

# Rural Youth in Higher Education in Punjab: A Survey of Parental Attitude and Facilities Available Within Home

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## ABSTRACT

India is facing a lot of challenges in the higher education system. One of the major challenges in the modern society is gender disparities especially in the rural areas and among the disadvantaged and marginalized communities. Other challenges include, lack of quality education, non-accessibility of higher education to rural youth, higher rate of dropout among the rural and marginalized sections of the society. It is true that enhancing social access to higher education is still important in the country, but the major challenge before the Indian higher education system is to bring equity in quality of education in the country. Though the literacy rate is improving in India, but still there is a huge gap between male-female literacy rates and rural-urban literacy rates. The opportunities of attaining higher education are not equal for all. Most of the higher educational institutions are in urban areas and the students from villages have to face a lot of difficulties to complete their degrees. With these observations in mind, the present paper gives an analysis of the higher education scenario in Punjab. It presents a case study of the rural youth in higher education with special reference to the parental attitude and facilities provided to the rural youth at home to pursue their education.

Education is one of the most important and powerful instruments for reducing inequalities and poverty. Therefore, ensuring access to quality education for all, particularly for the poor and rural population, for the marginalized and disadvantaged communities, is central to the economic and social development of India. Scholars have described education as the main factor for the development of human resources and most influential agent of modernization apart from industrialization and urbanization in India (Singh and Kaur, 2005).

Different Commissions and Committees on education in India have stressed upon the important role played by education. Kothari Commission (1964-66) opined that if social transformation and change on a grand scale are to be achieved without violent revolution, there is only one instrument that can be used, i.e. education.

As higher education in the country, as well as in Punjab, grew in size, its problems and prospects too increased in both numbers and size, and its relevance to development and especially to the socio-economic needs of the society increasingly became issues of debate. Comparing the situation of higher education in other states and at the all-India level, its development in Punjab seems to be relatively superior, but there are problems as unplanned institutional growth, lack of infrastructural facilities, financial constraints, non-placement of

degree holders, irrelevant course content and rural-urban, gender based and caste based disparities in education.

Punjab is struggling hard to deal with the problem of non-enrolment, irregular attendance and high drop-out rate, particularly in rural areas. The learning achievement in general has remained extremely low. Punjab's performance on education sector calls for attention, particularly in terms of highly differential educational environment in villages and cities. Students coming from villages to cities for higher education are not able to perform efficiently due to many hurdles in their way. Therefore, there is a need for various changes, modifications, adaptations, orientations and innovations.

### Disparities in Education:

The major issue concerning education in India is disparity in education in two major sectors, there is a huge gap in the literacy of both the gender as well as between urban and rural areas.

The following table shows that the literacy rate is improving with the passage of time in India, but there still remains a huge gap between the male and female literacy rates.

**Table 1.1**  
**LITERACY RATES (GENDERWISE) IN INDIA**  
**1991-2001 (%age)**  
**(7 years and above)**

Year	Total	Male	Female	Gap between male-female literacy rate
1991	52.21	64.13	39.29	24.84
2001	65.38	75.85	54.16	21.69
2011	74.04	82.14	65.46	16.68

Source: Census of India 2011

Table 1.1 shows that in 1991 the total literacy rate in India was 52.21%, in which male literacy was 64.13%, whereas female literacy was just 39.29%, with a huge gap of 24.84% in male-female literacy rates. In 2001, the gap was still 21.69%, where the total literacy rate was just 65.38%. In 2011, the literacy rate of India has gone up to 74.04%, where male literacy is 82.14% and female literacy is 65.46%, which is quite

low in comparison to male literacy rate. Table 1.1 clearly shows gender disparities in education.

Another disparity in education is between urban and rural literacy rate which is shown in the Table 1.2 given below. The table shows how the accessibility to education varies in cities and villages. Due to lack of higher educational facilities in rural areas, there remains a constant gap between urban and rural literacy rate.

