

Educational Attainment of Youth in India: A Review

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Abstract

Youth is the most significant population sub-group in driving any nation's social, economic, political, spiritual and other aspects. This youth cluster is cultivated through education: since the age group is intermediate, the education here tilts towards higher education. Unfortunately, much has been talked about in education in terms of plans and policies, yet this keyword (youth) has always been viewed under the 'literacy' umbrella of children only. This paper discusses the philosophical attributes and definitions of youth and their educational attainment. Another goal is to examine the current status, pattern and trends of improvement in youth education to determine the factors that account for the annual rate of increase in educational indicators. The literacy rate, percentage of the population with higher education, and the average years of schooling are all used to measure educational achievements. Datasets from various reliable sources and reports have also been used.

Keywords: Youth, Higher Education, Educational Attainment, Literacy, Positive Youth Development.

1. Introduction

Teenagers today regard their future professional careers as both promising and uncertain. They believe in the necessity of flexibility, specialism, and the usefulness of technology; they also believe that they will change professions and careers frequently. Teenagers recognise the labour market's instability and believe that obtaining extra education is the best approach to establish a personal safety net [1].

2. Who are Youth?

A To a considerable extent, youth is a collectively created concept. This has less to do with position and behaviour and more to do with age. Traditional societies had no idea of youth; rather, it was viewed as a transition from childhood to adulthood. Youth is a concept that is learned via everyday life. However, in today's fabrication, it is believed that this is no longer conceivable [2]. Youth is a more fluid category than a fixed age-group [3].

Youth, is a demographic notion including biological and sociological components. The term 'youth' refers to a group of people who are between the ages of childhood and adulthood. Sociologically, it is a category, not a group. And this category may be divided into multiple subcategories. The experience of developing a legal code for minors in Brazil is an excellent example of a precise and succinct description that divides children from youth [2].

The United Nations defines youth as people between the ages of 15 and 24. The National Youth Policy of 2003 defined youth as those aged 13 to 35 who live in the country. Because all of the people in this age group are unlikely to be one homogeneous group, but rather a collection of subgroups with different

social responsibilities and expectations, the age group can be separated into two main sub-groups: 13-19 years and 20-35 years. The youth aged 13 to 19 years constitute a significant portion of the adolescent age group and are treated as a distinct constituency [2].

After widespread student upheaval in Europe in the 1960s, numerous stakeholders felt compelled to assess adolescent problems and devise appropriate solutions. At different times, governments, international organisations, and leaders felt the need to drive out the growing hostility among the youth. Various policies and programmes were developed as a result of this process in order to integrate youngsters in development and channel their energies into positive activities. In 1978, UNESCO organised the first regional meeting on Youth Mobilization for Development in Asia, which took place in Kathmandu [2].

3. Youth in India

Youth make up 18% of the global population, with roughly 85% of them living in developing countries. India has been proven to be one of the world's youngest countries, and will remain so for some time. In 2000, a third of India's population was under the age of 15, with young people aged 15 to 24 accounting for about 20% of the population. With a high birth rate and a low death rate, India is expected to have 470 million young people available to participate in the productive process by 2020 [2].

Indian youth is diverse in terms of ethnic origin, religion, and socioeconomic status. There are numerous communities, each with its own set of customs, cultures, and values. Such diversities require customized initiatives to meet the needs of the youth. They make up the majority of India's population, and being the primary source of productive human resources, their socioeconomic development is inextricably related to the country's progress. As a result, it is critical to make youth the primary target of societal development efforts [2].

India has one of the world's largest adolescent and youth populations (253 million). The profile and status of India's adolescent and youth population, which makes up a significant portion of the total population, were emphasised in the 2011 Census of India. They have an impact on socio-political, economic, and demographic trends. The transition from education and training to economic engagement is a critical stage in the lives of young people, who are the country's productive workforce. India faces a long-term difficulty in terms of youth unemployment due to a lack of skills and poverty [3].

In 2001, young people (aged 10–24) accounted for about 315 million individuals, or 31% of the Indian population. Not only does this generation represent India's future in socioeconomic and political terms, but its experiences will have a significant impact on the country's ability to attain population stability and capitalize on its demographic dividend. While today's young are healthier, more urbanized, and more educated than previous generations, they nonetheless face social and economic challenges [4].

Youth are classified as those between the ages of 15 and 29, who account for 27.5 percent of the population, according to the most recent National Youth Policy. Any country's youth population is dynamic and vital to its long-term growth. Our economy can benefit from the latent power and demographic change of the Indian youth population [3].

