

Gender Disparity in Literacy Level among Scheduled and Non-scheduled Population: A Case Study of Bankura District, West Bengal (India)

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Abstract

Gender disparity in the level of literacy and educational attainment of scheduled and non-scheduled population may be the 'cause and the effect' of the differentials between their levels of socio-economic conditions and cultural orientation. In Bankura district, educational development has taken place unevenly in terms of gender and social groups. Even within the same segments of population, varying socio-economic status make a difference which gets further influenced by local regional characteristics at different-level. Bankura district ranks at 11th among 19 district of West Bengal (Human Development Report, 2006) with a high concentration of socio-economically backward social groups i.e., scheduled population comprising the Scheduled Caste (SC) and the Scheduled Tribe (ST) population with 32.65 per cent and 10.25 per cent respectively. Though the overall literacy rate of the district stands at 70.26 per cent but literacy rate among SC is just 53.30 per cent and the proportion is 59.18 per cent in case of STs. In comparison to national average of gender disparity in literacy (16.3 per cent, 2011 census), the district scores high i.e., 20 per cent gender gap with male and female literacy rate of 80.05 and 60.05 per cent respectively. This gender-gap is far more widening among SCs (23.82 percent) and STs (26.98 per cent). In this context, present study deals with the detailed overview of female literacy and gender gaps in educational attainment among scheduled and non-scheduled communities in a comparative framework.

Keywords: 1.Gender disparity, 2.Gender-gap, 3.Literacy, 4.Scheduled population

Introduction

Literacy is the basic building block and a crucial element in the development of education in society (Katiyar, 2016). It is a tool to empower women in the wider struggle against inequality and injustice in society (Patel & Dighe, 1997). Literacy can also be described as the cause as well as the effect of development and education is the key that unlocks the door to modernisation (Mohapatra, 1993).

The literacy rate in India has raised substantially from 52 per cent in 1991 to 74 per cent in 2011 (Census of India). In the last few decades whatever the educational development India has witnessed, is seemed to have taken place differently in terms of region, caste, gender, religion, etc. Gender becomes an important factor in determining the education level of an individual (India Human Development Report, 2011). Gender disparity in literacy rates declined by 5.34 per cent points from 21.59 per cent points in 2001 to 16.25 per cent points in 2001-2011. There has been a continuous decrease in gender gap in literacy since 1991 (24.84 per cent points).

India ranks 132 out of 187 countries on the gender inequality index. The picture is very dim in case women of deprived sections of our society. As a matter of fact, while certain regions as well as sections of our society have acquired greater importance in the system of education, others stand deprived as the

- i) To compare the extent of equality in female literacy among schedule castes and schedule tribes to other non-scheduled communities.
- ii) To examine the nature of gender disparities in educational attainment in general as well as scheduled vs. non-scheduled population.

Database and methodology

The research methodology followed in the present work includes consultation of literature, data collection from secondary sources, statistical analysis, and preparation of output maps. The basic ideas about the study area were retrieved from some available books, reports and papers, etc. Secondary data were obtained from *the District Human Development Report, Bankura, 2007*; *District Census Handbook, Bankura, 2011* and *District Information System for Education (DISE)*.

To measure the disparity between different social groups, 'Co-efficient of Equality in Education' has been used. Victor S. D'Souza (1980) evolved this formula for the measurement of educational inequalities among Scheduled Caste of Punjab. Here, the coefficient of equality is estimated by using the following formula:

$$Q_{cf} = [(L_{cf}/L_{of})/(P_{cf}/P_{of})] * 100$$

Where,

Q_{cf} = Coefficient of equality in literacy for SC or ST females,

L_{cf} = Literacy of SC or ST females in a particular block,

L_{of} = Literacy of Non-scheduled females (i.e. excluding SC and ST) in the same block;

P_{cf} = Female Population of SC or ST social groups,

P_{of} = Female Population of Non-scheduled social groups.

If the value of co-efficient of equality is 100, it indicates that females of SCs or STs are at par with other communities. If it is less than 100, it indicates that the SC or ST communities are lagging behind their counterparts.

To find out gender disparity, 'Sopher's Disparity Index' has been used. This method of calculating disparity has been developed by David V. Sopher (1974). According to this method:

$$D1 = \text{Log} \left(\frac{X_2}{X_1} \right) + \text{Log} \left[\frac{Q - X_1}{Q - X_2} \right]$$

Where, $X_2 > X_1$ and $Q=100$.

In this method, X_2 is taken from the variable having comparatively higher value and X_1 for the lower value. The measured value of 'D' is interpreted as- the higher the value of 'D', higher the extent of the disparity and lower the value of 'D' shows lower the disparity. In case of perfect equality, i.e. no disparity at all, the value of Disparity Index (D) will be 'Zero'.

