

Indian Women in Higher Education: An Avenue to Development

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Abstract

Women constitute nearly half of India's population, so the government tries to empower them in all aspects for the development of the nation. An educated woman not only has a saying in the family but also helps in developing human capital to accelerate economic growth. Women empowerment commences with the concept of education. The Govt. of India has started free and compulsory education up to the age of 14 years, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao etc. initiatives and schemes, which calls for basic development only. Nowadays, girls and women have crossed the boundaries of education and touched the horizon of higher education where they can explore themselves. The aim of this study is to highlight the position of women in higher education in India with the help of their enrolment in different courses through regular and distance mode of higher education, out-turn in different levels of programmes and different other aspects. Women enrolment in higher education is rising faster, revealing that women are increasingly turning toward higher education with clearer aspirations.

Keywords- Higher Education, Enrolment in Higher Education, Mode of Higher Education, Levels of Programmes

INTRODUCTION

Education is an important aspect of a person's life irrespective of being a girl or a boy. It enables one to be smarter, learn and understand various things about themselves and society. For the nation's overall development, it is imperative for each section of the society to grow. This was rightly mentioned by our first Prime Minister, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru said that one could tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its

women. India's higher education system is the third-largest in the world, next to the United States and China, and it has expanded at a fast pace. In ancient India, it was very difficult for women to establish themselves, but people like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and others took the initiative to bring women to the forefront. After independence, the government also took baby steps towards the development of women, but they were moving in a slow and

steady manner. Every government since independence considered women development as an important issue and launched different schemes and initiatives like Saakshar Bharat, Sarva Siksha Abhiyan, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Kanyashree Prakalpa (West Bengal), Mazi Kanya Bhagyashree Scheme (Government of Maharashtra), etc. towards it. It is with these steps Indian women could come out with flying colours in every field. Various measures are launched by the government every now and then for improving women's education in our country.

The well-known African proverb "If you educate a man, you educate an individual. But if you educate a woman, you educate a nation" has long been aspiring the world to focus on women education.

Higher Education is defined as the education, which is obtained after completing 12 years of schooling or equivalent and is of the duration of minimum nine months (full time) or after completing 10 years of schooling and is of the duration of at least 3 years (for the purpose of the study only). The courses under higher education are General, Vocational, Professional or Technical education.

The system of imparting education through colleges, universities and other formal educational institutions where the students getting education in a classroom in direct contact with the teachers and also make use of other infrastructure facilities is known as the formal system of Higher Education, i.e., Regular Mode

The systems of imparting education through government-aided universities/colleges/institutions on certain career-oriented courses without the

financial support of the Government are known as Self-Financing Courses in Regular Mode.

The system of imparting education by broadcasting, telecasting, seminars, internet, correspondence courses, contact programs or the consolidation of any two or more such means of communication is known as the Non-Formal system of Higher Education, i.e., Distance/Correspondence Mode.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Malik and Courtney (2011), in their study, have shown how higher education provides empowerment to women. Economic independence and standing with the family were the contributions of higher education. It also empowers women to impact discriminatory practices. **Noreen and Khalid (2012)** explored the possibilities and opportunities for women empowerment and how the participants in the study understand the role of higher education in the empowerment of women at home and at work. They found out that women should continue higher education and career by strategizing and acknowledging the support of their family members. **Jitendra Shinde (2014)** discusses women's empowerment through education. The main findings of the study reveal that the literacy rate of women does not in any way match that of men. As a result, even after 65 years of independence in India, women are still lacking in social hierarchy as a result of lack of education. Though he made some vital points, but he does not cover the topic extensively there are other factors that do influence women empowerment through education such as government expenditure on female education, the social awareness of the importance of women education.

Neha Elizabeth Emmanuel (2015) examines empowering women education with special reference to Indian economy. He examines education gap, it shows that men outnumber women in all higher education programs, except for the Master of Philosophy (MPhil). Also, there are much more men teaching in the system compared to women. Literacy can also provide a status to the citizens in the present world. A person who is educated has access to so much information around the world. It may be information on educational facilities, health, employment opportunities, legal literacy and so forth, the women empowerment through education is hindered as a result of social perspective about women, women are considered to be second class citizens. **Nabanita Bera (2016)** examines women empowerment through education. According to her in India it may be said that education is the cornerstone of women empowerment which could be achieved through hearty and co-operative efforts of the Government and NGO's and also eliminating the traditional norms, practices and attitude through proper education and guidance. The efforts of women empowerment by the

government and social reformers will go in vain unless the women are well educated, self-supportive and independent in all spheres of life.

