

Education, Participation and Disparity

A Descriptive Picture of the State of Jammu and Kashmir

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Abstract

The descriptive picture of the educational participation helps to identify gaps which need to be filled by appropriate policy. National Sample Survey maps the participation of the population within the age group of 5–29 years, thereby inviting state-specific initiatives to overcome the hindrances. The State's strength lies in the huge demographic dividend which has almost remained unexplored in the absence of innovative policies and programmes. Untapped youth dividend often poses a challenge and demand resource investment for a longer period. One important investment which every State has to plan very prudently is for the educational participation and completion of the children. The paper takes cognizance of these concerns and provides the descriptive picture of the educational participation in the State of Jammu and Kashmir. It points to the fact that educational participation in the State has seen unparallel growth on social, gender and regional lines. The private unaided schools are the popular choice among the urban parents, while government schools usually cater to the rural demand. The household expenditure which has been relatively higher for the State would be a possible obstacle to improve the rural participation in education. Financial constraints have been identified as the prominent factor for discontinuation. The paper invites state initiatives to address factors of the non-enrolment vis-à-vis discontinuation which has peculiar nature in rural and urban area.

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INTRODUCTION

Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) is the tenth most populated and the tenth largest State of the Indian Union, consisting around 1.25 crore population with an average sex ratio of 889 (Census of India, 2011). The population density of J&K is relatively lower than the national level as most part of the State is on a high altitude. The total population of J&K constitutes only 1.04 per cent of India's population with a decadal growth of 23.64 per cent (Census of India, 2011). National Sample Survey (NSS) provides socio-economic and demographic profile of the sample household where Jammu and Kashmir has been identified as one of the major States of India. The unique characteristic of J&K is uneven topography and extreme climatic conditions, making schooling less accessible for many children. The unfavourable environment like adverse geography and extreme climatic conditions are the impediment for unleashing the holistic growth of the State. Since education has been considered as one of the important development indicators, therefore "the educational system has to be more positive and dynamic to meet the challenges of transforming the personality of the children into productive citizen" (Government of J&K, 2000–01). Though the state government has been introducing many educational programmes to improve the participation of disadvantaged groups, but hurdles of various nature inhibit their growth.

The present paper seeks to explore the participation level of J&K's population within the age group of 5–29 years while inferring the educational statistics from NSS rounds (mainly 64th round). It also focuses on the adverse situations impinging on the educational system of the State, especially in the rural areas. The NSS 64th round (2007–08) titled 'Education in India: Participation and Expenditure' draws a broader picture of the educational status of the State as well as identify the factors which keeps J&K trailing other States of the Union of India. The report depicts the picture of social, regional and gender disparity within the State and provides a comprehensive picture of educational status of Indian States on some of the important themes considered to be critical for overall educational development. Therefore, inferences could be drawn to understand the particular context of J&K to achieve the desired results of the policy initiatives.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Attendance neither ensures quality learning nor successful completion of schooling. It cannot be accepted as a valid parameter to ensure successful completion of school education for most of the children, especially the vulnerable groups (girls, SC/ST) having the tendency to discontinue and then dropout. NSS defines attendance rate as the 'percentage of children who are attending education'. In this regard,

NSS provides detailed attendance status indicating 'whether a person is currently attending any educational institution or not'. The paper explores various dimensions of the attendance including gender, age, region, social category, school management, etc., to identify those areas which have weaker performance in the State. NSS 64th round identifies around 40 per cent of the total population of J&K within the age group of 5–29 years. Out of the identified population (aged 15–29 years), around 60.8 per cent are attending educational institutions and remaining are either not enrolled or not attending institutions in spite of being enrolled. It needs to be mentioned that 'not enrolled' population is relatively higher in rural areas which constitute mostly female population, whereas the percentage of 'enrolled but not attending' population is from the urban areas

(see Table 1). The reasons for being absent after getting duly enrolled are not clear from the available data.