**Table 1.2**  
**GAP BETWEEN URBAN AND RURAL LITRACY RATE**  
**1991-2001 (%age)**  
**(7 years and above)**

	Urban	Rural	Gap between urban and rural literacy
1991	73.08	44.69	28.39
2001	79.92	58.74	21.18
2011	84.11	67.77	16.34

Source: Census of India 2001

Table 1.2 shows that the gap between urban and rural literacy was 28.39% in 1991, 21.18% in 2001 and it is still continuing with 16.34% in 2011. As people from villages have to make daily commuting to reach to their educational institutions, they face a lot of hurdles in their way.

The situation is not very good in Punjab. Out of the total 75.2% literate male population, 83% are from urban areas. Among educated girls, again 74.5 % are from urban areas, whereas 57.1% are from rural areas (Census of India 2001). This shows that among all these groups, girls from the rural areas are most disadvantaged as far as the accessibility of educational facilities is concerned.

### The Need of the Study

Many researchers have pointed out the problems of higher education system in India, such as the uneven growth of higher education institutions, lack of quality education, lack of coordination between different administrative bodies working for the system, financial crunch, infrastructural problems etc. Very few studies however have dealt with the problems of rural youth going in for higher education. The present study was conducted to know about the problems faced by rural students from Punjab getting admission in urban colleges. As family is the most important unit in the life of a person, an attempt was made to find out the parental attitude towards education and the facilities provided to rural youth at their home for encouraging them to go for higher education in the institutions which are located in urban areas.

### The objectives of the Study

- (1) To know about the attitude of the rural parents towards the education
- (2) To know about the facilities and support provided to rural youth in higher education at home.

### Area of Study and Methodology

The area of the research consists of degree colleges located in the city of Batala in Gurdaspur district. Total 180 students were taken as sample by obtaining a sampling frame

consisting of all the students coming from rural areas enrolled in T.D.C Part II and Part III. With the help of an interview schedule data was collected from all these students. While collecting data, both qualitative as well as quantitative methods of research, are used. Apart from the Interview Schedule, Focused Group Discussions and some case studies are conducted for arriving at meaningful inferences.

The education scenario as a whole in Punjab is quite dismal. Thousands of schools lack teachers, classrooms, furniture or even drinking water. The rural population is gradually migrating to the cities seeking better educational opportunities and personality development of their wards.

### Facilities Available to Rural Youth in Higher Education within Home

In this study an attempt was made to know about the attitude of the parents towards the education of their children. The researcher was curious to know whether rural youth in higher education can convince their parents about the seriousness of the degree they are going to obtain, whether parents provide proper facilities to them for their studies or not? Different questions were asked by the researcher to the student respondents as well the parents to satisfy these queries.

#### a) Details about the Financial Status of the Families of the Respondents

To know about the facilities provided by the parents at home, first of all it was important to know about the financial status of the parents. So the first query was in that regard. When it was asked what the annual earnings of the family are, researcher observed that the students in the sample were not much interested in discussing their families with the researcher. However during discussion with different groups of students and their parents residing in villages, it was found that majority of the respondents belonged to middle class families, having all the resources for a comfortable but simple life. As agriculture was the main occupation of the parents of the respondents, so the researcher decided to ask directly about the family income.

Student respondents could give only an estimate of the annual income of the families of these respondents. Table 1.3 on the next page gives details about the

**Table 1.3: Gender Wise Details About the Financial Status of the Families of the Respondents (Annual earnings in Rs.)**

Respondents	3 lakhs and more	2-3 lakhs	50,000--2 lakhs	20,000-50,000	Less than 20,000	Total
Male	14	10	28	18	20	90
%	15.6	11.1	31.1	20.0	22.2	100
Female	12	10	22	24	22	90
%	13.3	11.1	24.5	26.7	24.4	100
Total	26	20	50	42	42	180
%	14.5	11.1	27.8	23.3	23.3	100.0