OBJECTIVES

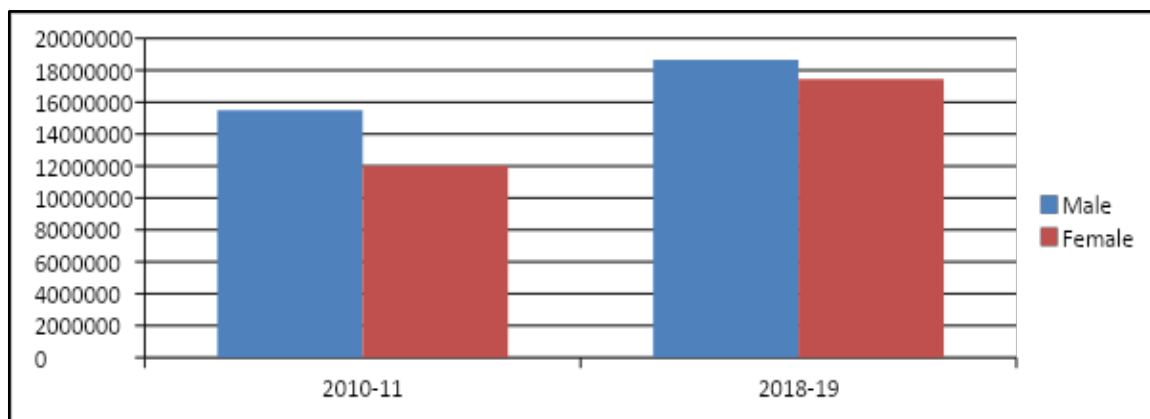
1. To assess the enrolment of female students in higher education and further segregating it into different modes and levels.
2. To understand the examination result of female students through pass-out/out-turn in different levels of higher education.
3. To identify the education status of females in major disciplines of university.
4. To analyse the percentage distribution of students by type of course pursuing, namely, general course and technical/professional course (incl. vocational course).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The data of the study has been collected from secondary sources. The dataset regarding women in higher education has been collected from various MHRD Reports, AISHE, and MOSPI Reports of India's Government over the last 8 years ranging from 2010-11 to 2018-19. The data were analysed on the basis of the percentage of absolute change.

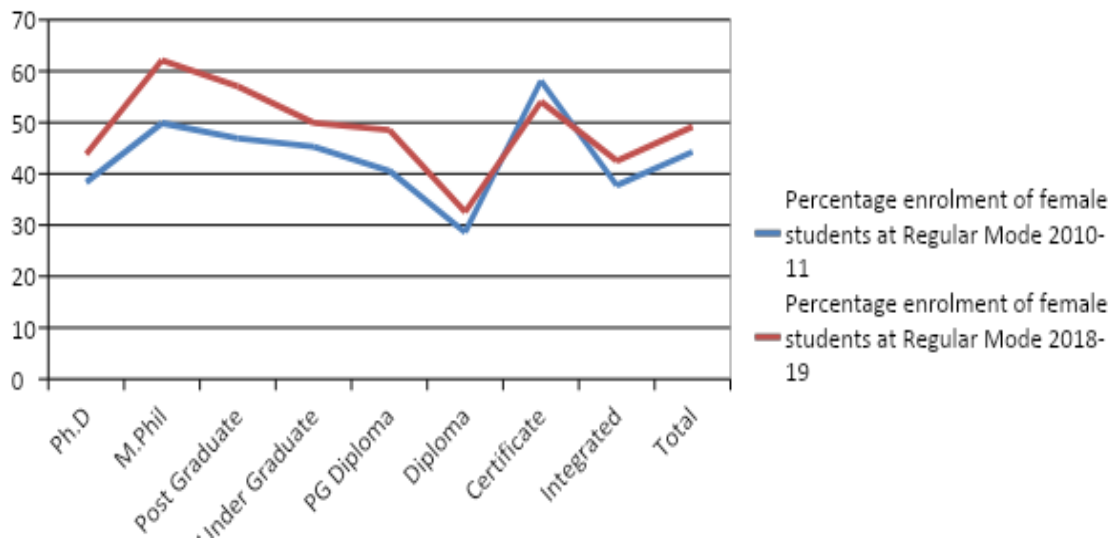
DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Graph 1(a) Enrolment in Higher Education



