

Measuring Gender Empowerment in Sehore Municipal Council of Madhya Pradesh

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Abstract: *The present study is focused on Sehore M. C. in Madhya Pradesh which is showing perceptible changes in workforce structure of female population. Urban centers such as Sehore M. C. are often the potential sites of a vibrant economy and thus make a fascinating subject of study for the deeper understanding of the economic development dynamics in regional perspectives. The study provides a comparative analysis of the workforce structure over the time and across the gender. The gender gap across the three socio-economic variables has been calculated as per the methodology of Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) of UNDP which applies the harmonic mean of the gendered percentages for the parameters. Although as observed in the study area, there has been a decline in the gender gap in total population as well as literate population; there exists a wide and increasing gender gap on economic participation front in Sehore M. C. The GEM for the three selected parameters has been worked out to be 0.43 which is showing the maximum gender gap on workforce participation.*

Keywords: Class I Cities, Urban Sprawl, Workforce Structure, Gender Empowerment Measure, Harmonic mean

1. Introduction

The declining and stagnating female workforce participation in urban India is bound to engender disparities in other socio-economic spheres as well. Although large and persistent gender gaps are already spread over health aspects, literacy rates, and education attainment levels as well as the decision-making power but the most serious of all is the gender gap on the work front (Dabla - Norris and Kochhar 2019) which remains the most discussed and debated issue in the female based urban studies concerning India (Klasen 2000).

Against the background of rising level of urbanization and the prominent demographic window that India has, such a grave condition of gender gap in workforce poses serious questions as highlighted from the Economic Participation and Opportunity subindex of the Gender Gap Index of the World Economic Forum (WEF 2018) on which India ranks 142 out of 149 countries.

This along with the fact that urbanization is on rise with an urban growth rate of 31.8% at the national level as against the rural growth rate of merely 12.2% (Census 2011), has placed the urban areas to be at the centre of attention. As the World Cities Report (UN - Habitat 2016) rightly points out to the fact that the contribution of urban areas to the national income is greater than their share of national population.

Examining the prospects of the underdeveloped but recently urbanized regions of the nation is also encouraged by the diminishing female participation in urban areas. One such instance is the state of Madhya Pradesh, which despite having a large urban population (27%) and a largely agricultural economy, ranks very poorly on the McKinsey index of female development (2015).

With only 12.8% of female workforce participation as against the state and national average of 15.4% and 15.1% (MoSPI 2017), as well as a lower female literacy rate of 69.8% than the state and national average (77.4% and 79.92% respectively) despite being under the urban sphere

of influence of the state capital Bhopal, call for an inquiry into the gender gap in the workforce structure and its relation with the other socio-economic variables of sex-ratio and gender gap in literacy rates. The present study is therefore an attempt to look into the changing female workforce structure in the city and to assess the level of gender empowerment over the city landscape as well as the dynamics of gender gap related with the three crucial parameters of population composition, literacy and workforce participation status.

2. Literature Review

The changing work participation in India has been a cause of concern but the stagnating workforce has been a disturbing issue especially in the context of female work participation, which has been declining and stagnated at around 25% since the last two decades between 1991 - 2011 (Verick 2014). The issue is highly pressing in the context of urban areas where the female work participation rates is at around 15.1% (Census, 2011). The declining work participation of females along with the already skewed sex-ratio and literacy rates has made the situation even poorer.

A number of gender related indices have been developed by a number of agencies, of which UNDP has been a forerunner as it was the first to develop the Gender Development Index (GDI) as a part of its Human Development Report (HDR) published annually between 1995 and 2009.

The GEM was launched as part of Gender Development Index in 1995 and continued to be in practice till 2009. The GEM focuses on opportunities and captures gender inequality. The GEM was intended to measure women's and men's abilities to participate actively in economic and political life and their command over economic resources.

The present study is thus based on the broader socio-economic variables of sex-ratio, gender gap in literacy rates and workforce participation rates that help in inference of

the larger situation of gender empowerment over the cityscape.

