

Enrollment in Higher Education: An Analysis of Inter-Caste Disparities in Tamil Nadu

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Abstract

Most states in India exhibit significant disparities in higher education enrollment, including Tamil Nadu. This study examines the extent of these disparities in Tamil Nadu by analyzing secondary data from the selected educational statistics of the MHRD, Government of India, over a ten-year period (2010-11 to 2019-20). The findings reveal that the Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of higher education enrollment increased by 4.34 per cent for Scheduled Caste (SC) students and 2.17 per cent for Other Backward Classes (OBC) students, while it declined by 7.49 per cent for other social groups during this period.

The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for SC and OBC students showed considerable improvement, whereas enrollment among other social groups decreased. Notably, a persistent gap remains between SC and Non-SC students in accessing higher education, though the disparity in GER has been narrowing due to the rapid rise in SC student enrollment over the past decade. The study recommends that the government implement stricter monitoring of admission processes in private higher education institutions, which have been growing rapidly in Tamil Nadu, to ensure equitable enrollment opportunities for SC students.

Keywords: Educational Inequality, Social Group Disparities, Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR), Access to Higher Education, and Affirmative Action in Education

Introduction

Higher Education is defined as the education obtained after completing 12 years of schooling or equivalent and is of the duration of at least nine months (full time) or after completing 10 years of schooling and is of the duration of at least 3 years. The education may be of the nature of General, Vocational, Professional or Technical education¹. Indian higher education system is the third largest in the world with 993 universities, 39,931 colleges, 37.40 million enrolment of students and over half a million teachers, next only to China and the United States.² However, the Gross Enrolment Ratio is low as compared to other countries, including developing countries. Critical gaps exist in the capacity and management systems of the higher education structure³. Since Indian society has been highly hierarchical in nature with nebulous perception of purity and pollution which principally known as caste system. The caste system practice structurally denied accessing the economic and social resources like land, education, employment opportunities to the underprivileged section of the society. Many studies found that there is also a large disparity in higher education between urban and rural areas, between men and women, between upper caste people and lower caste people. Tamil Nadu emerges as the top among the major states of India in term of Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education. Although, the majority of states in India have wide disparities in term of higher education enrolment including the state of Tamil Nadu. In this connection, the study tries to answer the following questions are 1) Whether the SC student enrolment in higher education is increases last 10 years? 2) Does inter-caste disparity exist in the Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education?. Therefore, the present study is designed with the main objectives are i) to analyse the growth and status of enrolment in higher education by social groups

in Tamil Nadu during the period from 2010-11 to 2019-20, ii) to analyse the inter-caste differences in Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education of Tamil Nadu.

2. Previous literatures

Higher education inequalities around the world have received a lot of research attention with different lines of research emphasizing different factors. More recently, The UGC was required to prepare a report on Approach and Strategy for the development of Higher Education during the 11th Plan (2007-2012). It is in this background that the UGC decided to sponsor about eight studies on various aspects of higher education and published in 2008. The studies were primarily focus on the issues related to expansion, inclusiveness quality and finance of higher education in India by the gender and social groups. A study on Enrolment Forecast of Higher Education for Inclusive Growth in the 11th Five Year Plan by Duraisamy dealt with the forecast of Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) by the gender and social groups from different official data. The main finding of the author has revealed that the enrolment forecast for the socially disadvantaged groups reveals that the existing disparity in GER between SCs, STs and general category will continue. The GER for SC is 7.0per cent and for ST is 4.6per cent compared to 9.7per cent for the general category. The forecast also indicates that while the current disparity would continue for the SCs it is projected to increase for the STs in the 11th. Plan period. It is estimated that 1.9 and 1.2 million additional enrolment of SCs and STs are required to catch up with the general category.

The study by Saraswati Raju, Srivastava and Sinha have focused on Inter-Social groups disparities in access to higher education in terms of Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in India by gender, caste, religion, occupation and region variation. They found that there are wide gender, caste, religion and region disparities in access to higher education in terms of GER. It is significantly note that the GER of rural women are much disadvantaged as compared to their urban counterparts, particularly, women belonging to SC are very low as compared to Non SCs followed that the Christian women have thrice as high enrolment in overall higher education as compared to Muslim women. They concluded that reservation policy for the SCs and STs has certainly altered the situation in the last two decades, although much needs to be done in order to make higher education truly inclusive.

Some other studies have tried to evaluating the effects of affirmative action policies in access to higher education in India. Weisskopf(2004), Sundaram (2006), Kale (2008), Wankhede (2008), Basant and Sen (2010) have studied on Affirmative Action in Access to Higher Education in India. They found that the vast majority of SC and ST beneficiaries of reservation policies to enroll in higher education. But there were wide gap between SC/STs and Non SC/STs students in accessing higher education over the past few decades. Authors suggested that the subsidy policy and other relief measures in name of caste reservations would definitely help the disadvantaged groups.

