

Status of Gender Disparity in the Districts of North Bengal

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Abstract:

Gender Disparity or the Gender Gap is one of the important issues in the field of development. The intensity of such disparity between genders is more in the developing countries like India in comparison to the developed nations. This paper is an attempt to analyze the status of gender disparity in the Districts of North Bengal in the State of West Bengal, India. The analysis of various gender based criteria like Sex Ratio, Literacy and Work Participation Rate has been taken into consideration. The analysis of the Sex Ratio for 2001 and 2011 census data shows that only three of the districts of North Bengal viz. Darjeeling, Cooch Behar and South Dinajpur have attained a positive change but the other three districts shows a negative change in sex ratio which has increased the gender gap in sex ratio thereby becoming a matter of great concern. The gender disparity in literacy has improved over the decade in all the districts of North Bengal. The analysis of disparity in work participation rate shows a huge gender gap in almost all the districts, in fact some of the districts like Darjeeling and Malda have seen a negative change in work participation over the decade. The overall findings of the analysis of Gender Disparity Index for the districts of North Bengal for literacy and work participation ratio divulges that the gender gap and disparity in literacy has improved among the districts except for the District of South Dinajpur but the improvement in work participation is unsatisfactory for all the districts.

Key Words: Gender Disparity, Gender Gap, Sex Ratio, Literacy, Work Participation.

I. INTRODUCTION

Gender and gender roles are socially learned behaviors by men and women. Gender and gender disparity thus is a social construct and exists in almost all the societies with certain degree of variations through time and space. Gender disparity or inequality between men and women prevail in all most all the walks of life be it social, economic, health, education or political. Women in the male dominated societies lack the provisions of equal right to resources, education, opportunity and employment, which has an adverse impact on the overall development of the society (Jayachandran 2014). While the problems are felt mostly by women, the costs of gender inequality cut across all of society and the economy and can ultimately harm everyone (World Bank 2001). In a country like India where female population constitutes 48.5% of the total population of the country, the existence of such discrimination between men and women become a matter of great concern particularly in relation to the overall development of the country. The country would not be able to progress be it on social, economic or political front if the major section of the country's population remains excluded. Though the constitution of India provides the legal framework for equality to both men and women, but in reality the inadequacy in the implementation of such constitutional rights and provisions has resulted in the women facing gender related discrimination in every wake of life. In fact, the women have been discriminated in both rural and urban areas of India (Dube et. al. 1986; Chen 1993; Agarwal 1994 and Panda 2000). The existence of discrimination on the basis of gender is a matter of grave concern as it affects not only the economic development of the society but also affects the social and individual well being of the women.

Taking into account the problems of gender inequality in India, the present paper tries to see the status of gender disparity and the trend of disparity among the districts of North Bengal. The Global Gap Index examines the gap between men and women in four fundamental categories: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival and political empowerment. The present study has taken into consideration the female literacy rate, sex ratio and female work participation rate to see the gender disparity or gender gap in the region.

II. ABOUT THE STUDY AREA:

The area selected for the present study includes the districts of North Bengal that is the part of West Bengal located at the North of River Ganga. North Bengal is consisted of seven districts they are Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, Malda, North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur and recently created Alipurduar. For the present study Alipurduar district has not been included as the study is based on the census data till 2011, and Alipurduar was created only on 25th June 2014. Geographically the districts of North Bengal is divided into Hill Region, Tarai and Doors region and plain region, extending between 25°01'N- 27°20'N and 87°E- 90°E.

III. DATA SOURCE AND METHODOLOGY:

The present study is based on the secondary data, particularly to analyze the status of gender gap or disparity among the districts of North Bengal in India. Three basic criteria like sex ratio, literacy and women work participation ratio has been taken into consideration. The data for the analysis has been obtained from the District Census Handbooks of concerned districts and district Statistical Handbooks. To understand the status of inequality between men and women in the districts the changes in the sex ratio in various census years have been calculated. The Sex ratio is considered as number of females per 1000 males in population. The Gender Gap in the considered criteria is derived as the difference between the male and the female. Sopher's Gender Disparity Index has been applied for calculating the disparity index.

$$\text{(Disparity Index) } DI = \log\left(\frac{x^2}{x^1}\right) + \log\left(\frac{100-x^1}{100-x^2}\right) \quad (\text{eq. 1})$$

