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GENDER DISPARITY IN LITERACY IN MALDA DISTRICT

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Abstract: In the present study, we highlight the disparity in male-female literacy with a special focus on spatial and temporal variation at the block level in Malda district of West Bengal. Despite India's achieving universal elementary education, reaching the goal of full literacy is rather difficult owing to the female illiterate populationin the district. According to the 2011 Census of India, the overall rate of literacy is 74 per cent, while for men it is 80.9 per cent and 64.6 per cent for women. In the same census, the respective literacy of Maldastood 61.73 per cent for total, 66.24 per cent for men and 56.96 per cent for females. And within that figure, nearly four-tenths of males are illiterate, compared with more than a sixth - tenth of the female. This paper also makes an attemptat mapping out the comparative analysis of male-female literacy disparity and best possible reasons responsible for the existence of any such disparity. Based on secondary sources of data, the study has used Sopher method to calculate disparity among male-female and Coefficient of Variation to assess intra-block variation of disparity from 1991 to 2011.The study brings out the fact that after 1991 swift decline in the disparity of literacy have found and,up to 2011 intra-block variation also minimised by five times. The study suggestsmaking an effort about the new strategies and appropriate programmes like universal elementary education in order to realize the goal of full literacy and result in bridging the gap between male and female.The accomplishment of universal elementary education, achieving the goal of full literacy isa grievous job, owing to the existence of an out-of-school-age illiterate population especially the girls' child.The study also suggests the provision of an effective adult-literacy programme witha focus on school left-out female above the age group of thirty.

Keywords: Disparity,universal elementary education,literacy,female literacy

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According to the census enumeration, 'a person above the age of seven, who can read and write with understandings in any language, is considered to be 'literate'. The person may be or may not have received any formal education(Roy & Mondal, 2015). This is the simplest and widely used indicator to assess and compare the progress in educational development across India. The united nations' Universal Declaration of Human Right recognizes literacy as a fundamental right of every individual.

According to census information, the national literacy level rises up from 64.8% in 2001 to 74% in 2011 (RGI 2011a). Although this is a welcome trend, any observation regarding progress in literacy based on its aggregate level may well be misleading without accounting for the differences across spatial disparity, male-female gap and variation therein.

With this background, we here attempt an analysis of spatial and temporal disparity and inter-block variation in male-female literacy in Malda district of West Bengal.

Policy on literacy in India

On the eve of India's independence, the founders of the country's constitution fully recognised the role of education in the nation's socio-economic development. However, providing everybody with basic skills in reading and writing was a herculean task for India, owing to its large number of uneducated citizens. According to the first population census of independent India, conducted in 1951, only 18.3% of the people counted as literate in which 8.86% were female and 27.16 per cent were male (RGI 2011a). Policymakers stressed the need to provide elementary education for children between 6-14 years of age and adult education for individuals 15 years and above, in order to achieve full literacy. Special provision also was made with the equal participation of male-female in the existing schooling system.

Article 45 of the Indian constitution made the provision of free and compulsory education for all children up to 14 years of age. The implicit assumption at the policy level seemed to be that expansion of elementary education would take care of the problem of mass illiteracy. The

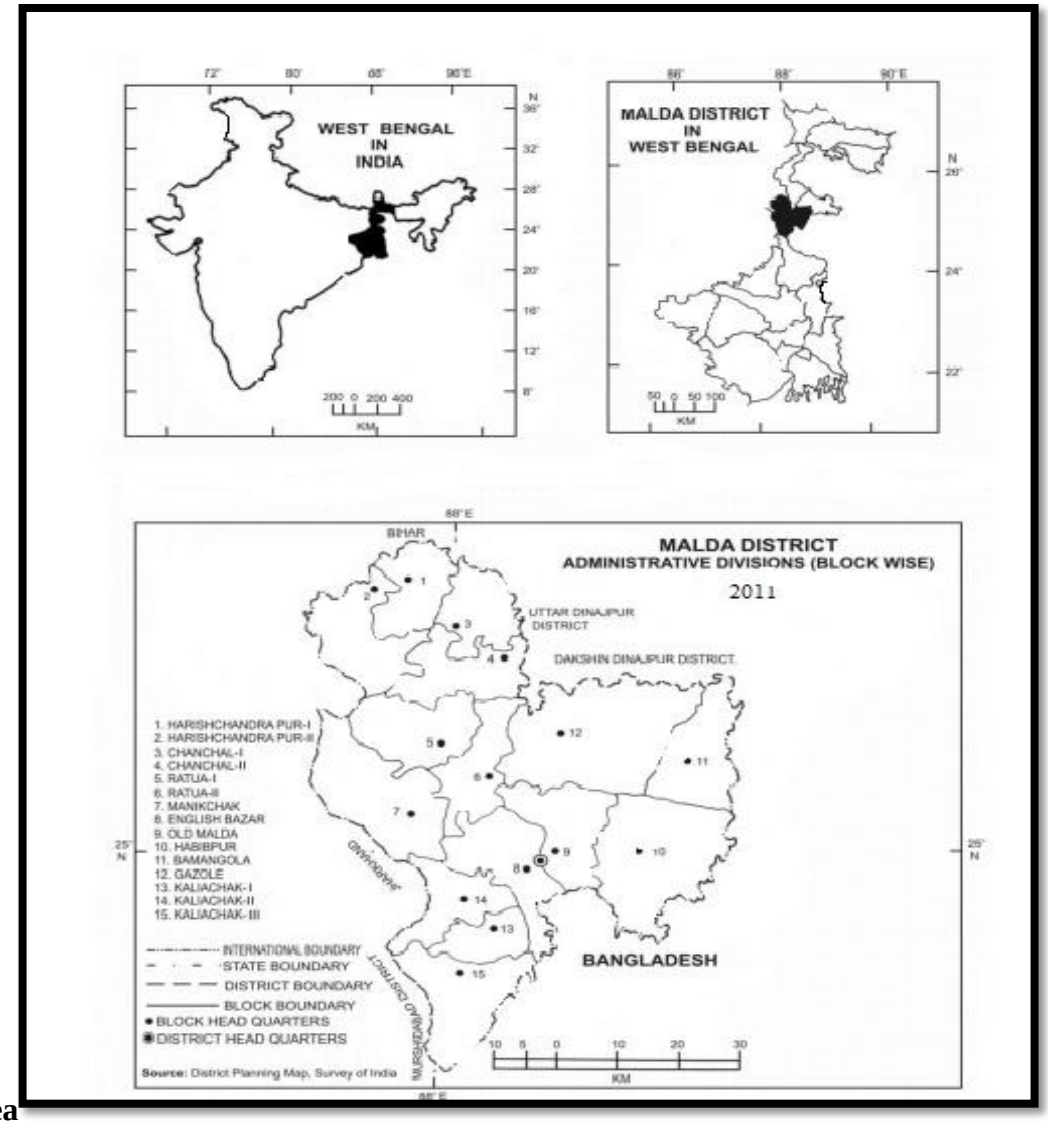
National Policy on Education, announced in 1986, envisaged universal primary education by 1990 (Shukla & Mishra, 2017). This policy, as revised in 1992, intended two distinct policy initiatives; namely, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and the Mid-Day Meal Scheme (MDMS). Parliament has since passed the Constitution's 86th Amendment Act (2002), to make elementary education a fundamental right (Pt. III, Art. 21A) and to make it a fundamental duty (Art. 15A) of parents and guardians to provide their children aged 6–14 with opportunities for education. The 86th Constitutional Amendment Act has been a path-breaking step towards the growth of education, especially for females. The Right to Education Act came into effect in April 2010; all children now have a fundamental right to 7 years of quality elementary education. As a result of a number of policy interventions and constitutional provisions, universal elementary education (UEE) is becoming a reality.

