

GENDER INEQUALITY IN LITERACY RATES AND LEVELS OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AMONG SCHEDULED CASTES AND NON-SCHEDULED CASTES IN RURAL HARYANA

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How to cite this paper:

Chamar K. V. and Chamar S. K. (2026) Gender Inequality in Literacy Rates and Levels of Educational Attainment among Scheduled Castes and Non-Scheduled Castes in Rural Haryana, Journal of Global Resources, Vol. 12 (01)

DOI:

10.46587/JGR.2026.v12i01.002

Received: 25 Oct. 2025

Reviewed: 25 Nov. 2025

Final Accepted: 14 Dec. 2025

OPEN ACCESS
Freely available Online
www.isdesr.org

Abstract: Access to education varies considerably across gender and caste among different social and marginalized sections of Indian society. The present study aims to analyze gender inequality in literacy rates and levels of educational attainment among scheduled castes and non-scheduled castes in rural Haryana. Both primary and secondary data have been utilized for this research. Primary data has been collected from 975 scheduled caste households and 390 non-scheduled caste households through stratified random sampling across 39 villages in 15 blocks, covering five districts such as Ambala, Panipat, Rohtak, Rewari, and Sirsa, representing the northern, eastern, central, southern, and western regions of Haryana, respectively. The sampled households have been bifurcated by caste, encompassing 37 distinct castes, including 13 scheduled castes and 24 non-scheduled castes, comprising seven general castes and 17 other backward castes. Initially, caste-wise male and female literacy rates have been calculated in percentages. To measure gender disparities in educational attainment among SCs, NSCs, and specific social groups in rural Haryana, the Chakraborty Disparity Index (1999) has been employed. Based on the sample data, the literacy rate among NSCs has been found 10 percent higher than that among SCs. The highest gender gap in literacy rates has been observed in the Doon caste among SCs, the Jat caste among general castes, and the Kashyap caste among other backward castes. At the primary level, the Sansi caste (SCs) and the Khati caste (NSCs) recorded the highest gender disparity. At the secondary level, the Ramdasia caste (SCs) and the Rajput caste (NSCs) showed the highest disparity.

Keywords: Literacy Rate, Levels of Educational Attainment, Gender Disparity, SC, Non-Scheduled Castes

Introduction

Education provides individuals with a deeper understanding of the interconnections between social, economic, and environmental systems. It enhances employment opportunities and serves as a powerful instrument for transforming people's attitudes and aspirations. Despite this, inequalities in educational attainment, employment, and income across caste, gender, and ethnic boundaries have persisted in Indian society for decades, largely due to its complex social structure (Sivanandan, 1979; Dreze and Sen, 1995; Anitha, 2000). Among the marginalized groups, scheduled castes (SCs) constitute the most socially, economically, and psychologically deprived section of Indian society (Raghavendra, 2020). Historically, both women and scheduled castes have faced significant barriers to attaining higher literacy levels in India. In fact, the gap between scheduled castes and non-scheduled castes has often been more pronounced than the gender differences observed within each group (Raju, 1988).

Indian society has traditionally been characterized by male chauvinism, where women have not only been marginalized but also deprived of their right to education (Romatra, 1988). Access to education historically remained confined to upper-class urban women, urban centers, certain caste groups, and a limited number of individuals within the scheduled castes. Consequently, women's participation in economic activities has remained disproportionately low compared to their male counterparts (Karlekar, 1982; Liddle and Joshi, 1986; Dunn, 1993; Wankhede, 2001a; Wankhede, 2016b). Interestingly, gender disparities have often been found to be greater in urban areas than in rural ones, primarily due to patriarchal mindsets, unsafe working environments, and unequal employment opportunities (Kushawaha and Sharma, 2019). Girls' education plays a crucial role in reducing gender disparities across various aspects of life, particularly among scheduled castes (SCs) and scheduled tribes (STs), with states such as Jharkhand and West Bengal (Ghosh, 2003a, 2007b). Similarly, within West Bengal, women belonging to castes such as Turi, Ghasi, Bhuiya, Bagdi, Dom, Bauri, Lohar, and Mal continue to lag significantly behind their male counterparts, particularly in higher education (Majhi and Sardar, 2019; Sarkar and Kasemi, 2019a, 2019b, 2020c). Using similar approaches, several studies have examined gender inequality in literacy rates, levels of educational attainment, and gender disparities among various social groups in India. Some of these studies have also highlighted the educational disparities and challenges faced by marginalized communities (see for instance Raju, 1991; Debi, 1996; Jacobs, 1996; McDougall, 2000; Azim, 2005; Ghosh, 2017; Husain, 2011; Husain and Sarkar, 2011; Ali, 2020; Chamar and Chamar, 2024; Rani and Chamar, 2025). In light of the above, the present study seeks to analyse gender inequality in literacy rates and different levels of educational attainment among scheduled castes and non-scheduled castes in rural Haryana.