Rural–Urban Attendance Variation

The National Sample Survey clearly demonstrates that rural–urban variation has hardly any kind of bearing on the school participation of the children within the age group of 6–13 years. It epitomises the State's initiatives to increase school accessibility at the primary level *vis-à-vis* awareness of the masses to get education. The age-wise participation has remarkable rural–urban difference above the age of 13 years. It could be seen in Figure 1 that participation from rural sector decreases with the increase in the age of the children. It indicates proportionately less chances of educational mobility after elementary schooling in the rural areas. Though

Table 1
Attendance Status in J&K (Age Group 5–29 years)

		Rural	Urban	Total
Female	Currently Not Enrolled	40.5	30.4	38.9
	Currently Enrolled but Not Attending	1.7	5.8	2.3
	Currently Attending	57.6	63.7	58.8
Male	Currently Not Enrolled	35	28.2	33.8
	Currently Enrolled but Not Attending	1.9	8.6	3.1
	Currently Attending	63	63.3	63
Total	Currently Not Enrolled	37.7	29.2	36.3
	Currently Enrolled but Not Attending	1.8	7.2	2.7
	Currently Attending	60.5	63.5	60.8

Source: NSS 64th Round.

on an average, J&K has performed relatively better in bringing students to educational institutions than the national average, but disparity in the attendance prevails across rural-urban spaces. Regional disparity seems to have impeded the educational growth of J&K at the secondary level. The normative recommendations of establishing schools within a particular distance often restrict the accessibility of a child in the rural area which is mainly hilly. The harsh topographical picture of J&K presents many challenges for the educational planners. For example, NSS 61st round informs that during the year 2000–05 around 56.5 per cent of the households had to travel 2–5 kms to reach secondary school in the State (NSSO, 2006). This seems to be a huge percentage in comparison to an all-India average of 35.5 households.

NSS 64th round also reveals the average distance which a household has to cover to reach the school. The average distance varies across educational levels: primary, middle and secondary level. State norms have prescribed the average distance within which schools should be located from the household. It is usually 1 km for every primary school, 5 kms for secondary schools and 7–10 kms for higher secondary schools. In J&K,

the maximum percentage of students have to travel a distance of less than 1 km both in rural and urban area to avail primary and middle level education. Though there is not much gap between the rural and urban households to reach primary schools, but the gap does persist at the secondary level. At the secondary level, maximum percentage (56.5 per cent) of rural students travel around 2 to 5 kms to reach the school. Besides this, around 9.4 per cent of rural households have to travel more than 5 kms making it unviable for a girl child to reach school, therefore resulting into dropout after elementary level (see Table 2). In urban areas, children have to travel lesser distance to access middle and secondary education, while the maximum percentage of rural children have to cover more distance to access middle and secondary schooling. Longer distance to reach educational institution becomes a barrier and directly affects the enrolment, attendance and participation of students. And the long distance between schools and households affects girls severely, raising many safety concerns for the parents. However, reducing the distance between school and households has helped to decrease gender disparity in enrolment.

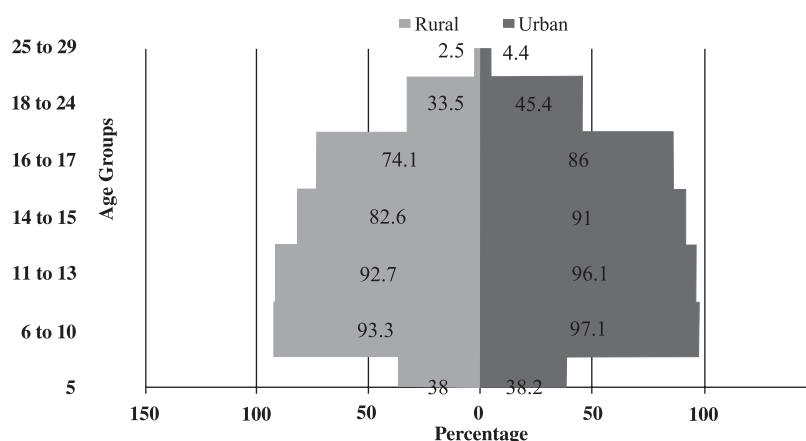


Figure 1. Age Distribution of Currently Attending Students in J&K

Source: NSS 64th Round.