The results of the statistical analysis were mapped out using MapInfo Professional software 8.5 and other diagrams were prepared with the help of Microsoft Office Excel 2007.

Results and Discussion

Status of Bankura District in Male-female Literacy Difference

In figure 2, a comparative bar diagram represents the existing scenario about the male-female literacy differences among the Scheduled and Non-scheduled population in district, state and national level. This difference is calculated as:

$$\text{Non Scheduled Literacy Rate} = \frac{\{ \text{Total literate population} - (\text{Total SC literate} + \text{Total ST literate}) \}}{\{ \text{Total population} - (\text{Total SC Population} + \text{Total ST Population}) \}} * 100$$

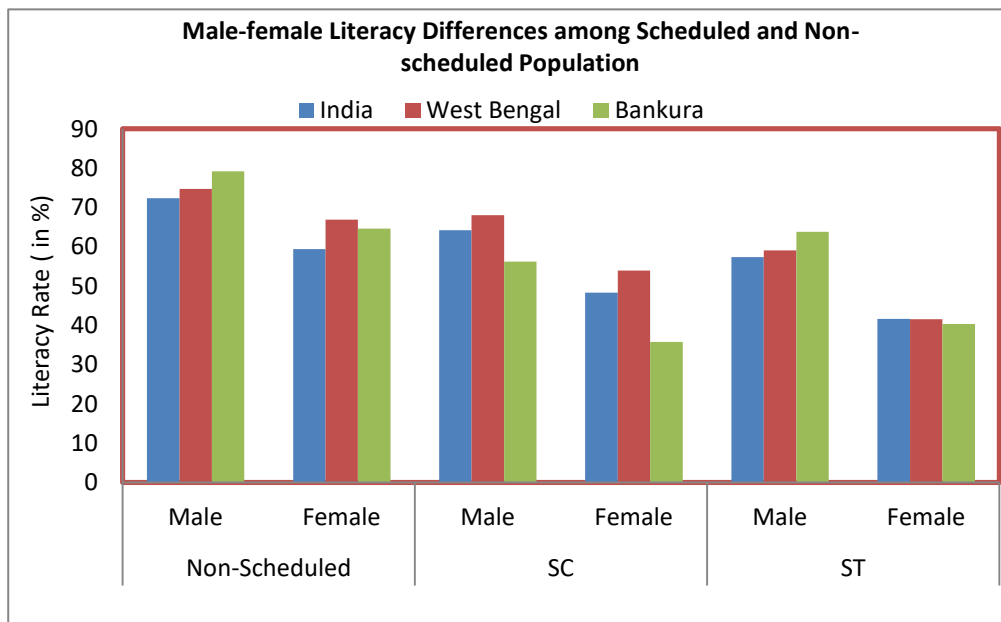


Figure 2: Male- female Literacy Differences among Scheduled and Non-scheduled Population

The diagram shows the gender differentials in literacy rate among Scheduled and Non-scheduled population on the basis of 2011 census data. It has been observed that both SC and ST females of Bankura district are less literate in comparison to national and state average. Gender difference in literacy rate is more distinct among SC's than ST's in Bankura. In terms of male literacy, Non-scheduled and ST's are well ahead of national and state average but SC males are way below both state and national average. This indicates educational progress has not been equal among different social groups.

Spatial Pattern of Literacy in Bankura

Among 22 blocks, *Kotulpur* ranks 1st in the district with a literacy rate of 78.01 per cent, while *Saltora* is at the bottom with literacy rate of just 61.45 per cent. Analysis of the spatial data (Figure 2) reveals that the blocks of *Jaypur*, *Kotulpur*, *Bankura-II* and *Sarenga* have a high literacy rate (1.042 to 1.11), while blocks of *Raipur*, *Khatra*, *Taldangra*, *Indus* and *Barjora* belong to regions of moderately high literacy rate (0.984 to 1.042). There are sporadic areas of low level of literacy (0.87 to 0.926) which is observed in *Hirbandh*, *Saltora* and *Patrasayer*. A relatively large area of central and western part of the district falls in the category of moderately low level of literacy (0.926 to 0.984).