These studies have abundantly made it clear that the most states of India has in nature of gender, caste discrimination and inequalities in terms of enrolment in all level of higher education. The most of these studies were notified that there were inter-caste disparities in Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education in north states of India, but not much focus on caste disparity in enrolment of higher education in south states of India especially the state of Tamil Nadu. There is a need to have a detailed study on the status of enrolment in higher education with focus on Gross Enrolment Ratio by the social groups.

3. Data and Methodology

The study is based on secondary data collected from the Annual Report of Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Government of India, The data

regarding the enrolment in higher education by social groups during last 10 years from 2010-11 to 2019 – 2020.

Application of statistical Tools

The main focus of the study is to examine the relative situation of the SCs in comparison to the other social groups with respect to Gross Enrolment of Ratio of higher education. For this purpose, the collected data would be analysed with appropriate statistical tools. The Disparity Index has been used for analyzing the data.

Disparity Index (DI)*

The Disparity Index may be defined as:

$$DI = \log (X_2/X_1) + \log [(Q - X_1) / (Q - X_2)],$$

ith Enrolment of SC

Where, $X_1 = \frac{\text{ith Enrolment of SC}}{\text{Age group 18-23 of SC Population in specific period}} \times 100$ (i.e GER of SC)

$X_2 = \frac{\text{ith Enrolment of Non-SC}}{\text{Age group 18-23 of Non-SC Population in specific period}} \times 100$ (i.e GER of Non-SC)

and $Q = 100$, $i = \text{Periods } 2011, 2012, \dots, n$

4. Results and Discussion

1. Number of Enrolment in Higher education

The number of student enrolment in higher education by social groups in Tamil Nadu during last 10 years is given in Table 1. The total enrolment in higher education has registered 24.08 lakhs in which 3.05 lakhs for SC students, 12.33 lakhs for OBC and 8.51 lakhs for other social groups in 2010-11. The estimated total number of enrolment in higher education has recorded 35.50 lakhs which is estimated 68.85 lakhs for SC students, 22.52 lakhs for OBC and 5.76 lakhs for other social groups in 2019-20. It is significantly noted that there is considerably increases in higher education enrolment of SC students as compared to Non-SC students during last 10 years from 2010-11 to 2019-2020..

Table- 1: Number of Enrolment in Higher Education by the Social Groups:2010-11 to 2019-20

Years	SC	ST	OBC	Others	Total
2010-2011	305,650	17,255	1,233,776	851,839	2,408,520
2011-2012	485,297	28,780	1,729,273	861,658	3,105,008
2012-2013	503,271	24,029	1,788,263	898,604	3,214,167
2013-2014	512,813	24,376	1,822,527	880,688	3,240,404
2014-2015	540,304	27,281	1,864,823	920,473	3,352,881
2015-2016	551,677	26,456	1,834,358	822,863	3,235,354
2016-2017	603,786	29,477	1,939,833	798,255	3,371,351
2017-2018	653,800	32,668	2,076,533	677,944	3,440,945
2018-2019	634,866	30,008	2,120,858	628,464	3,414,196
2019-2020*	688,581	31,911	2,252,440	576,231	3,549,164

* Projection number of enrolments

Note: Number of enrolment in higher education including distance education and open university

Source: Source: Selected educational statistics from 2010-11 to 2018-19, MHRD, Government of India

2. Percentage of Enrolment in Higher Education

Table 2 shows that the percentage of enrolment in higher education in Tamil Nadu by social groups for the period 2010-11 to 2001-20. The student enrolment in higher education was increased from 12.69 per cent to 19.40 per cent for SCs and from 51.23 per cent to 63.46 per cent for OBCs during the period from 2010-11 to 2019-20. The enrolment of other social groups was declined from 35.37 per cent in 2010-11 to 16.24 per cent in 2019-20. The Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of enrolment in higher education was increase at 4.34 per cent for SC students, 2.17 per cent for OBC students, but it decreases at 7.49 per cent for other social groups during the past 10 years.

Data (Table 2) clearly indicate that the student enrolment in higher education were increased for SCs and OBCs, whereas the other social groups were double time declined during the past 10 years. The Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of enrolment in higher education was high among SC students as compared to Non-SC students during the reference period.

Table- 2: Percentage of Enrolment in Higher Education by the Social Groups: 2010-11 to 2019-20

Years	SC	ST	OBC	Others
2010-11	12.69	0.72	51.23	35.37
2011-12	15.63	0.93	55.69	27.75
2012-13	15.66	0.75	55.64	27.96
2013-14	15.83	0.75	56.24	27.18
2014-15	16.11	0.81	55.62	27.45
2015-16	17.05	0.82	56.70	25.43
2016-17	17.91	0.87	57.54	23.68
2017-18	19.00	0.95	60.35	19.70
2018-19	18.59	0.88	62.12	18.41
2019-2020*	19.40	0.90	63.46	16.24
CAGR	4.34	2.30	2.17	-7.49

Source: Source: Selected educational statistics from 2010-11 to 2018-19, MHRD, Government of India

* Projection percentage of enrolment

3. Gross Enrolment Ratio in Higher Education by social groups

The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education by social groups in Tamil Nadu during past 10 years is given Table 3. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education was increased from 21.68 per cent to 44.67 per cent for SCs and from 35.69 per cent to 53.33 per cent for Non-SC/STs during the period from 2010-11 to 2019-20. The Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of enrolment in higher education was increase at 7.49 per cent for SC students and 4.10 per cent for Non-SC students during the past 10 years. It is clearly indicate that the Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education was double time increased among SCs as compared to Non-SC/STs. The Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of GER in higher education was high among SC students as compared to Non-SC students during the past 10 years.