Aims and objectives

The main aim of the study is to measure the gender empowerment in the upcoming urban township of Sehore M. C. which has been achieved through the following objectives -

- 1) To measure the gender empowerment in terms of selected indicators in Sehore M. C. for 2011.
- 2) To provide suggestions in the light of the analysis and spatial pattern of gender empowerment in Sehore M. C.

Database

The study is based on the secondary data obtained from the Population census and District Census Handbook for Sehore M. C., for the year 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011. Gender disaggregated data has been used to assess the gender gap in employment in the study area. Thus, non - spatial Data for the study is obtained from Census (1981 - 2011) from District Census Handbook Sehore, whereas spatial data is obtained from the MAPIT (Madhya Pradesh Agency for the Promotion of IT) database.

3. Methodology

- *Selection of Indicators:* The three variables used for the study include total population; literate population; and working population.
- *Statistical techniques:* For the calculation of Gender Empowerment Measurement in terms of socio - economic variability, the percentage for males and females are calculated for each of the three variables: total population, literate population and working population. The Harmonic Mean of the two gender percentages for the variable, using the formula:

$$Harm (M_p, F_p) = \frac{2}{\left(\frac{1}{M_p} + \frac{1}{F_p}\right)}$$

where, M_p is % of males for the variable

F_p is % of females for the variable

$Harm (M_p, F_p)$ is the harmonic mean of M_p and F_p .

The final score for the Gender Empowerment Measure is calculated as the unweighted average of the harmonic means.

4. Study Area

Sehore M. C. is an upcoming township in the Malwa region of Madhya Pradesh, with more than 27% of population living in urban areas as per 2011 Census. It is at an advantageous location at a distance of nearly 40 km from Bhopal on State Highway - 18, connecting Bhopal and Indore. Although Sehore M. C. is an agricultural trade centre, with the increasing population in the town the limits of Sehore M. C. kept expanding especially towards Bhopal eastwards.

The development of the Bhopal - Sehore Super Corridor, which plans to start metro trains connecting the two cities,

would enhance the growth of Sehore as a hub for education in the state. Despite a favourable sex ratio in Sehore M. C., the low participation of women in the labour paints an unsettling image. This, together with the fact that the female population and workforce are distributed unevenly, raises questions about the place of women and the degree of gender empowerment in Sehore M. C. 's urban environment.

Gender Empowerment Measure for Sehore M. C.

Gender Empowerment Measure (*GEM*) is calculated in order to capture the gender inequality of the socio - economic variability in Sehore M. C. for the three variables of gender gap in total population; literacy rates and workforce participation rates. The average gender empowerment measure for Sehore M. C. is worked out to be 0.48. A total of 16 wards are lying above the average score while 19 wards are lying below the average 0.48. The following is the category - wise distribution of the wards:

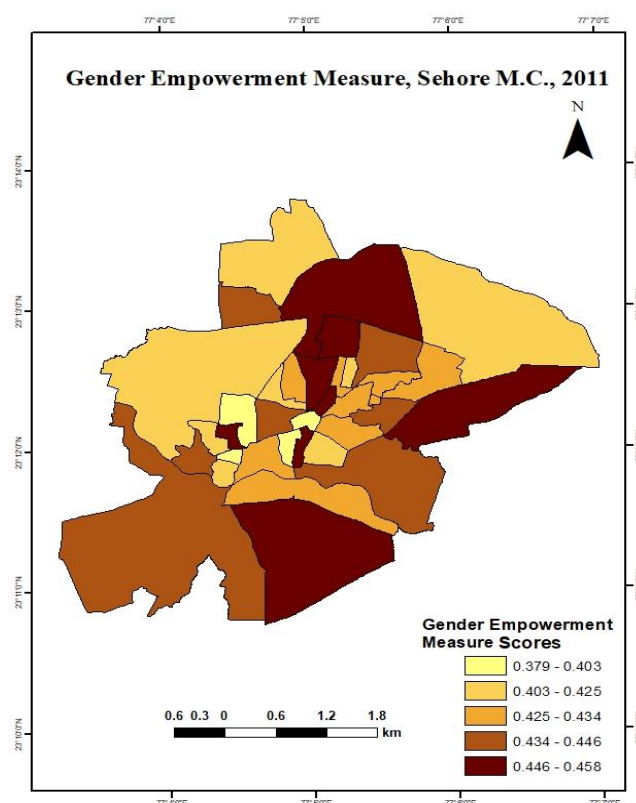


Figure 5: Gender Empowerment Measure for Sehore M. C., 2011

Very low (0.379 - 0.403) - The average score of four wards (numbers 30, 26, 31, and 28), which account for roughly 11% of all wards, cover the Qasba region, where the involvement of women in the labour force is particularly low due to favourable economic conditions, a lack of female literacy, and a lack of market areas.

Low (0.403 - 0.425) - Eight wards in total—numbers 21, 35, 13, 22, 32, 25, 5 and 18—representing approximately 23% of all wards—are classified as low. The Ganj area, which is located east of the Sehore M. C. centre, and the western periphery territories are covered by the wards. Wards 25, 32, and 35, which are located close to the western edge, are more rural in character than the eastern wards. The low women empowerment measure scores are linked to the

lower rates of literacy and work involvement in the westernmost wards, while the Ganj area in Wards 13 and 18 receive higher scores.

Medium (0.425 - 0.434) - Six wards, comprising roughly 17% of the wards (1, 11, 10, 6, 29, and 15), fall within the middle group. Due to good accessibility to medical, educational, and employment possibilities, particularly in Ganj wards, the wards are spatially covering the eastern periphery and partially the Ganj neighbourhoods in Sehore M. C. along Sehore - Bhopal Road (no.11 and 15).

High (0.434 - 0.446) - The high category wards (7, 19, 3, 4, 8, 23, 24, 12 and 34) are covering nearly 26% of the total wards. The high category covers the peripheral wards (no.20 and 4) and most the wards in the core region of Sehore M. C. Ward no.8 lying on the Bhopal - Indore Highway contains better living conditions.

Very high (0.446 - 0.458) - The very high category includes approximately 23% of the total wards (2, 14, 9, 17, 16, 27, 20 and 33) along the Bhopal - Indore state route that runs through Sehore M. C., with all of the essential amenities nearby and easily accessible from the wards. Due to its proximity to rural areas, Ward No.2 favours female agricultural labourers. Females from wards 14 and 17 are employed in bamboo and siradi basket making labour in wards 20, 24 and 27. Ward No.9 is having better - off population, whereas Ward no.20 has a high female labour force participation rate due to the presence of agricultural labourers.

5. Major Findings and Suggestions

The study finds that the gender gap in population is declining with its minimal low of 3.24% as per 2011 census. The gender gap in literacy is declining even at a faster rate from 21.9% in 1981 to a minimum of 8.5% in 2011. The study finds that although the gender gap on total population and literacy are very low, the disparity is highly noticeable in terms of the gender gap of 37% on the work front.

Several new initiatives are undertaken for urban revamp in Sehore M. C. including “Nagar Uday Abhiyan”; “Neki ka Ped” initiative; etc. Against this background of improving the urban portrait in Sehore M. C. the situation of gender empowerment can be improved by improving the educational background of women especially in areas where females are working for the sustenance of the family. Educational skills beyond secondary are needed so as to assure decent work opportunities for women. Vocational and skill - based education should be promoted at various levels.

6. Limitations of the Study

Age disaggregated data to calculate the gender empowerment in terms of working age group population was also not possible using the census population data. The actual indicators used in the Gender Empowerment Measure could not be applied due to the non - availability of those indicators from the census data.

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