To foster the growth of female education government has undertaken several schemes under the umbrella of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Scheme (KGBV) was first ever gendered perspective education for the underprivileged and rural areas where literacy level is very low. National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL) has been set up to provide better opportunities to girls' education.

Overview of Literature

In India, women face much discrimination at every level in society: they are not treated as at par with men, socially, economically and as a result, they fall far behind men in almost all spheres of life (Katiyar, 2016). This simple fact is evident from the reports of several committees constituted at various levels for the development of women. The National Committee on Women's Education (1957–1959), chaired by Smt. Durgabai Deshmukh made a strong recommendation for the education of women. Committee states that it should be a top priority, the report suggested that bold and determined efforts should be made to narrow down the existing gap between the education of men and women in as short a time as possible(Katiyar, 2016). The National Policy on Education, 1968 stressed that the education of girls should receive priority, not only on grounds of social justice but also because this would be a way to accelerate the social transformation.

The problem of women's literacy is directly connected to the problem of poverty and hence there is a serious need to pay attention to economic barriers (Dighe, 1991). To increase literacy rates and eliminate dropouts, children from all social groups should be given free food and shelters as well as compulsory education (Thanragaj, 1995). Literacy is a tool to empower women in the wider struggle against inequality and injustice in society (Patel &Dighe, 1997). There is need to implement literacy programmes as an integral part of an integrated rural development programme with a provision of vocational skill development and income generation programmes because literacy has a link with both societal needs and national development (Das & Singh, 2002). The administrator must pay greater attention to bridging the gap between the literacy of males and females in both rural and urban areas (Grover & Bhardwaj, 2002). The education disadvantageous class such rural women have been characterised by low literacy rates, high dropout rate as well as by the persistence of highly discriminatory malpractices (Katiyar, 2016). Socially weaker section, such as women, do not recognise the value of educating girls and the problems of access, quality, content and the devaluing of non-formal education reduce enrolment (Swamy, 2013).



Study Area

Figure 1 Location Map of Malda, West Bengal

The district lies between 24°40’20” Nto 25°32’8” Nlatitude and 87°45’50” E to 88°28’10” E, longitudes.Malda is bound in the south byMurshidabad district, by Uttar Dinajpur district in the north, in the east byBangladesh, by the state of Bihar to its west, by Dakshin Dinajpur districtin the northeast and Jharkhand to its southwest. The district is spread overan area of approximately 3,733 sq km and is located at distance of 365 kmfrom Kolkata, the state capital. Malda has 15 blocks divided into two SubDivisions, viz. Sadar and Chanchal. The district headquarters isEnglishbazar.

Spreading over an area of 3733 sq.km with a population of 39.89 lakh in2011, the district of Malda covers 4.7% of the total area of the state and ishome to 4.1% of the total state population.The total population of Malda is 39.89 lakh and it constitutes 4.37% of thestate population. The population density of the district is 1069 persons persq km as compared to West Bengal, which is 1028 persons per sq km. A totalnumber of male population is 20.51 lakh, while the female population is19.37 lakh.

Malda district of West Bengal has been chosen as the study area because of persistence disparity in male-female literacy. In West Bengal, Malda ranked third in ascending order in terms of female literacy in 2011.

Objectives

The present paper makes a modest attempt in mapping out the intra-blocks variation and male-female literacy disparity at block level in the Malda district. This paper also aims to analyse the temporal analysis and variation therein for three census years at the block level.

Database

The present study is primarily based on secondary sources of data mainly extracted from Census on India, District Statistical Handbook of Malda, Unified-District Information System for Education (UDISE) and School Report Card (SRC). Besides, some other reports and government publications have been used to supplement our analysis. Obtained data proceed in excel sheet.

