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Improved Position of SCs Female Students at School Level in India

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Abstract:

The present study tends to explain the improved position of Scheduled Castes (SCs) female students at school level in India. It makes an attempt to establish the argument that females (SCs) have now gone ahead of their male (SCs) counterparts in terms of receiving school education. This study tries to present a rising trend of SCs female students with respect to Gross Enrolment Ratios at school level. It has also highlighted the changes occurring in Gender Parity Index (GPI) of SCs in favour of female students at schools in recent years. Drop-out rates of SCs between male-female students are one of the main highlights. An attempt has been made to put forward a scenario with rise in pass percentage of SCs female students at school level against their male counterparts. This study seeks to suggest some policy framework to further strengthen the position of SCs female students at school level.

Keywords: SCs, GER, GPI, Pass percentage, Drop-out rates

1. Introduction

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”- Nelson Mandela

Education is believed to be the key to understand the world we live in. It makes us able enough to take better decisions and allows us to decide between rights and wrongs. Education in its true essence makes world a safe place to live. All round progress can never be achieved in a nation with low levels of educational attainments. Education broadens the spheres of mind and allows us to think of prosperity and generate innovative ideas. It is through education that we can think of a world with high levels of development and mutual cooperation among nations.

“When we invest in women and girls, we are investing in the people who invest in everybody else”- Melinda Gates.

Sarwar (2012) has laid emphasis over the provision education to womanhood at all levels. He believes that the development of a nation in particular and of the world in general is highly associated with female educational attainment and women empowerment. When education reaches to the last girl standing in the line, only then higher levels of human development can be witnessed.

Women education has become the core issue of planning in all nations of the world. Gender perspective has been adopted by various international organisations such as UNO, IBRD, IMF and WTO et cetera (Arora, 2012) for measuring human progress. Gender equality is the prime source of economic prosperity too. It has been observed that states in India with high per capita incomes have low gender-gaps and vice-versa.

Talking about women education leads us to think of equality. It has become the part and parcel of every debate in the field of gender studies. Improvement in females’ educational levels is directly correlated with the positive impacts on health and economic status of females. Higher levels of female educational attainment lead to low rates of infant mortality, higher levels of female empowerment and better standards of living with respect to womanhood. It is believed now days that educating a girl is synonymous of educating a whole family.

When it comes to the upliftment of socially backward strata of the society, women education plays a vital role. Social inclusion of socially backward sections of the society such as scheduled castes (SCs) can be achieved up to a greater extent by the provisions of education to the females of these sections. In the recent years females belonging to SCs community have received exposure to education up to a larger extent.

The gross enrollment ratio (GER) of SCs female students at school level has been higher than the SCs male students (Statistics of School Education). Whereas SCs male students GER are 62.8, the SCs female students GER are high 63.9 in the year 2013-14. Gender parity index (GPI) of SCs students at school level has been shifted in favour of SCs female students (AISHE and U-DISE-NUEPA). GPI ranging from 0 to 1 favours male students while GPI above 1 favours female students. SCs GPI at school level are 1.05 at secondary level and 1.02 at senior secondary level in the year 2013-14.

SCs female students’ drop-out rates at school level have improved in case of female students (U-DISE-NUEPA Enrolment Data). Whereas SCs male students’ drop-out rate is 42.4 at elementary level, SCs female students’ drop-out rate is low at 34.4 in the year

2013-14. Similarly SCs male students' drop-out rate at secondary level stands high at 51.8, SCs female students' drop-out rate 48.0 in the same year.

Female (SCs) pass percentage has also been better than their male counterparts (Results of High Schools and Higher Secondary Schools, 2010). It was 67.2 % for SCs male students at secondary level in the year 2010, while for SCs female students, it was 71.3 %. Similarly, SCs' male pass percentage was lower than their female counterparts at senior secondary level in the same year. It was 67.1 % for SCs male students, whereas it was 75.8 % for SCs female students.

Higher levels of educational attainments by women of lower strata of the society in particular and women in general assure higher levels of economic development and social progress. Provision of education and training to women of lower strata of the society has become the need of hour. Emphasis has been laid upon educating women belonging to socially backward groups and empowering them so that they can raise their living standards and can take forward the process of development.

