

The Status of Women in Higher Education in India: A Study During 2010-2020

Manpreet Singh*

Dept. of Journalism & Mass Communication, Chaudhary Devi Lal University, Sirsa

ARTICLE INFO

*Correspondence:

journalist.manpreet@gmail.com

Dept. of Journalism & Mass Communication,
Chaudhary Devi Lal University, Sirsa

Dates:

Received: 03-09-2023

Accepted: 05-11-2023

Published: 25-12-2023

Keywords:

Women, Higher Education, India, Gender Disparity, Government Initiatives, Transformation

How to Cite:

Manpreet Singh. (2023)
The Status of Women in Higher Education in India: A Study During 2010-2020. *MediaSpace: DME Journal of Communication*, 4(2), 1-5.
doi: 10.53361/dmejc.v4i02.01

Abstract

The educational landscape of India has witnessed an evolution in the status of women in higher education from the post-Vedic era to modern times. Historically, gender disparity has been evident, with women experiencing an inferior educational status compared to men. However, endeavours to ameliorate this disparity emerged in the contemporary epoch. In the post-independence era, the Indian government made conscientious efforts to augment women's involvement in higher education. The fruition of these efforts was evident during the decade spanning from 2010 to 2020, wherein a significant paradigm shift was observed in the status of women in the realm of higher education. This period witnessed women outpacing men or attaining near parity in various spheres. The decade of 2010-2020 holds paramount significance in the trajectory of female education, marked by substantial transformations. This research study comprehensively examines the status of women in higher education in India during this period, grounded in a thorough analysis of secondary data and findings.

INTRODUCTION

In the present global context, education forms the primary foundation for human development. The improvement in educational status is a crucial factor in the progress of any segment of society. Without education, an individual not only remains devoid of social and economic development but also cannot foster personal growth. Education enriches human beings, enhancing their ability to think, perceive, behave, establish social relationships, and develop other essential qualities. The significance of education is acknowledged globally; however, there still exists a substantial segment of women who lag behind in matters of education compared to men. (Nnabuo & Asodike, 2012)

When we discuss the educational status of Indian women concerning the present research, India, like the rest of the world, also witnesses women comprising nearly half of the total population. According to the 2011 Census data, women constitute 48.04 percent of the total population in India. The social, economic, and educational status of women in India is significantly backward compared to many other countries. There are several historical reasons behind the poor educational status of women in India. Multiple studies have explored the aspect of women lagging behind men in their educational

MediaSpace:

DME Journal of Communication

e-ISSN: 2583-035X

© Delhi Metropolitan Education, 2023. **Open Access** This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence, and indicate if changes were made. The images or other third party material in this article are included in the article's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the article's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder. To view a copy of this licence, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>.

levels, attributing it to social, economic, gender, and religious factors. Gender discrimination is also a significant factor behind the inferior educational status of women in India. Although awareness about educating women has increased in society, and the situation is gradually improving, gender bias still remains a major hindrance. There was a time when people believed that educating girls is not necessary. However, over time, people have become aware of the importance of educating girls. The present era is the time to awaken the girls. Girls are challenging boys in all areas of life. Educating girls is a significant responsibility for the progress of society. (Singh, n.d.)

Education of Girls in Indian History

In the Indian historical context, the Vedic era (1500 – 500 BCE) marked a period where women held a respected position in society and enjoyed significant rights. Women's status was comparatively better in both social and educational domains during this era. Additionally, women had rights to property, decision-making, and freedom of expression. Eminent women like Ghosha, Lopamudra, Maitreyi, and Gargi exemplified the greatness of women during the Vedic period. However, following the Vedic era (circa 1100 - 500 BCE), the status of women began to deteriorate. During this time, women struggled for their educational, social, and religious rights. Subsequently, in the early Buddhist period, women were not allowed to enter Buddhist monasteries. However, after some time, individuals advocated for this cause before Lord Buddha and Buddha himself visited Buddhist viharas with 500 women.