Where x^2 is taken for male and x^1 is for female.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION:

To understand the status of Gender Disparity or Gender Gap in the Districts of North Bengal, three basic criteria has been taken into consideration, they are: Sex Ratio, Literacy and Female Work Participation. The analysis and the result of the mentioned criteria are as follows:

4.1: Sex Ratio:

Sex Ratio is one of the best indicators of Gender Disparity, particularly in a male dominated society like our Indian society. It is a known fact that birth of a girl child is not desired in many parts of India because of the existence of dowry during the marriage of the girl and also the belief that the girl will not be able to continue the progeny of the family. Because of such bias attitude the Sex Ratio in India varies from one place to another and also from one group of people to another group. But the recent census results show positive changes in Sex Ratio for the whole Country. According to 2011 census the sex ratio of India is 943 females for 1000 males. Likewise the analysis of the sex ratio for the Districts of North Bengal based on the census data for the period of 2001 to 2011 shows unsatisfactory results except for Darjeeling and South Dinajpur districts (Figure 1). Both Darjeeling and South Dinajpur district has experienced a positive change in sex ratio (Table 1). It is worthy to note that Darjeeling district according to 2011 census has the Sex Ratio of 970 females for 1000 males, which is more than the country's sex ratio for the same census year. The important and unexplained reason for such high positive change in the sex ratio of Darjeeling district is the gender neutral attitude of the people living in the hill areas of the district. The people generally tend to give equal treatment to a girl child and welcome the birth of one

On the other hand in the districts like Malda, Jalpaiguri and North Dinajpur a negative change in the sex ratio has occurred over the decade. North Dinajpur as per 2011 census has only 938 females per 1000 males, which is the lowest among all the districts. The perception that the birth of a male child as a security during the old age and females to be the wealth of others, could be one of the reasons for such disparity in sex ratio to occur.

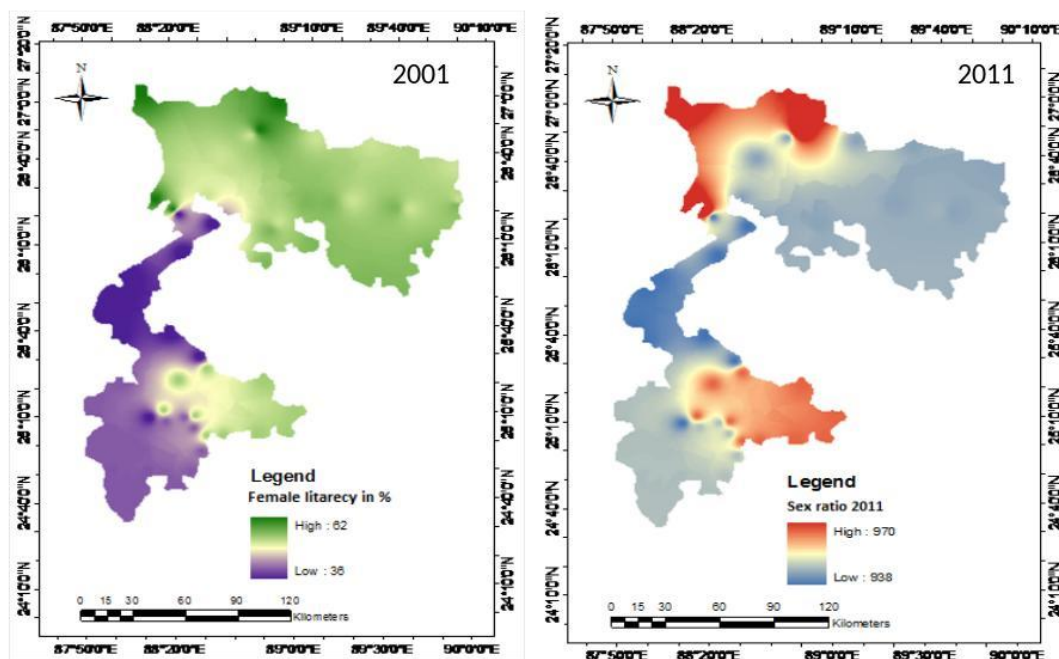


Fig. 1 Sex ratio

Table 1: District-wise decadal change in Sex Ratio

Districts	Sex Ratio		Change in Sex Ratio
	2011	2001	
Darjeeling	970	937	+33
Jalpaiguri	942	949	-7
Cooch Behar	943	942	+1
Malda	944	948	-4
North Dinajpur	938	939	-1
South Dinajpur	956	951	+5