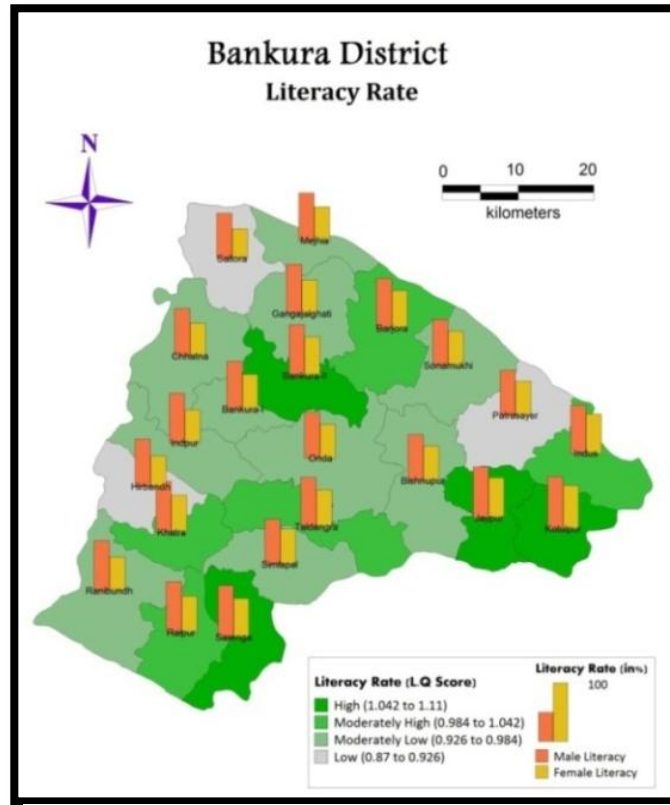
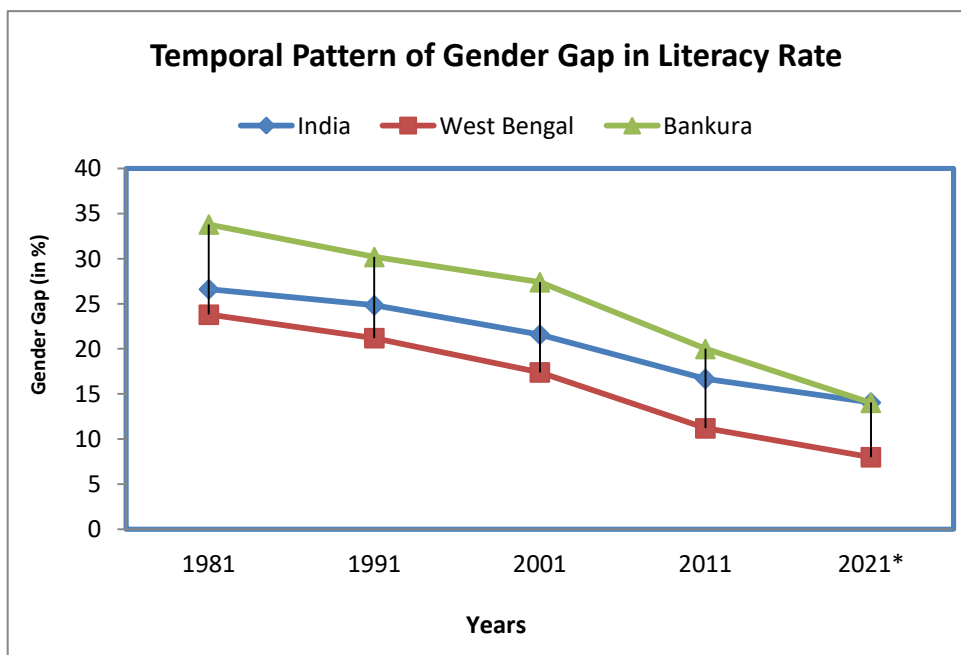


Figure 3: Bankura District: Literacy Rate

Gender Disparities in Literacy

The disparity between the genders remains a major stumbling block largely because of the neglect of the girl child, for purely cultural and social reasons. Though it was an established fact that an educated mother can open the door of development by educating her children particularly girl children.



In the district of Bankura, the overall literacy rate was 70.26 per cent and female literacy rate was 60.05 per cent (as against the male literacy rate of 80.05 per cent). Thus, the literacy status (overall as well as female literacy) of Bankura district is lower than the state level (77.08%) as well as national level (74.04%). Factors responsible for poor female literacy rates are gender-based inequality, social discrimination and economic exploitation, the engagement of the girl child in domestic chores, the low enrolment of girls in schools, their low retention rate and high dropout rate (Government of India, 1998). Apart from these, gender-gap varies across social groups and one block to the others. Gender gap is much higher among SC's, followed by ST's and Non-schedule.

Figure 4 show that Bankura always had considerably high gender gap in comparison to state and national average. A significant improvement has been observed in the last decade (2001-2011) and projected figure of 2021 shows that it might improve further to match national average of gender gap in literacy. In spite of lowering the gender gap, it is still higher to the state average. The difference between the state and district average stands at 9.8% in 2011. The following sections will briefly discuss the gender aspect of educational attainment in general and among scheduled and non-scheduled social groups in a comparative framework.