Methodology

To show male-female literacy disparity, Sopher method of Disparity Index has been used and the value calculated for the census year of 1991,2001 and 2011.

$$\mathbf{D = Log(X_2/X_1) + Log\ [(Q-X_1)/(Q-X_2)]}$$

Where, $X_2 >$ or $= X_1$ and $Q = 100$

In the present study, group 2 is taken for male literacy, having comparatively higher value and, group 1 for female literacy that have relatively lower value.In case of perfect equality i.e.

nodisparity at all, the value of D will be zero. The measured value of D is interpreted as – higher the value of D higher the extent of disparity and lower the value of shows lower disparity.

For intra-block variation in male-female literacy from 1991 to 2011, Coefficient of Variation (C.V) has used.

The coefficient of Variation (C.V.) = $\frac{\textbf{Standard Deviation}}{\textbf{Mean}}$

The calculated value of C.V lies between zero to one. In case of perfect equality i.e. no disparity at all the value of C.V will be zero, if it is not zero, the higher the calculated value of C.V, greater the degree of variation in the series of observation.

To show the spatial pattern of literacy disparity at block level QGIS 2.14 and ArcView 3.2 software have been used. The displayed value has been categorised under three classes under Natural Break caption in QGIS and ArcView software. Due to the higher degree of variation in end data level from 1991 to 2011, no common scale in class categorizations has fixed from researchers end.

Results and Analysis

Table 1 Trends of Literacy Rate of India, West Bengal and Malda District (1951-2011)

Year	**India**			**West Bengal**			**Malda**		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1951	27.23	8.90	18.31	34.60	13.20	24.90	18.10	5.00	11.68
1961	40.40	15.47	28.30	46.50	20.32	34.50	25.70	7.02	16.60
1971	46.00	22.00	34.45	49.50	26.50	38.91	29.90	11.20	20.86
1981	56.40	29.80	43.65	57.10	34.40	46.38	36.10	16.30	26.52
1991	64.10	39.30	52.21	67.80	46.60	57.73	45.60	24.92	35.62
2001	75.80	54.20	65.38	77.10	59.60	68.64	58.80	41.25	50.28
2011	82.14	65.46	74.04	82.67	71.16	77.08	66.24	56.96	61.73

Note: (*) For 1951, the population male, female and persons refer to effective literacy rates and the breakup of and male- female components are crude literacy rates.

(1) Literacy rates for 1951, 1961 and 1971 Censuses relates to population aged five years and above. The rates for the1981, 1991 and 2001 Census relate to population aged seven years and above.

(2) The 1981 Literacy rates exclude Assam where Census could not be conducted and the 1991 literacy rates exclude Jammu and Kashmir where Census could not be conducted due to disturbed conditions.

(3) The 2001 Census, Literacy rates exclude entire Kachchh District, Morvi, Maliya-Miyana and Wankaner talukas of Rajkotdistrict, Jodiya taluka of Jamnagar district of Gujarat State and entire Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh where population enumeration of Census of India, 2001, could not be conducted due to natural calamities.

Data Source: Census of India.2011

The table No. 1 shows the trends of literacy pattern of the country, state and district since 1951. It has been noted that the literacy rate of the total population has been 18.31 per cent in 1951 and has further increased up to 74.04 per cent during 2011. Similarly, in 1951, 27.23 per cent of male and just 8.90 per cent of female were found as literates, which have increased to 82.14 per cent and 65.46 per cent respectively. Similar increasing pattern found for West Bengal and Malda. Male-female literacy rises up from 34.60 and 13.20 per cent to 82.67 and 71.16 per cent for West Bengal and 18.10 per cent to 5.00 per cent for Malda. This is possible because of the 'national literacy mission' drive launched by the Government of India which has created a new scope of immediate awareness to supply the energy for rapid growth of literacy in the country as a whole (Dasgupta, Sivaramakrishnan, & Bengal, 2013).

However, it is quite surprising to note that, though the literacy rate of the total population is comparatively higher than female but male-female gap has formed persisting feature for all three places. For Malda, after 1991 literacy rate shows a swift rise, still though, it below than national and state average. In 2011, the literacy rate among the female for Malda stood around 56.96 per cent but 14.20 and 8.30 per cent lower than the State and National average.

Hence, the analysis depicts that though the proportion of literates among both male and female has increased over the time period of 1951 to 2011, yet the positions of the district from the reference point of the state and national average remain almost unaltered. It is noteworthy to mention that, in the case of female literacy in Malda, the scenario has improved from 1991 to 2011.

Table 2 Coefficient of Variation value on Male-Female Literacy from 1991-2011

Block	**Male**	**Female**
Harishchandrapur-I	0.19	0.40
Harishchandrapur-II	0.19	0.47
Chanchal-I	0.17	0.34
Chanchal-II	0.19	0.43
Ratua-I	0.21	0.47
Ratua-II	0.20	0.43
Gazole	0.22	0.50
Bamongola	0.25	0.40
Habibpur	0.15	0.30
Old Malda	0.18	0.43
English Bazar	0.15	0.40
Manikchak	0.21	0.46
Kaliachak-I	0.21	0.43
Kaliachak-II	0.26	0.48
Kaliachak-III	0.22	0.50
District	0.20	0.43

Source: Value calculated by authors, (based on Census Table 2011.a)

Table 2 calculated value stood for intra-block variations in male-female literacy variations from 1991 to 2011. District C.V value for female found 0.23 unit difference which is more than the double gap from the male. In male literacy, less than 0.20 point variation recorded in seven blocks while eight blocks lie above it. Least variation of male literacy for three census years, i.e., 1991, 2001 and 2011 found in English Bazar (0.15) and Habibpur (0.15) while highest variations recorded in Kaliachak-II (0.26) and followed by Bamongola(0.25) and Kaliachak-III (0.22). In figure 2 C.V of 1991 for Harishchandra Pur-I start from 0.40 and with 0.21 point lags of male i.e. 0.19. The gap between the highest and lowest C.V value in male-female are 0.24 and 0.15. Two blocks come under 0.40 CV value, seven under 0.45 and six valued more than 0.46 C.V value in the female category. Intra-block variation in female literacy though recorded 0.20 point gap but the concentration of blocks above 0.40 are twelve. Except for three blocks, the calculated value of female literacy recorded doubled gap than male.