Transitioning to the British colonial period, Arthur Havel's book "Education in British India" acknowledges that in the early stages of British rule in India, there were no attempts to reform education or focus on women's education. However, later they began working in the field of education in India. The education of women in India resumed during the British colonial period

Commissions in India: Focus on Women's Education

The Indian Education Commission (Hunter Commission), established in 1882, emphasized the expansion of primary education to provide

educational opportunities to the marginalized sections of society. Furthermore, the Hunter Commission also mentioned initiatives to attract girls towards education. It proposed financial assistance in the form of scholarships for girls' education and advocated for increasing the number of girls in schools and constructing hostels for them. (PATEL, 2013)

The Gokhale Proposal in 1910 urged for free education for girls aged 6-10 years, addressing the concern that only 23% of boys attended schools compared to a mere 2.5% of girls. Gokhale proposed the establishment of English-medium schools for girls and suggested penalties for parents who refrained from sending their daughters to school.

In 1913, the Government Resolution on Education Policy advocated for creating specialized curricula for girls based on their social status. It also called for increasing the number of female teachers and improving higher education management in villages and small towns.

The Saddler Commission in 1919 made extensive efforts to improve the educational status of women. It recommended the establishment of special schools for Muslim women, enhancement of technical and business education, and promotion of professional education for women.

The University Education Commission in 1948 made several recommendations to improve higher education for women. These suggestions included providing equal facilities to women and men in universities, formulating skill-based courses, and striving to strengthen women socially.

The Kothari Commission in 1966 also proposed significant recommendations to promote women's education. These included initiating schemes to encourage women, starting educational programs for domestic workers to steer them towards education, and introducing teaching, nursing, and social service courses for women.

Apart from these committees and commissions, efforts to promote women's education were also seen in the Sachar Committee (2005-2006), the National Higher Education Mission, Five-Year Plans, and the National Education Policy. These initiatives proposed various measures, such as conducting door-to-door surveys to increase female

enrolment, providing hostel facilities, and offering free education, leading to the implementation of several significant recommendations by different governments.(Dutta, 2008)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Utilize a descriptive research design to analyze and summarize the gender distribution in higher education over the years 2010 to 2020. The primary data source will be the government’s annual reports on higher education in India, specifically focusing on statistical data regarding the enrollment of males and females in higher education institutions. Extract relevant statistical data pertaining to gender distribution in higher education from each annual report for the years 2010 to 2020. Used quantitative analysis methods to interpret and compare the gender-specific enrollment trends in higher education from 2010 to 2020. Calculate the percentage of male and female enrollments for each year to identify trends and variations over the specified period. Present the analyzed data using graphical tools such as bar charts or line graphs to visually represent the gender disparity.

In terms of numbers, India ranks third in the world for higher education system, following the United States and China. In India, higher education institutions are categorized into three main types: colleges, universities, and nationally significant institutions, including deemed universities. The responsibility of providing education primarily lies with both government and private institutions.

During the last decade (2011-2020), there has been a significant increase in higher education institutions in India. Table 1 According to the All India Higher Education Report for 2010-11, the country had a total of 621 universities and 32,974 colleges. However, in the academic year 2019-20, the number of universities increased by 41%, reaching 1,043, and the number of colleges increased by 22%.

The Table 2 illustrates the status of rural and girls’ education institutions in higher education in India over the past ten years. The figures depict the situation in higher education institutions during this period, based on percentages. According to the data, in 2010-11, out of the total higher education institutions in India, 9.1% were exclusively girls’ education institutions, where only girls could pursue education. By the end of the decade (2010-20), this proportion increased to 10.75%. Additionally, there was a 6.28% increase in the number of higher education institutions in rural areas. Their proportion increased from 54.3% to 60.58% of the total educational institutions. It is evident from the aforementioned statistics that the Indian government and state governments have shown a significant commitment to establishing educational institutions in rural areas. Rural areas experience the highest dropout rates. The establishment of higher education institutions in rural areas has expanded opportunities for girls from rural backgrounds to access higher education in proximity to their homes.

Put Table 3 instead of table above education in India over the past decade. Upon analyzing the comparative data, it becomes apparent that

Table 1: Higher Educational Institutions in India.