4. Ignorance of Youth as an Important Target Group

An evidence-based overview discusses the challenges and inequalities faced in various contexts, with special attention paid to the statistical invisibility of youth, comparisons between developed and developing countries, the gender gap, and deficiencies and requirements for 'old' and 'new' literacy. The Education for All framework addresses educational achievements and goals [5].

By and large, educational statistics are a condensed and narrowly focused empirical depiction of a set of assumed arrangements for purposeful learning and its outcomes. Behind an avalanche of statistics that reflects involvement in institutional learning processes but disclose nothing about those who participate, youth as a social phenomenon and young people as the primary target population of formal education and training recede from view. In many ways, educationalists and analysts are obligated to report on education while remaining silent on the subject of youth [5].

Youth are almost invisible if education is treated in a completely uncritical manner. The term ‘children’ is nearly universally used in international education reports; the phrases ‘youth’ and ‘young people’ are rarely adopted. The label ‘young adult’ is occasionally used, although almost often in relation to school dropouts and illiteracy issues. Furthermore, most discussions of literacy rates emphasize that illiteracy is primarily a problem for older age groups, not the young. Illiteracy is seen as a problem that will die out naturally as education participation rates rise cohort by cohort—even though the results of literacy surveys in the developed world do not necessarily support such optimism [5].

5. Why Education is Important to Youth

Education enhances a country's economy and society, making it a turning point in its development. It imparts knowledge and skills to the populace while also developing the personalities of a nation's youth. Is it possible, however, for education to shape the national identity of young people? Is it possible to develop a person's identity or sense of national belonging through education? [6].

A society's influence on national identity is significant. As a result, all aspects of education, including skills, academics, and personal development, are critical to the country's development of youth today. Students' education shapes the country's identity, and education has a significant impact on life opportunities to obtain good quality and identity. As a result, excellent education is a changing term that evolves through time and changes in relation to social, economic, and environmental factors.

The education level of people who are unable to manage their quality of life in order to achieve economic and social growth is determined by the education they have acquired. Individuals can develop self-esteem and the courage to face the world and society while also understanding their heart's desire through education. Also, self-assertiveness is the foundation of one's life. Individuals who are able to make choices and decisions on actions and break away from outside influence or interference that is not beneficial can do so with firmness. Education provides the understanding of assertiveness and confidence. One's self-esteem is not as high without education as it is for someone who has gained knowledge through education [6].

Clearly, education has a critical role in conveying and fostering values, which in turn influences the behaviours, attitudes, and reactions of responsible citizens. The components in the education system are to blame for education's inability to shape national identity. Education must be improved by all members of society, including teachers, educational facilities, and government commitment. Teachers, for example, must have a strong identity as well as a strong dedication to instilling a sense of identity in their students. In the development of national education, the government must play a significant role. It entails providing proper education, caring for teachers' well-being, and avoiding using education as a political tool [6].

Education has long been regarded as a tool for achieving economic and social progress. Education has a number of mechanisms that influence economic growth in the short and long run, according to growth theories. Scholars have demonstrated that education increases the natural human capital in the labour

force, which boosts productivity and encourages long-term growth. As Barro outlined two routes through which education promotes higher economic growth. Lucas and Romer have identified the role of education in innovation and the invention of new technologies, which leads to higher economic growth. First, education as a main component of human capital promotes the absorption of superior technologies from leading countries; and second, a country with a higher human capital to physical capital ratio obtains a greater growth rate by increasing the quantity of physical capital in proportion. Other studies have found that investing in education generates a higher rate of return on investment than investing in physical infrastructure [7].

Education is critical to global development and the improvement of young people's lives, and it has been designated as a priority area in international development goals such as the Millennium Development Goals and the World Programme of Action for Youth. Education is critical for reducing poverty and hunger, as well as for supporting long-term, inclusive, and equitable economic growth and development. Access to, quality, and affordability of education are critical components of global development efforts [8].

Youth migration is influenced by education in both direct and indirect ways. Education is emphasised in the existing literature since it is one of the most important parts of the capabilities approach. Education is cited as one of the major factors in theories that attempt to explain the antecedents of international labour migration. Over the last two decades, scholarly interest in understanding the function of education within the capabilities approach has grown. These efforts involve determining the role of education in defining an individual's or a group's well-being or freedoms in terms of living the life they reason they value. Nussbaum identifies schooling as a core capability of people's capability set in this regard. Saito goes on to explain how education increases human wellbeing (capabilities), or the flexibility to perform valued functions. Amartya Sen also discusses the concept of capabilities vis-à-vis education [9].