2. Review of Existing Literature

Latha (2014) envisages on the importance of women literacy and development. Women education is the key for overall progress of the society. She lays down emphasis on the fact that a literate woman can take along with her the process of development. System should do away with the hurdles in the path of women literacy and empowerment. She quotes an example of a literate mother who possess 50% more probability of surviving newborn babies.

Chouhan (2013) talks about the education of SCs women in India. He has studied the SCs population of Maldah district of West Bengal in terms of educational attainment. Overall SCs literacy is lower than the national average. Male gross enrolment ratio (GER) is lower than female gross enrolment ratio (GER) amongst SCs population of Maldah. Male drop-out rate is higher than the female drop-out rate of the SCs of Maldah. SC's female pass percentage is above their male counterparts.

Education of women establishes a strong base for carrying out better development of the society in particular and of the nation in general (Pathak, et al., 2013). They refer women of India as the 50% of the human capital which can be employed in developmental processes. They also talk about raising women's standard of living through educational attainment. Literate women help in narrowing down the rates of unemployment and reduction of poverty rates.

Sharmila, et al. (2010) explains that education of women can overcome the problems of health issues, poverty and unemployment and help improve the economic status of households. Investment on education and support in infrastructural development help in raising the levels of educational attainments in case of women in India. More schools, improved quality of school education and investment in education can bring about a handsome rise in educational level of women in India.

Kumar (2012) has explained in his study that the female literacy rate has improved much since independence. In 1951, female literacy rate was 8.86 only. With the passage of time and better government programmes aiming at improving the levels of education, female literacy rate reached up to 53.67 in 2001 and to 65.46 in 2011. He has laid emphasis on role of programmes like National Literacy Mission (NLM) and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) et cetera in improving the educational position of women in India. NLM raised the number of literate persons to 127.45 million in India out of which 60 % are women.

SCs have tremendously increased their level of educational attainment after independence (Scheduled Castes, Census of India 2001 & 2011). Their gross enrolment ratio (GER) has gone up to a larger extent and drop-out rates have come down. SCs are now attaining higher, technical, managerial and professional education and training. The females of this community are ahead of their male counterparts in terms of attaining education at school, college and university level.

2.1. Prime Objectives of Study

- To study SCs male-female students gross enrolment ratio (GER) at school level.
- To study the trends in gender parity index (GPI) of SCs students at school level.
- To enquire into male-female (SCs) drop-out rates at school level.
- To find out SCs male-female students pass percentage at school level.

2.2. Hypotheses

- H0 A: SCs female students' gross enrolment ratio at school level has been more than their male counterparts
- H1 A: SCs female students' gross enrolment ratio at school level has not been more than their male counterparts.
- H0 B: Gender parity index has been in favour of SCs female students at schools.
- H1 B: Gender parity index has not been in favour of SCs female students at schools.
- H0 C: Female (SCs) drop-out rates have been lower than their male counterparts at schools.
- H1 C: Female (SCs) drop-out rates have been higher than their male counterparts at schools.
- H0 D: Pass percentage of SCs female students at school level is above their male counterparts.
- H1 D: Pass percentage of SCs female students at school level is below their male counterparts.
- Note: H0- Null hypothesis and H1- Alternative hypothesis.

3. Methodology

The present study has found its base upon secondary data. Data has been collected from various authentic sources such as research journals, government website (MHRD, Government of India), statistics of school education, U-DISE-2013-14 and AISHE portal et cetera. Descriptive and exploratory research has been carried out in the study. Simple statistical tools such as tables have been brought

into use for the analysis of data. School education is the universe size and male-female (SCs) students at school level are the size of sample. 2000-01 to 2013-14 is the time period of the study.

