

FEMALE POPULATION AND THEIR EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN NEPAL

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INTRODUCTION:

The level of educational attainment by males and females both are regarded an important indicator of modernization. Schulze, Harbinson (1995) indicate the important aspects responsible for the rapid growth of the economy is increasingly relative outlays on education to the people. Investment in human capital means expenditure on health, education and training therefore education is considered as an important aspect of the human resource development since it promotes employment by (i) enabling persons to learn more and increasing capability to take up independent jobs or improving their current work performance, (ii) raising the labour force participation rate especially that of the women in remunerative work outside home (Agrawal and Kayastha 1984 less social awareness and existence of traditional values have created a discriminating situation of education. Consequently females are ignored in almost all developing countries.

There is a direct correlation between levels of female education and their participation in economic activities specially in white-collar occupations (Shrestha; 1994). The 1991 census data indicates that 90.46 percent women are engaged in

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agriculture. The major reason of low participation of women in formal occupation other than agriculture is due to their low level of educational background. Similarly, levels of education also relates to fertility rate. Educated women do not want to have many children and they are very familiar to family planning devices. (Shrestha, 1992). In this context it is relevant to highlight the status of female education of the country like ours. The main focus of the paper is to find out the educational attainment of female population and its male/Female ratio

FEMALE POPULATION BY DEVELOPMENT REGION

Female population constitute about 50 percent of the total population in Nepal (census 991).

The male female population ratio is almost one. The annual population growth rate is 2.08 percent. Following table 1 highlights the distributions of female population by different development regions between the year 1981-1991.

Table 1 : Distribution of female population by different development regions (1981-1991)

<i>Development Regions (DR)</i>	<i>Female Population</i>	
	1981	1991
Nepal	73275003 (48.8%)	9270123 (50.1%)
Eastern Development Regions (EDR)	1806966 (48.7%)	2218160 (49.8%)
CDR	2370742 (48.3%)	3036061 (49.0%)
WDR	1544317 (49.4%)	1949179 (59.6%)
MWDR	961106 (49.1%)	1210122 (49.8%)
FWDR	644372 (48.8%)	856601 (50.8%)

Source: Population Monograph of Nepal, CBS' 1987; Statistical Pocket Book, CBS; 1994, Women in Nepal Some Statistical Facts, CBS 1992.

The female population is increasing very fast in the country. The percentage distribution of female population in each development regions has been increased in the year 1991. Of the total population the percentages of female population for EDR, CDR WDR, MWDR, and FWDR are 49.8, 49.0, 59.6, 49.8, and 50.8 respectively in the year 1991 whereas this percentage is 48.7, 48.3, 49.4, 49.1, and 48.8 only in the year 1981.

SEX RATIO OF POPULATION

The sex ratio is defined as the number of males per 100 females. It is an important indicator of women's status since it is a patterns of cumulative product of demographic and social behaviour. In the year 1981 the sex ratio for the population is over 100 (excess males over females). However the year 1991 shows a sex ratio of 99.5, the slight dominance of females (Table 2).

Table:2 Sex ratio of population by development regions (1981-1991).

Dr	Year	
	1981	1991
Nepal	105.0	99.5
EDR	105.3	100.5
CDR	107.1	103.7
WDR	102.6	93.5
MWDR	103.5	99.2
FWDR	104.9	96.0

Surce: Population Monograph of Nepal, CBS, 1995.

The region-wise sex ratio for the 1991 census shows that except in eastern and central development regions the population is female dominance. The sex ratio for eastern and central development regions are 100.5 and 103.7 respectively. Similarly, the sex ratio for western, mid western, and far western development regions are 93.5, 99.2, and 96.0 respectively.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF FEMALE POPULATION IN NEPAL

Majority of female population in Nepal are illiterate. It is a major barrier to improve the position of women in her overall status like employment, health, legal and constitutional rights etc. The male domination and low socio-economic status of women is the society and religious and cultural beliefs of the people are responsible factors that have pushed ahead into the lower status in the society. Cultural restrictions often confine women to domestic affairs and limit their participation in markets and community gatherings. The access to news and information is constrained by the long distance between scattered wards and the bazaars. New ideas spread through radios, schools, health posts, extension services and tourism are often less accessible to most of the rural women of Nepal. When information and training have been offered to women in the context of development programmes, too often they have been regarded as "targets" rather than as participants, and little attention has been given to what they already know or what they might be interested in (Children and women of Nepal, UNICEF, 1987).

FEMALE LITERACY REGIONWISE

The literate population aged 6 years and over is 39.34% in the year 1991 but the percentage of female literacy total is only 12.44. This percent is very low compared to population of the females. The male/female literacy rates aged 6 years and over for different development regions for 1981-1991 is 34:12 and 26.89; 12.44 between the year 1981 to 1991 (Table 3)

Table 3 : Literate population aged 6 years and over by development Region (1981-1991).

Dr.	Year			
		1981	1991	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Nepal	34.0	12.0	26.89	12.44
EDR	39.5	14.5	29.49	14.54
CDR	32.3	12.5	26.23	8.11
WDR	38.3	13.2	23.53	11.97
MWDR	25.2	7.3	25.11	6.74
FWDR	26.8	7.6	25.11	6.74

Source: Population Monograph of Nepal, CBS, 1987, Statistical Pocket Book of Nepal, CBS 1994.