Youth's full and effective engagement in social, economic, and political growth is dependent on their knowledge and education. Education policies, curricula, and training programmes must be aligned with national development priorities and needs, international development initiatives, and labour market requirements in a people-centered manner. This will improve the position of young people, combat severe poverty, and allow youth to reap the full benefits of globalisation. Youth growth is hampered by the ongoing gender disparity in education [8].

Increased access to the complementary nature of vocational, formal, informal, and non-formal educational practises in a non-discriminatory manner—particularly for young women—is critical for young people to be able to address their aspirations and challenges, fulfil their potential, and influence current and future social and economic conditions and opportunities [8].

Understanding the nature of educational advancements and examining the drivers of such sluggish progress in educational attainment across regions over the previous decades requires keeping the importance of education in mind [7].

6. Status of Education among Youth in India

Since education is so important in achieving human development, universalization of school education and the complete elimination of illiteracy among persons aged 15 to 35 years is one of the Indian five-year planning's main goals. Education also plays a critical part in developing the youth's mindset. The Kothari Commission Report (1964-66) also stated that “India's fate is molded in her classrooms,” implying that a greater emphasis on education among the youth is required [2].

Despite the government's and different social organisations' efforts over the last six decades to promote compulsory education, over 22% of India's young aged 13 to 35 years are still illiterate. Going into the details it is revealed that the illiteracy level is around 35 per cent in the age group of 25 to 35 years. The recent endeavour to provide free and compulsory education has resulted in a reduced literacy rate among youngsters aged 13 to 19 [2].

In order to achieve global educational goals, researches underline the significance of relying on a variety of pedagogies and techniques, including formal, non-formal, and distant education. Patterns and trends in educational opportunities and outcomes are notoriously difficult to explain and analyse with any precision. To begin with, the information is very context-dependent. Second, the intricacy of educational access and accomplishment across the globe—across world regions, countries within these regions, and locations and social groupings within each country—is bewildering. Third, the amount and quality of information accessible for comparison analysis is restricted, and the coverage of specific countries and world regions is imbalanced [5].

Education is only one aspect of a young person's life—an essential one in some parts of the world, but a non-existent element for large numbers of young people in others. Formal schooling is not yet available to everyone for a variety of economic, political, and cultural reasons, and many people have not been able to acquire enough basic skills despite attending school for a length of time [5].

While the country's youth were better educated than the overall population, they did not all attend school. Almost one out of every ten young males and one out of every four young women had never gone to school. Furthermore, young women in rural regions and married young women were found to be disproportionately disadvantaged, with one-third of rural young women and nearly two-fifths of married young women having never attended school. Educational milestones were also achieved in a variety of ways. Only two out of every five young males and one out of every three young women had finished high school. Young women, married youth, rural youth, those from impoverished homes, Muslim youth, and those from scheduled castes and tribes had the lowest rates [4].

The most common reason for not attending school among young men and women was financial (for example, the respondent was required to work on the family farm/business or for outside wage-earning work, or the family could not afford school-related expenses), which was cited by nearly three out of five young men and women. Furthermore, more than half of young women cited reasons linked to housework. Other key reasons for never going to school, as expressed by one-third of young men and women, were attitude or perception-related factors (for example, education was useless or the respondent was not interested in schooling). Finally, school-related factors (school distance, school quality, etc.) were significant, particularly among young women [4].

Financial reasons were identified by nearly three out of five young men and women as the most prevalent reason for not attending school (for example, the responder was expected to work on the family farm/business or for outside wage-earning labour, or the family could not afford school-related fees). Furthermore, more than half of the young women cited domestic reasons. Another third of young men and women cited attitude or perception-related concerns as reasons for never going to school (for example, education was useless or the respondent was not interested in schooling). Finally, school-related characteristics (distance from school, quality of school, etc.) were important, especially among young women [4].

Many youths are illiterate or have very low educational attainment:

- a. An estimated 31% of young women and 14% of young males are illiterate.
- b. However, literacy rates are substantially higher among 15-year-olds (77 percent for women and 92 percent for males) than among youngsters barely a decade older (63 percent among women and 84 percent among men).
- c. Despite gains over time, educational achievement among youth remains low: just 29% of young women and 38% of young men have finished 10 years or more of study.
- d. Women's literacy and educational attainment gaps are substantially wider in rural than in urban areas, and the gender gap is also much wider in rural than in urban areas.
- e. In the 2005-06 school year, just 41% of adolescents aged 15-17 were enrolled in school, indicating a high school dropout rate. School attendance rates for 15-17-year-olds rise dramatically as household affluence rises. The gender gap is also much narrower in wealthier households than in poorer households.

