

GENDER DISPARITY OF LITERACY AMONG INFORMAL WORKERS AT IMPHAL CITY, MANIPUR

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ABSTRACT

Gender disparity is a social issue that exists in most of the societies. Literacy rate is one of the key indicators of development of a country. Gender disparity in literacy is considered as one of the basic problems of the Northeastern region of India as well as Indian society. The role of informal workers in Manipur is so significant and important. The paper attempted to examine and analyse the gender disparity of literacy among informal workers by applying Sopher's disparity index based on empirical data. The analysis of the paper reveals that male-female disparity of literacy in informal worker is 0.160665 with literacy rate of 71.49 % and 78.4% for informal male and female workers respectively.

Introduction

Gender disparity is a social issue that exists in most of the societies with certain degree of variations through time and space. Gender disparity or inequality between men and women influences all attributes of life in social, economic, health, education or political aspects. 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 .

Education is another vehicle to gear up the pace of development in the region . Literacy rate is one of the key indicators of development of a country. It influences a person's daily life and range of activities of the activities. Socio-economic development of any region depends largely on its level of educational attainment. "Literacy is essential for eradicating poverty and mental isolation, for cultivating peaceful and friendly international relations and for permitting the free play of democratic process" .In 1951, UNESCO defined the term literacy as the aptitude of a person who can read and write and ability to write their daily life. The Population Commission of United Nations considers "the ability, to both read and write a simple message with understanding in any language, a sufficient basis for classifying a person as Literate." Indian census has adopted this definition. The Indian labour market is marked with high proportion of informal employment with more than 90 per cent of India's informal workforce working as self-employed and casual workers. The disturbing trend is the increasing rate of informal employment even in the organised sector . The Indian Economy is characterized by the existence of a vast majority of informal or unorganized labour employment. More than 90 per cent of workforce and about 50 per cent of the national

product are accounted by the informal economy. In Manipur, the main source of income generation is informal employment.

The National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector (NCEUS) has defined the informal/ unorganised sector as all unincorporated private enterprises owned by individuals or households engaged in the sale and production of goods and services operated on a proprietary or partnership basis and with less than ten workers. Informal workers being spread both in the organised and unorganised sector. The NCEUS also defined informal workers as “Informal workers consist of those working in the informal sector or households, excluding regular workers with social security benefits provided by the employers and the workers in the formal sector without any employment and social security benefits provided by the employers”. The First Indian National Commission on Labour (1966- 69) defined unorganised sector workforce as –“those workers who have not been able to organize themselves in pursuit of their common interest due to certain constraints like casual nature of employment, ignorance and illiteracy, small and scattered size of establishments”. The paper has attempted to examine and analyse the gender disparity of literacy on informal workers who are working in the informal sectors such as market vendors, street vendors, mobile vendors, daily wage workers, puller and potters, rikshaw drivers, cobblers, barbers, tailors, domestic helpers, loading and unloading workers, construction workers.

Gender disparity in literacy is considered as one of the basic problems of the Northeastern region of India as well as Indian society. The role of informal workers in Manipur is so significant and important. Therefore, an attempt of the present study is to explore nature of the gender disparity of literacy in Imphal city.

Dr. Kiran Devi (2011) examined the gender disparity in work participation which is based on the inter-states disparities in female work participation in India by applying Disparity Index for period of 2001 and 2011. The paper has revealed that each state has a high gender disparity, due to patriarchal mindset, unsafe work environment, and unequal job opportunities, etc. The study resulted that a significant difference undoubtedly, exist between male and female work participation in inter-states. **Sarmah & Hazarika (2015)** carried out a study on gender disparity in literacy. The analysis found that there is a nearly negative correlation between the gender disparity in literacy and the sex ratio in Assam from 1951 to 2011. **Bishal Chettri (2016)** has attempted to study status of gender disparity for literacy and work participation in the districts of North Bengal by on the basis of census data for 2001 and 2011 census by sopher’s disparity index. His work resulted that the gender gap and disparity in literacy has improved among the districts except for the District of South Dinajpur but in work participation it is unsatisfactory for all the districts . **Narender Kumar et al. (2016)** studied gender disparity in literacy based on districts level evidence from selected states of India. By applying Sopher’s disparity index, the study showed leading and laggard districts in terms of gender disparity in education and recommended policy implications for centre and state governments . **Bhavna Tiwari (2018)** has examined and analysed the disparity in literacy amongst states of India. The finding of the study shows that he male-female disparity in literacy of India is observed as 0.115289 whereas indices rural areas and urban areas are 0.141954 and 0.068706 respectively . **Samsul Hoque et al. (2019)** studied the levels of gender disparity of literacy in the district of Malda, West Benga. The study revealed that gender disparity of literacy also exists by residence (rural-urban) in the district .

