

An Analysis Of Gender Gap In Education On The Basis Of Attendance Ratio – The Case In West Bengal

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Abstract:

A crucial role in determining educational motivation is played by gender. The difference in educational attainment that is found between boys and girls provides evidence that educational motivation is highly gender specific. It is argued that differential market returns to educational investment in girls and boys are important determinants of parental decisions regarding schooling. Also social considerations such as perceptions of gender roles (implicit in the sexual division of labour) and son preference (biased intra-household allocation of resources) have led to educational discrimination against the female child. The perceived difference in benefits for boys and girls has definitely led to an undervaluation of female education and this is implicit in the high female non-enrolment rates and drop-out rates at different levels of education. This study attempts to analyse the gender gap in education by considering attendance ratio. The study focuses on West Bengal on the basis of data available in NSSO 52nd round.

Keywords: gender, education, attendance ratio

Data source: NSSO 52nd round

Analysis:

Traditionally there are three important indicators which give an idea of the proportion of population that is enrolled in educational institutions at different levels. They are:

- i) Gross attendance ratio,
- ii) Age-specific attendance ratio, and
- iii) Net attendance ratio.

The gross attendance ratio and net attendance ratio are considered to be important indices of educational status and can be used to check the existence of gender disparity in the various levels of education.

Gross attendance ratio [suppose for classes I to V]

= [Number of persons attending classes I to V / Estimated population of age-group 6-10 years] x 100

Where 6-10 is the official age group for classes I to V.

Here, while the denominator consists of only the official age group, the numerator may include both over-aged and under-aged children as long as they are studying in classes I – V, resulting in over-estimation. In spite of this drawback, this indicator is widely used.

Age-specific attendance ratio [suppose for the age group 6 – 10 years]

= [Number of persons of age group 6 – 10 years currently attending educational institution / Estimated population of age group 6 – 10 years] x 100

This measure gives an idea of the proportion of persons of a particular age group attending educational institutions irrespective of the class or level in which they are studying. Thus, a seemingly high age-specific attendance ratio for the age-group, say 11-13 years [which corresponds to the official age group for classes VI – VIII] may be due to a large number of children actually studying in classes I – V but who belong to the age group 11 – 13 years.

Net Attendance Ratio [suppose for classes I to V]

= [Number of persons of age group 6 – 10 years currently attending classes I - V / Estimated population of age group 6 – 10 years] x 100

This indicator overcomes the deficiencies of both gross and age-specific attendance ratios.

The following tables present the gross attendance ratio, age specific attendance ratio and net attendance ratio respectively for West Bengal [according to NSS 52nd round data].

Table I:

Gross Attendance Ratio by broad class group in general education [West Bengal]

	Class I -IV	Class VI - VIII	Class IX-X	Class XI-XII
<u>RURAL</u>				
Male	97	60	36	19
Female	84	55	25	7
Person	91	58	31	14
<u>URBAN</u>				
Male	108	83	64	42
Female	103	75	59	34
Person	105	79	62	38

Source: NSS 52nd Round

Table II:**Age specific attendance ratio by broad age group in general education [West Bengal]**

	6 - 10	11 - 13	14 - 17	18 - 24
RURAL				
Male	69	74	44	14
Female	61	67	42	4
Person	65	71	43	9
URBAN				
Male	79	83	63	26
Female	75	83	57	21
Person	77	83	60	24

Source: NSS 52nd round**Table III: Net Attendance Ratio by broad Class-group in general education****[West Bengal]**

	Class I -IV	Class VI - VIII	Class IX-X	Class XI-XII
RURAL				
Male	68	29	10	5
Female	59	27	9	2
Person	64	28	10	4
URBAN				
Male	78	47	32	15
Female	73	49	28	12
Person	75	48	30	14

Source: NSS 52nd round

The percentage change in the age-specific attendance ratio by broad age group have been calculated and tabulated in Table IV below.

Table IV: Percentage change in age-specific attendance ratio**[based on Table III]**

Age group	Rural		Urban	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
6-11 to 11-13	+7.3	+9.8	+5.1	+10.7
11-13 to 14-17	-40.5	-37.3	-24.1	-31.3
14-17 to 18-24	-68.2	-90.5	-58.7	-63.2

A sharp break can be identified in the age-specific attendance ratio, for both males and females, in both the rural and urban areas, specifically in the age group 11-13 and 14-17. For the rural males the attendance falls by 40.5% and by 24.1% for urban males. This break may be due to the fact that they join the labour force after attending primary school [if at all] to earn income for the household. A similar break is noticed for females both in the urban and rural areas, though the fall is more in case of the rural females. The reason behind such a fall in attendance ratio is however different for girls. They have to participate in regular household chores. They have the responsibility of looking after younger siblings, particularly if the mother goes out for work and they also participate in other economic activities to earn additional income for the family. The attendance ratio further falls in the age group 14 -17 and 18-24. For rural females it falls by as much as 90%. The sharp fall in the attendance ratio in this age group can be directly related to the custom of

marriage, which greatly reduces the possibility of girls continuing to study, the problem being more acute in the rural areas.

As is evident from the above table, beyond the stage of primary education, female attendance rates sharply decline compared to that of males. Factors like early marriage, distance to school, reluctance of parents to educate the girl child, acute poverty and others play a crucial role in withdrawing children from school beyond a particular level of education. This is more true in case of a girl child because there is parental motivation to continue educating the boy child as he is the future bread-winner of the family, whereas the girl would be leaving the family after marriage. In order to retain students in school, several schemes have been implemented, including mid-day meal schemes, free text books and uniforms, scholarships etc. The aim of such schemes are to create an enabling environment for children, particularly girls, to be sent to school. However, flaws in the delivery mechanism result in wastage, non-utilisation and leakages at various levels.

Development is about improvement in the quality of life of people. It is about enhancing the capabilities of people so that they can meet their material needs. Towards achieving this end, education plays a crucial role, particularly in addressing the gender gap. Education leads to empowerment. But mere availability of schools does not guarantee educational attainment, particularly for the girl children. A comprehensive strategy, that aims to make education as an instrument for basic change in the status of women, is essential. Proper implementation of policies is required to ensure enrolment and attendance in schools, particularly for the girl children in rural areas. In this context Panchayats and the NGOs can play a very crucial role.

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