

Critical Appraisal of Female Education Progression in South Asia

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ABSTRACT

Over the decades now, women around the globe have exposed to fewer opportunities in terms of healthcare, education, employment and political representation. The gender gaps are shrinking but the progress is uneven, when it comes to labour force participation and political representation. Progress in secondary school enrolment worldwide and with South Asia specifically is impressive but higher education remains in bits and pieces. Higher Education shall aid in reducing these gender gaps invites no arguments worldwide, thus occupies a dominant position. Unfortunately, South Asia comprising of emerging and middle-income economies and house to 860 million females have displayed flat curve when it comes to tertiary education. The research study evaluates the extent of educational attainment of females in the South Asia represented with help of funnel diagram and analyzed using One Sample T test. The results display the below average performance of female enrollment in tertiary education. Analyzing Country level performance, Maldives and Sri Lanka have achieved a considerable increase in basic education enrollment ratio followed closely by India and Bangladesh, but tertiary education still remains a far distant dream.

Keywords Education Attainment, South Asia, Tertiary Education, Below Average, Gender budgeting.

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Introduction

Gender budgeting in an ordinary sense is an approach to use fiscal policy that seeks to use national resources towards reducing gender inequality and ensure sustainable inclusive development. It doesn't imply on creation of different budgets between men and women but instead allocate resources and draft fiscal policies to promote gender equality. It is a methodology ensuring translation of gender-based commitments into fiscal based. Gender budgeting and fiscal measures play a prominent role in promoting women development and gender equality. The two facets which drive the economies around the globe to adopt gender-based budgeting are a) Universally female population tends to suffer at greater hindrance across an array of social and economic indicators since ages now. To alleviate these disparities gender-based budgeting acts as tool for improvement. b) Secondly policy makers and economists have perceived gender equality as catalyst for economic progression.

Despite the phenomenal progress over the past several years in closing gender gaps the progress remains uneven. Notwithstanding the upsurge in female labor force participation over the past three decades, women still do not have the same prospects as men to participate in economic activities in most of the

countries. The average female labor force participation rate across countries is even today 20 percentage points lower than the male rate, and gender gaps in wages and access to higher education persist.¹ This is primarily because female participation in higher education ie bachelors' degree and doctoral is too low to make it visible on the charts. The fewer opportunities for attaining higher education have led to lower participation of females in managerial positions and political representation. Since the mid-1980s, many countries have adopted fiscal policy measures to promote gender equality. Countries use tax and expenditure policies to address gender inequality and the advancement of women in areas such as education and economic empowerment. As of 2018, at least 80 countries have used gender-responsive fiscal policy interventions to reduce gender inequality.² Education has been the primary focus of the policy makers with maximum budget allocations but the focus has remained up to secondary education only since decades. Consequently, South Asia has foregone with the paybacks of upscaling the higher education for females in the country.

The study embarks to report the gender budgeting initiatives of South Asian Economies in terms of female education. It shall also evaluate the progression in the field of education individually amongst each country.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Hypothesis of the Study

H_{a1}- The progression of the economies in term of Tertiary enrollment is significantly low.

Methodology

South Asia – It comprises Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Maldives and Sri Lanka. The data analyzed is extracted from World Bank, World Economic Outlook and UNICEF to assure dependability of research discussions. The data for the year 2018 is extracted and analyzed.

Educational Attainment – The key indicators used are standardized against global accepted reports of IMF and UNICEF with an addition of Percentage of females enrolled in Doctoral or Equivalent Degree.

tertiary education.

To depict the progression of females in educational attainment funnel diagram has been whittled out for each country. Further for hypothesis testing, One Sample T test is used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Near about 860 million women reside in South Asia out of which 75% live in India with huge gender gaps. In terms of educational attainment, the growth in primary and secondary enrolment was phenomenal over the period of time but the performance is meagre in terms of tertiary education and doctoral is too low to be noticeable. The below tabular and graphical representation in form of funnel represents the thinning of female participation in

Table 1.1 – Indicators of Female Educational Attainment Across South Asia

| Country | AFN | BGD | BTN | IND | MDV | NPL | PAK | LKA | Average Score |
|---------------|---------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---------------|
| Literacy Rate | 29.8052 | 71.20 | 57.08 | 65.79 | 98.11 | 59.72 | 46.47 | 90.80 | 69.88 |
| Primary | 88.97 | 93.90 | 88.54 | 93.03 | 96.40 | 74.80 | 61.57 | 96.38 | 86.37 |
| Secondary | 85.5486 | 68.70 | 76.60 | 62.40 | 50.60 | 58.60 | 36.40 | 90.40 | 63.39 |
| Tertiary | 1.005 | 17.10 | 15.50 | 29.40 | 59.80 | 12.40 | 8.40 | 23.40 | 23.71 |
| Doctoral | 0.0001 | 0.13 | 0.03 | 0.10 | 0.04 | 0.00 | 0.04 | 2.30 | 0.38 |