Objectives of the study

The major objectives of the present study are:

- to examine gender inequality in literacy rates among scheduled castes and non-scheduled castes in rural Haryana, and;
- to analyse gender disparity across different levels of educational attainment among scheduled castes and non-scheduled castes in rural Haryana.

Study Area

Haryana, one of the most prosperous states in India, is located in the north-western part of the country. It is a landlocked state, extending from $27^{\circ} 39' 0''$ to $30^{\circ} 55' 5''$ north latitudes and from $74^{\circ} 27' 8''$ to $77^{\circ} 36' 5''$ east longitudes, covering an area of 44,212 km². Physiographically, the eastern sector of Haryana is largely plain and featureless while western sector is traversed by numerous sand dunes. Primarily an agrarian state, agriculture plays a vital role in Haryana's economy and continues to be the main occupation of its people. At the same time, Haryana is

home to significant industrial hubs such as Ambala, Yamunanagar, Sonipat, Gurgaon, and Faridabad, while Kurukshetra, Hisar, and Rohtak serve as major educational centers. Its proximity to the national capital, New Delhi, has further strengthened Haryana's position as one of India's leading industrialized states. According to the 2001 Census, Haryana comprised 19 districts, 67 tehsils, 114 community development blocks, and 6,955 villages, of which 6,764 were inhabited and 191 uninhabited. The rural population of Haryana was about 150.29 lakh, accounting for 71.08 percent of the total population, with 80.53 lakh males (53.58 percent) and 69.76 lakh females (46.42 percent). Within the rural population, the scheduled caste community numbered 32.11 lakh (21.37 percent), including 17.17 lakh males (53.47 percent) and 14.94 lakh females (46.53 percent).

Database and Research Methodology

The present study is broadly based on primary data collected through a well-structured schedule, using a systematic sampling procedure from the district to the household level in rural Haryana. For the fieldwork, five districts such as Ambala, Panipat, Rohtak, Rewari, and Sirsa have been strategically selected to represent both scheduled caste and non-scheduled caste population across different geographical areas covering the northern, eastern, central, southern, and western parts of the state respectively. After that, 25 households from scheduled castes category and 10 households from non-scheduled castes category have been surveyed from each village, resulting in a total of 1365 households comprising 975 scheduled castes households and 390 non-scheduled castes households, across 39 villages of rural Haryana. The sample households have been subsequently categorized by caste, representing 13 distinct scheduled castes and 24 from non-scheduled castes including 7 from general castes and 17 from other backward castes. Further, caste-wise male and female literacy rates have been calculated in percentage in proportion to male and female educated population. Furthermore, to assess the levels of educational attainment, total educated persons of each caste has been divided into five broad levels (i.e. Primary (Ist to Vth classes), Middle (VIth to VIIIth classes), Secondary (IXth to Xth classes), Plus two (XIth to XIIth classes), and above Plus two (above XIIth classes), and calculated into percentage for uniform pattern i.e. 100 percent. Finally, to analyse the gender disparity in levels of educational attainment among the scheduled castes and non-scheduled castes, the following specific formula has been applied.