Youth's educational achievement has an impact not just on their economic potential, but also on their ability to function as knowledgeable citizens, parents, and family members. Everyone has the right to education, according to Article 26 of the 1948 Declaration of Human Rights, which also specifies that “technical and professional education will be made generally available, and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit”. It recognises the need to address the significant disparities in elementary and higher education between rural and urban areas, as well as between males and girls. The low age at first marriage contributes to limited educational access and attainment, particularly among girls. Despite the fact that the average age of first marriage has risen over time, a significant number of Indian girls are still married at an age when they should be in school or finishing their education [10].

7. Gender Disparity in Higher Education

Males have consistently greater literacy rates and a higher percentage of young adults who have achieved higher education than girls. In 2011-12, the male literacy rate was 84.2 percent, while the female literacy rate was only 67 percent. Higher education follows a similar pattern. Until 2009-10, the male population had a larger annual rise in higher education. Females, on the other hand, increased their proportion of higher education by 0.64 percent each year in 2011-12, which is slightly more than the male population [7].

The gender divide also exists in terms of space. Over the whole time period, female educational attainment has been continuously lower than male educational attainment in all regions, and the gender gap has remained large at all levels of schooling. However, with the exception of the north-eastern states, these indices have risen over time in primary, secondary, and university education [7].

8. Urban-Rural Disparity

Both the literacy rate and the indicator of human capital are significantly higher in urban areas than in rural areas, resulting in a rural-urban inequality in favour of urban communities. Because rural areas are growing at a quicker rate than urban areas, the rural-urban divide in higher education was increasing until 2009-10, then declining in 2009-12 [7].

Furthermore, the rural-urban divide persists across all regions within the time span. In the BIMARU states, just 62.1 percent of young adults in rural areas are literate, compared to 80.5 percent in urban

areas. Despite the fact that several north-eastern states have had negative growth in the education sector for a few years, their literacy rates are exceptionally high when compared to BIMARU states and below-average states. When it comes to the supply of skilled labour in India, only 24% of urban residents and 7.9% of rural residents have completed higher education. The situation is even worse in the north-eastern and lower-income states, where less than 5% of young individuals complete their higher education in rural areas [7].

9. Youth Enrolment in Higher Education

India's higher education system, along with its basic education system, has evolved rapidly to become one of the world's largest systems. According to the All-India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2014-15 student enrolment figures, the biggest number of students are enrolled at the undergraduate level. 79 percent of the total number of students enrolled are in the Undergraduate level. In addition to undergraduate studies, 11% of students (38.5 lakh) are enrolled in postgraduate studies [11].

10. Household Expenditure on Higher Education

A number of factors determine how much money a family spends on education. At least in part, the decision-making process for education investment can be explained in terms of economic factors. Furthermore, various household variables such as religion, caste, household size, parent's education level, and occupation, as well as other factors, influence the nature and amount of education spending by households [2].

According to several research, among the household types, labourers make up the greatest segment of the Indian population, followed by self-employed agriculturists. In urban regions, salaried households account for roughly 37% of total income earned by all urban households, with a little over 45% of total income earned by all urban households. In rural areas, a household involved in other occupations spends roughly Rs. 135 per month on education, whereas in urban areas, households whose primary occupation is salaries and wages spend more on education [2].

Household education spending has increased in real terms in both rural and urban areas. During the 1993-94 and 2004-05 school years, household expenditure on education increased by around 28% in urban areas and by nearly 53% in rural regions, as stated in the previous section. It is worth noting that between 1993-94 and 2004-05, the average household expenditure on education for agricultural labourers climbed by nearly 62 percent. In metropolitan regions, households engaged in other activities had a 47 percent increase in household expenditure on education, while those engaged in casual labour saw a 40 percent increase in household expenditure. On the other hand, for those earning a regular income and wages, there was a 16 percent increase in household education spending [2].

An Indian household's schooling spending accounts for around 4% of its entire monthly consumption expenditure. In comparison to their rural counterparts, urban households spend more on education. In general, increasing poverty has resulted in reduced educational spending, which is backed up by a lower literacy rate [2].