Equalities in Female Literacy among Scheduled and Non-scheduled Population

Education is an important avenue for empowering the economic and social positions of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe females who were neglected for long. Now, have a look at the literacy differences between non-scheduled and scheduled (SC and ST) females. So far the caste specific equality in the female literacy rate is concerned; it is evident from Figure 5 & 6 that blocks in the south-western

Figure 4: Temporal Pattern of Gender Gap in Literacy Rate

part of the district presenting higher equality in literacy rates with reference to non-scheduled population. Although it is to be noted that all these blocks have a higher percentage share of SC and ST population

Table 1: Equalities in Female Literacy among SC and ST in Bankura District								
Block	Non-Scheduled		Scheduled Castes (SC)			Scheduled Tribes (ST)		
	Literate Female (LOF)	Total Female (POF)	Literate Female (LCF)	Total Female (PCF)	Coefficient of Equality	Literate Female (LTF)	Total Female (PTF)	Coefficient of Equality
Saltora	16058	30556	7772	22886	64.62	4178	12806	62.08
Mejhia	14535	25751	5036	14817	60.21	382	1045	64.76
Gangajalghati	32237	52580	9661	31580	49.9	1326	3562	60.72
Chhatna	28497	47138	8526	28152	50.1	7593	20225	62.1
Indpur	22279	37243	10761	31237	57.59	3089	7486	68.98
Bankura - I	18585	29740	7149	19604	58.36	1148	3262	56.32
Bankura - II	30713	45970	7198	20831	51.72	745	1761	63.32
Barjora	43123	65949	10235	30724	50.95	534	1607	50.82
Sonamukhi	26321	40168	11067	34165	49.43	1005	2754	55.69
Patrasayer	30783	45210	13017	42459	45.03	1074	2787	56.6
Indus	33812	44767	13073	36764	47.08	612	1555	52.11
Kotulpur	41586	57462	15365	31878	66.6	1243	3041	56.48
Jaypur	31725	44913	12526	30264	58.59	612	1605	53.98
Bishnupur	26551	43183	9583	27778	56.11	2076	5920	57.03
Onda	43632	75700	14248	41889	59.01	2192	6147	61.87
Taldangra	27693	43052	7376	19360	59.23	4093	10482	60.7
Simlapal	25581	41385	6272	18031	56.27	3947	10614	60.16
Khatra	19581	30878	5208	13494	60.86	5644	12600	70.64
Hirbandh	9715	17826	3616	11146	59.53	4622	11945	71
Ranibundh	13603	24101	3291	6670	87.41	12102	28028	76.5
Raipur	26381	42843	7431	17264	69.9	10731	23931	72.82
Sarenga	17703	26731	6834	15426	66.89	5132	10483	73.92
TOTAL	664330	996782	195245	546419	53.61	74080	183646	60.53

Source: Computed by Authors (based on Census of India, 2011)

and overall female literacy rate is also low in most of these blocks (except *Kotulpur*). *Kotulpur* is the only block, where SC females are really at par with their counterpart of other castes. On the other hand, those

blocks where the inter-caste equality is low, generally the concentration of SC and ST population is also low. So, in general, it can be said that female literacy rates among SC and ST community is well below the other castes.

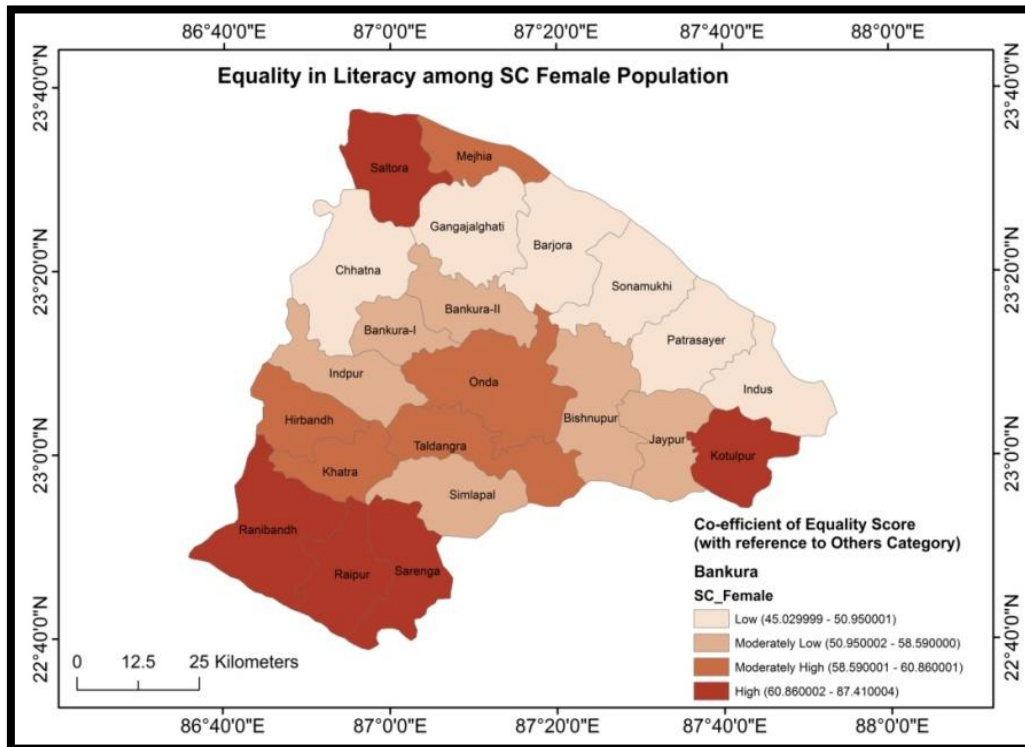


Figure 6: Equality in Female Literacy among SC's with reference to non-scheduled Community