Gender Disparity Index in Levels of Educational Attainment

The gender disparity index quantifies the extent to which one gender lags behind the other in achieving different levels of educational attainment. To measure the Gender Disparity Index (GDI) proposed by Chakraborty (1999) has been applied across different levels of educational attainment among the select scheduled castes and non-scheduled castes. The formula is as follows:

$$GDI = \left(\frac{Y_p \times X}{Y \times X_p} \right)$$

Where;

- X represents the total male population aged 7 years and above,
- X_p is the male population at specific levels of educational attainment,
- Y denotes the total female population aged 7 years and above,
- Y_p is the female population at the given level of educational attainment.

A higher gender disparity index (GDI) indicates lower gender disparity between the males and females at a particular educational level, while a lower value indicates greater gender disparity. The gender inequality in literacy rates and gender disparity index for different levels of educational attainment including primary, middle, secondary, plus two and

above plus two has been calculated for the select scheduled castes and non-scheduled castes in rural Haryana. Finally, the tables have been prepared to interpret the results regarding the gender gap, and gender disparity across broad levels of educational attainment in the study area.

Results and Discussion

Population Proportion of Sample Households

The study is based on 1,365 sampled households covering 37 select castes, with a total population of 6,796 persons, comprising 3,582 males (52.71 percent) and 3,214 females (47.29 percent). This includes 13 scheduled castes and 24 non-scheduled castes (general and other backward castes). Among 975 scheduled caste households, the population is 4,899 persons, including 2,568 males (52.42 percent) and 2,331 females (47.58 percent). The Chamar (54 percent), Balmiki (19 percent), and Dhanak (11 percent) are predominant castes, account for nearly 84 percent of the scheduled caste population. The Odh and Mazhabhi Sikh each represent about 4 percent, while the remaining eight castes accounts for nearly 8 percent. Similarly, among 370 non-scheduled caste households, the population is 1,897 persons consisting of 1,014 males (53.45 percent) and 883 females (46.55 percent). Of these, 1,057 persons belong to general castes and 840 to other backward castes. The Jat, Brahman, Ahir, Jatt Sikh, and Punjabi are the most dominant castes, comprising 60 percent of the total non-scheduled caste population. The Jhinwar, Khati, Bania, Lohar, Jiginath, Nai, Muslim, Kamboj, Kumhar, Saini, Gujar, and Sunar, account for 33 percent, while the remaining castes represent about 7 percent.

Literacy Rates and Gender Gap across Different Social Groups

Table 1 presents the literacy rates across different social groups in rural Haryana. The study reveals that among the scheduled castes, the overall literacy rate stands at 76.32 percent, which is considerably lower than the state average of 78.93 percent. Male literacy among scheduled castes reaches 83.88 percent, while female literacy lags behind at only 67.94 percent, reflecting a wide gender gap of nearly 16 percent. In contrast, the general castes record a much higher literacy rate of 85.14 percent. Male literacy rate is as high as 90.57 percent, while female literacy stands at 78.68 percent, indicating a gender gap of about 12 percent, which is smaller than that observed among scheduled castes. The other backward castes (OBCs) report the highest literacy rate among all social groups at 85.95 percent, with male literacy at 92.62 percent and female literacy at 78.65 percent. Similarly, the non-scheduled castes also record a higher literacy level (85.50 percent) than the state rural average, with male and female literacy at 91.47 percent and 78.67 percent, respectively. At the aggregate level, rural Haryana reports a literacy rate of 78.93 percent, with male literacy significantly higher at 86.06 percent than female literacy at 70.95 percent reflecting a gender gap of nearly 15 percent. Overall, still scheduled castes and rural women remain particularly disadvantaged in achieving the educational attainment.