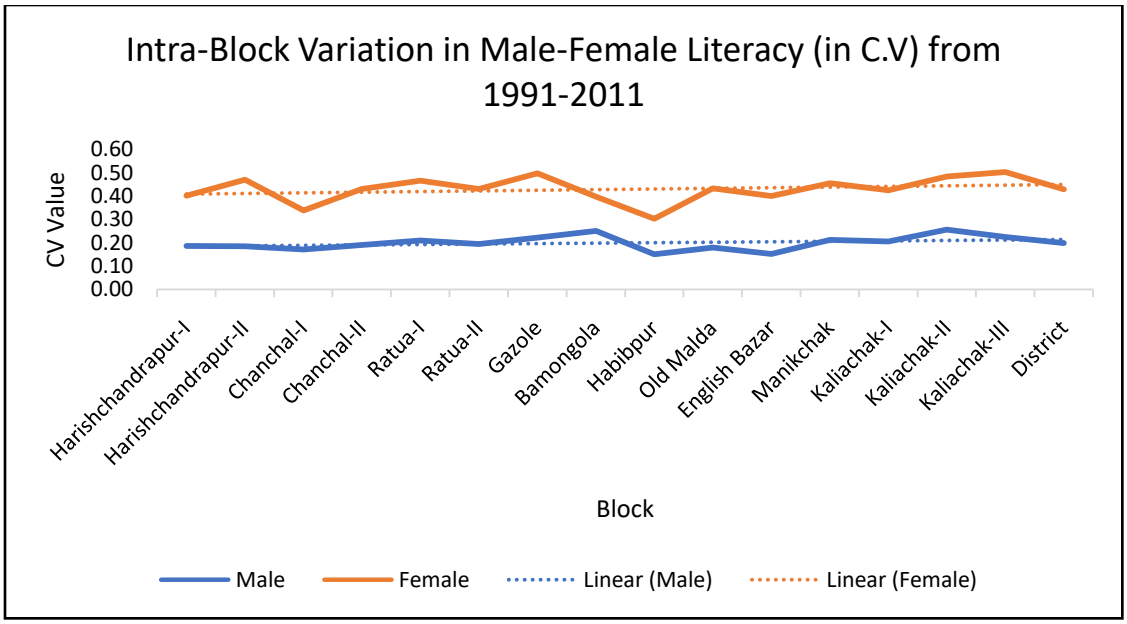


Figure 2

Figure 2represents more variation in C.V value for female than their male counterpart. The linear line of female moved across nine times of actual graph while male curve progressed across five times of actual male graph. The female C.V line (actual) also substantiate moving variation with almost continuous direction while male curve indicates sudden variation with limited moving extent. Therefore, a pattern evolves from female C.V in intra-block variation is more prominent and continuous than male C.V.

Gender-biased literacy in India found its roots in Gross Enrollment Ratio of female students, the distance of school from home, and limited infrastructure such as, female teacher, separate classroom, toilets, playgrounds, mid-day meal (Digh, 1991). Socio-religious background also plays an important role in school-based learning(UNESCO on India,2001).

In the district of Malda, Gross enrollment of male-female students in general schools including primary, secondary, high school and special and non-formal institutions have shown in figure 3.It shows a declining gap in enrolment of male-female students in general school from 1995-96 to 2007-08.Both curves merge in 2007-08 meaning by no disparity found in terms of gross enrolment. Female enrolment rises up and increased enrolment over male students. In primary and upper primary schools, female students enrolled more than male but in high schools, senior secondary, degree colleges and in technical institutes male dominate enrolment still evitably persist. Early marriage, the burden of households works, and pessimistic approach about end

effect of education bars in rural female education in India (UNESCO on India, 2001). From 2013 onward, girls enrolments in higher secondary and colleges became female favoured. Policy outcome of central government about female education, girl favoured and specific facilities bythe state government have found its effects in the recent change of enrolment and participation (Roy & Mondal, 2015).