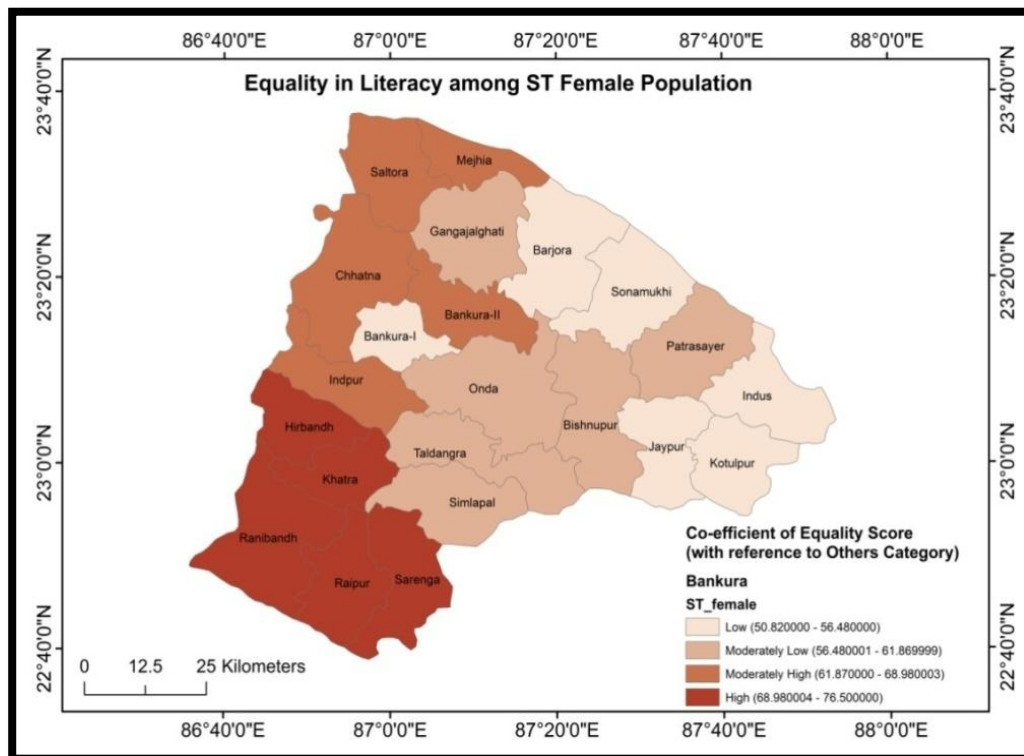


Figure 5: Equality in Female Literacy among ST's with reference to non-scheduled Community

Thus, it will be totally wrong if we perceive that scheduled females of western blocks are at par with the non-scheduled females. The apparent 'higher equality score' is the upshot of a high concentration of low

literate scheduled female population in the total population. It can be reasoned that where the symmetry of the scheduled population to the entire population is low, equality index showing higher 'equality' trend and vice-versa; although this is not the right notion barring a very few blocks (e.g. *Kotulpur*).

Sex Ratio of Enrolment in Primary & Upper-Primary Level

The figure 7 shows the sex ratio of enrolment in formal education (at primary and upper primary levels). The product of the ratio is total girls enrolled to total boys enrolled on a base of 1000. *Bankura-I* ranks first with an enrolment ratio of 997 girls per thousand boys. *Sarenga* and *Indus* in at 2nd and 3rd position with enrolment ratio of 983 and 982 per thousand boys respectively (*District Human Development Report, Bankura, 2007*). Five blocks with high (1.02 to 1.61) girls' enrolment ratio are *Bankura-I*, *Indus*, *Sarenga*, *Taldangra* and *Raipur*. On the other hand, blocks like *Saltora*, *Gangajalghati*, *Onda* and *Chhatna* show low enrolment ratio for girls as well as low female literacy rate. *Gangajalghati* is at the bottom with just 864 girls per thousand enrolled boys. *Ranibandh*, *Hirbandh*, *Khatra*, *Bishnupur*, *Bakura-II* and *Mejhia* register moderately low (-1.02 to 0) enrolment of girls. The rest of the blocks in the