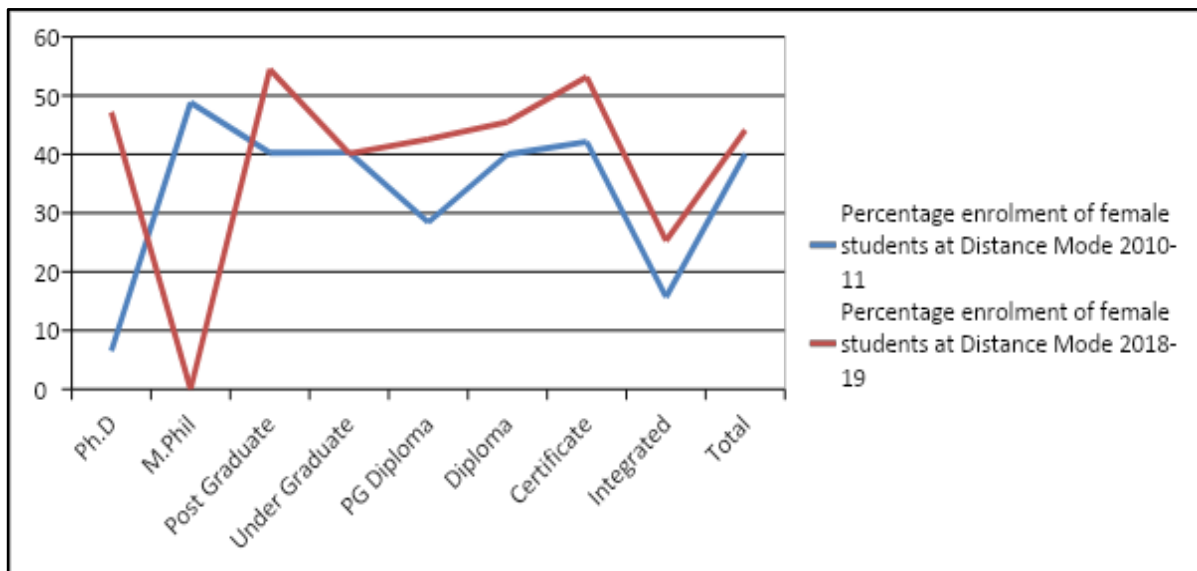
The graph 1(a) highlights the female enrolment in higher education constitutes 43.64% in 2010-11 and 48.34% in 2018-19. Therefore, there is a rise of 45.42% in the overall enrolment of female students in higher education in the last 8 years.

Graph 1(b) Enrolment of Female Students at Regular Mode



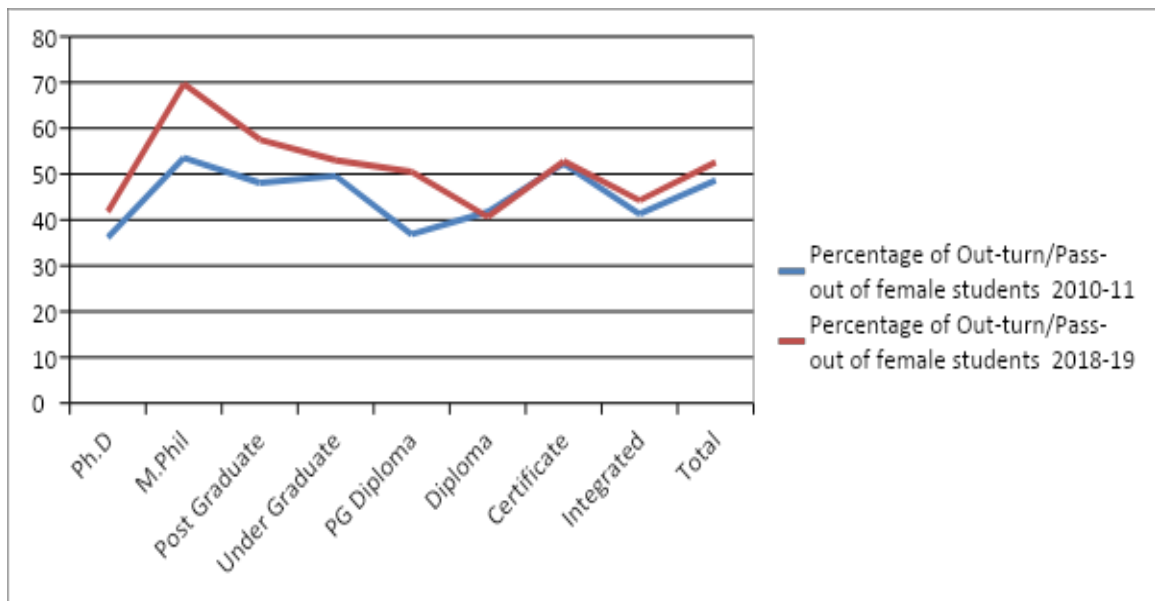
The above graph exhibits the rate of female enrolment in regular mode at various levels has significantly increased by 53.54% from 2010-11 to 2018-19. The number of female students in the undergraduate level is maximum in both 2010-11 and 2018-19. Growth in enrolment over the last 8 years is most in integrated level (396.13%) followed by Ph.D. (148.38%) and PG Diploma (86.91%).

