

# **WOMEN ENROLMENT: EXISTING TRENDS IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

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## **Abstract:**

Education is a much generalized term consisting of various stages from schooling or elementary education to development of specialized skill and competence. Specialized skill, knowledge and competence come through Higher Education. By attaining Higher Education the individual becomes efficient enough to combat social, economic, moral and cultural issues. In India “Right to Education” has become the rule of the land but still Higher Education is still to achieve a lot. The major glitch is the gender disparity with regards to individuals willing to attain Higher Education. The norms of the patriarchal society even during the 21st century debar women from making up for Higher Studies. The gender gap is truly evident from the Higher Education enrolment ratio for men and women. The stereotype in opting for faculties for Higher Studies also indicate that field of study has also become gender specific. This paper will therefore specifically focus on the enrolment aspect of Higher Education and analyze the trend prevalent with regards to gender disparity in Enrolment for Higher Education.

**Keywords:** Higher Education, Women, Enrolment, Gender Gap, Gross Enrolment Ratio & Faculty for Higher Studies.

## **Introduction**

Education is critical for the continuous growth and development of all human beings as well as the society at large. In the present scenario followed by poverty literacy is the second most important concern. Getting educated is no more an option rather it has become a necessity worldwide. It is assumed that if anyone is born as a human being he or she needs to be educated to become a better person who in turn will make valuable additions to their own life and to the society.

In India special efforts are being made by the Government to ensure that every member of the nation has easy access to education. Especially the Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-17) is considered to be a big push in terms of 'Education' where the targeted efforts would also lead towards increased enrolments.

Taking about Women 'Education' would act as a catalyst in their status upliftment. Since the Vedic period women education has been a major concern in India. Women were always denied access to education which further lead to decreased empowerment and the right to take decisions and power to lead. Major reason for all this was the social structure of the country where women were always treated as inferior to their counterparts.

Post independence the scenario changed and today we have reached a stage where the constitution of the country inhibits equal opportunity for both men and women with regards to education. The literacy Rate of women enrolment has been on a continuous increase. Even though the female literacy rate has progressively increased from 8.86% in 1951 to 18.34% in 1961 to 21.97% in 1971 to 29.75% in 1981 to 39.42% in 1991 it is still below the desired level (Maitr & Sinha, 1993). When these figures are compared with the literacy rate of males a development gap becomes evident.

Acts like Right to Education have certainly been helpful in raising the participation level of women in education. But the important issue that needs to be addressed with regards to women education is "How important is Higher Education for Women?" It is not just Schooling or secondary education that solves the purpose of individual development. Higher Education leads to a growth in the socio-economic

status of any person. Then in an Indian perspective why do Indian women attain Higher Education in lesser numbers as compared to men?

Women constitute nearly 48% of the total population and therefore they constitute 48% of the total Human Resource of the country. If this proportion of the human resource is not nurtured properly and well in time the nation will lag behind in speeding up its developmental process. Various schemes are being launched by the Government and especially by UGC (apex body of Higher Education) to promote and ensure participation of women in good numbers.

Higher Education which precedes Secondary Education leads towards development of specialized skills and knowledge. Individuals attaining Higher Education become competent enough to raise their socio-economic status and solve moral, social, economic and cultural problems. Despite of the necessity of attaining Higher Education it is generally observed that men and women in India do not attain Higher Education in the same numbers. This gender gap is evident from the enrolment figures of Higher Education.

This paper would focus on the attainment of Higher Education by Women and thus would specifically concentrate on the enrolment figures. In order to understand and analyze the status of women participation in Higher Education in comparison to men the paper will re-visit the trend of enrolment of women for higher studies.

## **Review of Literature**

Gender gap in Higher Education is a major concern and therefore has been taken up for research on various occasions. The regional disparity in enrolment in basic and elementary education (Filmer and Pritchett 1998; Kingdon 2002) gets perpetuated in the realms of Higher education (Chakrabarti, 2009).

Gender gap in Higher Education enrolment is higher in states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Orissa as compared to states like Goa and Kerala. Pro-women cultural traditions and values and the migration of young men to the Middle East have been cited as plausible factors for this gender imbalance in favour of women (Chanana 2004).