Source – Researcher's Compilation

Figure 1.1- Educational Attainment in Afghanistan

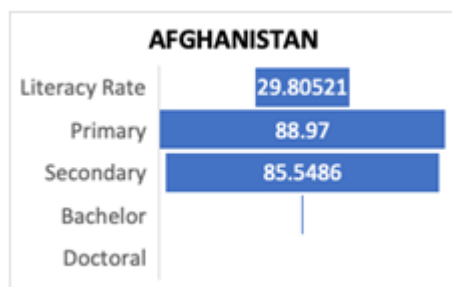


Figure 1.2- Educational Attainment in Bangladesh

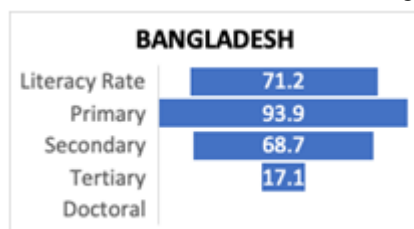


Figure 1.3 Educational Attainment in Bhutan

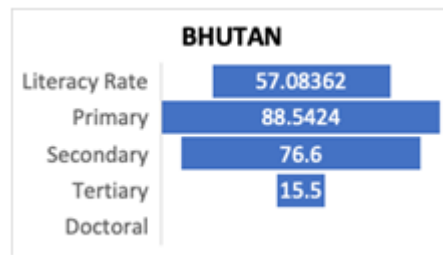


Figure 1.4 Educational Attainment in India

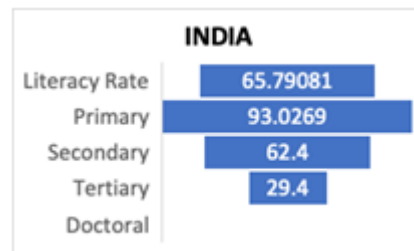


Figure 1.5 Educational Attainment in Maldives

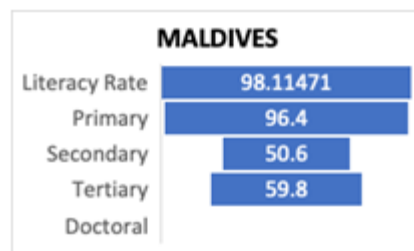


Figure 1.6 Educational Attainment in Nepal

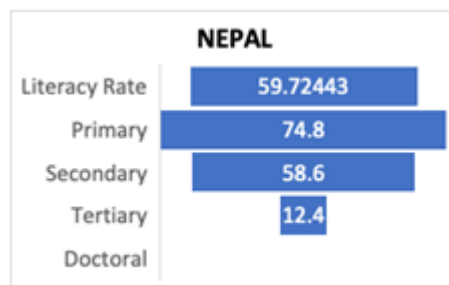


Figure 1.7 Educational Attainment in Pakistan

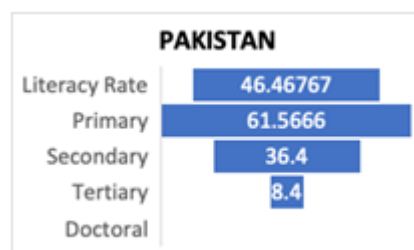
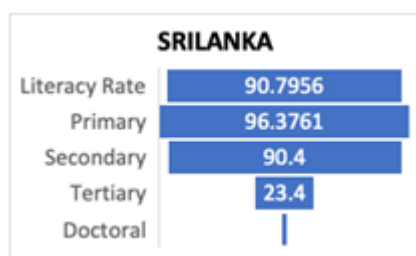