Table 3: Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Higher Education by the Social Groups: 2010-11 to 2019-20

Years	SC	ST	Non-SC/STs	Total
2010-11	21.68	23.74	35.69	32.87
2011-12	28.48	32.50	43.37	39.98
2012-13	29.99	27.55	45.67	42.03

2013-14	31.04	28.39	46.66	43.03
2014-15	33.21	32.27	48.83	45.22
2015-16	34.44	31.78	47.32	44.32
2016-17	38.29	35.97	49.53	46.91
2017-18	42.12	40.50	50.62	48.64
2018-19	41.56	37.80	51.33	49.03
2019-2020*	44.67	39.80	53.33	51.26
CAGR	7.49	5.31	4.10	4.54

Source: Source: Selected educational statistics from 2010-11 to 2018-19, MHRD, Government of India

* Projection value of GER

4. Inter-caste differences in GER

The table 4 depicted that the result of disparity index of Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education in Tamil Nadu during the period from 2010-11 to 2019-20. The disparity between the SC/STs and Non-SC/STs in terms of GER in higher education was 30 per cent for the period of 2010-11 and 16 per cent for the period 2019-20. It is considerable note that there is wide disparity between the SC/STs and Non-SC/STs in terms of GER in higher education. However, the level of disparity was declined at double time during the past 10 years

Table 4: Level of disparity in Gross Enrolment Ratio

Years	SC/ST	Non - SC/ST	Disparity index
2010-11	21.78	35.69	0.30
2011-12	28.68	43.37	0.28
2012-13	29.87	45.67	0.30
2013-14	30.90	46.66	0.29
2014-15	33.16	48.83	0.28
2015-16	34.31	47.32	0.24
2016-17	38.17	49.53	0.20
2017-18	42.04	50.62	0.15
2018-19	41.37	51.33	0.17
2019-2020*	44.43	53.33	0.16

Source: Author Computed

5. Conclusions

The findings of study reveals that the total number of students enrolled in higher education has considerable increased in Tamil Nadu during the last 10 years. It is significantly note that the enrolment in higher education of SCs and OBCs were high as compared to other social groups. The Compound Annual Growth Rate of enrolment in higher education was also high among SC student as compared to OBCs and other social groups. The study is observed that the Gross Enrolment Ratio(GER) in higher education was double time increased among SCs as compared to Non-SC/STs, but there is differences between SCs and OBCs in terms of GER during last decade. It is significantly note that the disparity between SC/STs and Non- SC/STs in terms of GER declined during the period from 2010-11 to 2019-2020, but the disparities were still remaining in getting access to enrolment in higher education for the last decade.

The study is concluded that the level of disparity between SC/STs and Non SC/STs in higher education enrolment are decline due to the more number of SC enrolled in higher education

institution as result of reservation implemented in higher educational institutions of Tamil Nadu. Although, there were evidences from the wide disparity between the SC/STs and Non-SC/STs in terms of Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education in Tamil Nadu during the period from 2010-11 to 2019-2020. Government has introduced several policies for under privileged groups like SC and ST in access to higher education, but in the absence of systematic follow these policies actually work. Although, the level of disparity was decreased as the affirmative action practiced through reservation policy for the SCs and STs has certainly altered the situation in the Government and Government aided higher educational institution, but in private educational institutions have not much enrolled for SCs and STs. Thus, the study has suggested that the Government should be concentrated in admissions to private higher educational institutions and needful of positive discrimination policies for SCs and ST in private higher educational institutions as increasing these institutions in Tamil Nadu.

Notes and References:

Notes:

¹ Annual Report “All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE)”, MHRD, 2007-08

² Annual Report “All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE)”, MHRD, 2019-20

³ Pawan Agarwal, Towards Excellence-Higher Education in India, Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER), Working Paper No.179, 2006)

* This method of calculating disparities has been developed by David V. Sopher (1974). According to this method, if X1 and X2 represent the respective percentage of value of variables of group 1 and 2 then disparity index (DI) can be calculated by the formula:

$$DI = \text{Log } (X2/X1) + \text{Log } [(Q - X1) / (Q - X2)]$$

Where, $X2 > \text{or} = X1$, and $Q = 100$

In this method of measuring disparities group 2 is taken for the variable having comparatively higher value and group 1 for that having relatively lower value. In case of perfect equality i.e. no disparity at all, the value of DI will be zero. The measured value of DI is interpreted as – higher the value of DI higher the extent of disparity and lower the value of DI shows lower the disparity.

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