Choice of discipline for Higher Education has also been widely studied. Traditionally not only women were less likely to continue with higher studies but they were also disproportionately registered for Humanities (Chakrabarti 2009). Percentage of women enrolment in Engineering (Commerce) degree took a leap from 0.2 (0.6) per cent in 1950-51 to 22.3(36.7) per cent in 2002-03 (Chanana 2007). In commerce discipline as well percentage increased from 0.5 per cent in 1950-51 to 15.9 per cent in 1980-81, rate steadily increasing reached till 36.7 per cent in 2002-03 (Chanana 2004).

## Objectives

The Objective of this paper on “Enrolment of Women: Existing Trends in Higher Education” is:

1. To study the Enrolment rates of Women in Higher Education.
2. To find out the State-wise Enrolment of women in Universities and Colleges.
3. To Study the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Higher Education for both men and Women for the purpose of comparative analysis.
4. To analyze the Faculty-wise distribution of women enrolment in Higher Education.

## Research Method:

Research is based on descriptive design. In order to study the Enrolment status of Women in Higher Education secondary data was collected from different resources on four major factors: Enrolment rate of Women in Higher Education, State-wise Enrolment of Women in Universities and Colleges in 2015-16, Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Higher Education for both men and Women to do comparative analysis and Faculty-wise distribution of Women Enrolment in Higher Education 2015-16.

**Table: 1 – Number of Female per hundred Male Enrolled in Higher Education In India**

Female Enrolment per 100 Male Enrolment in Higher Education	
Year	Women Enrolment rate (per 100 Males)
1950-51	13
1960-61	21
1970-71	28
1980-81	36

1990-91	46
2000-01	58
2005-06	62
2006-07	62
2007-08	63
2008-09	65
2009-10	67
2010-11	78
2011-12	80
2012-13	81
2013-14	85
2014-15	85

Source: Source: Compiled from Educational Statistics at a Glance, Ministry of HRD 2015-16

**Table No.1** shows that enrolment of women per 100 men in Higher education in India has been increasing continuously. There has been a steady increase in the past decades.

**Table: 2** - State-wise Enrolment of Women in Universities and Colleges in comparison to Total Enrolment: 2015-16

State-wise students enrolment of Women in Universities & Colleges : 2015-16				
State/UT	State/UT	Total Enrolment	Women Enrolment	% of women
1	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	6349	3445	54.26
2	Andhra Pradesh	1295329	555765	42.91
3	Arunachal Pradesh	32802	15979	48.71
4	Assam	485656	237795	48.96

5	Bihar	1364218	570024	41.78
6	Chandigarh	68456	37843	55.28
7	Chhattisgarh	395424	194254	49.13
8	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	5333	2521	47.27
9	Daman & Diu	3057	1206	39.45
10	Delhi	348338	170099	48.83
11	Goa	31208	18820	60.31
12	Gujarat	1398646	576879	41.25
13	Haryana	666936	318434	47.75
14	Himachal Pradesh	195361	105591	54.05
15	Jammu and Kashmir	233091	125761	53.95
16	Jharkhand	521601	252323	48.37
17	Karnataka	1557353	773561	49.67
18	Kerala	643822	378021	58.72
19	Lakshadweep	501	351	70.06
20	Madhya Pradesh	1527607	655231	42.89
21	Maharashtra	3055164	1386677	45.39
22	Manipur	92932	46337	49.86
23	Meghalaya	60730	30925	50.92
24	Mizoram	18710	9006	48.13
25	Nagaland	29716	15410	51.86
26	Odisha	777231	370757	47.70
27	Puducherry	53362	27643	51.80
28	Punjab	734839	376847	51.28
29	Rajasthan	1563395	721466	46.15
30	Sikkim	17867	8507	47.61
31	Tamil Nadu	2375377	1239802	52.19

32	Telangana	1206873	554780	45.97
33	Tripura	61327	26012	42.42
34	Uttar Pradesh	5748990	2759167	47.99
35	Uttrakhand	330829	159063	48.08
36	West Bengal	1576316	739449	46.91
	Grand Total	28484746	13465751	47.27