Graph 1(c) Enrolment of Female Students at Distance Mode



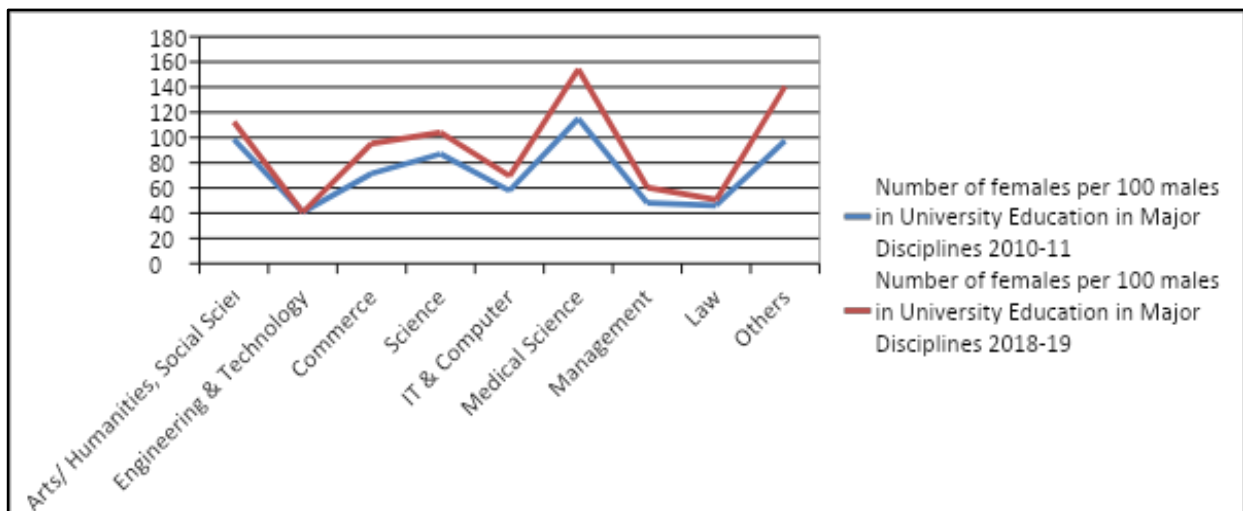
As compared to 2010-11, enrolment of female students at various levels through distance mode has increased by 32% in 2018-19, as shown in the above graph. The percentage growth in the last 8 years is maximum in Ph.D. (733.33%) followed by PG Diploma (149.21%) and Undergraduate (10%). The graph also indicates that the enrolment of female students has seen a surge almost in every level except for M.Phil. and Integrated courses.