Only 26% student respondents were from rich families, who claimed that the annual income of their families is 3 lakhs and above, while 23.3% came from very poor families, who could not earn even 20,000 per year. 27.8% of the student respondents said that their families were earning an average income 50,000-2 lakhs per year and they were managing well with that. Most of the student respondents from rich families were not ready to admit that they had faced any problem regarding attainment of higher education in the cities. They seemed proud of their high economic status. In one particular incident during a visit to some village; the researcher got a chance to meet the elder sister of one of the student respondents who had spent 5 years in one of the colleges in Batala City. When the researcher asked her if she could recall any problem faced by her during her studies, she kept repeating the statement, "Sade kol sab kuch hai, is laie sanu kade koi problem nahi aayi" (we have everything, so we never faced any problem). When the researcher asked her specifically about any problems faced by her on her way to college especially while commuting by bus, a strange expression crossed her face as she replied, "Sade sariya bhain bharaawa kol apni conveyance hai, aasi log bus vich dhake

kyon khawange, sanu koi problem nahi hai (all our brothers and sisters have their own conveyance, why shall we travel by bus, we do not have any problem).. On the other hand, student respondents from poor families told the researcher that they were not keen to disclose anything relating to their families in the college as there were many students who would make fun of their low status

#### b) Availability of Separate Study Room at Home

The next aspect that the researcher was eager to investigate was to find out how serious the rural parents were about the studies of their children. Table 1.4 gives details about the availability of a separate study room for the student respondents in their home. 60.6% respondents admitted that they had a separate study room. Female students were a little more fortunate in getting this facility. But 39.9% of the respondents did not have any separate place to study and they were managing their studies in a common room only. They seemed dissatisfied for not getting a special room for preparing for the exams. But it was encouraging to note that majority of the students had the facility of a separate study room.

**Table 1.4: Gender wise Availability of Separate Study Room at Home**

Respondents	Yes	No	Total
Male	52	38	90
%	57.8	42.2	100.0
Female	57	33	90
%	63.4	36.6	100.0
Total	109	71	180
%	60.6	39.4	100.0

#### Disparity between Responses of Parents and Respondents

Surprisingly, the information given by students did not match with the statements of the parents in our sample. Only 2 parents confirmed giving separate study rooms to their children.

#### c) Parental Cooperation and Support while Studying

Table 1.5 gives information regarding the attitude of the parents of the student respondents during the time they are engaged in studies. It shows that majority of the parents did not disturb them during their study time. A small percentage, 7.2% admitted that their parents wanted them to help in agricultural work or domestic chores before sitting down for studies. Interestingly 21.7% of the respondents admitted that their parents did not disturb them during exam time only.

Table 1.5: Gender wise Response of the Parents during Studies of Respondents

Respondents	Do not disturb at all	Want them to help in domestic chores/ agricultural work	Indifferent	Do not disturb during exams only	Total
<b>Male</b>	64	6	2	18	90
%	71.2	6.6	2.2	20.0	100.0
<b>Female</b>	61	7	1	21	90
%	67.8	7.8	1.1	23.3	100.0
<b>Total</b>	125	13	3	39	180
%	69.4	7.2	1.7	21.7	100.0

As to the nature of disturbance, it was not clear as only 7.2% admitted helping their parents in domestic or agricultural work. One disturbance could be lack of space for study, which during exam days might be taken care of by parents making some special arrangements for their children. Only 3 students felt that their parents were indifferent about their studies.

#### Parental Response regarding their Support

The parents of the student respondents were also asked questions in this regard; almost 50% of them admitted that they sought their children's help in domestic and agricultural work, while they tried not to disturb them during their exams. Some of the mothers admitted that their ill health was the greatest hurdle in the education of their daughters as these girls had to bear the burden of home as well as studies.

#### d) Financial Assistance Given by Parents for Studies

On the basis of the discussion with the student and parent respondents, it came to light those financial constraints posed the biggest problem in the way of education of rural youth. Most of the parents in villages could not afford expensive education in private colleges for their children. For them education was not only just getting admission and paying fees; their children also needed money for buying books and availing transportation facilities to reach their educational institution. The purpose to ask the next question was to know about the attitude of the parents regarding the educational needs of their children. The detail in this regard is shown in Table 1.6. Most of the parents i.e. 74.4% immediately tried to fulfill demands related to the education of their children as they did not want their children to go without books and other facilities. Only 2 respondents admitted that their parents were not cooperative at all.