Source: UGC Annual Report 2015-16

**Table No. 2** reveals that Women Enrolment out of Total Enrolment is highest in the Union Territory Lakshadweep (70.06%) followed by the state of Goa (60.31%) and the lowest in Daman & Diu (39.45%)

**Table: 3** – The Gross Enrolment Ratio for Men and Women from 2001-02 to 2014-15

Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)			
Year	Men	Women	Total
2001-02	9.3	6.7	8.1
2002-03	10.3	7.5	9.0
2003-04	10.6	7.7	9.2
2004-05	11.6	8.2	10.0
2005-06	13.5	9.4	11.6
2006-07	14.5	10.0	12.4
2007-08	15.2	10.7	13.1
2008-09	15.8	11.4	13.7
2009-10	17.1	12.7	15.0
2010-11	20.8	17.9	19.4
2011-12	22.1	19.4	20.8
2012-13	22.7	20.1	21.5
2013-14	23.9	22.0	23.0
2014-15	25.3	23.2	24.3

Source: Compiled from Educational Statistics at a Glance, Ministry of HRD 2015-16

**Table no. 3** shows that The GER of Women in Higher Education has been increasing continuously over the years from 6.7% in 2001-02 to 24.3% in 2014-15. But in comparison to males it has always remained less across all the years. GER of women was never more or even at par with men in past 14 years.

**Table: 4 – WOMEN ENROLMENT: FACULTY-WISE: 2015-2016**

S.No.	Faculty	Women Enrolment	Percentage to Total Enrolment
1	Arts/Oriental Learning	5539097	41.13
2	Science	2685403	19.94
3	Commerce / Management	2141673	15.91
4	Education	680953	5.06
5	Engineering / Technology	1360021	10.10
6	Medicine	676162	5.02
7	Agriculture	65640	0.49
8	Veterinary Science	9879	0.07
9	Law	159216	1.18
10	Others	147707	1.10
	<b>Total</b>	<b>13465751</b>	<b>100.00</b>

*Source: University Grants Commission Annual Report 2015-16, New Delhi (Provisional).*

According to Table No. 4 the highest women enrolment is under the faculty of Arts/Oriental Learning and with lowest in the faculty of Law, Agriculture & Veterinary Science.

**“Right to Education”** provides for educational opportunity to all citizens of India irrespective of social and economic status, cultural and age factors. Gone are the days when greater attention was given to schooling by the society as well as by the Government and when the budgetary allocation to Higher Education was kept on declining steadily in comparison to overall outlays (John 2012). This decline happened over the nine plan period till 2006. It was the Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012) which was even called the Educational Plan where the Government announced a big push through a fourfold increase



in the overall outlays for education including a nine fold increase for Higher Education. But with the end of the Eleventh Plan the same objectives are now in the hands of the Twelfth Plan (2012-2017) (John 2012).

It is essential that in order to combat the socio-economic, cultural and moral issues people attain Higher Education. Where primary and Secondary Education creates awareness, resolve queries and generate discipline taking it further on the same lines Higher Education leads to the development of specialized skill, knowledge and competence to deliver what one is meant to. Thus, schooling cannot be referred to as complete education. It is necessary that one attains Higher Education in order to add value to his or her own life and deliver their services for the development of the nation.

Despite of Higher Education being considered necessary for all it is clearly evident from the data available that there have been major gender gaps with regards to getting enrolled for Higher Studies where in the enrolment percentage of women have always been less in comparison to men. Simple data on the enrolment rate of women in comparison to total enrolments done from 2000-01 to 2014-15 (Table: 1) shows that enrolment of women for Higher Studies has been increasing continuously but at a very slow pace. The enrolment rate also makes it evident that a major proportion of the enrolment across all the years includes men not women. Therefore, the increase in women enrolment rate is not amplified enough to reduce the gender gap.

