

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE EXCLUSION OF GIRL CHILD IN SCHOOL EDUCATION IN INDIA AND PUNJAB

Navneet Kaur Brar

Exclusion in education takes into account “out-of-school children” or “dropouts” as well as all those who have never been to school and also those who are not in a position to attend school regularly. This study was conducted to assess the growth of literacy and enrolment trends of children in school education in terms of gender and caste in India and Punjab with special reference to rural areas. The dropout situation was also studied among children especially girls in school education and reasons for exclusion of children were also explored. Trends in educational indicators were analysed using qualitative as well as quantitative methods. Comparative analysis of literacy rates of India and Punjab revealed that Punjab has a higher literacy rate than India though India and Punjab both show increasing trends in the literacy rate. The number of females was found to be more illiterate than the males in both rural and urban areas of India. One out of every five males and one out of every three females in the country were found to be illiterate. These differentials in literacy rates are comparatively more pronounced in the districts falling in the Malwa belt of Punjab. In terms of enrolment, it was observed that the total enrolment was found to be higher at the primary stage. Enrolment was found to be comparatively lesser at upper primary stage. The secondary level had least enrolment. The percentage of never enrolled children was found to be higher than out of school and dropped-out children. The comparison of figures of Punjab with national figures indicated that the percentage of never enrolled children was higher in Punjab than national figures. Larger number of children from urban areas (4.77%) were found to be out of school than children from rural areas in Punjab. Out of school females (3.25%) were more than males (1.58%) and the percentage was much higher for rural areas than urban areas in Punjab. These values were even more than national figures. Therefore, the study concluded that a large number of girls especially from rural areas are still excluded from school education in Punjab.

KEYWORDS: Exclusion, Enrolment Trends, Gender Parity Index, Drop-out Rate

Navneet Kaur Brar 
Research Scholar, Punjabi University Patiala.
Email: ninubti@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Exclusion is a multi-layered and multi-causal phenomenon involving different contexts and various sets of historical, sociological, economic, political, sexual, biological or racial factors. Number of children who have little or no access to schools are not randomly distributed, they are specific groups. Therefore, Inclusive education is seen as a process of addressing and responding to diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities and reducing exclusion within and from education. Right to Education Act, 2009 in India is one such step for achieving universalization of elementary education (UEE). Meaningful access to education which is an aspect of UEE requires more than just full enrolment, it also necessitates high attendance rate, progression through grades with no or low level of repetition and learning outcomes which confirms that basic skills are being mastered. But the goal to provide free and compulsory education to all up to age of 14 still remains elusive. As per Population Census of India 2011, the literacy rate of India has shown an improvement of 9 percent, being up to 74.04% in 2011 from 65.38% in 2001 (GoI, 2011). There is improvement in literacy in Punjab from 69.65% in 2001 to 75.84% in 2011 which is above the national average. However, gender concerns in literacy still shows a problematic situation with a high level of gap in male-female literacy rate at national level as well as state level. Programmes such as SSA and RMSA have been run to strengthen elementary and secondary education respectively. Punjab is among few states in India that has been in forefront of education movement. As per NUEPA report (2013), the GER of Punjab at the primary level is 111.2, at the upper primary level the GER is 96.7, at the secondary level is 84.61 and at the senior secondary level is 60.66. Despite overall growth in enrolment and retention there is still a cause of worry, why number of children goes on decreasing in completion of school education. Exclusion is inability on the part of an individual to participate in the basic political, economic and social functioning of society. This means social exclusion is denial of equal access to opportunities imposed by certain groups of society upon others. As multiple identities give birth to phenomenon of cumulative exclusion- a girl/woman may be excluded not only on the basis of gender, but also on class, religion, caste, language, which brings into play the phenomenon of multiple exclusionary practices.

Exclusion in education takes into account “out-of-school children” or “dropouts” as well as all those who have never been to school and also those who are not in position to attend school regularly or for a specified period of time. However, the most important factors of exclusion recognized by different researchers refer to poverty, gender bias, caste system, remote geographical location, child labour, overloaded classrooms, unfit language of instruction, high fee structure, insecurity to girls, corporal punishment, parental death, low education level of parents and care of younger siblings.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Following are the research questions addressed by the study:

1. What is the growth of literacy among males and females in India with special reference to Punjab during last two decades?
2. Is there increase or decrease in the number of illiterate males and females w.r.t. to total population of India as well as Punjab?
3. What is the trend in enrolment in terms of gender in India and Punjab at primary, upper primary and secondary school stages?
4. What is the situation with respect to drop out rate in school education in Punjab?
5. Whether the girl child dropout rate is higher than boys in schools?
6. Which categories are excluded from school education and what has been done so far to include them?