Source: Census of India, West Bengal Series

4.2: Literacy:

Literacy is the indicator of educational status of the place. Education on the other hand is a cornerstone for building a better society. Education, in reality encompasses the power to eliminate the evils of economic backwardness, social problems, health problems, as well as political instability. Thus education is a human right for men and women. For a country like India education is the base for socio-economic development. But women in India are deprived of such human right and as a result we see the existence of low literacy rate for the country which is 74.04% as per 2011 census. To understand the status of literacy and gender disparity in the literacy among the districts of North Bengal following criteria has been considered.

4.2.1: Decadal Growth Rate in the Percentage of Female Literacy among the districts of North Bengal:

The analysis of the female literacy changes over the decade for the districts of North Bengal as per 2001 and 2011 census shows positive results which gives a ray of hope for the whole region. Districts like South Dinajpur and Darjeeling has acquired a commendable growth in the female literacy over the decade. According to 2011 census the female literacy for Darjeeling is 73.33 % which is the highest in the region followed by South Dinajpur which has made a tremendous progress from 54.28% in 2001 to 72.43% in 2011. North Dinajpur and Malda have the low female literacy rate i.e. 52.17% and 56.96% as per 2011 census. But it is important that even these districts have experienced a positive change in female literacy over the decades (Table

2). Such positive change in the female literacy gives better scope for the improvement and enhancement of the same which on the other hand may be highly beneficial for the development of the whole region.

Table 2: District- wise Decadal growth rate in the percentage of female literacy

Districts	Female Literacy Rate in %		Change in Female Literacy in %
	2011	2001	
Darjeeling	73.33	62.94	10.39
Jalpaiguri	66.23	52.11	14.12
Cooch Behar	68.49	56.12	12.37
Malda	56.96	41.25	15.71
North Dinajpur	52.17	36.51	15.66
South Dinajpur	72.43	54.28	18.15

Source: Census of India, West Bengal Series, 2001 &2011.

4.2.2: District-wise percentage of male female literacy and Gender Gap in literacy in North Bengal:

The analysis of the status of male female literacy and gender gap in the literacy among the districts of North Bengal shows that the percentage of male and female literacy is high in the districts of Darjeeling which is 85.61% and 73.33% as per 2011 census, followed by South Dinajpur. Percentage of Male literacy is comparatively high in all the districts than the percentage of female literacy creating a huge gender gap in literacy. A huge gap is observed in case of Cooch Behar where male literacy is 80.71% and female literacy is only 68.49 % followed by Jalpaiguri where male literacy is 79.95% and female literacy is 66.23% respectively (Figure 2). In the districts like Malda and North Dinajpur percentage of both male and female literacy is comparatively lower than other districts. It is important to note that even though the female literacy rate has improved within the decade in the whole region of North Bengal but the gender gap or the disparity in education still prevails among all the districts with certain degree of variation, which clearly indicates that till today the women in the region are not getting the equal right to education as their male counterpart. Thus such gender based disparity in education requires an immediate attention for the development of region as well as for the country as a whole.