Table 2
Percentage Distribution of Household Distance from Schools

		Jammu and Kashmir		India	
		Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
Primary	Less than 2 km	98.6	99.7	98.2	99
	2–5 km	1.3	0.1	1.4	01
	More than 5 km	0.1	0.2	0.1	0
Middle	Less than 2 km	72.2	99.7	78.7	96.6
	2–5 km	27.1	0.2	18	3.2
	More than 5 km	0.7	0.2	3.1	0.2
Secondary	Less than 2 km	34.1	89.6	47.3	90.7
	2–5 km	56.5	10.2	35.5	8.1
	More than 5 km	09.4	0.1	17.1	01

Source: NSS 64th Round, 2007–08.

Management-wise Attendance Variation

In Jammu and Kashmir, the maximum percentage of students (84 per cent) attend government and local body managed schools, while at the

national level the percentage is only 59 per cent. Per 1000 distribution of students at different levels of educational institutions shows a very interesting picture. Preponderant majority of rural students are

enrolled in government schools, whereas the 'currently attending' per 1000 distribution of urban students are very less in government schools. One can observe an obvious tendency among the urban households to enroll their children in private unaided schools and the choice of private unaided school is very high at the primary and middle school levels. Unlikely to this, urban households prefer government schools at the secondary level. In the process of school selection, the gender biases of the households could be seen very clearly. Rural girl child has the highest possibility to get into government school; while the urban male child has the highest possibility to get into private unaided school. Inferences from some data sources like U-DISE (2015) show that enrolment share of government higher secondary schools in urban areas is relatively higher than their rural counterparts.

Also the growth of higher secondary schools in urban areas is faster than in rural areas. These trends show the pattern of household choices as well as the rural-urban school scenario. Thus, the overall comparison of figures demonstrates that the average percentage of students attending private unaided schools is higher in Jammu and Kashmir than the national average up to the level of middle school, whereas the relative share of students attending private unaided schools from secondary level onwards is lower in the State.

HOUSEHOLD EXPENDITURE ON EDUCATION

Private expenditure on education could be a possible factor limiting the household's accessibility to get education, whereas low cost could be an enabler for the poor. Private expenditure which is defined as a student's or parent's investment on

Table 3
Percentage Distribution of Currently Attending Students

Level of Education	Management	J&K (in %)	India (in %)
Primary Level	Govt. + local body	66	73
	Private aided	7	7
	Private unaided	26	20
Middle Level	Govt. + local body	70	70
	Private aided	7	12
	Private unaided	23	17
Secondary & Higher Secondary	Govt. + local body	84	59
	Private aided	6	21
	Private unaided	10	18

Source: NSS 64th Round.

education has possible bearing on the attendance. Therefore, low cost schooling can help in accomplishing the goal of complete attendance. This section of the paper attempts to draw insights from the NSS 64th round about the possible effects of the household expenditure on student attendance and mobility. Usually parents bear the indirect burden of school education which goes as a private expenditure. This expenditure is levied in the form of monthly fee by private schools, and as an indirect fee by most of the government schools. Burden of private expenditure increases at the higher levels of school education, and is relatively very high for private schools. Private expenditure could have severe consequences for the marginalised children, especially the girl child, which probably could restrict their education mobility. It has been found in many research studies that the chances of boys' dropout at the middle school level is higher as he could be a potential member to earn livelihood for a poor household. NSS 64th round provides some fascinating insights on this issue. Jammu and Kashmir has often been acclaimed as the State which provides free education to all its citizens, however, household survey shows that on an average each household spends much higher amount than the national average. The expenditure has bearing on parents at the secondary level, which means higher chances of dropout of the children from the

marginalised communities. A rural-urban contrast again informs that the rural households spend around three times higher amount on school education than rural household at the national level, while the amount spent by the urban households of the State is only about one time higher than the national average of urban households. This shows the high possibility of dropout in the rural areas of the State. Again, at the higher levels of education, surprisingly the average expenditure incurred by the households on vocational education is much higher than the national average, whereas at the national level figures show higher average expenditure on the technical education.