Table 1: Literacy Rates among Different Social Groups in Rural Haryana

Castes	(Percent)	Castes	(percent)
Chamar	16.84	Khatik	03.26
Balmiki	15.43	Sansi	45.45
Dhanak	18.19	Doom	53.33
Majhabhi Sikh	02.95	Ramdasia Sikh	-08.33
Odh	07.50	Bawaria	47.14
Meghwal	07.70	Sapera	46.67
Bazigar	22.39	Rural Haryana	15.94

Source: ICSSR: ESCAC, Field Survey, 2012-14 (Haryana). Compiled by Authors

Caste-wise Gender Gap in Literacy Rate

Among Scheduled Castes

Significant caste-wise gender gaps in literacy rates have been found among the scheduled castes in rural Haryana. According to the sample survey, the male literacy rate among the scheduled caste population has been recorded 15.94 percent higher than the female literacy rate in the study area, reflecting substantial gender inequality. The widest gender gap in literacy has been recorded among the Doom caste, where the male literacy rate is 83.33 percent, compared to a significantly lower female literacy rate of 30.00 percent, resulting in a gender gap of 53.33 percent. This is followed by the Bawaria (47.14 percent), Sapera (46.67 percent), and Sansi (45.45 percent) castes. Among the larger caste groups, Chama records the highest literacy rate (79.83 percent), with a gender gap of 16.84 percent. In contrast, the smallest gender gap among scheduled castes has been observed in the Mazhabi Sikh community, with a difference of just 2.95 percent. This relatively narrow gap can be attributed to the uniformly low literacy rate within this caste. Historically one of the most socio-economically marginalized castes, the Mazhabi Sikhs continue to experience poor living conditions and limited educational attainment. Interestingly, the negative gender gap in literacy rate has been found only in the Ramdasia Sikh caste, where the female literacy rate exceeds that of males by 8.33 percent, indicating a rare reversal of the typical gender pattern across rural Haryana (see Table 2).

Table 02: Rural Haryana: Caste-wise Gender Gap in Literacy Rates among Scheduled Castes

Social Groups	Literacy Rates (percent)			
	Total	Male	Female	Gender Gap
Scheduled Castes	76.32	83.88	67.94	15.94
General Castes	85.14	90.57	78.68	11.89
Other Backward Castes	85.95	92.62	78.65	13.97
Non-Scheduled Castes	85.50	91.47	78.67	12.80
Rural Haryana	78.93	86.06	70.95	15.11

Source: ICSSR: ESCAC, Field Survey, 2012-14 (Haryana). Compiled by Authors.

Among Non-scheduled castes

The study reveals that within the general castes, Punjabi (94.59 percent), Rajput (93.55 percent), and Bania (89.29 percent) display very high literacy rates, while Jat (87.12 percent) and Brahman (82.44 percent) record moderately high levels. In contrast, Jatt Sikh (75.00 percent) and Rai Sikh (64.71 percent) exhibit relatively lower literacy achievements. Similarly, within the OBCs, significant disparities are evident. Castes such as Dhobi (100 percent), Darji (95.00 percent), Gujjar (92.68 percent), Ahir (92.51 percent), Sunar (91.89 percent), and Kamboj (89.80 percent) achieve exceptionally high literacy rates. However, communities like Kashyap (72.72 percent), Jogi Nath (74.00 percent), Jhinwar (80.33 percent), Saini (79.49 percent), and Muslim OBCs (80.77 percent) remain below the state average.

Table 3 presents the caste-wise gender gap in literacy rates among non-scheduled castes in rural Haryana. Overall, the gender gap in literacy rates of 12.80 percent has been recorded among the non-scheduled castes. Within this category, the gap is 11.89 percent among the general castes and 13.97 percent among the other backward castes (OBCs). The lowest disparities are found among Punjabi (0.88 percent) and Bania (5.64 percent) communities, while considerably higher gaps are evident among Jat (15.41 percent) and Rajput (13.33 percent) groups. On average, rural Haryana reports a literacy rate of 85.14 percent for the general caste population, with a gender gap of 11.89 percent. The variation in gender gaps is particularly sharp across OBCs. In some cases, the gap is extremely low or even negative, as observed among Nai (1.79 percent); Saini (3.17 percent), Lohar (5.15 percent), Sunar (6.76 percent), and Kamboj (7.15 percent). In contrast, castes such as Kashyap (60.00 percent), Maniyar (33.33 percent), Muslim (21.63 percent), and Jhinwar (26.05 percent) display very wide gender disparities.