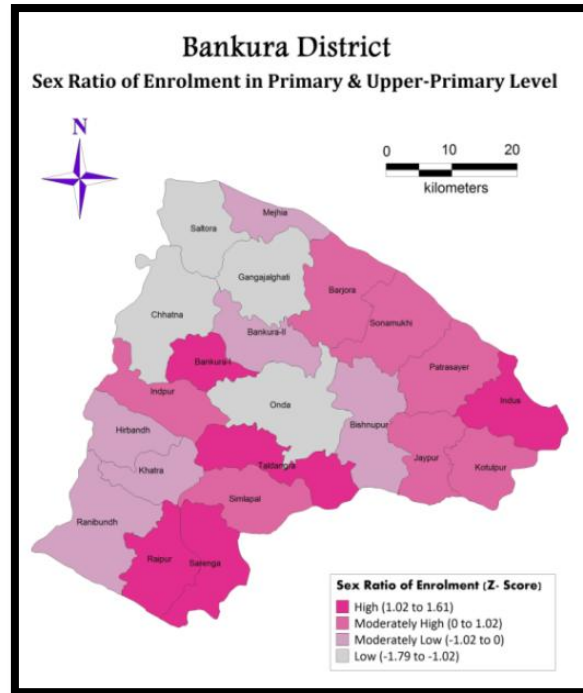


Figure 7: Sex Ratio of Enrolment

district have moderately high (0 to 1.02) enrolment of girls in primary and upper-primary level.

These blocks are mostly dominated by scheduled population (both SC and ST) and their poor socio-economic condition is one major reason behind the dismal picture of girls' enrolment. The education of Scheduled Castes has been characterised by low literacy rates, high dropout rates as well as by the persistence of highly discriminatory malpractices (Thorat, 2009). Tribal communities do not recognise the value of educating girls and the problems of access, quality, content and the devaluing of non-formal education reduce enrolment (Swamy, 2013).

Overall Gender Disparity in Literacy

Illiteracy of women in this district continues to be a major problem. Nevertheless, gender-wise literacy rates between different blocks indicates that *Ranibandh*, *Hirbandh*, *Khatra* and *Indpur* blocks have high (0.511 to 0.55) literacy disparities among gender according to Sopher's Disparity Index. Among these four blocks, *Ranibandh*, *Indpur* and *Hirbandh* blocks have more than 50% combined share of SC & ST population to total population. It signifies that the literacy rates of females belonging to Scheduled Castes (SC) and Schedule Tribes (ST) continue to be a major problem in this district. There is a noteworthy gap in enrolment of boys and girls in school education of entire district. Moderately high (0.439 to 0.511)

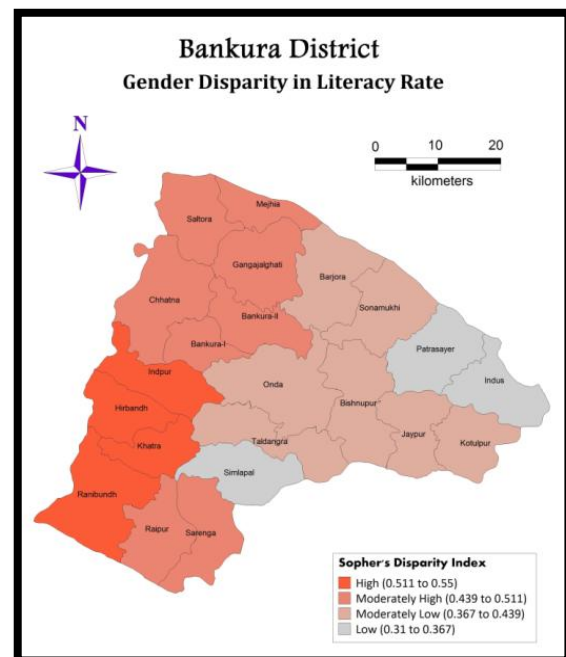


Figure 8: Gender Disparity in Literacy

gender disparity is found in Mejhia, Saltora, Gangajalghati, Chhatna, Bakura-I, Bakura-II, Sarenga and Raipur. In general, it is discovered that blocks in the easterly region of the district have relatively less gender disparity compare to western part. Indus, Patrasayer and Simlapal scores low (0.31 to 0.367) on disparity index and thus gender gap is least among all 22 blocks in the district (figure 8).

Gender Disparity in Literacy among Schedule Castes (SCs)

The gender disparity among the SC population was highest (0.53) in Hirbandh block; Patrasayer had the index value of 0.37, the lowest gender disparity in the territory during the census year 2011. Gender disparities in literacy among SC category in all the blocks in the westerly region of the district were quite high.