Graph 2 Percentage of Out-turn/Pass-out of Female Students at Various Levels



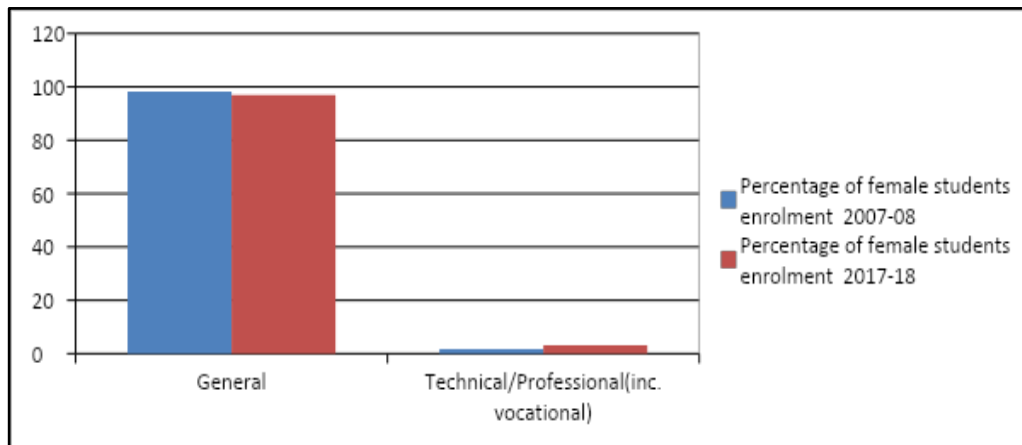
The above graph shows the number of out-turn/pass-out female students has overall increased at various levels of higher education from 2010-11 to 2017-18 i.e., 33.75%. The maximum growth in the last 8 years can be seen in PG Diploma (146.64%) followed by Ph.D. (119.60%) and Integrated course (68.06%).

Graph 3 Number of Females per 100 Males in University Education in Major Disciplines



Others include Agriculture, Education, Indian Language, Foreign Language, Oriental Learning, Home Science, Fine Arts, Physical Education, Library Education, Fisheries etc.

The above graph depicts that all the major disciplines in university education in terms of number of females per 100 males has shown an increasing trend from 2010-11 to 2018-19. Among all Medical Science (34.04%) shows the maximum enrolment of female students followed by Commerce (33.41%), Management (25.61%) and Arts/Humanities/Social Science (13.86%). One cannot ignore the significant growth in other disciplines which includes numerous subjects like Agriculture, Education, Languages, etc. Enrolment of female students in Engineering and Technology as compared to male students has grown but at a decreasing rate.

Graph 4 Percentage Distributions of Female Students by Type of Course Pursuing

The above graph reveals the percentage distribution of students pursuing the technical/professional (incl. vocational courses) is significantly increased by 72.22% while general courses increased but at a decreasing rate of 1.32%.

CONCLUSION

Women play a crucial role in making the country progressive. If we want a bright future for the women of our country, then giving them education should be a prerequisite. The recently released AISHE 2018-19 report affirms India's rapid progression towards higher enrolment and inclusion. Total enrolment in higher education has been estimated to be 37.4 million with 19.2 million male and 18.2 million females i.e., 48.6% of the total enrolment.

The reasons for this increase are government efforts and the self-realisation of the women themselves to be more independent and self-reliable. There are 16 Universities exclusively for women (3 in Rajasthan, 2 in Tamil Nadu, 1 each in Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Odisha, Uttarakhand and West Bengal). Distance enrolment constitutes about 10.62% of the total

enrolment in higher education, of which female students are 44.15%. Therefore, female education is increasing at every level and it is evident in our findings.

We can conclude by saying that educated women have greater knowledge, skills, capabilities and self-confidence which enables them to make sound choices over what kind of life they want to lead. AISHE and all other relevant government reports clearly indicate that women aspirations are on the rise which implies education is no more a luxury but a necessity.

SUGGESTIONS

Today, Knowledge is power. The more knowledge one has, the more empowered he/she is. Without the engagement and empowerment of women, rapid economic progress is not possible. Therefore, there is a requirement of more and more awareness programmes regarding women higher education at grass-root level so that the aspirations of girls and their parents are raised. Equal accessibility to all and a multi-disciplinary approach with collaboration of top international institutes will expand and enhance the development of women through higher education.

LIMITATIONS

The study is entirely based on secondary data and does not consider the other indicators of women in higher education like different schemes and their assessment, enrolment of students in self-financing mode of higher education (not clearly mentioned anywhere). The study also suffers from some restrictions due to unavailability of data like number of out-turn/pass-out female students in higher education consists of seven years instead of eight years.

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