Table 1.6: Gender wise Response of Parents to the Educational Needs of the Student Respondents

Respondents	Immediately try to fulfill demands related to education	Want them to wait for some time	Try to convince that one can do without these things	Tell me that they cannot afford these and I better discontinue my education	Total
<b>Male</b>	74	13	1	2	90
%	82.2	14.5	1.1	2.2	100.0
<b>Female</b>	60	28	2		90
%	66.6	31.2	2.2		100.0
<b>Total</b>	134	41	3	2	180
%	74.4	22.8	1.7	1.1	100.0

Here students adopted different coping mechanisms to handle the situations, so that their education would not suffer. Some reported taking up tuitions or working part time to support their studies. Such schemes are already available in B.U.C College under the name 'Earn While You Learn'.

#### View Point of the Parents

The response of parents in this regard was similar to that of the student respondents. Majority of the parents admitted that they tried their best to meet the educational needs of their children. When they were not able to fulfill their demands immediately, they would convince their children to wait for some time. Thought most of the parents of the student

respondents voted for the education of their children as their first choice, yet during discussions it was found out that marriage of daughters was equally important for them

#### e) Most Helpful Person in the Family for Educational Matters

Though it was quite clear from the responses of the respondents that all the members of the family were quite supportive and they encouraged them to go for higher education, but it was again the demand of the study to ask them directly that who is the most helpful person in their family. Interesting responses are shown in the following table;

Table 1.7: Most Helpful Person in the Family for Educational Matters (Gender wise)

Respondents	Father	Sister	Any other	Mother	Bother	All	Total
Male	37	8	6	20	10	9	90
%	41.2	8.8	6.6	22.2	11.2	10.0	100.0
Female	22	8	6	15	7	32	90
%	24.4	9.0	6.8	16.6	7.6	35.6	100.0
Total	59	16	12	35	17	40	180
%	32.8	8.9	6.7	19.4	9.4	22.8	100.0

32.8% of the respondents admitted that they were being encouraged by their father, among 19.4% of students who were getting maximum encouragement from mother, 20 were boys and 15 were girls. 40% of the student respondents gave credit to all the members of the family, in this 32 were girls and 9 were boys. It was interesting to note that under any other category; the student respondents gave credit to their grandparents too. This category was not included by the researcher. On the whole almost all students received support from their immediate family members. During discussions with families of the student respondents also, it was observed that all the members, old or young, illiterate or literate, relatives, parents and grandparents, all seemed quite enthusiastic about the idea of their children acquiring higher education. The very fact that these young boys and girls had managed to enter a college indicates that they enjoyed the support of their families.

### Conclusion

After reviewing the profile of the respondents and the facilities given to them at home for attaining higher education, some important observations could be made. These have been enumerated below.

1. The rural society has undergone a rapid transformation and developing heightened awareness about the value of education.
2. Although village people were facing many financial problems, yet they were determined to give higher education to their children and help them secure good jobs.
3. The first priority of the parents of the respondents under the sample was education. Majority of the parents admitted that they tried their best to meet the educational needs of their children. If for some reasons, they were unable to fulfill their demands

immediately, they tried to convince their children to wait for some time.

4. Although education was important in the agenda of the parents, yet they were confused about their daughter's future. They wanted them to be qualified, but ultimately, they wanted them to settle down in domesticity.
5. All the members, e.g. father, mother, brother, sister and even grandparents' extended full support to the children in their pursuance of higher education.
6. Almost 50% of the parents sought their children's help in domestic chores and agricultural activities, while they tried not to disturb them during their exams.
7. Villagers were quite convinced about the positive role of education and the higher social status it would accord to their families in the village.
8. Student respondents from rich families were proud of their higher economic status whereas student respondents from poor families were not very comfortable in disclosing their family details for fear of being ridiculed and looked down upon.
9. Students were not willing to give factual information regarding the atmosphere and facilities within their home. Even if they had problems, they were not ready to admit in front of others. Such behaviour reveals a clear-cut hypocrisy on the part of student respondents

So, it can be concluded that as far as the awareness about the role of education is concerned, it is clear from the data that the villagers are not lagging behind. They very well know the importance of education especially education of girls and they try their best to give proper facilities to them also. The problem that the rural population faces at present is not backwardness or ignorance in thinking; rather it is lack of finances for supporting higher education in urban colleges.

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