Overall, these findings highlight significant gender inequalities in literacy rate across castes in rural Haryana.

Table 03: Rural Haryana: Caste-wise Gender Gap in Literacy Rates among Non-Scheduled Castes

Castes	Percent	Castes	Percent
General Castes			
Jat	15.41	Bania	05.64
Brahman	10.79	Rajput	13.33
Jatt Sikh	12.89	Rai Sikh	12.86
Punjabi	00.88	Rural Haryana	11.89
Other Backward Castes			
Ahir	14.13	Kumhar	18.38
Jhinwar	26.05	Sunar	06.76
Khati	07.86	Kashyap	60.00
Jogi Nath	17.95	Mali	09.62
Kamboj	07.15	Darji	11.11
Lohar	05.15	Maniyar	33.33
Nai	-01.79	Dhobi	00.00
Saini	03.17	Muslim	21.63
Gujjar	14.29	Rural Haryana	13.97
Non-Scheduled Castes			12.80

Source: ICSSR: ESCAC, Field Survey, 2012-14 (Haryana). Compiled by Authors.

Levels of Educational Attainment

For this study, any individual with formal education at any level is considered 'educated.' The caste-wise educational attainment among scheduled castes and non-scheduled castes has been analyzed separately.

Among Scheduled Castes

The study reveals a pyramidal pattern, with a higher concentration at the primary and middle levels and a sharp decline at secondary and above levels. The castes such as Majhabi Sikh (49.0 percent), Odh (41.6 percent), and Meghwal (43.5 percent) record comparatively higher attainment at the primary stage, while Sansi (52.2 percent) and Sapera (50.0 percent) dominate at the middle level. At the secondary level, attainment falls considerably, though Ramdasia Sikh (37.5 percent) and Bazigar (29.6 percent) exhibit relatively better progress. The proportion of attainment at plus two and above plus two remains extremely limited across most castes, with some presence among Meghwal (21.2 percent), Chamars (5.0 percent), and Ramdasia Sikh (18.8 percent). Gender disparities persist, with males generally attaining higher education than females, though exceptions exist e.g., Khatik and Doom females surpass males at certain stages. Overall, the SCs in rural Haryana remain concentrated at lower levels of schooling, with minimal representation at higher education, reflecting structural disadvantages and inter-caste variations in access to education.

Exceptions to this trend are observed among the Ramdasia Sikh, and Chamar castes, where relatively higher levels of education have been attained. At the aggregate level, the highest proportion of the literate population (30.82 percent) has completed education up to the middle level, whereas the lowest proportion (3.46 percent) has reached beyond the plus two levels. Notably, more than 96 percent of the educated scheduled caste population in rural Haryana has attained education only up to the plus two levels. At the aggregate level, the highest proportion of the literate SC population (30.82 percent) has completed education up to the middle level, while the lowest proportion (3.46 percent) has reached beyond plus two. Notably, more than 96 percent of the educated scheduled caste population in rural Haryana has attained

education only up to the plus two levels. The study further reveals notable limitations in educational advancement among certain scheduled castes. Specifically, no person from the Majhabi Sikh, Khatik, and Sansi castes has attained education beyond the plus two levels. Gender disparities are also pronounced: at the time of the survey, no female from the Bawaria and Sapera castes has progressed beyond the primary level. Similarly, among females, none from the Doom caste has studied beyond the middle level, none from the Bazigar caste beyond the secondary level, and none from the Dhanak, Odh, and Meghwali castes beyond the plus two levels in rural Haryana.

