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Economics of Gender Disparity in Education in Tamil Nadu

K. Thamayanthi, Ph.D. Scholar and T. S. Kalyani, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

This paper presents the literacy performance of people in Tamil Nadu. The literacy rate of Tamil Nadu was almost comparable to the All India position in 1941, the state has inched ahead of All India in the decades following independence. The results of the 2001 census show that Tamil Nadu has attained third position behind Kerala and Maharashtra among major states, both in terms of overall and female literacy. While the literacy rate has gone up from 62.7 percent in 1991 to 73.47 percent in 2001, the male literacy rate has increased from 73.75 to 82.33 percent. What is encouraging is that the female literacy rate has gone up by more than 13 percentage points from 50.49 per cent in 1991 to 63.15 per cent in 2001. The ratio of male literacy to female literacy has come

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down from 1.4 in 1991 to 1.27 in 2001, revealing the narrowing of gender inequality in the state.

The state average female literacy rate is 63.15% which is less than the total rural literacy rate of 66.66%. 8 districts excel the state average literacy rate by more than 6%. Kanniyakumari and Thoothukkudi districts literacy rates are 15% higher than state average female literacy rate of 63.15%. In urban female literacy, Kanniyakumari district is ranked first with 86.06% literacy rate. Next to Kanniyakumari, Tiruchirapalli district is ranked second according to the literacy rate (84.65%). The literacy rates vary between 17.53% and 86.06%. Ariyalur district ranks last in urban female literacy rate. Only 5 districts are having literacy by more than 80%. 19 districts have literacy rates more than 70% but less than 80%. All the other districts except Ariyalur have literacy between 60% and 69%. Narrowing the gender gap in education in primary and secondary at the high school and higher secondary levels, calls for a multi pronged strategy that includes (a) educating parents about the economic and social benefits of girls, education. (b) lowering the opportunity cost of girls, education. (c) free education, (d) providing scholarships to girls to encourage them to continue in secondary school. (e) providing day care facilities to look after the young ones (f) involving the community in planning and development of education, (g) making the curriculum more gender sensitive and (h) recruiting more female teachers. Ultimately teachers should be trained to create an enabling environment whereby parents feel comfortable sending their girl children to school.

Introduction and Statement of the Problem

This paper presents the literacy performance of people in Tamil Nadu. The literacy rate of Tamil Nadu was almost comparable to the All India position in 1941, the state has inched ahead of All India in the decades following independence. The results of the 2001 census show that Tamil Nadu has attained third position behind Kerala and

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Maharashtra among major states, both in terms of overall and female literacy. While the literacy rate has gone up from 62.7 percent in 1991 to 73.47 percent in 2001, the male literacy rate has increased from 73.75 to 82.33 percent. What is encouraging is that the female literacy rate has gone up by more than 13 percentage points from 51.33 per cent in 1991 to 64.55 per cent in 2001. The ratio of male literacy to female literacy has come down from 1.4 in 1991 to 1.27 in 2001, revealing the narrowing of gender inequality in the state.

International Comparison

International comparisons are useful to contextualize Tamil Nadu's performance amongst other developing countries. While Tamil Nadu's position in 1991 was significantly better than that of Pakistan and Bangladesh on literacy indicators, the state has not yet attained the average level of developing countries. The literacy levels of China, Indonesia and Sri Lanka are much higher, having marginally surpassed the average attainment levels of medium human development countries as defined in the United Nations HDR. The gender inequity index for Tamil Nadu also follows the same trend, being lower than that of Pakistan, Bangladesh and India as a whole, but yet to reach the levels attained by other countries. Within the Asian region, Sri Lanka, South Korea, China and Indonesia have made impressive strides.

Inter-State Comparison

Tamilnadu comes a close third (45 percent) to Kerala (51% percent) in terms of girls enrolments, ahead of Haryana, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh (Sixth Educational Survey 1993). In terms of social group-wise enrolment the percentage of SC girls enrolment is 43.7 percent of the total SC enrolled, which is quite close to the states for overall girls enrolment. The state stands second only to Punjab in SC enrolment in classes IX-X, while in classes XI-XII, Tamil Nadu ranks first. The rural – urban differential at the state level is very narrow (6 percent) for high schools, while it shoots up sharply at

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the higher secondary level where the gap is as much as 23 percent indicating the reluctance among parents in rural Tamil Nadu to send their children to schools beyond class X.

Female Literacy, Enrolment, Poverty and Gender Gap

The link between poverty, female literacy and the gender gap has been a subject of intense debate for quite some time now. A comparison of high and low performing states shows a definite link between poverty and female illiteracy. The logic can be extended to girls' enrolment as well (World Bank, 1998).

In 20 out of 30 districts in Tamil Nadu, there is correlation between poverty, female literacy and enrolment. The indication is that poverty has a significant impact on the education of girls. The reverse is also true, that high education levels can have a positive impact on reducing poverty. As household income is limited, boys tend to get preference over girls for schooling. A World Bank study (1996) reports that willingness to educate their daughters, decreases faster than their willingness to educate sons.