Banalata Saikia et al. (2021) investigated the gender disparity in literacy rates focusing on north-east India. The study employed Sopher’s disparity index to measure the disparity level of literacy for the analysis. **Subhasis De (2022)** investigated a temporal disparity of male-

female, rural-urban, and SC-ST in literacy for India from 1901 to 2011. In his paper, the gender gap, rural-urban divide, and the Scheduled Castes-Scheduled Tribes gaps in literacy are all discovered using the Sopher's Disparity Index .

Study Area

Imphal City has been selected as the study area which is located within the territory of Manipur, a state of India. At present, it is under the Imphal Municipal Cooperation (IMC), the government of Manipur. Imphal city which is classified as the only Class I city in the state acts as a primate city and also provides livelihood of the workers of both formal and informal economy. The Imphal city is the heart as well as business centre of the state with the area of about 34.75 Sq. km located at 93.57° E longitude and 24.50° N latitude shown in figure 1. As per the Census 2011, the total population of the city is 2,68,243 of which male and female are 130,735 and 137,508 respectively. Imphal has sex ratio of 1052 females per 1000 males. The population of the city is increasing day by day due to rural-urban migration within the state.

The unique characteristic of the city is the nature of Ima Keithel called 'Women's Market'. Other noteworthy markets of the city are Paona Bazar, Thangal Bazar and others market centres. The city is classified as the administrative, commercial, historical religious and educational town as per the functional classification of town. Peculiar feature of the city is that the rivers named Imphal River and Numbul River pass through the city. Physiographically, the city being a part of central valley called Manipur Valley is surrounded by Eastern and Western Hills of Manipur.

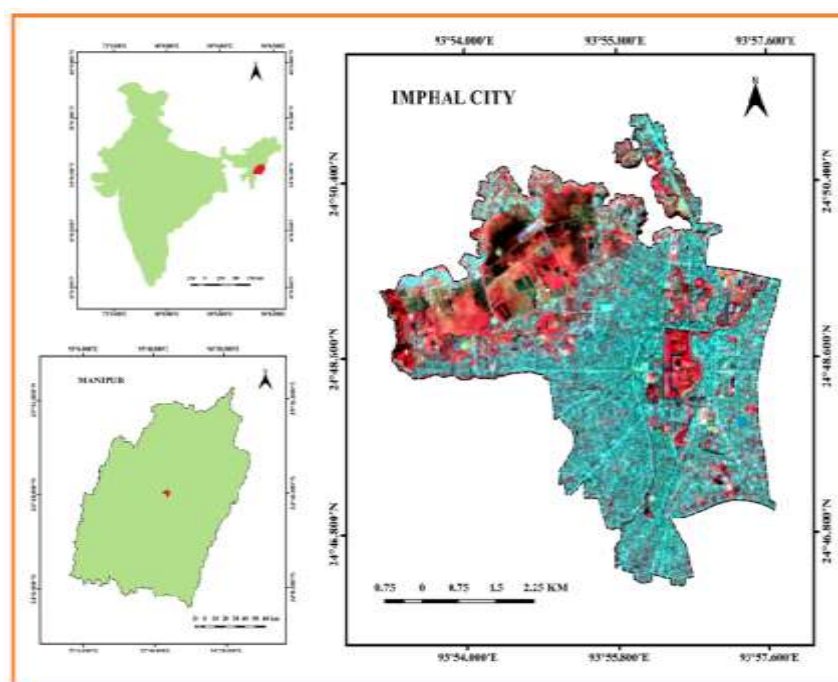


Figure 1: Imphal City

Objective of the Study

The present study is primarily based on the following objectives.

1. To examine the level of the gender disparity of literacy among informal workers in 2024.
2. To identify the factors responsible for gender disparity in literacy in the city.

Materials and Methods

Sources of Materials: The present study is based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data has been collected through personal interview schedule. The report of Economics and Statistics, Manipur published by government of Manipur and census report of India 2011 are used as secondary sources.

Sample Size: The work is based on 367 Samples collected through survey with interview schedule determined with the help of William G. Cochran's formula of sample size determination and propulsive method.

Methods: The analysis of the study is computed by using SPSS and Excel techniques and suitable graphical techniques. The gender disparity in literacy is measured by adopting the Sopher's Disparity Index (1974).