Among Non-Scheduled Castes

The study also reveals that about 48 percent of the literate population has studied up to the middle levels, while 25.8 percent have reached the secondary level, 19 percent the plus two level, and only 7 percent have studied beyond plus two levels. Among other backward castes, the Dhobi (50 percent), Darji (47.37 percent), Jhinwar (46.94 percent), and Jogi Nath (45.95 percent) record the highest proportions at the primary level. In the Dhobi caste, the remaining half of the literate population has completed only up to the middle level. Similarly, Kashyap (43.75 percent), Punjabi (42.86 percent), and Mali (40 percent) show high middle level attainment. At the secondary level, the Bania caste has recorded the highest proportion of educated person (40.00 percent), followed by the Gujjar (36.84 percent) and Lohar (36.59 percent) castes. The Maniyar caste records the highest proportion (50 percent) at the plus two level, followed by the Sunar (29.41 percent), Kumhar (28.21 percent), Rai Sikh (27.27 percent), and Brahman (24.54 percent) castes. Within general castes, the largest share (26.65 percent) has attained secondary education, while only 9.91 percent have studied beyond plus two levels. Among other backward castes, the majority (27.35 percent) are concentrated at the primary level, and just 4.20 percent have crossed the plus two level. Overall, the proportion of non-SCs attaining above plus two is more than double that of SCs, though over 93 percent remain confined to below plus two levels. Notably, no person from the Punjabi caste has studied beyond plus two levels, and in the Dhobi caste, none have progressed beyond the middle level. Educational attainment among OBCs remains limited to a few castes such as Ahir, Khati, Jogi Nath, Kamboj, Kumhar, and Sunar.

Gender Disparity in Educational Attainment Across Castes

The caste-wise gender disparity across various levels of educational attainment such as primary, middle, secondary, plus two, and above plus two has been analyzed among scheduled castes and non-scheduled castes in rural Haryana.

Among Scheduled Castes

The caste-wise Gender Disparity Index (GDI) at different levels of educational attainment among scheduled castes in rural Haryana reveals significant variations across castes and levels of education (Table 4). At the primary level, most castes exhibit moderate disparities, with extremes ranging from very high female disadvantage among Sansi (0.26) and Doom (0.40), to high female advantage among the Sapera (3.33) and Ramdasia Sikh (2.67). At the middle level, disparities fluctuate widely, with certain castes showing female advantage (e.g., Mazhabhi Sikh 1.41, Odh 1.33) while others reflect strong female disadvantage (Khatik 0.34, Meghwali 0.59). At the secondary level, extreme imbalances appear; Khatik (5.43) and Mazhabhi Sikh (2.68) display strong female advantage, whereas the Chamar (0.65) and Ramdasia Sikh (0.33) reflect female disadvantage. At the plus two level, the mixed trend continues, with female advantage among Sansi (1.55) and Mazhabhi Sikh (1.43), while other castes remain below parity. Beyond the plus two level, female representation becomes negligible, with most castes recording very low or zero values, except for Ramdasia Sikh (1.33). Overall, the aggregate GDI for rural Haryana remains below parity across all levels of education, with the steepest disadvantage observed at higher

education (0.40), highlighting persistent gender gaps and highly uneven caste-wise patterns. It is noteworthy that certain castes, such as the Ramdasia Sikh at the middle level; the Bawaria and Sapera castes at all levels except the primary level; the Sansi at the secondary level; the Doom at the secondary, plus two, and above plus two levels; and the Bazigar at the plus two and above plus two levels, have recorded a zero (0.00) disparity index. This indicates that at the time of the survey, neither male nor female educated person has been identified from these castes at the respective levels of education. A similar situation has been observed among the Dhanak, Odh, and Meghwal castes at the above plus two levels. Overall, the analysis confirms that females remain significantly behind males at all levels of educational attainment in rural Haryana, with the exception of the primary level.