4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

4.1. SCs Male-Female Students Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) at School Level

The present study shows that the GER of male-female (SCs) students at school level has been declining but the female (SCs) GER has been above their male counterparts. Table 1 depicts GER of SCs male-females students from first stand to eighth standard within the age group of 6-13 years and from ninth to twelfth standard within the age group of 14-17 years at school level. GER for SCs male-female students for both groups has declined since 2009-10. In the table, we can notice that instead of declining GER in both the groups, SCs female students GER has been above the SCs male students GER. In I-VIII group, SCs male GER was 111.9 and SCs female students GER was 111.1 in 2009-10. In the year 2010-11, SCs male students GER were 116.9 whereas SCs female student GER was 116.5, slightly behind the male students. From the year 2011-12, SCs female GER started to be placed above the male students. It was 109.8 for male students (SCs) and 114.9 for female students (SCs). This trend has continued till 2013-14. In the year 2012-13 (P), male students (SCs) GER were 106.0 whereas female students (SCs) GER stood high at 109.2. Similarly SCs male students GER stood low at 104.2 in 2013-14 (P) whereas SCs female students GER was 109.4.

In the second group (IX-XII), similar trends have been observed. Male students (SCs) GER were 54.6 and female students (SCs) GER were 49.3 in the year 2009-10. Likewise the SCs male students GER students was 57.3 and SCs female students GER was low at 52.1 in 2010-11. In the year 2012-12, male students (SCs) GER were 62.1 and female students (SCs) GER were 61.4. In the year 2012-13 (P), male students (SCs) GER were 58.0 whereas female students (SCs) GER stood high at 58.4. It was 62.8 from SCs male students and 63.9 for SCs female students in the year 2013-14 (P).

Level/ Year	I-VIII	(6-13 Years)	IX-XII	(14-17 Years)
	Males	Females	Males	Females
2009-10	111.9	111.1	54.6	49.3
2010-11	116.9	116.5	57.3	52.1
2011-12	109.8	114.9	62.1	61.4
2012-13 (P)	106.0	109.2	58.0	58.4
2013-14 (P)	104.2	109.4	62.8	63.9
P- Provisional.				
Data Sources:				
A. Statistics of School Education.				
B. U-DISE-NUEPA.				
C. AISHE.				

Table 1: SCs Male-Female Students Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) at School Level.

4.2. Gender Parity Index (GPI) of SCs Students at School Level

There have been a shifting trend in gender parity index (GPI) in favour of SCs female students in relation to their male counterparts. GPI ranging from 0 to 1 favour male students and GPI above 1 favour female students. Table 2 has been showing us a similar picture of GPI of SCs students at elementary and secondary + senior secondary levels of school education. GPI for SCs students at elementary level in the year 2000-01, 2005-06 and 2010-11 was 0.78, 0.86 and 1.00 respectively favouring SCs male students. From the year 2011-12 onwards GPI for SCs female students at this level has improved. In 2011-12, 2012-13 (P) and 2013-14 (P), GPI was 1.05, 1.03 and 1.05 respectively.

Trends in GPI of SCs students at secondary and senior secondary level have shown similar fashions. GPI has been in favour of male students in the year 2005-06, 2010-11 and 2011-12 with GPI of 0.76, 0.91 and 0.99 respectively. Here after GPI trends have shifted in favour of SCs female students at this level of school education. In 2012-13 (P) and 2013-14 (P), GPI stood at 1.01 and 1.02 respectively.

Level Year	Elementary (I-VIII)	Secondary & Senior Secondary (IX-XII)
2000-01	0.78	NA
2005-06	0.86	0.76
2010-11	1.00	0.91
2011-12	1.05	0.99
2012-13 (P)	1.03	1.01
2013-14 (P)	1.05	1.02
P- Provisional.		
Data Sources:		
A. Statistics of School Education.		
B. U-DISE-NUEPA.		
C. AISHE.		

Table 2: Gender Parity Index (GPI): SCs Students at School Level.