Sopher's Disparity Index:

$$DI = \text{Log} \left(\frac{X_2}{X_1} \right) + \text{Log} \left(\frac{100 - X_1}{100 - X_2} \right)$$

Where, $X_2 \geq X_1$

Where, DI= Disparity Index; X_2 = Male literacy rate; X_1 = Female literacy rate.

This method reveals that the higher the value of Disparity Index (DI), the higher the extent of disparity and the lower the value of DI, the lower the extent of disparity. In case there is no disparity (perfect equality), the value of DI will be 0.

Result and Discussion

As per the Census 2011, the literacy rate of India is 72.98% and the literacy rate for females and males are 64.63% and 80.9% respectively. It indicates that disparity in literacy rate of 16.25% on the basis of gender. In 2011 census, the literacy rate of Manipur is 79.85 percent and that of male and female are 86.49 % and 73.17 % respectively. The literacy rate of the city is 90.8% by which male accounts 95.1% and 86.77% for females. Based on the data, the literacy rate of informal workers in Imphal is observed as 73.84 % that is lower than literacy rate of the city (90.8%) as per the 2011 census.

Table 1: Imphal City: Male Female Educational Level of Informal Workers, 2024

Educational Level		Illiterate	Primary (I-V)	Secondary (VI-XII)	Graduate & Above	Population
Gender	Male	69	96	62	15	242
	Female	27	34	50	14	125
Total		96	130	112	29	367
Frequency Percentage		26.2	35.4	30.5	7.9	100.0

Source: Authors' Computation

The male-female disparity in literacy of India is 0.115289 whereas in rural areas it is 0.141954 and in urban areas it is 0.068706 . The disparity index (DI) value of Manipur

is found to be 0.370598 in 2011 shown in table 2. By computing data collected, literacy rate of informal workers in the city are 71.49 % and 78.4% for male and female respectively. The unique characteristic of literacy of these informal workers is that female literacy is higher than that of male literacy by 6.99% but, in case of India and Manipur, literacy rate of male is higher than that of female. It shows the keen interest of pursuing education by female informal workers and their parents . They think that education can bring many changes in their lives. This will become a true if they get government jobs. Moreover, government jobs are considered to be high class and respectable jobs in Manipur, more particularly in Imphal city.

Table 2: Male-Female Literacy Disparity Index of Informal Workers, 2024

Variables	Male %	Female %	$\text{Log}(x_2/x_1)$	$\text{Log}\{(100-X_1)/(100-X_2)\}$	Disparity Index (DI)
Informal Workers*	71.49	78.4	0.040085326	0.120579974	0.160665
Imphal City (2011)	95.1	86.77	0.039810919	0.431363764	0.471175
Manipur (2011)	86.49	73.17	0.072632842	0.297965324	0.370598

Source: Authors' Computation; * Based on Samples collected through field survey, 2024

The gender disparity of literacy of Imphal city is 0.471175 according to 2011 census. The analysis of the paper reveals that male-female disparity of literacy in informal worker is 0.160665. The significant characteristics of gender disparity of literacy among informal workers is found to be small and number of female literacy are more than that of the male among the informal workers within the Imphal city. In male-female disparity index of literacy, the zero value of DI represents no disparity at all. The higher the value of DI, greater is the extent of disparity and lesser the value of DI, lower the disparity.

Factors of Inducing gender disparity in literacy among informal workers

The government of India has launched a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) to provide education to all citizens of India: Some of the important initiatives are Sarva Shiksha Abhiman" (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) was launched in 2009–10, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) scheme, Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) in 2013, etc.

Based on the empirical data, the following factors have been synthesised which are responsible for inducing gender disparity of literacy in informal workers of the study area.

- Unaware of government schemes related to free education.
- High engagement of female in domestic work during the early education period.
- High engagement of male population in agricultural practices.
- Inaccessibility of schooling facility in surrounding village or area.
- Dropout rate of education is higher in male than that of female.

Conclusion

The paper presents empirical analysis of gender disparity in literacy among informal workers. It is observed that Imphal city is facing problem of gender disparity in literacy. The result of

the analysis shows that gender disparity of literacy of informal workers in Imphal city is low which is better comparing to state and country's gender disparity. Based on this empirical work, it is also found that in Imphal City, the literacy rate of female workers is higher than that of male workers. This indicates that female workers place in good standard of living and economic condition. The gender disparity of literacy is a hindrance to socio-economic development of the region. It is recommended that the union and state governments should implement proper initiatives to eliminate this gender gap in near future.

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