Out of the 20 districts in 13 districts girls suffer from educational deprivation. Educating girls does not get the highest priority among the family's survival concerns in a state of poverty. Even when education is free, there are other costs such as transport, learning materials and participation in extra-curricular activities at school. This is compounded with the opportunity cost of sending girls to school when they could be helping with household work or with income earning activities. This also partly explains the higher school drop out rate among the order girls since their opportunity cost becomes higher.

The supply side factors, such as lack of conveniently located schools, non-availability of female teachers and the absence of single-sex schools, play an even greater role in preventing girls from enrolling in high schools. Many parents, particularly in rural

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areas, fear the social risk of sending adolescent girls to schools which are co-educational and which lack female teachers. A common apprehension among parents is that it is an unnecessary risk that may later damage their daughter's marriage prospects, and perhaps even force them to give a larger dowry so as to compensate for the loss of reputation. There have been apprehensions that education makes a girl independent and less submissive to her natal family and subsequently after marriage, to the husband's family. Parents also feel that investment in girls' education brings them no return when the girls have to be married off early, since once married, the reciprocal support to her natal household is not possible because of social restrictions on her mobility and choice. In spite of all these impediments, it is pertinent to note that literate mothers are increasingly influencing their daughters to go to school, as is evident from the higher enrolment of girls seen in districts such as Coimbatore, Tiruchirappalli, Nagapattinam, Tiruvarur and Virudhunagar.

Reviews

Agarwal (2002) in his article explained that the right to education is one of the most important means of empowering women with the knowledge, skill and self confidence necessary to participate full in the development process. Education enables women to respond to opportunities to change their traditional roles, and to change their life circumstances. Promoting the education of women and girls contribute to postponement of their age of marriage and to reduction in the size of their families. Education builds life skills for acquiring timely and relevant information. Functional literacy and basic education are pre-requisites for accessing information and services for good health and raising the functional literacy level of a community lead to a demonstrable decline in fertility and infant mortality rate. Educational interventions through formal and non-formal education are investments for population stabilization and for ensuring human rights, including reproductive rights.

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Duraisamy (2002) observed that higher education increases probability of women entering regular salaried government or private sector wage work. Returns to women's education are higher than men's education at the middle and secondary level. Between 1983 and 1994 returns to middle level schooling declined for both sexes but the change is stronger for women.

Kambhampati and Pal (2001) assessed that as mother's literacy increases the chances of daughters being educated in terms of being enrolled in school and attaining primary schooling, but has no impact on boys. Newman (2001) expressed that education does not have a significant negative impact in reducing housework share for women and men.

Mammen and Paxson (2000) stated that post- secondary schooling is strongly associated with participation in the labourforce. More educated women are more likely to work as "employees". In non – manual jobs, secondary education has a stronger effect.

Rakesh Dashora and Anushree Sharme (2003) in their study on "Role of rural women in education" have expressed that, the rural female literacy rate is very low but with the efforts of modernization and urbanization and due to the effects of various missionaries and social workers, education is being spread over rural area through constant motivation.

Suddhasil Siddhanta and Debasish Nandy (2004) in their article titled, "Disaggregate pattern of Gender Gap in Education in Indian Population: A Fresh Exploration", analysed (1) the pattern of gender disparity in the literacy rate in the urban and rural segments of different states of India (2) Gender gap in average years of schooling and gender differential in education Gini are calculated by using NSSO 55th round data on education. (3) Education Deprivation index as a function of average years

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of schooling and education Gini co-efficient is also worked out by the authors for Indian states (4) The relation between these deprivation indices and monthly per capita expenditure is seen to examine the nature of the association between economic affluence and gender inequality in education in India and also at the state level.

Usha Ram Kumar (2002) in their study on women's education in Western Ghats regions explained that the role of decentralization of education administration is significant for spreading women's education. Before re-organisation of the state, the regions which formed parts of the provinces and states differed in terms of patterns of education and in terms of curriculum. The vital role played by NGOs in empowering women through literacy campaigns has facilitated the spread of literacy among women. However, regional variations exist in facilities extended to girls education as well as female participation rates, in school education.

Based on the reviews, the following objectives are framed.

Objectives

- I. To study the gender disparity in literacy in Tamilnadu.
- II. To make a comparison of gender disparity in urban literacy and rural literacy in Tamil Nadu.
- III. To make policy suggestions to improve the literacy rate in Tamil Nadu.