11. Public Expenditure in Education

Despite the fact that higher education plays an important role in growth, India has not paid enough attention to improving higher education. India places a greater emphasis on primary education, allocating a larger amount of state spending to this sector [7].

Thus, it is evident that the percentage of educational expenditure spent on higher education has a considerable impact on the annual increase in the percentage of the population who have completed higher education. As a result, the findings confirm the theory that states that invest more in higher education have a greater rise in the skilled labour force [7].

Higher education spending as a percentage of total expenditure is an important component in reaching a higher percentage of the population completing higher education. Adult education spending, on the other hand, has no discernible effect on literacy rates. The percentage of registered manufacturing and the share of GSDP in industry and services are highlighted as demand-pull factors that stimulate further education. Furthermore, the percentage of rural households with irrigation facilities is critical for making development in the education sector, as it has the potential to improve rural livelihood [7].

The findings (in the study by Runa, 2015) show that public expenditure on adult education has no significant impact on the literacy rate of a specific age group, whereas the percentage of education expenditure on higher education is a key factor in determining the per year increase in the percentage of the population who has completed higher education. Furthermore, the per capita public education expenditure among states determines the rise in average years of schooling every year. Other social, economic, and demographic factors have also been recognised as predictors of the young adult population's present educational advancement. [7].

12. Problems, Prospects and Positive Youth Development

While the National Youth Policy of 2003 addresses the needs of youth in a broad sense, it must be customised to the specific circumstances of each state in order to be implemented effectively. The policy aims to tap into youth strengths such as commitment, honesty, simplicity, interest in sports and cultural activities, and a love of culture and values [2].

Various policies and initiatives for the development of youngsters have been introduced from time to time. However, it is debatable how far these initiatives and policies have benefited and improved the position of Indian youth. Simply said, demographic data alone is insufficient for making forecasts regarding the future of younger generations [2].

There is an ongoing debate on the recent approach to youth research and practice that has been called positive youth development. This approach grew out of dissatisfaction with a predominant view that underestimated the true capacities of young people by focusing on their deficits rather than their developmental potentials. It should be noted that positive youth development emphasises each child's individual abilities, strengths, interests, and future potential [12].

The positive youth development (PYD) perspective shifts away from the negative, deficit view of youth that dominated developmental science, psychology, sociology, education, public health, and other fields for much of the twentieth century, and toward a view of youth's strengths and the positive qualities and outcomes one wants them to develop.

Unemployment, poverty, a lack of amenities, and a lack of educational opportunities were the top four issues raised by both young men and women. The majority of young males cited difficulty obtaining work as the most pressing issue, followed by concerns about poverty in general, a lack of facilities or infrastructure, and a lack of educational prospects. Young women, on the other hand, cited a lack of facilities and infrastructure as the most pressing issue, followed by difficulty obtaining work, poverty in general, and a lack of educational alternatives. Improving employability would be dependent to a large part on higher educational achievement [14].

In 2014, the Government of India formulated a National Youth Policy covering eleven priority areas—Education, Employment and Skill Development, Entrepreneurship, Health and Healthy Lifestyle, Sports, Promotion of Social Values, Community Engagement, Participation in Politics and Governance, Youth Engagement, Inclusion, and Social Justice [13].

13. Conclusion

Youth are the backbone of every country or nation; they are the beating heart of any civilization, pulsing with vitality and inventiveness, and serving as a link between the past, present, and future. As a result, it emphasises the need of giving this group with the best opportunity to mould their personalities and widen their potentials so that they can positively contribute to the development of their communities and the world as a whole. As a result, youth should get proper education in order to empower them to be well-informed and engaged citizens of their communities. Youth have been seen as the driving force behind reform movements over time because they seek a better and more fulfilling existence that matches their expectations, and they are the ones who reject extreme answers to modern concerns that exclude religion and heritage [15].

If educational outcomes are capable of meeting the world's current challenges and requirements, as well as keeping up with new scientific breakthroughs and technology. This can be accomplished through advancement-oriented education. Education is a critical component of all development strategies and programmes. It is also a crucial pillar in the process of long-term growth. Youth should obtain appropriate education on all levels in order for the educational system to be successful. It is necessary to create awareness of the necessity of change in order to achieve sustainable development and to prioritise education. In general, it may be argued that education, change culture, and sustainable development have a strong relationship. Thereby, it is vital to ensure that all affected sectors work together, as well as to strengthen traditional education and teaching. To achieve sustainable development, it is needed to increase education and make it more accessible to the youth, who are the driving force behind developing societies [15].

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