

Name: Hussain Dilshi

Supervisor: Prof. Mary Tahir

Department: Geography

Title: “Gender Inequalities in Bihar: A Spatio-Temporal Analysis.”

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Abstract

In this study the spatio-temporal gender inequalities in Bihar has been analysed, through the examination of the discrimination, biasness and inequalities that women face in different spheres of life in the male dominated society, and to ascertain the reasons behind it. Gender inequality has been shown with the help of three premises (i) demographic (ii) education and employment and (iii) political participation and decision making.

Study is based on secondary as well as primary sources. Secondary data was collected from Census of India (1991-2011), District Handbooks of Bihar (2011), Annual Health Survey (2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13), National Family Health Survey (1992-93, 1998-99 and 2005-06) and Election Commission of India(2005-2015). For primary data, Village Pachrukha was chosen for the field survey which was conducted in 2017 of 200 households (3 percent sample) by random systematic method. The selection of the village was done as it was found that district Purbi Champaran was worst hit as it ranked 38th and although it had 1293 villages, but Pachrukha was selected as it had the maximum population in 2011.

Development of indices for demographic (missing women, sex ratio, child sex ratio, under-five child mortality rate and child marriage); educational and employment opportunities (gender gap in literacy rate, education attainment, gender gap in economic participation); and empowerment (number of female members in Bihar assembly and percentage of female head of the family) has been done using unity based normalization technique to bring the values of different parameters into the range 0 to 1 in all the districts.

According to composite demographic index, gender inequality decreased with increasing distance from centre to periphery as it was more prevalent in central Bihar and less in southern and western and least in Kishanganj. Kishanganj with lowest gender inequality in demographic indicator ranked 1st followed while Muzaffarpur ranked 38th having highest.

According to composite education and employment index, it was found that gender inequality is more prevalent in north (Darbhanga, Madhubani and Supaul), south (Arwal and Jehanabad), south-west (Bhojpur and Buxar) and west Bihar (Saran) and less in central Bihar (Muzaffarpur and Patna) stretching towards east (Begusarai, Munger, Khagaria, Bhagalpur, Katihar and Purnia); Gaya in south and Gopalganj in west. Gaya with lowest gender inequality in this index ranked 1st while Bhojpur ranked 38th.

From the composite empowerment index, it was found that gender inequality was maximum in Madhepura (east) which ranked 38th followed by Saharsa (central), Purbi Champaran (north-west) and Araria (north-east) and it was least in Siwan (west) which ranked 1st followed by Sitamarhi (north), Gopalganj (west) and Jamui (south).

Composite gender inequality index has been calculated to ascertain the role of three parameters in explaining gender inequality in Bihar, and it was found that it existed in all the districts with varying magnitude and was maximum in Purbi Champaran which ranked 38th and minimum in Gopalganj which ranked 1st. Gender inequality was more prevalent in central Bihar followed by north-west and south-west and least in south followed by east.

The largest village (Pachrukha) of district Purbi Champaran, which had maximum gender inequality, was selected for the field study and following are the major findings:

- Early marriage of girls was a major problem, as 47 percent were married at 18 years while only 20 percent males married at 21. Out of total married females, 82 percent were not consulted before marriage while among males, 67 percent were. 77 percent females were not consulted before mate selection while 78 percent males were.
- 35.5 percent of total respondents were illiterate of whom 66 percent were female. 73 percent of the respondents stated that girls are not given the same opportunity as boys.
- Among female respondents, early marriage was the major reason for their dropout (48 percent) while among male, it was employment (55 percent).
- Majority of female respondents (57 percent) were engaged in household activities while majority of males were engaged in agriculture (38 percent). 46.5 percent respondents did not have any income; of them around 70 percent were females.
- It has been seen that as the order of children increases, the ratio of boy and girl declined drastically from 81:81 in 1st order to 63:50 in 2nd followed by 36:18 in 3rd and finally to 13:6 in 4th. 53 percent families celebrated boy's birth, 25 percent celebrated birth of boys as well as girls and only 22 percent celebrated girls.
- 91 percent families had male heads and only 9 percent had female showing the existence of gender inequality in decision making process and lack of female involvement, which would otherwise, been beneficial for the family.
- According to 64.5 percent respondents, gender inequality exists in the society and the major reason of it according to them is patriarchy followed by poverty and illiteracy.

A number of hypotheses were tested in this study: Firstly, it was hypothesized that gender inequality is because of patriarchal mindset, which has been verified as 72.5 percent respondents agreed with the statement that inequality does perpetuate because of it. Secondly, education is an important tool to remove gender inequality, has been proved as 70.5 percent respondents believed that it is a prerequisite to eradicate gender inequality. Thirdly, early marriage of girls is a major obstacle in their path of development, has been found to be true as 71.5 percent respondents agreed that it does hinder the overall development of girls. Fourthly, financial independence of women is compulsory for their empowerment and say in family matters, which has been verified as 71 percent respondents agreed with the viewpoint. Lastly, political participation of women can help them to raise voice against inequality and discrimination, was also found to be true as 72.5 percent responded affirmatively.