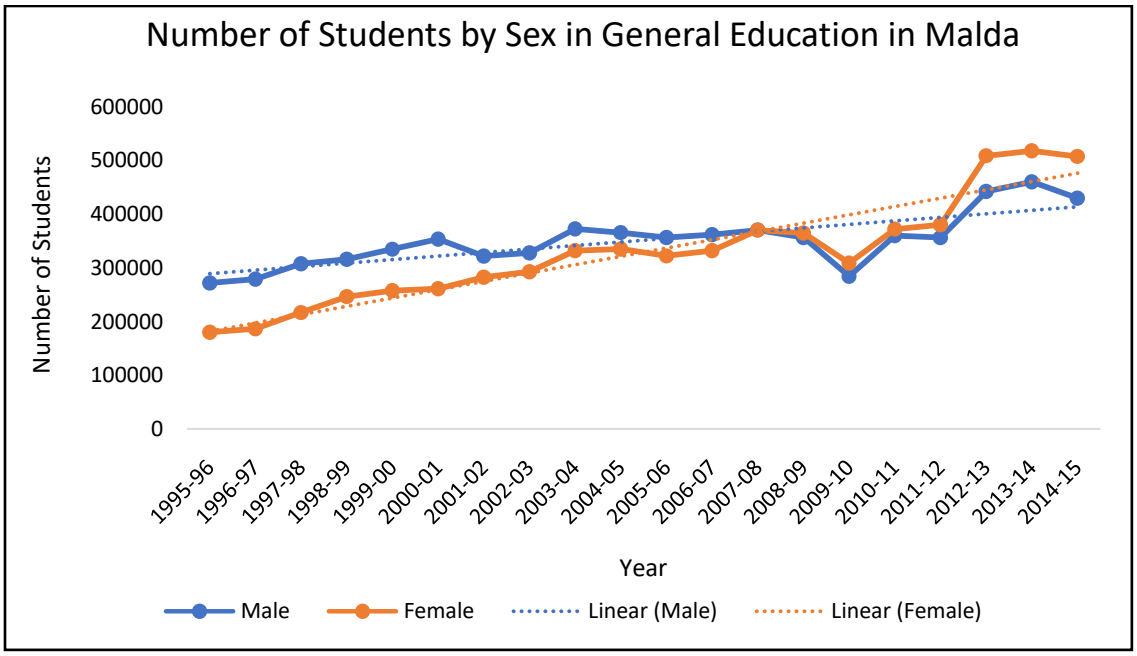


Figure 3

Table 3 on the correlation matrix of the selected variable have been computed on block level data where total literacy found the significant correlation with the number of institutes, students and teachers for 1991. It meaning out thereby, apart from the said reasons literacy rate of both sex, male, female and total literacy indicate its root determinants as the institute, students and teachers.

Table 3 Correlation Matrix for 1991

	Male Literacy	Female literacy	Total Literacy	Institute	Student	Teacher
Male Literacy	1					
Female literacy	0.83	1				
Total Literacy	0.96	0.96	1			
Institute	0.75	0.64	0.61	1		
Student	0.66	0.72	0.75	0.90	1	
Teacher	0.77	0.78	0.80	0.75	0.83	1

From 1990-91 to 2010-11, the number of students in general education increased almost four times. In the same period, the number of institutions and teachers rise up just 0.7 and 0.9 times respectively. Table 4 do not found institutions and teachers as much significance as it was in 1991. Out-migration of male students as workforce, poverty and a growing number in workforce participation of male toward cities contribute significantly in lowering down male enrolment in schools and further studies (Township, n.d.). Correlated matrix value of institute, student and teacher for 2011 give directionabout another variable which comes up as a sign in the rise of female and total literacy.

Table 4 Correlation Matrix for 2011

	Male Literacy	Female literacy	Total Literacy	Institute	Student	Teacher
Male Literacy	1					
Female literacy	0.74	1				
Total Literacy	0.94	0.92	1			
Institute	0.22	0.34	0.40	1		
Student	0.54	0.43	0.51	0.45	1	
Teacher	0.20	0.53	0.53	0.59	0.67	1

Source: Calculated by Authors

Spatio-temporal distribution of literacy gap of male-female from 1991 to 2011 as depicted in figure 4. District means gap for 1991, 2001 and 2011 were 0.33, 21 and12 respectively. In 1991, all the block recorded higher gap than two successive years.Kaliachak-III, with 0.40 index value rank top while Chanchal – I with 0.25 index value lie in the least at the ranking ladder.With 0.21 disparity index for the district in 2001, Habibpurrecorded the highest gap with 0.26 index value while Chanchal – I and Kaliachak – I placed last with 0.17 index value.

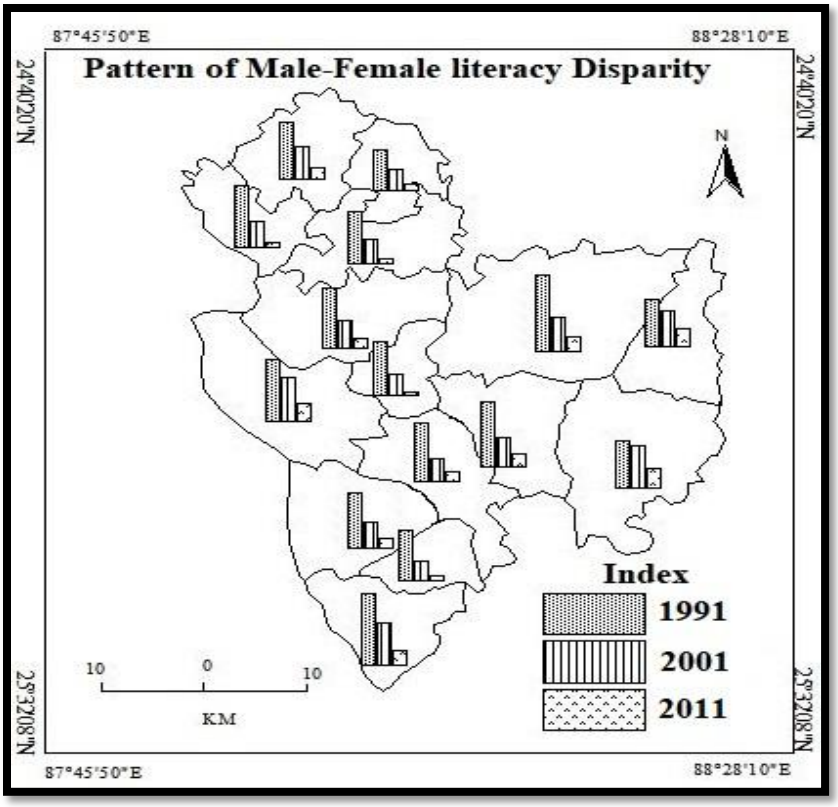


Figure 4

For 2011, district index value has fallen from 0.21 to 0.12 caused by increased in Gross Enrolment of girls in Primary and Secondary classes 2007-08 onward. Habibpur found 0.17 index value while Ratua-II evolves as the least disparity block for 2011 with index value 0.07.