SIGNIFICANCE

It is well known fact that the goals of universal elementary education in India including state of Punjab. So far it is claimed that India has been able to accomplish the goal of universal enrolment and retention up to primary education (UPE) as per MDG report card. The concept of universal elementary education (UEE), to be extended to universal school education (USE) is to be achieved in near future. Hence, the process of inclusionary practices needs to be strengthened and it is truer for fair sex i.e. gender based. The findings of the study are of immense use for practitioners and policy makers for this purpose.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Following are the objectives of the study:

1. To enumerate the growth of literacy across gender and location in India and Punjab.
2. To study the enrolment trends of children in school education in terms of gender and caste in India and Punjab with special reference to rural areas.
3. To study the dropout situation among children especially girls in school education.
4. To explore the causes of exclusion of children especially girls.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Both qualitative and quantitative methods of research have been used to

explore the status of exclusion and its causes in school education among marginalized sections of the society, particularly girls who belong to rural areas of the Punjab. Qualitative method employs a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomenon in context-specific setting. Quantitative methods have been used to analyse trends in educational indicators across different levels of school education.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Document analysis and trend analysis have been done to analyse data in the present study. The rudimentary steps in 'meta-analysis' technique was also used to look into causation of non-completion of targets of school education.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Growth of Literacy Across Gender and Location: India and Punjab

The percentage share of male population is comparatively higher in urban areas than the percentage share in rural areas of India over the period 2001 and 2011. Total number of females is 417 million, out of which 224 million are literate and 193 million are illiterate. There has also been decrease in number of male illiterates in each district, but sharp decrease is shown by Ludhiana (16.43%) with decrease of 59,826 in male illiterates followed by Gurdaspur (11.20%) with decrease of 40,781 male illiterates. Females are more illiterate than males in both rural and urban areas of India. Therefore, we can say that females are more excluded in education. The condition of exclusion is same in Punjab also. The population of illiterates in total population of the district, is noted highest in Mansa (33.27%) with 2,55,797 number of illiterates followed by Muktsar (29.45%), Sangrur (27.82%), Barnala (27.81%), Bathinda (27.24%), Tarn Taran (27.02%), Ferozepur (26.56%), Faridkot (26.18%), Moga (25.46%), Patiala (21.16%) and Amritsar (20.35) reported higher number of illiterates (more than 20%) in total population. Districts Kapurthala (17.81%), SBS Nagar (17.72%), Fatehgarh Sahib (17.67%), Gurdaspur (16.95%), Jalandhar (15.87%), Ludhiana (15.64), Roop Nagar (15.01%), SAS Nagar (13.45%) have less than 20% of illiterates in total population. Hoshiarpur (13.07%) has minimum number of illiterates in total population.

The effective literacy rate for India in census 2011 works out to be 73.0 percent. The literacy rate for males and females in the year 2011 are 82.14 and 65.46 percent respectively. Thus, four out of every five males and two out of every three females in the country are literate. Female literacy rate rose from 8.86 % (1951) to 65.46% in 2011 with increase of 56.60%. Male literacy rate rose from 27.16% (1951) to 82.14% (2011) with increase of 54.98%. Increase in female literacy rate has been more impressive than increase in male literacy rate from census period of 1951 to 2011. Therefore, maximum reduction in the gap of male-female literacy rate was recorded in 2011 (16.68%).

In Punjab, literacy rate has been rising. It was 58.51 percent in 1991 and increased to 69.65 percent in 2001 and 75.84% in 2011, an increase of 6 percent points during the last 10 years. The comparative analysis of literacy rates of India and Punjab reveals that Punjab has higher literacy rate than India though India and Punjab both show increasing trend in literacy rate. There is overall increase of 42.58 percent in literacy rate of Punjab as compared to increase of 43.59 percent in literacy rate of India, from year 1971 to 2011. In spite of having improved literacy rates, the rank of Punjab went down from the 12th position in 1971 to the 16th in 2001 and 21st in 2011 when compared to other states and UTs in India. At present, Kerala has the highest literacy rate of 93.91 percent while Bihar has lowest of 63.82 percent.