Component of Private Expenditure on Education

Major components of private expenditure which NSS 64th round counts are tuition fees, examination fees, books and stationary costs, uniform, conveyance, private coaching, etc. It needs special focus to generate either free or affordable fees to motivate parents to send their children to schools since the fee is relatively high in J&K when compared to the national level. Except tuition fees, all other expenses are higher in J&K than the national average. It has been revealed that out of all the expenses, the average annual expenses on books and stationary are relatively higher in J&K followed by the tuition fees, exam fees and

other fees, uniform, private coaching, transport, other expenses, etc. Educational fee is very high in urban areas of the State. It has also been found in NSS 64th round that male students pay higher fees than females in J&K. Much before the coming of RTE, the percentage of children getting free primary education was relatively less (only 61 per cent) than the national average which was 71 per cent in 2007, surely the situation might have improved a lot after 2010. The NSS 64th round surprisingly informs about the higher percentage of students availing free secondary education in the State (70 per cent) than the national average (48 per cent). One important reason which could be identified would be that the maximum percentage of students are enrolled in private schools at the primary level in the State, whereas at the secondary level most of the households opt for government schools.

Different Type of Incentives

Taken together all the general education students within the age group of 5–29 years, only 2 per cent of them are availing scholarship incentives from the State. The number is far less than the national average (14.2 per cent). On the other hand, 43.2 per cent are getting free or subsidised books and stationary and 28 per cent has been provided mid-day meal by government and other organisations. In addition, 15.4 per cent students are availing

concession in public transport. It is important to point out that all these percentages are below the national level, except concession in public transport. The State's inability to provide scholarship and other incentives has possible bearing on the attendance and education completion rate. The status of other States is far better where high percentage of students from Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Lakshadweep pursuing general education are getting various incentives to complete their education. One of the major purposes of these incentives is to promote educational opportunities of marginalised children, especially the girl child. For example, Bihar provides bicycle to a girl child as an incentive to attend the school. The scheme has been successful in improving the household accessibility to the school, whereas hardly any initiative is taken to address such intricate issues in J&K. While the majority of beneficiaries of these incentives are from rural areas but barely any attention is given to the girl child. Figures depict that per 1,000 male and female beneficiaries are almost same which implies that female students are not getting any extra incentives which can motivate them for higher education.

NEVER ENROLLED

There is a huge chunk of population in Jammu and Kashmir who are never enrolled in any educational

institution. National Sample Survey provides age-wise classification of the never enrolled population as well as the possible reasons for their non-enrolment. Survey shows that relatively higher percentage of non-enrolled children are under the age of 5 years, while at the higher ages, the State's performance is better than the national average (see Table 4). It also identifies three most common and popular reasons for non-enrolment in the State which include: 'parents not interested in studies', 'financial constraints' and 'education is not considered necessary'. Out of these three popular reasons, 'Parents are not interested in studies' has been identified as the most commonly given reason for non-enrolment both in rural and urban areas of J&K. While identifying reasons for male and female non-enrolment, Survey identifies 'financial constraint' (36.7 per cent) as the most potent reason for male non-enrolment, while for female non-enrolment 'parents

are not interested in studies' (35.9 per cent) emerged as the popular reason along with 13 per cent also pointing 'education is not necessary' for females. The qualitative difference in the household opinion regarding the non-enrolment informs that the major obstacle which the girl child encounters is from household indifference towards girl education. The NSS also provides very stark insights for non-enrolment in the rural areas which is qualitatively very different from urban areas. For example, 'inadequate number of teachers', 'school is far off', 'to work for wage salary', 'for participating in other economic activity', 'to attend other domestic chores', 'for helping in household enterprises', 'language medium of instruction', etc., are the most popular reasons given by households for non-enrolment. The variation of reasons pointed out demand appropriate action from the State to reduce the possible number of non-enrolled population. It becomes

Table 4
Never Enrolled Population in Different Age Groups

Age Group (years)	J&K (%)	India (%)
5	44.8	38.5
6-10	4.9	8.8
11-13	2.8	6.1
14-17	7.3	8.5
18-24	14.5	16.6
25-29	24.8	24.1
5-29	11.6	13.8

Source: NSS 64th Round.

quite clear from the household survey that the onus to reduce the number of 'never enrolled population' by promoting incentives and facilities lies more with the State. Again, there is a need for the targeted approach to differentiate between the rural and urban factors of non-enrolment.