Table 5 Sopher Disparity Value

Block	**1991**	**2001**	**2011**
Harishchandrapur-I	0.33	0.22	0.13
Harishchandrapur-II	0.35	0.19	0.09
Chanchal-I	0.25	0.17	0.10
Chanchal-II	0.30	0.17	0.08
Ratua-I	0.34	0.20	0.11
Ratua-II	0.31	0.16	0.07
Gazole	0.42	0.23	0.15
Bamongola	0.28	0.24	0.16
Habibpur	0.28	0.26	0.17

Old Malda	0.37	0.21	0.13
English Bazar	0.33	0.18	0.10
Manikchak	0.35	0.27	0.15
Kaliachak-I	0.30	0.17	0.09
Kaliachak-II	0.32	0.19	0.12
Kaliachak-III	0.40	0.27	0.14
District	0.33	0.21	0.12

Source: Calculated by authors (Literacy data from Census of India)

Spatial Analysis of Disparity Index

Spatial-temporal distribution of Sopher Index value has been categorised into three classes for mentioned census year as High, Medium and Low. Due to high variability in data, the common index value is not the possible basis of categorisation. Therefore, classes were framed in QGIS 2.14 labelled at Natural Breaking. Since the gap of index value is different, therefore, not the value but blocks have taken as basis of comparison.

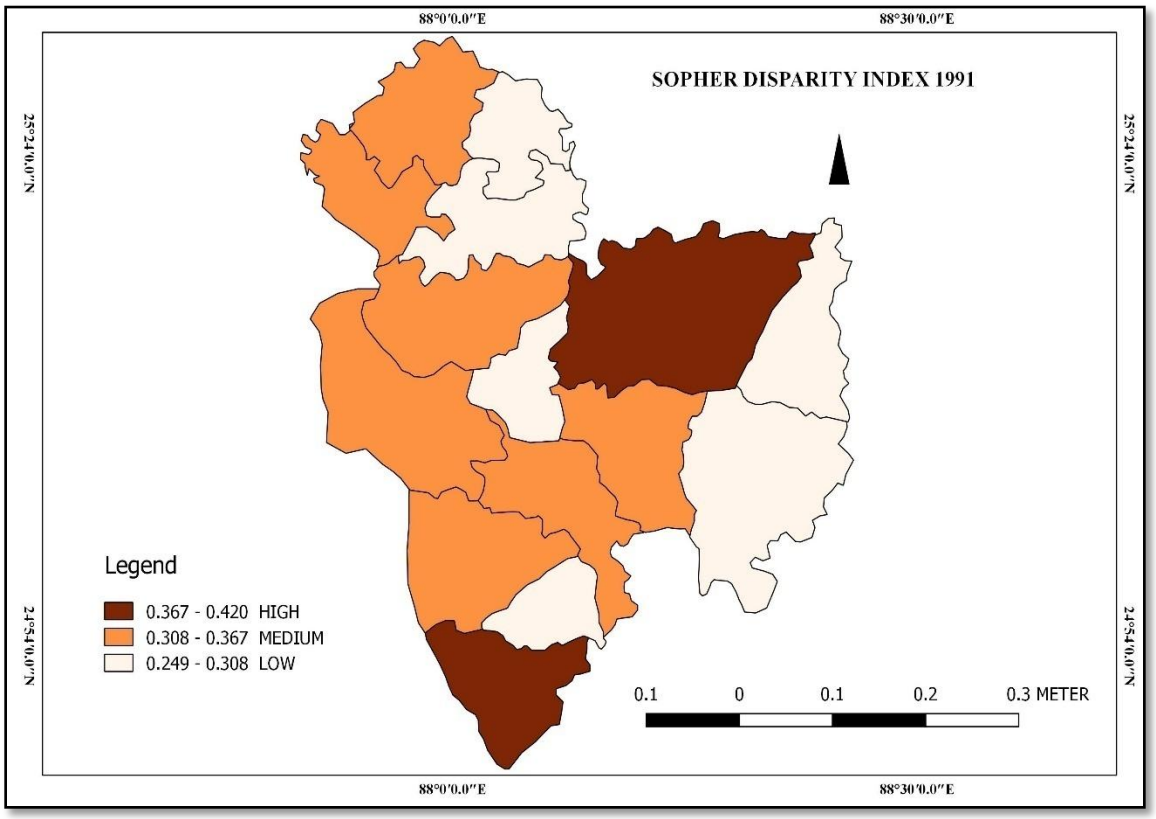


Figure 5

Male-Female Disparity 1991

Figure 5 shows the spatial distribution of Sopher disparity index for 1991. Two out of fifteen blocks fall in the high category with 0.367-0.420 index value.Gazole and Kaliachak-III aresuch blocks where teachers and institution have found a significant correlation with girl's literacy. Harishchandra Pur-I, and II, Kaliachak II, Ratua-I, Manikchak, Old Malda and English Bazar have been placed in the medium category with index value 0.308-0.367. Remaining blocks found comparatively low index value ranging from 0.308 to 0.249. Number of teachers have found high significant matrix value and hence, low disparity depicts for Chanchal-I and II, Ratua-I, Bamongola, Habibpur and Kaliachak-I.

Male-Female Disparity 2001

Manikchak, Habibpur and Kaliachak- III have found high disparity with index value 0.239-0.272. In comparison to last year Kaliachak -III remain on the same category. Here the number of institution found significant correction matrix value. Harishchandra Pur-I, Ratua-I, Gazole, Bamongola and Old Malda have come under a medium category. Harishchandra Pur-I, Ratua-I and Old Mlada have remained in medium category with the comparison to 1991. Seven out of fifteen blocks have placed in the low category with Kalichak-I, Ratua-II, Chanchal-I and II remained in the same category.