Session	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
University	621	642	667	723	760	799	864	903	993	1043
Colleges	32974	34852	35525	36634	38498	39071	40026	39050	39931	42343

Source: All India Survey of Higher Education Report (<https://aishe.gov.in/aishe/gotoAisheReports>)

Table 2: Higher Education Institutions for Rural and Girls’ Education (in percentage)

Session	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Girls’ Educational Institute	9.1	10.2	10	10	10.7	11.1	9.3	11.4	10.82	10.75
Rural Educational Institutions	54.3	55	55	56	58	60	59.34	60.48	60.53	60.56

Source: All India Survey of Higher Education Report (<https://aishe.gov.in/aishe/gotoAisheReports>)



Table 3: Boys and girls in higher education during the period 2010-2020 is as follows

Session	Graduate level	Post graduate level	M.Phil	Ph.D
2010-11	Boys- 12117511 Girls- 9854749 Difference- 2262762	Boys- 1813992 girls- 1455677 Difference- 358315	Boys- 12687 Girls- 12625 Difference- 62	Boys- 48007 Girls- 29837 Difference- 18170
2011-12	Boys- 12612513 Girls - 10562437 Difference- 2050076	Boys- 1769276 Girls- 1597914 Difference- 171362	Boys- 15913 Girls- 18241 Difference- +2328	Boys- 49296 Girls- 32134 Difference- 17162
2012-13	Boys- 12918796 Girls- 10971513 Difference- 1947283	Boys- 1769101 Girls- 1679050 Difference- 65580	Boys- 13169 Girls- 17011 Difference- +3842	Boys- 55237 Girls- 39382 Difference- 15855
2013-14	Boys- 13574434 Girls- 11925891 Difference- 1648543	Boys- 1888637 Girls- 1933582 Difference- +90051	Boys- 13632 Girls- 17748 Difference- +4125	Boys- 64772 Girls- 43118 Difference- 21654
2014-15	Boys- 14467226 Girls- 12705120 Difference- 1759106	Boys- 1867142 Girls- 1982296 Difference- +115154	Boys- 14107 Girls- 19264 Difference- +5157	Boys- 69584 Girls- 47717 Difference- 21867
2015-16	Boys- 14611603 Girls- 12808847 Difference- 1802756	Boys- 1818443 Girls- 2098713 Difference- +279970	Boys- 17473 Girls- 25020 Difference- +7547	Boys- 74547 Girls- 51904 Difference- 22643
2016-17	Boys- 14933909 Girls- 13414288 Difference- 1519621	Boys- 1820564 Girls- 2187006 Difference- +366442	Boys- 16464 Girls- 26803 Difference- +10339	Boys- 81795 Girls- 59242 Difference- 22553
2017-18	Boys- 15052304 Girls- 13964046 Difference- 1088258	Boys- 1891071 Girls- 2223239 Difference- +332168	Boys- 12287 Girls- 21822 Difference- +9535	Boys- 92570 Girls- 68842 Difference- 22728
2018-19	Boys- 15203346 Girls- 14625729 Difference- 577617	Boys- 1761330 Girls- 2281192 Difference- +519862	Boys- 11623 Girls- 19069 Difference- +7446	Boys- 95043 Girls- 74127 Difference- 20916
2019-20	Boys- 15563077 Girls- 15084210 Difference- 478867	Boys- 1860163 Girls- 2452372 Difference- +592209	Boys- 9043 Girls- 17891 Difference- +8848	Boys- 111444 Girls- 91106 Difference- 26338

Source: All India Survey of Higher Education Report (<https://aishe.gov.in/aishe/gotoAisheReports>)

Table 4: Total Enrollment Ratio Between 2010 and 2020

Academic Year	Total Enrolment Ratio	Total Enrolment Ratio (Girls)	Gender Parity Index
2010-11	19.4	17.9	0.88
2011-12	22.8	19.4	0.88
2012-13	21.0	20.1	0.89
2013-14	23.0	22.0	0.92
2014-15	24.0	23.2	0.92
2015-16	24.5	23.2	0.92
2016-17	25.2	24.5	0.94
2017-18	25.8	25.4	0.97
2018-19	26.3	26.4	1.0
2019-20	27.1	27.3	1.01

Source: All India Survey of Higher Education Report (<https://aishe.gov.in/aishe/gotoAisheReports>)

the situation of women in higher education has improved considerably. The most significant fact is that there has been a substantial increase in the number of girls at all levels - undergraduate, postgraduate, M.Phil, and Ph.D. - between the years 2011 and 2020.

During the span of the last ten years (2011-2020), there has been a notable rise in the number of girls pursuing education at the levels of undergraduate, postgraduate, M.Phil, and Ph.D. Specifically, during this period, the number of girls increased by 53% at the undergraduate level, 68% at the postgraduate level, 41% at the M.Phil level, and an astonishing 200% at the Ph.D. level.