Table 04: Rural Haryana: Caste-wise GDI at Different Levels of Educational Attainment among Scheduled Castes

Selected Castes	Levels of Educational Attainment (Gender Disparity Index)				
	Primary Level	Middle Level	Secondary Level	Plus Two Level	Above Plus Two Levels
Chamar	1.23	0.75	0.65	0.75	0.47
Balmiki	0.76	0.82	0.92	0.75	0.57
Dhanak	0.85	0.73	0.87	0.88	0.00
Mazhabi Sikh	0.57	1.41	2.68	1.43	-
Odh	0.67	1.33	0.80	1.22	0.00
Meghwal	1.02	0.59	1.29	1.21	0.00
Bazigar	0.81	1.15	0.72	0.00	0.00
Khatik	1.27	0.34	5.43	0.45	-
Sansi	0.26	0.77	0.00	1.55	-
Doom	0.40	1.20	0.00	0.00	0.00
Ramdasia Sikh	2.67	0.00	0.33	-	1.33
Bawaria	1.07	0.00	0.00	-	0.00
Sapera	3.33	0.00	0.00	-	-
Rural Haryana	0.97	0.79	0.74	0.78	0.40

Source: ICSSR: ESCAC, Field Survey, 2012-14 (Haryana). Compiled by Authors.

Among Non-Scheduled Castes

The table 5 presents the Gender Disparity Index (GDI) in different levels of educational attainment across various castes among non-scheduled castes in rural Haryana. At the primary level, various castes display near parity (e.g., Rajputs 2.67, Sainis 1.94, Kumhars 1.74), while others like Rai Sikhs (0.71) and Gujjars (0.00) reflect strong male dominance or complete absence of female participation. At the middle level, gender disparity varies sharply. Some castes record high female advantage (Khati 2.76, Rajput 2.13, Darji 1.83), while others reveal extreme male dominance like the Bania (0.12), and Kashyap (0.20). At the secondary stage, disparities fluctuate widely, with castes like Kashyap (2.40), Nai (1.56), and Bania (1.30) favouring females, whereas others like Rajput (0.21) and Sunar (0.24) reflect severe male dominance. At the plus two level, some caste show exceptionally high female advantage (Sunar 4.12, Muslim 2.78, Arora 1.88), while others (Ahir 0.41, Kamboj 0.38, Lohar 0.37) show marked male dominance. At the above plus two levels, Brahmans (1.46), Jatt Sikhs (1.42), and Banias (1.44) exhibit significant female advantage, while Rajputs (0.36) and Jats (0.44) show male dominance. The study reveals that, among the general castes, all except the Punjabi caste have achieved educational attainment across all levels. Zero gender disparity (0.00 point) has been recorded only among the Rai Sikh caste at the secondary and above plus two levels, due to the absence of both males and females representation. The Rajput caste exhibited both the highest

and lowest gender disparities among non-scheduled castes; the highest at the secondary (0.21 points) and above plus two levels (0.36 points), and the lowest at the primary level (2.67 points). Certain castes exhibited zero gender disparity at specific stages due to the absence of either males or females. These include the Gujjar and Dhobi at the primary level; the Maniyar up to the middle level; the Kashyap at the primary and plus two levels; the Darji at the plus two level; and the Jogi Nath, Kamboj, and Kumhar at the above plus two levels. The study also found complete absence of educated persons from some castes at higher levels. No member of the Maniyar caste has been recorded at the secondary and above plus two levels, and none from the Dhobi caste beyond middle levels. Similarly, no one from the Punjabi (general caste), and Jhinwar, Lohar, Nai, Saini, Gujjar, Kashyap, Mali, Darji, and Muslim (OBC) castes has been found at the above plus two level among non-scheduled castes at the time of the survey. Analysis of trends shows that gender disparity generally rises from the primary to middle, and from middle to secondary levels across all social groups, scheduled castes, non-scheduled castes, general castes, and OBCs. A slight decline is seen from secondary to plus two, followed by a sharp rise from plus two to above plus two levels among scheduled castes, and a moderate rise among non-scheduled castes. This pattern indicates that females are significantly underrepresented at higher education levels. Overall, the findings highlight that females continue to lag behind males in educational attainment at all levels, except at the primary stage, in rural Haryana.