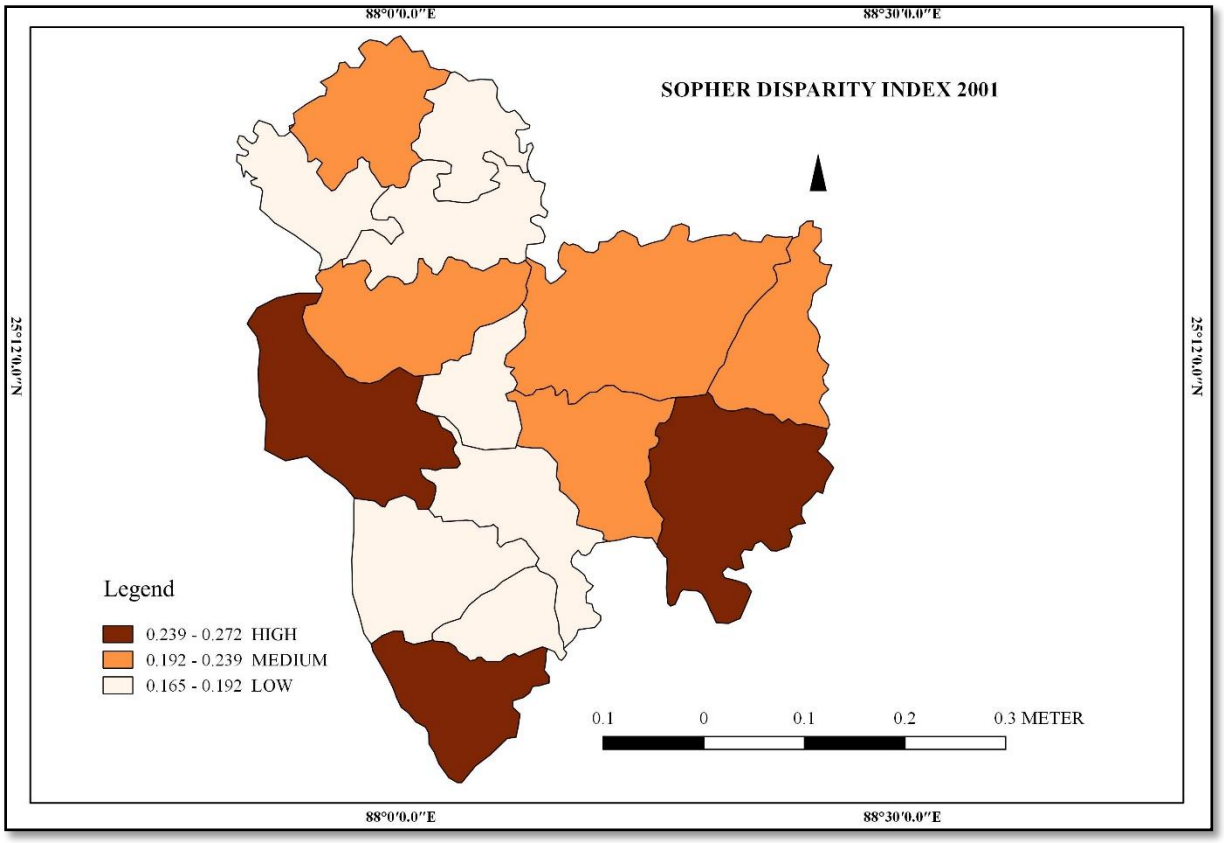


Figure 6

Male-Female Disparity 2011

Four blocks namely Gazole, Bamongola, Habibpur and Manikchak have come under high category with index value 0.138-0.170. Except for students-teacher, no other matrix value found the significant correlation with regard to literacy.Habibpur and Manikchak have remained in the same category with respect to 2001. Harishchandra Pur-I, Ratua-II and Old Malda were unchanged blocks with the comparison to 2001. Chanchal-I, English Bazar, Kaliachak-II and III were added to the list of Medium categories with the index value of 0.089-0-138. Remaining four blocks with index value 0.073-0.089 were placed in the low category. Kaliachak-I, Ratua-II, Harishchandra Pur-II and Chanchal-II have remained in the same category. Teacher in total literacy found significant correlation matrix value and hence these blocks were in a low category.