An important revelation from the data analysis is that since the academic year 2013-14, the number of

girls at the undergraduate level has surpassed that of boys. In the academic year 2011-12, the number of boys pursuing undergraduate education exceeded girls by more than 358,315. However, in the academic session of 2019-20, the number of girls surpassed boys by 592,209 at the undergraduate level. Similarly, at the M.Phil level, the number of female students was higher in the year 2020 compared to their male counterparts.

The above Table 4 illustrates the moderate Total Enrolment Ratio in higher education in India between the years 2010-2020. According to the figures presented in the table, it can be observed that there was a 7.7% increase in the total enrolment Ratio in higher education in India from the academic year 2010-11 to 2019-20. During this period, there was a notable 9.4% rise in the enrolment of females in higher education.

Furthermore, in terms of the Gender Parity Index, India has achieved a historic success of 1.01% during the same period. When the Gender Parity Index reaches 1, it is considered to be a considerably improved situation in terms of gender equality.

CONCLUSION

The trajectory of higher education in India over the past decade has witnessed a notable shift, prominently marked by a remarkable increase in the enrollment of female students. This paradigmatic shift is a testament to the evolving societal perspectives and growing awareness regarding the significance of empowering girls through education.

The analysis of the presented data in this research conclusively demonstrates a significant positive trend in girls' education during the last decade (2011-2020). Over this period, there has been a substantial increase in the number of girls pursuing education, particularly at the postgraduate and MPhil and Ph.D levels, compared to boys. This positive trend is reflective of the collective efforts made by stakeholders, including government initiatives, educational institutions, and societal awareness campaigns, to bridge the gender gap in higher education. Girls are now embracing academic pursuits at advanced levels, demonstrating their determination and capability to excel in diverse fields. Moreover, the attainment

of a Gender Parity Index of 1.01 further accentuates the progress towards achieving gender equality in the higher education landscape. However, despite this encouraging growth, it is imperative to remain vigilant and address persisting challenges that hinder equal educational opportunities for all. Enhancing accessibility, ensuring inclusivity, and promoting a conducive environment for girls in higher education will be pivotal in sustaining this positive trajectory. By fostering a culture that nurtures and supports the aspirations of every individual, regardless of gender, we can create a society where higher education truly embodies the principles of equity and empowerment.

REFERENCES

- Al-Shuaibi, A. (2014). The Importance of Education. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/260075970_The_Importance_of_Education
- Ashworth, J., & Evans, J. L. (2001). Modeling student subject choice at secondary and tertiary level: A cross-section study. *Journal of Economic Education*, 32(4), 311–320.
- Associated Press. (2019, February 14). Students sue to open Yale fraternities to women. *The Times of India*, p. 20.
- Analytical Reports in International Education, 4(1), 67-86.
- Chanana, K. (2001). Female Sexuality and Education of Hindu Girls in India. *Sociological Bulletin*, 50(1), 287-317.
- Dutta, P. (2008). The Indian Education System, Kothari Commission 1964, and the National Policy on Education 1968 — A Historical Evaluation. Running Head: Indian Education System, Kothari Commission, and NPE 1968.
- Singh, N. (n.d.). *Forum on Public Policy Higher Education for Women in India-Choices and Challenges*. 1–16.
- Chanana, K. (2007, February 17). Globalisation, higher education and gender: Changing subject choices of Indian women students. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 42(7), 590–598.
- Deshpande, G. P. (2002). *Selected Writings of Jotirao Phule*. Manohar Publishers and Distributors, pp-140.
- Jyothsna, K. Y. (2016). Status of women education in India. 1 (1), 142.
- Nnabuo, P. O. M., & Asodike, J. D. (2012). Exploring Education As a Tool for Sustainable Development in Nigeria. *European Scientific Journal*, 8(10), 1–11.
- PATEL, J. I. (2013). Education System in India. *International Journal for Research in Education*, 2(2), 39–48. www.rajmr.com
- Raju, S. (2008). Gender Differentials in Access to Higher Education. In: *Higher Education in India – Issues related to expansion, Inclusiveness, Quality and Finance*, University Grants Commission, New Delhi.
- Shevtekar, S. (2002). *History of Indian Education*. Mrunmayi Publication, Aurangabad, pp-45.