Widespread illiteracy, along with mass unemployment, low income and scarcity of resources, was prevalent among Scheduled Castes (Sinha, 1981). Therefore, the problem of women's illiteracy is directly connected to the problem of poverty and hence there is a serious need to pay attention to economic barriers (Dighe, 1991). Of the 22 blocks in the district, three blocks (i.e. Hirbandh, Khatra and Indpur) had high (0.484 to 0.53) gender disparity index, while nine blocks had moderately high (0.44 to 0.484) disparity in literacy among genders. Comparatively Low (0.37 to 0.396) gender disparity is found in Kotulpur, Indus, Patrasayer, Sonamukhi and Onda. There are five blocks that had moderately low (Mejhia, Barjora, Bankura-II and Simlapal) gender disparity in literacy among schedule castes population (figure 9).

Gender Disparity in Literacy among Schedule tribes (STs)

Gender Disparity in Literacy among Schedule tribe is high in comparison to non-scheduled social groups. The reasons for tribal girls non-enrolment or dropout from the school are many; her pre-occupation income, visible or invisible, non-relevance of the learning in the present day school to the needs of the tribal girls, modern education acting as deculturising agent/or alienating force in tribal societies (Behera, 2014:134).

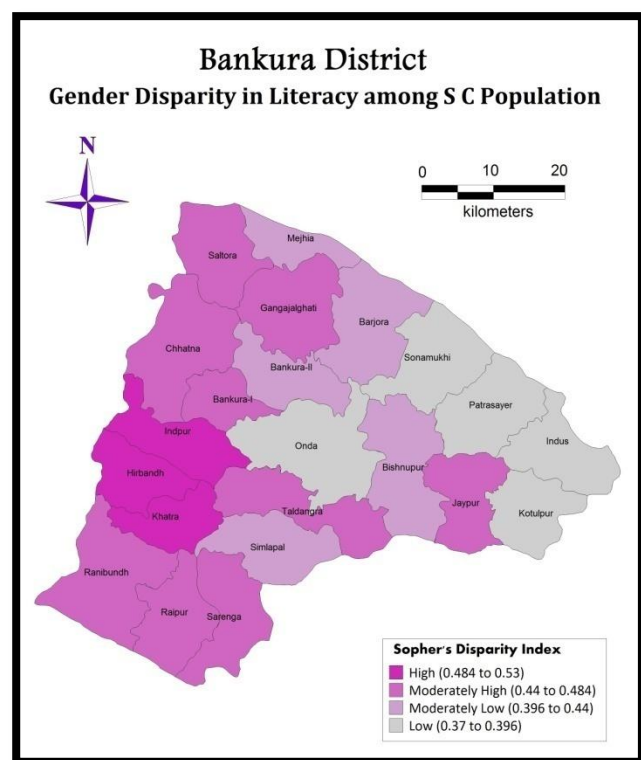


Figure 9: Gender Disparity in Literacy among SC Population

Table 2: Bankura District: Gender Disparity in Literacy Rate

Block	Over all Literacy Rate (in %)		Sopher's index value "D"	Literacy Rate among S.C (in %)		Sopher's index value "D"	Literacy Rate among S.T (in %)		Sopher's index value "D"
	Male (X2)	Female (X1)		Male (X2)	Female (X1)		Male (X2)	Female (X1)	
Bankura-I	79.12	57.87	0.44	67.38	41.72	0.46	68.13	40.39	0.5
Bankura-II	83.22	63.46	0.46	62.92	39.92	0.41	71.5	47.63	0.44
Barjora	81.01	61.81	0.42	62.78	38.56	0.43	65.04	39.01	0.46
Chhatna	77.63	53.33	0.48	60.47	35.56	0.44	70.59	42.79	0.51
Gangajalghati	79.79	55.75	0.5	61.82	35.54	0.47	68.73	42.31	0.48
Indus	78.96	64.23	0.32	62.22	40.94	0.38	66.76	45	0.39
Indpur	79.87	54.25	0.52	68.62	39.97	0.52	76.06	46.91	0.56
Joypur	83.04	65.74	0.41	71.48	47.28	0.45	69.63	43.78	0.47
Kotulpur	85	70.7	0.37	74.97	54.87	0.39	69.4	47.33	0.4
Khatra	83.43	60.33	0.52	72.04	44.57	0.51	78	50.75	0.54
Haribandh	77.8	49.86	0.55	67.25	37.67	0.53	74.13	44.14	0.56
Mejhia	77.88	54.98	0.46	64.2	39.87	0.43	62.6	41.61	0.37
Onda	75.44	55.81	0.39	61.27	39.22	0.39	64.62	40.75	0.42
Patrasayer	73.46	56	0.34	56.02	35.32	0.37	68.39	43.91	0.44
Ranibandh	81.03	55.75	0.53	78.85	56.17	0.46	77.06	48.73	0.55
Raipur	82.53	59.74	0.5	73.95	49.35	0.46	78.74	50.54	0.56
Sarenga	84.63	63.62	0.5	75.3	51.26	0.46	81.7	54.71	0.57
Sonamukhi	75.23	56.55	0.37	59.72	37.56	0.39	67.09	42.41	0.44
Saltora	73.83	48.45	0.48	64.95	39.48	0.45	61.12	37.3	0.42
Simlapal	73.86	58.09	0.31	64.09	40.48	0.42	68.72	42.02	0.48
Taldangra	80.34	61.13	0.41	68.88	44.22	0.45	70.56	44.38	0.48
Bishnupur	75.51	56.69	0.37	62.74	39.66	0.41	66.02	40.35	0.46