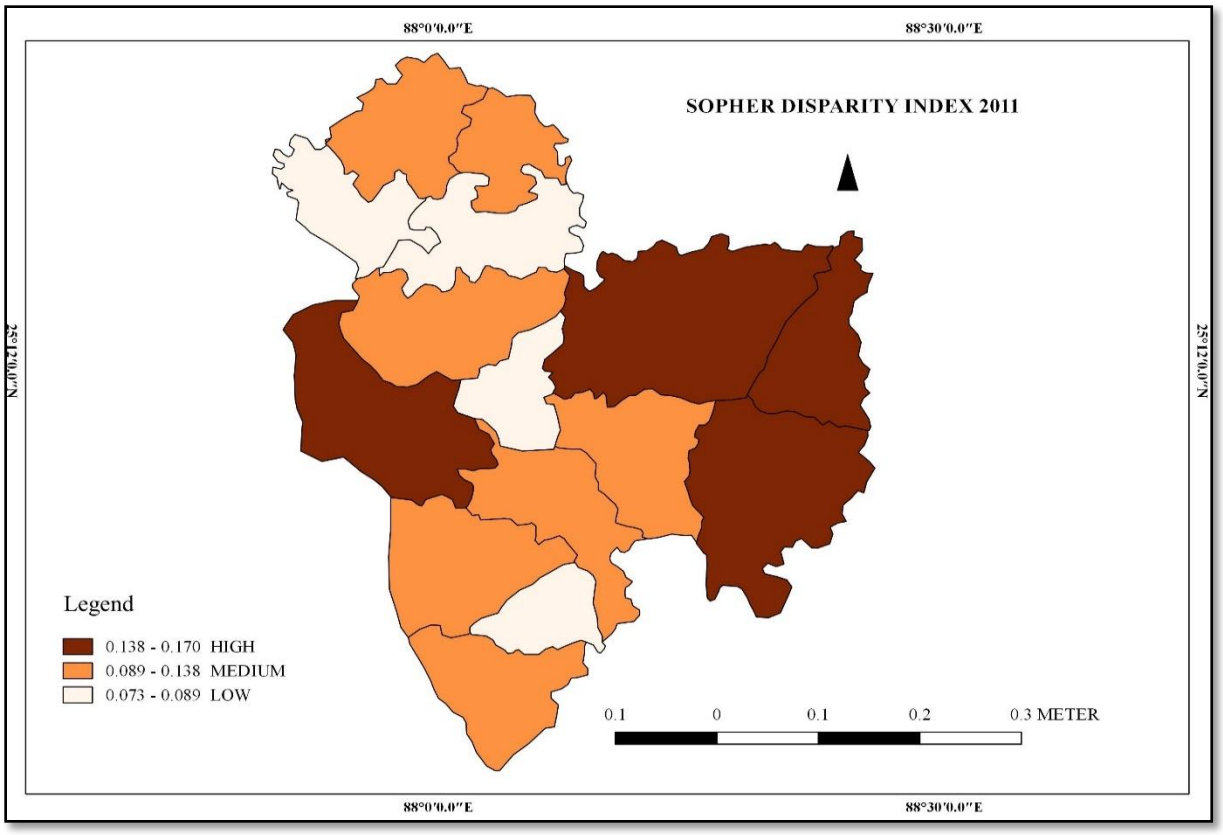


Figure 7

Comparative Analysis

All these blocks found continuous fall in index value for three census years.In terms of parity in male-female literacy Chanchal-I, Chanchal-II andKaliachak-Ido found continuous fall from mean. Highest fall in mean deviation recorded in Chanchal-I block. High index value falls for three years recorded in Gazole followed by Kaliachak-III, Old Malda, Manikchak and Harishchandra Pur-I. Ratua-II and English Bazar shows swift fall in index value in mentined three years.

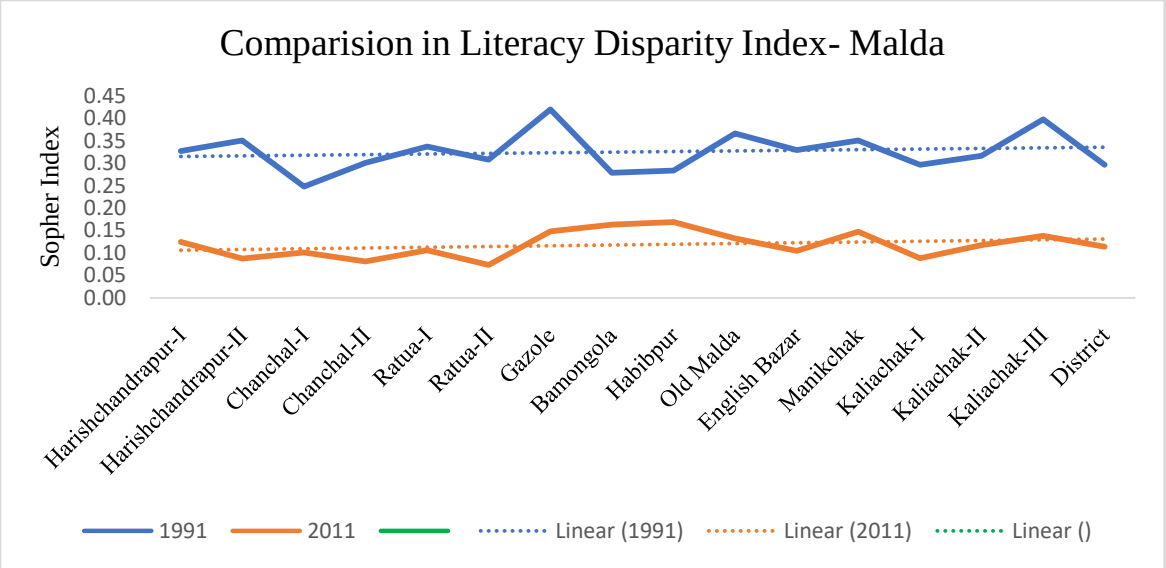


Figure 8

Conclusion

Thus, this paper provides an insight into the existing pattern of the literacy rate, intra-block variation therein and the level of disparity of male-female in Malda district of West Bengal.The analysis depicts that the proportion of literates among both male-female has been showing an increasing trend over the past three decades. In fact, though the literacy gap declines from 1991 to 2011 yet, the literacy rate of female still lags behind. This shows the awful condition of the female literacy in the country even after six and half decades of independence. The study, reveals that two blocks namely Chanchal-I and Chanchal-II have minimum disparity with a continuous fall. Moreover, the block of Gazole has the maximum gap with swift fall and Kaliachak-III, Old Malda and Manikchak are next on the same line. The overall study concludes that there has a direct relationship between total literacy and female literacy. There is no block in Malda which has a better rate of female literacy than males.

Suggestions

To raise overall literacy of female compared with male, age-cohort based literacyis essential. According to 2011 census, district has 45 per cent women above the age group of thirty. We propose broadening the scope of basic literacy programmes and their coverage beyond the 15-35 age group. Thus, we suggest that Malda needs an effective adult-literacy programme in order to realise the goal of full female literacy.

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