Table 05: Rural Haryana: Caste-wise GDI at Different Levels of Educational Attainment among Non-Scheduled Castes

Castes	Levels of Educational Attainment (Gender Disparity Index)				
	Primary	Middle	Secondary	Plus Two	Above Plus Two
General Castes					
Jat	0.98	1.08	0.74	0.87	0.44
Brahman	1.28	0.92	0.69	0.66	1.46
Jatt Sikh	0.95	0.58	1.03	0.81	1.42
Arora	1.03	0.90	0.59	1.88	-
Bania	0.87	0.12	1.30	1.44	1.44
Rajput	2.67	2.13	0.21	1.60	0.36
Rai Sikh	0.71	1.43	0.00	0.71	0.00
Rural Haryana	1.07	0.88	0.76	0.88	0.77
Other Backward Castes					
Ahir	1.17	1.11	0.88	0.41	1.01
Jhinwar	0.87	0.37	1.01	0.90	-
Khati	0.69	2.76	0.37	1.10	0.37
Jogi Nath	1.04	0.62	0.74	0.62	0.00
Kamboj	02.0	0.50	1.78	0.38	0.00
Lohar	1.28	1.47	0.64	0.37	-
Nai	1.33	0.88	1.56	0.58	-
Saini	1.94	0.97	0.70	0.39	-
Gujjar	0.00	1.90	0.26	0.48	-
Kumhar	1.74	0.30	0.52	0.87	0.00
Sunar	1.18	0.47	0.24	4.12	0.71
Kashyap	0.00	0.20	2.40	0.00	-
Mali	1.08	0.65	1.08	1.08	-
Darji	0.98	1.83	0.41	0.00	-
Maniyar	0.00	0.00	-	0.67	-
Dhobi	0.00	0.33	-	-	-
Muslim	0.93	0.56	0.62	2.78	-
Rural Haryana	1.18	0.83	0.72	0.67	0.77
Non-Scheduled Castes					
Rural Haryana	1.13	0.86	0.74	0.79	0.76

Source: ICSSR: ESCAC, Field Survey, 2012-14 (Haryana). Compiled by Authors

Conclusions

The study concludes that literacy rates vary significantly across castes and social groups. Overall, non-scheduled castes (NSCs) record a literacy rate nearly 10 percent higher than scheduled castes (SCs). Gender inequality remains pronounced, with male literacy rates 15.94

percent higher than female literacy among SCs and 12.80 percent higher among NSCs. The widest gender gaps in literacy have been observed among the Doom caste (53.33 percent) within SCs, the Jat caste (15.41 percent) among general castes, and the Kashyap caste (60.00 percent) among other backward castes (OBCs). Gender disparity also varies across educational levels; among SCs, the lowest disparity has been recorded at the primary level (0.97) and the highest at the above plus two level (0.40); among NSCs, the lowest disparity occurred at the primary level (1.13) and the highest at the secondary level (0.74).

At the caste level, the Sansi caste (SCs) recorded the highest disparity at the primary stage (0.26), while the Khati caste (NSCs) showed the highest at the same level (0.69). At the secondary level, Ramdasia (SCs) and Rajput (NSCs) castes showed the greatest disparities, while at the above plus two level, the Chamar caste (SCs, 0.47) and Rajput caste (NSCs) recorded the highest disparities. Overall, education among SCs and OBCs has largely been confined to lower levels compared to general castes in rural Haryana. Furthermore, at the primary level, the Sansi caste exhibits the highest gender disparity in literacy rates (0.26 points), whereas the Khatik caste records the lowest disparity (5.43 points) at the secondary level. In contrast, at the middle level, the Bania caste shows the highest disparity (0.12 points), while the Khati caste reports the lowest disparity (2.76 points) among non-scheduled castes. Notably, among SCs, only the Chamar and Balmiki castes attained access across all levels of education. Among general castes, only Punjabi and Rai Sikh have attained, while among OBCs, only the Ahir, Khati, and Sunar castes reached all levels. Overall, females remain significantly disadvantaged in educational attainment at every stage beyond the primary level among both scheduled castes and non-scheduled castes in rural Haryana.

Acknowledgements: The first author (Project Director) is deeply grateful to ICSSR, New Delhi, for sponsoring the major project entitled 'Educational Status of Scheduled Castes: Attainments and Challenges, 2012–14', and extends sincere thanks to all team members, including the project assistants.

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