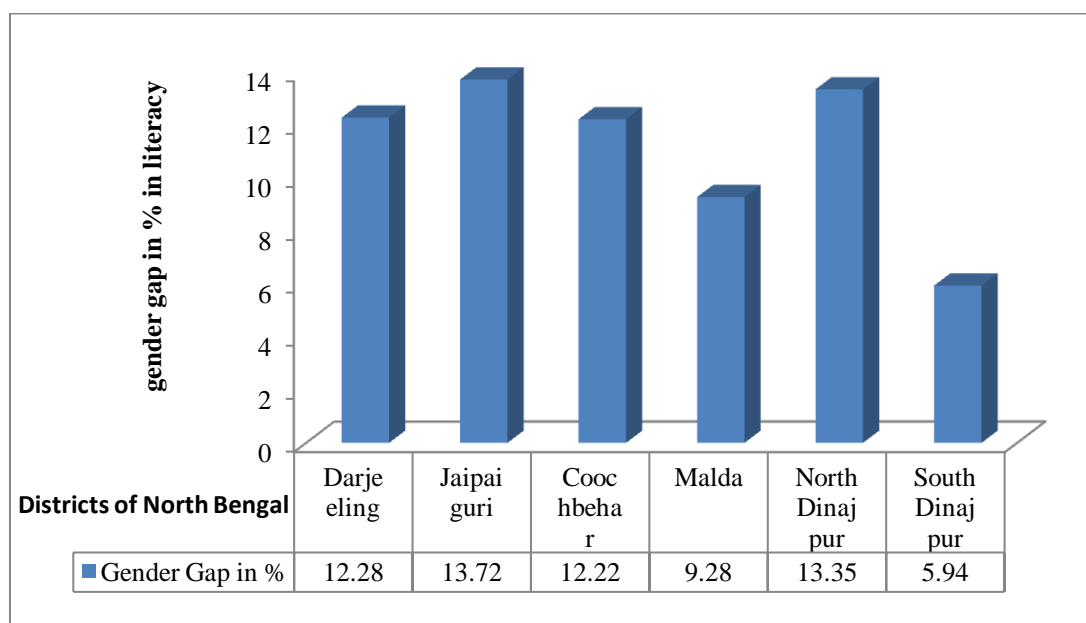


Figure 2: District-wise percentage of Gender Gap in Literacy as per 2011 census

4.3: Work Participation:

The work participation of a country basically means the proportion of working population to the total population. Such proportion of working population is the best indicator of the economic status of the country or the region. But the involvement of the both men and women in the economic activities or the employment is the matter of concern. Women make up a little less than half of the country’s population in India according to 2011

census (48.5%), but their economic participation is far less than its actual potentiality. Employment opportunity is one of the important grounds for gender discrimination in India. According to 2011 census report of India the female work participation rate is just 25.51% against the male work participation rate of 53.26%. Huge difference between the male and female work participation rate for the country gives the clear picture of gender discrimination against the women particularly in employment opportunity.

4.3.1: District-wise male female work participation rate and gender gap in work participation rate in North Bengal:

The analysis for the work participation rate for the districts of North Bengal for the 2011 census reveals that the total work participation rate for male is highest in the districts of South Dinajpur and Cooch Behar, which is 58.28 and 58.24 respectively (Figure 3). The highest female work participation rate is observed in South Dinajpur that is 24.84 (Table 4). The analysis of both male female work participation rates for the whole of North Bengal shows a pathetic situation for the whole region. Amongst all the criteria selected for the analysis the work participation rate shows a huge gender gap or disparity among all the districts of North Bengal. The highest gender gap in work participation is observed in case of Cooch Behar district.

Table 3: District-wise male female work (Main and Marginal) participation rate and gender gap in work participation rate.

Year	Name	2011		
		Male	Female	Gender Gap
2011 census	Darjeeling	51.17	22.44	28.73
	Jaipaiguri	55.03	22.31	32.72
	Coochbehar	58.24	20.67	37.57
	Malda	52.96	23.31	29.65
	North Dinajpur	51.55	18.96	32.59
	South Dinajpur	58.28	24.84	33.44

Source: Census of India, West Bengal Series, 2011.

4.4: Gender Disparity Index for the districts of North Bengal

The gender disparity index for the literacy and work participation rate for 2011 census for the districts of North Bengal has been calculated using Sopher’s Disparity Index (Figure 4). The result of the analysis (Table 5) shows that the disparity index for literacy is comparatively better in all the districts which means that the gender disparity is relatively low in the field of literacy, whereas, the disparity index for work participation rate is comparatively high among all the districts which indicates a huge gender disparity in work participation among male and female due to less employment opportunities for the women in the districts.

Table 4: District-wise gender disparity index in literacy and work participation ratio in North Bengal

Census Year	Districts	Variables	Male	Female	Disparity Index
2011	Darjeeling	Literacy Rate	85.61	73.33	0.33
		Work Participation Rate	51.17	22.44	0.55
		Literacy Rate	79.95	66.23	0.30
		Work Participation Rate	55.03	22.31	0.63
	Malda	Literacy Rate	80.71	68.49	0.28
		Work Participation Rate	58.24	20.67	0.72
		Literacy Rate	66.24	56.96	0.17
	North Dinajpur	Work Participation Rate	52.96	23.31	0.57
		Literacy Rate	65.52	52.17	0.24
		Work Participation Rate	51.55	18.96	0.66

	South Dinajpur	Literacy Rate	78.37	72.43	0.13
		Work Participation Rate	58.28	24.84	0.63

Source: Census of India, West Bengal Series, 2011.