4.3. Male-Female (SCs) Drop-Out Rates at School Level

There has been a handsome improvement in the drop-out rates of SCs students at school level. And above all the SCs female students' drop-out rate has declined tremendously. In the year 2001-02, at elementary level, SCs female students' drop-out rate was high at 63.6 whereas SCs male student drop-out rate was 58.6. In 2005-06, SCs female student drop-out rate was again higher than their male counterparts at 57.1 whereas SCs male students' drop-out rate was 53.7. Since 2010-11, SCs female students' drop-out rate has declined and has now been lower than their male counterparts. In 2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13 (P) and 2013-14 (P), SCs female students' drop-out rates were below their male counterparts at 39.1, 36.4, 35.3 and 34.4 respectively whereas drop-out rates for their male counterparts were 46.8, 43.3, 43.3 and 42.4 respectively.

Similarly such trends can be followed at secondary level. SCs male-female students' drop-out rates were quite high at 71.1 and 74.9 respectively in 2001-02. In 2005-06, SCs male-female students' drop-out rates were 68.2 and 73.7 respectively. Till now SCs female students' drop-out rate was higher than their male counterparts. In 2010-11, SCs female students' drop-out rate started improving more than their male counterparts. In 2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13 (P) and 2013-14 (P), SCs female students' drop-out rate stood low at 54.2, 55.6, 48.4 and 48.0 whereas SCs male students' drop-out rates were 57.4, 55.0, 55.6 and 51.8 respectively.

Year / Class	Elementary (I-VIII)		Secondary (IX-X)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
2001-01	58.6	63.6	71.1	74.9
2005-06	53.7	57.1	68.2	73.7
2010-11	46.8	39.1	57.4	54.2
2011-12	43.3	36.4	55.0	55.6
2012-13 (P)	43.3	35.3	55.6	48.4
2013-14 (P)	42.4	34.4	51.8	48.0
P- Provisional.				
Data Sources: A. Statistics of School Education. B. U-DISE-NUEPA Enrolment Data.				

Table 3: Male-Female (SCs) Drop-Out Rates at School Level. (In Percentage)

4.4. SCs Male-Female Students Pass Percentage at School Level

Female pass percentage of SCs students has improved over time at school level in India. Table 4 depicts a similar showing SCs female students pass percentage in the year 2010 at secondary and senior secondary levels. In the year 2010, SCs male students pass percentage stood at 67.2 % whereas their female counterparts stood high with 71.3 %. In the same year, senior secondary results also showed similar trends. SCs male students pass percentage was low at 67.1 and their female counterparts stood high at 75.8 %.

Class	Males	Females
X	67.2 %	69.0 %
XII	67.1 %	70.8 %
Data Sources: Results of High Schools and Higher Secondary Schools, 2010.		

Table4: SCs Male-Female Students Pass Percentage at School Level. (2010)

5. Findings and Recommendations

The present study has tried to pursue research within the sphere of its core objectives. It has found out that the GER of SCs female students at school level in India has improved up to a large extent and they have left SCs male students behind in terms of GER at school level. This study has also highlighted that the GPI of SCs students at school level has now in the recent years shifted in favour of SCs female students. This can be due to the reason that GER of SCs female students has gone up above their male counterparts. Female (SCs) students have left male (SCs) students behind them in terms of pass percentage at secondary as well as senior secondary levels of school education. Over the last 5 years, female (SCs) drop-out rates at school level have declined and their drop-out rates stand quite low than the SCs male student drop-out rates at school level.

This study comes up with certain recommendations for further improving the position of SCs female students at school level in India. More governments' programmes targeting SCs female students at school level must be implemented and provisions for increased budgetary outlays should be made for SCs female students at schools. Such steps can be of great importance for providing better position of female (SCs) students at school levels.

6. Limitations of the Study

- The present study does not talk about the factors affecting the improved position of SCs female students at school level.
- It does not incorporate the study of SCs female students at higher education level.
- This study does not reveal pass percentage of SCs students at elementary school education level.

7. Concluding Remarks

Position of female students belonging to scheduled castes (SCs) at school level has improved over a period of time. Female (SCs) students at schools have left their male counterparts in many aspect of the school curriculum. Be it the case of GER or pass percentage, female students of scheduled castes category have shined more than their male counterparts. Better position of females in every aspect of the society is the key indicator of cultural and socioeconomic prosperity. None of the null hypotheses in the study are rejected while all the alternative hypotheses of the study are rejected.

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