Surprisingly the gender gap in enrolment for Higher Education where women have been lagging behind is not identical across the country. The data available on the State-wise and Union Territory enrolment (Table: 2) of women for Higher Education shows that Lakshadweep (70.06%) and Goa (60.31%) are the leading states with highest number of women enrolled. On the contrary Daman & Diu (39.45%) has the lowest rate. Other States like Kerala, Chndigarh, Haryana, Himanchal Pradesh and Union Territory like Andaman & Nicobar Islands show a higher rate of women enrolment in comparison to national average. But states Bihar, Gujrat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Telangana, Tripuraand West Bengal show a gloomy picture where women enrolment is below the national average. All the states analyzed are part of the same nation then why can't they strive to compare with the high scorer states like Goa and Union Territory like Lakshadweep. It is essential for the states with low rate of women enrolment to realize that the age old notion of not giving importance to female education and considering females as liabilities is

over. If these states can afford to male enrolment then they can even endeavor to promote and increase women enrolment. The best example in front of them is Lakshadweep, Goa and Kerala.

Clearer picture on the enrolment is captured through the Gross Enrolment Ratio or GER. GER is the percentage of those enrolled for a particular educational level or stage out of a given population group. Thus, in order to have a better understanding of the women enrolment status the data on GER was analyzed. The available data on GER (Table: 3) shows that the total GER has been increasing 2001-02 to 2014-15. Simultaneously there has been a continuous increase in the GER for women where the highest rate if increase is recorded from 2013-14 to 2014-15. It is inspiring as a nation to see that GER has been increasing continuously over the years. This consistence increase in itself is a signal that women and society are realizing the value of Higher Education for Females. Out of the total women eligible for Higher Education more and more women are striving for higher studies by getting themselves enrolled. But still the gender gap between men and women GER exists. Efforts need to be made to decrease these GER gender gaps.

Higher Education entails different Discipline or Faculties in itself and people taking up higher studies can opt for any field as per their interest and capability. Therefore, the trend analysis on the enrolment of women for Higher Education would certainly take into account the Faculty-wise enrolment of women into different fields. The available data (Table: 4) of 2015-16 makes it evident that Humanities signified as Arts/Oriental Learning is the choice of the majority of women aspiring for Higher Education. Highest number of enrolment is under the discipline Arts followed by Commerce/Management & Science. But as compared to these figures enrollment in professional and technical courses like Engineering/Technology, Medicine & Law are extremely less. These difference which are not marginal rather huge indicate that women have to work hard to break the stereotype that certain fields like Engineering & Technology are not meant only for men. These Faculties of Higher Education should be chosen by women as per their own interest, career prospects & capabilities as with the help of Higher Education women would give a direction to their career and will be ready to make value addition to their lives and society at large. Therefore, Faculties of higher Education should never be divided on the basis of gender. It is collective responsibility of the family members, well wishers and society at large to help women choose the right faculty for their Higher Education in order to help them attain their goals in life.

## **Conclusion:**

The enrolment rate of women in Higher Education clearly shows that improvement has happened over the years with regards to considering specialized education as an important part of 'Women Development'. But the picture still remains bleak. Factual indicators like Gross Enrolment Ratio make it evident that women are moving on the path of attaining Higher Education but the rate at which it is happening is not robust enough to cover the gender disparity and lead the nation towards sustainable development. Out of all the literate women only a handful have obtained specialized education to acquire economic independence, for majority, literate women receive education only to become more eligible for marriage (Johnson & Johnson, 2001).

Society at large both at the rural and the urban level will have to understand that today women constitute 48% of the total population and if this 48% is debarred from attaining specialized skill, knowledge and develop caliber to deliver their best, a huge amount of Human Resource will go waste and this will ultimately act as a major hurdle in the development of the nation. It is essential that every girl child is given complete school education and once that is through she is enrolled timely for Higher Education as per her competence and interest. It is a pre-requisite for the socio-economic development of the women and for the society at large. Fully knowing that the efficient Human Resource is essential for the development of the nation Government and allied Ministries are trying level best to provide ample opportunities for Higher Education to Young India then what restrains us from getting our women enrolled for Higher Studies and give more meaning to their life when we can do the same of our male lot.

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