The percentage of literate female population in the year 1981 is 12.0 and it is marginally increased by 0.44 in the year 1991. The table 3 also indicates that EDR had the highest percentage both in 1981 and 1991 censuses followed by WDR in 1981 and CDR in 1991. It is remarkable to note that the percentage of female literacy is more in the year 1981 and it is decreased in MWDR and FWDR in the year 1991 (Table 3). Whereas this percentage is 6.74 for both the development regions. The percentage of literate female population vary in different development region is according to the distribution of accessible schools, the socio-economic status of the people (CBS 1995).

REGIONWISE DISTRIBUTION OF FEMALE POPULATION BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Nepalese constitution 1990 provides an equal opportunity of education to the women. This constitutional provision is still meaningless to raise up womens' literacy in Nepal. They are very backwarded to schools as well as campus level of education.

Table: 4 Regionwise distribution of female population by educational attainment (1991)

Development Region (DR)	Percent of female literate to the total literate	Percent of total educated population		
		S.L.C. or equivalent	Graduates and equivalent	Post graduates and equaivalent
Nepal	31.2	22.6	16.6	17.6
EDR	32.7	20.1	10.8	10.3
CDR	31.4	25.8	20.9	19.9
WDR	35.5	22.0	9.2	12.9
MWDR	24.7	16.3	12.0	9.4
FWDR	21.7	12.5	6.6	5.1

Source: *Women in Nepal Some Statistical Facts, CBS, 1992.*

According to the census report of 1991, the total percentage of female literacy is only 31.2. However the population of the female population is slightly higher than the male in the year 1991. This percentage (female literacy) is highest for the western development region, that is 35.5 and lowest for the far western development region i.e., 21.7. Similarly in an aggregation, the percentage of women population attaining S.L.C. or equivalent is 22.6. This percentage is highest (25.8) for CDR, and lowest (12.5) for FWDR. Similarly, the percentage of female population attaining graduates or equivalent and post graduates and equivalent is 16.6 and 17.6 respectively in 1991. This percentages is also highest for CDR (20.9 and 19.9) and lowest for FWDR (6.6 and 5.1) respectively. For the EDR this percentages is 10.8 and 10.3 and for the WDR and MWDR this percentages is 9.2, 12.9 and 12.0, 9.4 respectively.

The literacy rate for 1981 is 23.2 whereas this rate is 39.6 in 1991. The proportion of literate females is moving up from 12.1 percent in 1981 to 25.0 percent in 1991. However, high sex differentiation still prevails in the literacy rate. As the level of education increases, the ratio of the females to the males declines fast. At the post-graduate level, the female-male ratio is one is to four. (Table 5)

Table 5: Variation of Female-male ratio by educational attainment, aged 6 years and above between the year (1981 to 1991)

	Category	Female/male Ratio	
		1981	1991
	Illiterate	127.1	166.7
	Literate	33.38	46.3
1)	No schooling	32.2	50.0
2)	Primary	41.5	53.5
3)	Lower Secondary	27.9	
4)	Secondary	21.4	39.2
5)	SLC equivalent	22.2	31.2
6)	Intermediate equivalent	21.5	26.4
7)	Graduate or equivalent	18.7	22.2
8)	Post graduate or equivalent	17.6	23.7

Source: *Population monograph of Nepal, CBS, 1995.*

LITERACY RATES BY SEX AND DEVELOPMENT REGIONS

The literacy rates differs to the different development regions of Nepal. The western development region has the highest proportion of literate women i.e. 30.6 percent in the year 1991. For the Mid-western and Far-western Development Regions the proportion is very low. The male/female differences for Eastern Development Region is 29.9, Whereas this difference for Central, Western, Mid-western, Far-western Development Region is 27.2, 27.6, 31.3 and 38.5 respectively (Table 6).

Table 6 : Sexwise literacy rates according to different development regions (1981-1991)

<i>Development Region</i>	<i>male</i>		<i>Female</i>		<i>Male/female Differentials (1991)</i>
	1981	1991	1981	1991	
Nepal	34.0	54.5	12.1	25.0	29.5
EDR	39.5	59.0	14.5	29.1	29.9
CDR	32.3	51.6	12.5	24.4	27.2
WDR	38.4	58.2	20.3	30.6	27.6
MWDR	25.3	47.4	7.3	16.1	31.3
FWDR	26.8	51.6	7.7	13.1	38.5

Source: Population Monograph of Nepal; CBS, 1995.

CONCLUSION

Education is very important factor in developing qualitative human resources. Since, females constitute a significant portion of human resources, they must get chances in attaining education.

The female/male ratio in attaining education shows that as the level of education increases, the ratio of females to males declines the ratio of female

population to the male, is slightly higher in 1991. The literacy rate for females in Nepal is still lower. It was found that higher the educational level lower is the participation of females compared to males in attaining different levels of education. Only a small proportion of literate women continue education beyond their SLC level.

The sex ratio for five development regions in 1991, western, mid western and far western development regions have higher female population than the males. But the male/female difference in literacy rate is higher for WDR, MWDR and FWDR.

There is a gender gap in educational attainment in Nepal. On the whole a religious and cultural belief system of marrying girls in early age and their low socio-economic status from early childhood are the major hindrances for the female education. Since education is the main indicator of development and modernization, women should not be discriminated in getting it. Therefore, some effective government measures should be formulated by which the females (girls) and their parents would be motivated in taking and providing education in each and every parts of the country.

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