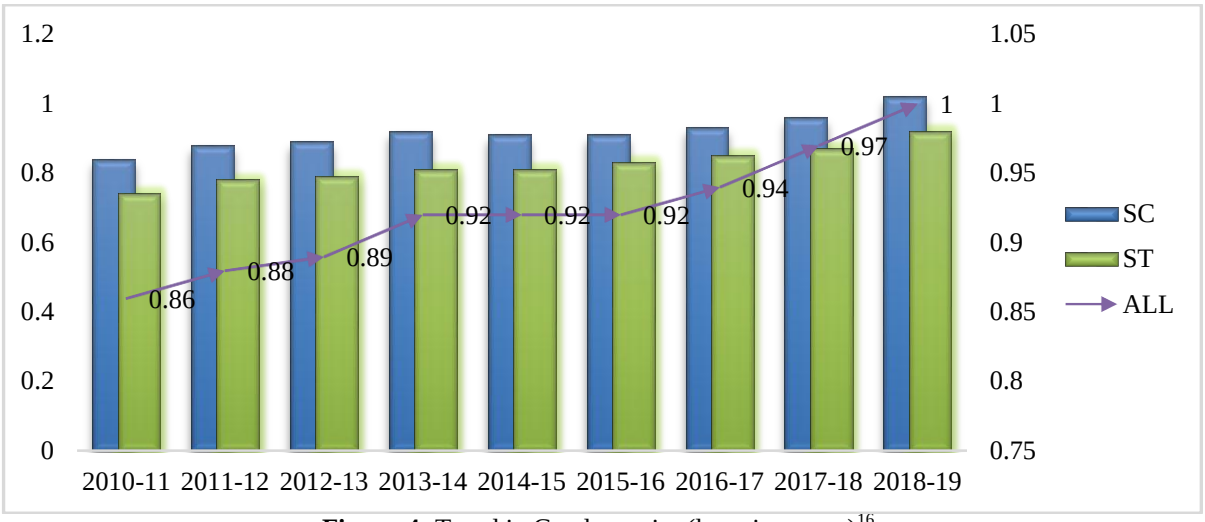

Figure-4: Trend in Gender parity (last nine years)[16].

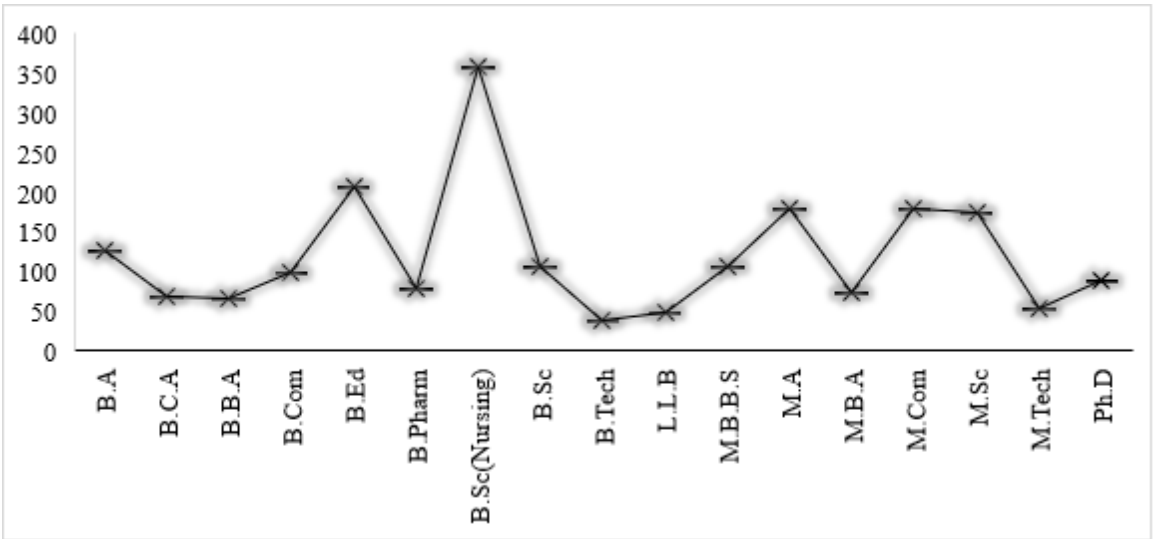

Figure-5: Programme-wise female per 100 males in higher education[16].

The higher education programme is mainly concentrated on Undergraduate, Postgraduate and Ph.D. Figure-5 has analyzed the entire program from Undergraduate to Ph.D., determining females' participation in higher education. The study has found unequal participation of male and female students in different courses or programs. Gender choice participation has been found in higher education courses. The study has found very high participation of female students in the program like B.Ed. (207), B.Sc. (Nursing, 358), M.Com. (179), M.A. (180), M.Sc. (174) and B.A. (126) per 100 male students. On the other hand, the participation of female is very low in the technical courses like B.C.A. (70), B.B.A. (67), B.Pharm (79), B.Tech (40), L.L.B. (49), M.B.A. (75), and M.Tech (54). A clear visualization has been seen in Figure-5 about females participation in higher education in India.

Discussion: After analyzing all the Gender Parity Index data, different domains of the result have been explored. The GPI in higher education is not equally distributed among India's other states. A visible difference has found in GPI among economically forward and backward states, general category students, S.C. and S.C. in higher education (Figures-1,2,3). The study has also found an improvement in GPI of the last nine years in higher education. In 2019, India's Gender Parity reached the target point 'one' (Figures-4), but the inter-state gender imbalance still exists in higher education (Figures-1,2,3)[16]. Course-wise female participation has also been analyzed in this study. The female choice based course has been identified (B.Ed, Nursing, M.Com, M.A., M.Sc.), where female students are remarkably higher than male students. On the other hand, the female participation in some technical courses (B.C.A., B.B.A., LL.B., B.Tech, M.Tech, M.B.A.) has abysmal participation (Figure-5). The study has analyzed the state-wise sex ratio to find the cause of gender imparity. According to the 2011 census survey, there are 943 females for every 1000 males in India[1]. The report shows a demographic crisis which makes a considerable discord between male and female. A correlation coefficient analysis has been conducted to determine the relation between GPI and sex ratio. A Significant negative correlation (-.64) has been found among GPI and Sex ratio at .001 level.

Conclusion

This paper offers new insights into the gender gap in India's higher education. The study has already explored the imbalance in male and female representation in higher education. The overall gender disparity in programme choices reflects significant differences where females prefer non-technical courses, such as teaching, nursing and M.Sc., while males tend to specialize in technical studies. Despite our main findings' robustness, we cannot justify the gender distinction in students' field of study. Although the state-wise difference in gender parity has been considerably reducing at its own pace, the range of variation is vast. The study gives a glimpse of hope for gender parity not in numbers or quantity but the dynamics of gender balance, gender equity and gender democracy.

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