According to 2011 census, Hoshiarpur occupies the top position in rural literacy rate among both males (89.48%) and females (79.56%) while Mansa occupies the lowest position. Hoshiarpur (91.61%) and Barnala (79.54%) occupy the highest and lowest position, respectively in urban male literacy rate. While in urban female literacy rate Hoshiarpur (85.48%) and Sangrur (70.49%) occupies highest and lowest position respectively. These differentials in literacy rates are comparatively more pronounced in the districts falling in the Malwa belt. The female literacy level is on rise in the state over the decades, though it is still low in comparison to male literacy rate.

Enrolment Trends in Elementary School Education Across Gender and Location: India and Punjab

The total enrolment is highest for the primary stage. Enrolment is much less at the upper primary school stage than primary stage and lowest at the secondary school stage. Girl's enrolment has shown improvement at all levels namely primary, upper primary and secondary. But, it is remarkable at upper primary level which is 32.0 million much close to boy's enrolment which is 33.7 million in the year 2013-14. The enrolment in primary education is declining in the state. One of the reasons for the decline in enrolment in primary education is the declining child population age 0-6 years. During the period 1991 to 2011, the total enrolment in upper primary education has increased by 71.53 percent. The increase in enrolment has been much higher for boys (73.59 percent) than that for girls (68.86 percent). The enrolment at the upper primary education has been increased steadily with more children moving from primary to upper primary stage of education. The transition rate from primary to upper primary stage of education has increased from 83.98 percent in 2007-2008 to 97.61 percent in 2013-14 (U-DISE, NUEPA).

In Punjab during the period 1991 to 2011, the total enrolment in upper primary education for all category children has increased by 71.53 percent. The increase in enrolment has been much higher for boys (73.59 percent) than that for girls (68.86 percent). The enrolment at the upper primary education has

been increased steadily with more children moving from primary to upper primary stage of education. The transition rate from primary to upper primary stage of education has increased from 83.98 percent in 2007-2008 to 97.61 percent in 2013-14. It may be stated in sum up that the total enrolment in senior secondary education increased by 419.13 percent during the period 1991 to 2012. The increase in enrolment has been much higher for girls than that for boys.

Gender Parity Index

The Gender Parity Index (GPI) reflects female's level of access to education as compared to that of males calculated for each school phase. Ratio of girls to boys (Gender Parity Index) in primary and secondary education is the ratio of the number of female students enrolled at primary and secondary levels of education to the number of male students in each level. A GPI of less than one indicates that there are fewer females than males in the formal education system in proportion to the appropriate school-age population. A GPI of more than one means that there are proportionately more girls than boys attending school. A score of one reflects equal enrolment rates for boys and girls.

The average of 22 districts in 2012 indicates a GPI of 0.91 in primary classes. The respective figure in 2011 was 0.86. A significant difference is observed in the GPI in primary enrolment in district SAS Nagar (0.87) and district Muktsar (0.96) in 2012. District Gurdaspur, Ludhiana, Ferozepur and Patiala have the highest GPI of 0.92 in 2012. Further analysis of district specific GPI in upper primary education indicates that the index remained above 83 in 9 districts in 2012 compared to other 16 districts in the previous year. Every district from year 2005-06 to 2012-13 shows increase in transition rate except Bathinda, SBS Nagar and Patiala. There is maximum increase of 61.3% in district Gurdaspur from 2005-06 to 2012-13 and minimum increase is shown by Moga. Overall, lowest transition rate was seen in Roop Nagar from 90.2% to 71.2% during period 2005-06 and 2006-07 respectively. Low transition rate indicates that goal of universal elementary education has not been realized so far.

Dropout Situation Among School Children

The percentage of never enrolled children is higher than out-of-school and dropped out children. On comparing the figure of Punjab with national figure we found that percentage of never enrolled children was higher in Punjab than national figures. More number of children from urban areas (4.77%) is out of school than children from rural areas in Punjab. More number of females (3.25%) are out of school than males (1.58%) and percentage is much higher for rural area than urban area in Punjab. These values are even more than national figures (2.54% out of school in urban areas, 3.23% out of school females). Therefore, we can say that girls especially from rural areas are excluded from

school education. Higher percentage of children in rural areas is out of school as compared to those in urban areas. Gender wise disaggregation reveals that 31.66 lakh males and 28.98 lakh females are estimated to be out of school. 2.94% of rural males and 2.30% of urban males are out of school. 3.36% of rural females and 2.86% of urban females are out of school. Hence, it can be said that a greater number of females are out of school than males. Also, the percentage of out of school children is higher in rural areas than urban areas for both males and females.