Figure 1.8 Educational Attainment in Sri Lanka



Source : Figure 1 to 8 – www.worldbank.org/indicators and www.unicef.org

A) Country Wise Analysis of Educational Attainment

1. Afghanistan –The female literacy rate in Afghanistan is lowest in the South Asia with only 29% while its primary and secondary enrolment has comparatively progressed with help of gender budgeting initiatives and UN efforts. However female contribution towards tertiary education is meagre and doctoral attainment is 0. The education system is devastated lying at bottom of the pyramid in South Asia and world too.
2. Bangladesh–The funnel tapers as it moves from primary enrollment to tertiary and becomes negligible when it comes to doctoral. The journey has been quite impressive with help of Female Secondary School Assistance Project (FSSAP) initiated in 1990. Despite the enrolment rates have improved the outcome remains unsatisfactory and unequal. The completion rate and progression has displayed in the figure 1.2 expresses its poor effectiveness and progression.
3. Bhutan –It has achieved significant socio-economic growth in recent decades by devoting significant budgets towards female health and education. UNGEI in collaboration with Ministry of Education have successfully increased female enrollment progressively in the tertiary education. However customary ethnicities and rituals act as major barrier in female progression. Consequently only 15.5% of female population go for tertiary education.
4. India –Kothari Commission in 1968 set the stepping stone for Girls Education in India. Progressively through free and compulsory primary education for girls it attained 93% enrollment in primary education. However, the progression has been mediocre due to huge female population in diverse traditional constraints. But still over the years it occupies second position in secondary education and third in place of tertiary education.
5. Maldives –It had made a phenomenal progress in field of education keeping in mind the gender parities. The female literacy rates and its education progression has been HIGHEST in South Asia. The concern posing the country is to break the stereotypical perception of limiting female education beyond secondary education and increased its enrollment in tertiary education.
6. Nepal –Girl's education particularly in poor and Dalit family is largely ignored with second lowest primary enrollment of females in South Asia. Nevertheless, female count in secondary and tertiary education too remains low and lies below average. With the help of UNESCO project "Cheli- Beti" in 1990 things improved for Nepal enormously but the rural urban divide in terms of female education still remains a major challenge. Further its illiteracy rate is twice in rural as compared to urban areas.
7. Pakistan – Women's Education is the fundamental right of an individual however even today in major parts of the country girls are not allowed to go to school. The gender disparity strides are so high that even today only 61% of the females are enrolled in primary school. These further stoops down drastically when it comes to secondary and tertiary education. The drop out ratio is excessively high in Pakistan compared to its counterparts in South Asia.
8. Sri Lanka –The Constitution of Sri Lanka provides for free education to all leading to reduced gender gaps in field of education and also ensuring highest percentage of female enrollment in secondary and doctoral education in South Asia. The Ministry under its initiative of Madhya Maha Vidyalayas (MMV) has scattered public school and universities

across the island to ensure improved education system.

B) Testing of hypothesis

H_{a1} - The progression of the economies in term of Tertiary enrollment is significantly low.

Table 1.2 Descriptive Statistics of Percentage of Female Enrollment in Tertiary Education in South Asia.

| SOUTH ASIA | TERTIARY EDUCATION |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| Mean | 20.88 |
| Standard Error | 6.35 |
| Median | 16.30 |
| Standard Deviation | 17.97 |
| Sample Variance | 322.80 |
| Kurtosis | 3.28 |
| Skewness | 1.61 |
| Range | 58.80 |
| Minimum | 1.01 |
| Maximum | 59.80 |
| Sum | 167.01 |
| Count | 8.00 |

(Note - Output generated by using Microsoft Excel Version 16)

One-Sample T Test

data name = Tertiary Data

t = 3.28637

df = 7

p-value = 0.0133692

(

Output generated through TYSS Stat)

The p value so obtained is 0.013 i.e less than significant value 0.05 which leads to non-acceptance of null hypothesis. In other words, it is statistically significant that the progression of the economies in South Asia with respect to Female enrollment in tertiary education is low.

CONCLUSION

South Asia has potential to compete with the Advanced economies of the world considering its demographic dividend and hence there is growing thrust when it comes to education especially of girls in these countries. The Millennium Development Goals 2030 have further

accelerated the need to educate females of the country. The deeper analysis has pointed out the fact that one third of females drop out of the school as result the pyramid shrinks largely as level of education progresses upwards. In the entire South Asia, Maldives enjoys the highest female literacy rate of 98.11% whereas it is lowest in Afghanistan with 29.81%. Similarly, primary enrollment is highest in Maldives with 98.40% closely followed by 98.38% in Sri Lanka while lowest in Pakistan with 61.57%. As we progress ahead, Sri Lanka maintains its consistency with 90.40% while Pakistan drowns with mere 36.40% females enrolled in secondary education. Tertiary Enrollment is highest in Maldives 29.40% while lowest in

Afghanistan displaying only 1.05% females being enrolling into tertiary education. The overall picture is quite distorted one with extremes being experienced in the region. In last few years India has successively stepped upwards in enrolling females for tertiary education and the progression has been impressive.

It has been collectively observed that countries due to its cultural ties have since decades prevented girl child being educated and pursuing higher education is a reserved only to upper middle class. South Asia with its rich and positive progression needs to accelerate and make people of its country realize the tremendous pay off which it could reap in long run as girl child climbs the ladder.

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ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

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2. <https://www.unicef.org>
3. <https://www.worldbank.org>