Source: Computed by Authors (based on Census of India, 2011)

In Bankura district, gender disparity among ST population was highest (0.57) in *Sarenga* block; *Mejhia* had the index value of 0.37, the lowest gender disparity in the district according to the census report 2011. Gender disparities in literacy among tribal population in all the blocks (except *Saltora*) in western and south-western part of the district were quite high. Of the 22 blocks in the district, six blocks (i.e. *Hirbandh*, *Ranibandh*, *Raipur*, *Sarenga*, *Khatra* and *Indpur*) had high (0.538 to 0.57) gender disparity index, while five blocks had moderately high (0.477 to 0.538) disparity in literacy among genders. These are *Simlapal*, *Taldangra*, *Bankura-I*, *Chhatna* and *Gangajalghati*. Comparatively Low (0.37 to 0.396) gender disparity is found in blocks in the eastern and north-eastern part. There are three blocks (i.e. *Kotulpur*, *Indus* and *Mejhia*) that had low gender disparity in literacy among schedule tribes population. Rest eight blocks had moderately low (0.37 to 0.417) gender disparity in literacy (figure 10). It has been observed that the *Sopher's Disparity Index* is low when overall literacy rates are high. The gender disparity indices are usually high where the concentrations of Scheduled Tribe (ST) populations are high. The reasons for the gender gap in education are similar throughout the district. Poverty has an enormous bearing on the girls' chances of schooling. When household income is limited, boys generally tend to get preference over girls for schooling. The distance of schools is another factor. Schools located in distant places keep them away from domestic work for a longer period of time. Infrastructure related factors also play an important role in motivating girls to enrol and persist in schools. Other important factors are

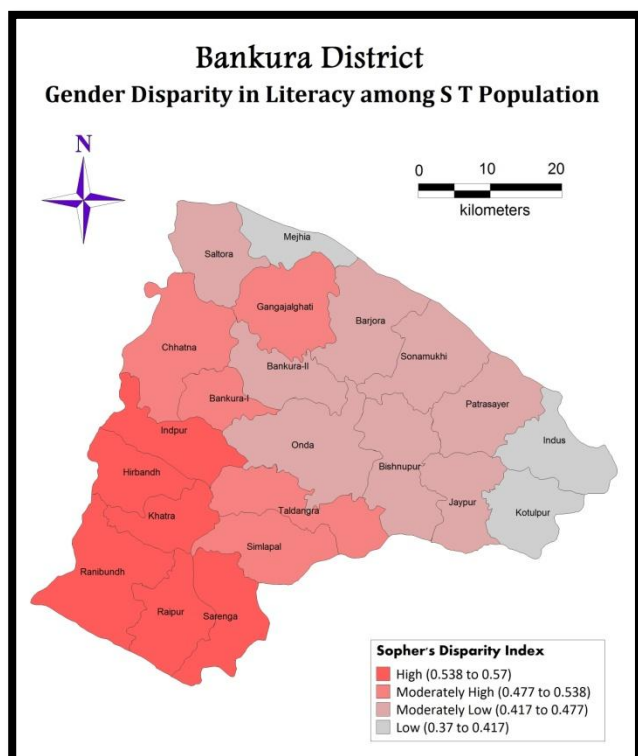


Figure 10: Gender Disparity in Literacy among ST Population

lack of qualified and committed educational instructors and relevant gender sensitive curriculum along with limited availability of toilet facility and drinking water facility within school compounds.

Conclusion

From the ongoing analysis, it is seen that girls' enrolment is high in percentage where the overall literacy rates are high. There are of course some cases where distance is a problem, but the main reason is economic. Seasonal migration is one of the major causes of drop-out and out-of-schooling in some areas of this district. Families from *Bankura-I, Chhatna, Indpur, Khatra, Ranibandh*, Simlapal blocks migrate to the Eastern district as agriculture labour in *Rabi/Boro* and *Kharif* season. Children also are compelled to go with their families. They remain detached from studies and school environment. Off late, the direct or indirect impact of economic incentives like *Kanyashree* (2013 onwards), and other employment schemes have improved the scenario to some extent in recent times. Still, there are lots of schemes for backward community's students, which are lesser known to the people of the region. Hence, more and more involvement of people in the government schemes is necessary for economic empowerment of scheduled communities which in turn will help their next generation especially girl children in attaining education at par with other castes.

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