DISCONTINUANCE OF EDUCATION

The percentage of those who discontinue or dropout is relatively higher in Jammu and Kashmir as compared to the national level. NSS 64th round has reported mainly two categories of discontinuation: first those who have 'achieved desired level of education' and, others who have 'neither completed their desired level nor even completed the last enrolled level due to some reason' (see Table 5). In Jammu and Kashmir, maximum percentage (23 per cent) has reported to have achieved their desired level which is higher secondary level, whereas those who reported to have achieved upper primary as their desired level of education is only 1 per cent. The percentage of responses who are supposed to have discontinued after secondary level without achieving their desired level of education is substantially high, i.e., 63 per cent. This remarkably high percentage of population which seems to have high aspiration to move upward to the higher education is a serious point of consideration

for the state government. NSS also identifies various reasons for educational discontinuance which include 'financial constraints', 'child not interested in studies', 'unable to cope up or failure in studies', 'completed desired level or class', 'parents not interested in studies', 'for participating in other economic activities', 'to work for wage/ salary', 'to attend other domestic chores', 'for helping in household enterprises', 'other reasons' (including marriage, etc.). In J&K, for all categories of population (rural-urban and male-female) financial constraints have been the most common reason for dropping out. 'Child is not interested in studies' is the only reason of dropout between the age of 5 and 9 years in J&K. At higher ages (25 to 29 years), the main reason of discontinuance is 'completed their desired education level'. However, it has been found that some reasons emerge very prominently for educational discontinuance in the rural areas which include 'school is far off', 'for participating economic activities', 'failure in studies', 'non availability of ladies toilet', etc. These are also the reasons which could be mainly held responsible for non-enrolment in the rural areas. Therefore, the State needs to heed to these issues very seriously to achieve complete educational participation.

Table 5
Persons Enrolled in the Past but Currently Not Attending Educational Institutions (in per cent)

Level of Education	Having achieved desired level/ class		Neither completed desired level/class nor completed last enrolled level	
	J&K	India	J&K	India
Primary	2	2	48	48
Middle	1	4	54	61
Secondary	10	8	63	53
Higher Secondary	23	15	46	37
All	13	10	52	49

Source: NSS 64th Round.

CONCLUSION

This paper attempted to draw a comprehensive picture of the educational participation of the population (5–29 years) in Jammu and Kashmir. Primarily gathering data from NSS 64th round, it points out the major hurdles in the educational participation. The analysis from the data informs about the huge proportion of the population (around 39 per cent) either not enrolled or not attending educational institutions in spite of being enrolled. The participation pattern again shows that most of the rural female population is not enrolled in any educational institution, whereas the percentage of ‘enrolled but not attending’ is higher in urban areas. The participation pattern shows that majority of the rural students are enrolled in the government schools, whereas the currently attending per 1,000 distribution of urban students are very less in government schools. One can

observe an obvious tendency among the urban households to enroll their children in private unaided schools and the choice of private unaided school is very high at the primary and middle school levels. Unlikely to this, urban households prefer government schools at the secondary level. In the process of school selection, the gender biases of the households could be seen very clearly. Rural girl child has the highest possibility to get into a government school, while the urban male child has the highest possibility to get into a private unaided school. Thus, the overall comparison of figures demonstrates that the average percentage of students attending private unaided schools is higher in J&K than the national average up to the level of middle level, whereas the student attending private unaided secondary schools onwards is lower in the State.

Regional disparity seems to have impeded the educational

growth of most of the rural pockets of the State. This disparity comes up very sharply at the secondary level, where most of the rural households have to travel longer distance to reach to the school. This remoteness makes it unviable for the girl child to reach school, thereby promoting gender inequality at the higher levels between rural and urban areas. The paper identified household expenditure as one of the potent factors for non-enrolment. Households in the State spend relatively higher amount on education than the national average. In the case of rural households,

spending on education is three times higher than rural households at the national level. Except tuition fee, all other expenses are higher in J&K. This has consequences for the girl education where Survey also points that male students pay higher fee than the female students in the State. Non-enrolment could also be the possible outcome of household perception about the education of boys and girls. Survey informs that financial constraints are mainly held responsible for the non-enrolment of boys, whereas parents' indifferent attitude towards girls' education is a major hurdle.

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