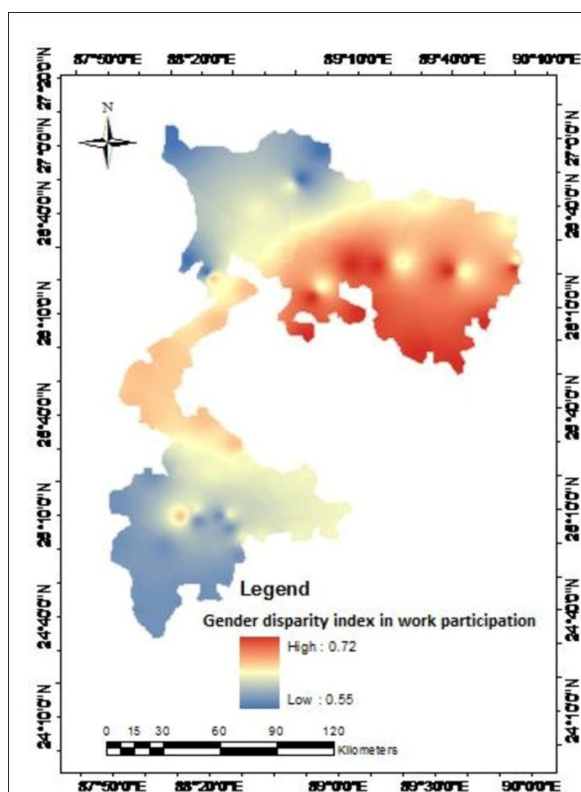


Fig. 3 Gender disparity index in work participation

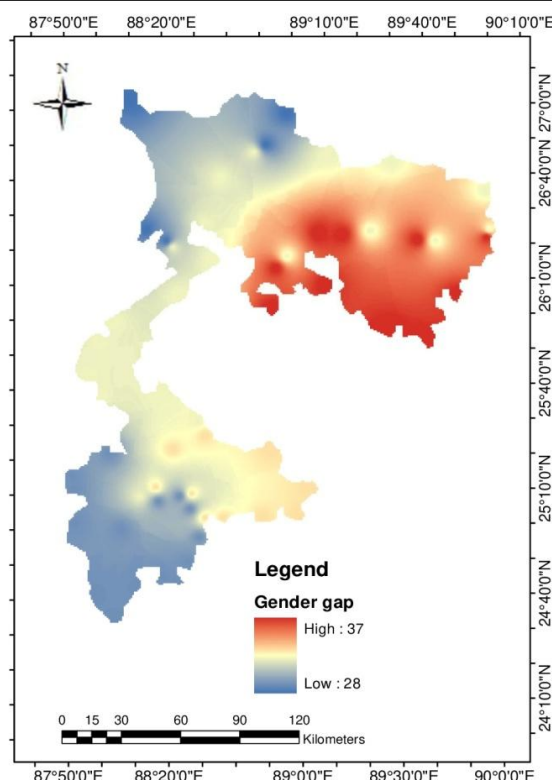


Fig. 4 Gender Gap

V. CONCLUSION:

The present study for analyzing the status of gender disparity or the gender gap in the districts of North Bengal considering three main criteria that are Sex Ratio, Literacy and Work Participation Rate shows that there have been both positive and negative changes in the sex ratio for the recent census year in the districts of North Bengal. A positive change is observed in case of female literacy rate among all the districts, which means that the women are also getting opportunities of education even though there is the existence of gender disparity in literacy. But the female work participation rate shows very unsatisfactory result for all the districts. The gender disparity index for work participation rate thus is high indicating a high degree of gap between male and female workers in all the districts. The comparative analysis like this among the districts of North Bengal shows that the status of gender disparity is highly variable among the districts due to many reasons. It is clearly visible through the analysis that some of the districts are lagging behind in all the considered criteria which directly affect the status of the region. Looking after all the findings it can be said that the districts of North Bengal still faces the problem of gender disparity even in the basic necessities of life. The gender disparity study like this can help the authorities and policy makers to focus on the problem areas and address the same for the complete development of the area.

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