Out of 91578 children in Punjab, who are out-of-school, 61527 children are such who are never enrolled which constitutes the 67.19% of total. 26085 are such children who were enrolled but dropped out of school due to any reason which constitutes the 28.48% of total out of school children. 3966 children were enrolled but never attended the school. Such population constitutes the 4.33% of total out of school children. So, we can conclude that percentage of never enrolled children is higher than other two types of out-of-school children.

On comparing the figure of Punjab with national figure we found that percentage of never enrolled children was higher in India than state figures. In India, total 2.97% of children are out of school whereas in Punjab 2.28% of children are out of school. Out of 2.28% out of school children; 1.58% are male and 3.25% are female, 0.85% belongs to rural areas and 4.77% belongs to urban areas. Hence, data revealed that more children from urban areas (4.77%) are out of school than children from rural areas in Punjab. Also, higher percentage of female children (3.25%) is out of school than male children. These values are even more than national figures (2.54% out of school in urban areas, 3.23% out of school females).

Causation of Exclusion

There is a significant proportion of children (especially girls) drop out before they complete primary education. Variety of factors determines whether the child will continue or drop out. Focus of various researchers have been invariably studied to know the factors responsible for dropout and non-enrolment and these include school related factors (distance from school, poor quality of education, language of instruction, irrelevant curriculum); family and society factors (caste, ethnicity, male-female stereotypes) and personal factors (disability, poor health, orphans). Education to all is not going to be very easy especially for girls in rural area continue to be plagued by problems of insecurity of harassment, lack of girls' toilet, low educational level of parents, care of younger siblings, involvement in household work, gender biases, early child marriage, undervaluing girls education that are responsible for huge dropout rate.

CONCLUSION

Though India has made significant progress in rising enrolment rates for elementary education, yet it has been less successful at preventing dropouts during this critical learning phase. Differentials in literacy rates are comparatively more pronounced in the districts falling in the Malwa belt of Punjab. The female literacy level is on rise in the state over the decades, though it is still low in comparison to male literacy rate. Enrolment is much less at upper primary stage than primary stage. Secondary level has least enrolment among all levels. The percentage of never enrolled children is higher than out of school and dropped out children. On comparing the state figure with national figure, we found that percentage of never enrolled children was higher in Punjab than national figures. The number of females, who are out of school, is more than males and percentage are much higher for rural areas than urban areas in Punjab. Therefore, it can be concluded that girls especially from rural areas are excluded from school education. Poverty, availability, and accessibility are three big reasons why children drop out of school. There is sharp variation of enrolment and drop out with respect to gender (male and female) and location (rural and urban) within state Punjab and it suggest that local, social and cultural factors play a major role in school retention and, therefore, any intervention to reduce dropouts need to be rooted in local contexts.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Following are the educational implications of the study:

1. Scholarships should be provided to female children, which are not being currently given.
2. Teachers need to be trained in using child-friendly teaching methods, ending corporal punishment and providing skill-oriented education at school. Physical facilities and recreational facilities need to be improved.
3. Initiative for inclusive education includes role of state to provide education (availability and access to schools) and employment to weaker sections of the society (dalits, women especially in rural areas) need to be relooked, training and recruitment of teachers, curricular and pedagogic reforms, greater need for context specific data and creative utilization of funds are needed areas of immediate intervention.
4. Role of non-government organizations like NGOs and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to support government efforts in identifying, tracking, monitoring and supporting participation of disadvantaged groups need to be ensured.
5. Eradication of bonded labour and shaping of schemes of rehabilitation will

enable poor and marginalized to cross poverty line.

6. Children, especially girls should get admission in hostels or be admitted to local residential schools.
7. Inclusive education can be achieved by creating secular environment in schools, inspiring confidence among marginalized sections, recognizing and addressing within school discrimination along with safe and secure participation of disabled students.
8. Continuation of railway service at remote station in Japan for only one girl so that she can travel to and from high school is quite an example for a country like India, where it is a struggle for girls to first attend and then stay at school.
9. The Nobel Laureate Kailash Satyarthi launched his most ambitious campaign in 2016 against child labour “100 million to 100 million and “a biggest moral platform” that is a very deep and effective approach to raise the voice of children world over. 100 million plus youths and students in schools and colleges who are well off and looking to do something should become spokespersons, champions and leaders for the cause of another 100 million who are exploited, who become victims of child labour, overlapping abuses and vulnerabilities and deprived of their childhood freedom.

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