Rationale for the Study

According to 2001 census, Tamil Nadu attains third position behind Kerala and Maharashtra among major states, both in terms of overall and female literacy. While overall literacy rate has gone up from 62.7 percent in 1991 to 73.47 percent in 2001, the male literacy rate has increased from 73.75 to 82.33 percent during the same period and female literacy rate has gone up by more than 13 percentage points from 51.33 percent in 1991 to 64.55 percent in 2001. The ratio of male literacy to female literacy, which serves

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as a measure of gender inequity has come down from 1.4 in 1991 to 1.27 in 2001 revealing the narrowing of gender inequality in the state. The gender inequity index for Tamil Nadu is lower than that of the Indian average and countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, etc. and yet to reach the level attained by other developed countries. There are urban – rural differentials in literacy rate; the male-female literacy ratio, for urban areas is 1.2 while that for rural area is 1.6 showing more gender divide in the rural literacy rate. Hence a probe into the gender divide in literacy in Tamil Nadu is attempted by analysing the following variables.

1. Male-female literacy ratio
2. Urban male and urban female literacy ratio
3. Rural male and rural female literacy ratio
4. Urban – rural differentials in literacy for both male and female and
5. District level educational attainment of boys and girls in different educational levels.

These analyses will be of much use to suggest policies to bring gender equality in literacy in Tamil Nadu.

Methodology

The study used secondary data from the census report 2001. The literacy levels of male and female for different educational levels are collected from census reports, and Ministry of Education and Tamil Nadu government website.

Concept

Gender disparity - Gender gap between male and female literacy rates.

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Delimitation

The study pertains to the gender disparity in educational attainment of male and female upto senior secondary level education in Tamil Nadu.

Gender Disparity in the Educational Attainment of Rural Population In Tamil Nadu

The gender disparity in the educational attainment of rural population is calculated by finding the difference between educated male population and educated female population and the gender disparities are presented in **Table Nos. 1 & 2** with different levels.

Table – 1
Gender Disparity in the Educational Attainment of Rural Population: Absolute Numbers

Sl. NO.	District	M-F (BP)	M-F (P)	M-F (M)	M-F (S)	M-F (SS)	M-F (AYS)
1	Thiruvallur	5937	19911	18837	47127	23029	1.59315226
2	Chennai	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	Kancheepuram	10553	32069	20485	33018	12916	1.19711108
4	Vellore	20029	56063	32971	64311	28692	1.43481692
5	Dharmapuri	40466	87836	30722	57368	36025	1.29153101
6	Tiruvannamalai	14079	50080	25837	39295	21678	1.26366343
7	Viluppuram	29790	93038	43508	65246	32641	1.47193699
8	Salem	31563	65342	24370	39412	25593	1.30754794
9	Namakkal *	13316	28550	13276	23535	18771	1.44143798
10	Erode	25424	49845	20874	28789	16411	1.28873519
11	The Nilgiris	256	5617	4219	7062	7257	1.54504765

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12	Coimbatore	14085	31978	14103	18844	9250	0.7765175
13	Dindigul	17023	48742	23732	24705	12142	1.34577692
14	Karur *	8721	21314	10226	16401	8646	1.55905881
15	Tiruchirappalli	11489	33157	17034	36851	21305	1.50527807
16	Perambalur *	4440	12820	5795	10368	7832	1.55374402
17	Ariyalur *	5442	20837	10280	20382	10448	1.7297553
18	Cuddalore	8852	43824	27136	57310	25650	1.69119021
19	Nagapattinam *	1872	16149	12245	27262	13024	1.0975164
20	Thiruvarur	1275	12298	11491	26833	11589	1.25410488
21	Thanjavur	5836	17680	12316	24081	13116	0.87395836
22	Pudukkottai	7908	35721	18289	23361	13509	1.2768181
23	Sivaganga	4917	25178	13397	19009	8949	1.47849256
24	Madurai	9417	35751	19035	23616	14662	1.2855867
25	Theni *	5321	11406	5044	6775	4716	0.86475263
26	Virudhunagar	4820	30927	15314	19515	10184	1.30358708
27	Ramanathapuram	4997	20872	10095	18375	12167	1.34236983
28	Thoothukkudi	-1454	8354	5040	13595	4063	0.81845787
29	Tirunelveli	2894	23067	16811	23459	9991	1.04748389
30	Kanniyakumari	1662	2039	437	6245	-1812	0.25007816
31	Tamilnadu	310930	940465	482919	822150	432444	1.27618318

Source: BP-Below Primary, P-Primary level, M- Middle level, S- Secondary level,

SS - Senior Secondary level, AYS – Average years of schooling

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Table - 2
Gender Disparity in the Educational Attainment of Urban Population: Absolute Numbers

Sl. No.	District	M-F (BP)	M-F (P)	M-F (M)	M-F (S)	M-F (SS)	M-F (AYS)
1	Thiruvallur	1211	-2965	7181	70667	34386	1.269068708
2	Chennai	4140	-14575	11149	139189	125272	1.073178237
3	Kancheepuram	4777	5602	4730	44678	30259	0.976255934
4	Vellore	4071	7449	7344	36827	23018	1.16314535
5	Dharmapuri	3290	6134	2457	14835	9170	1.145707582
6	Tiruvannamalai	1343	3041	1006	8375	4685	0.840295582
7	Viluppuram	2053	3376	2771	14506	8527	1.291859521
8	Salem	12328	27259	8656	38213	28611	1.165016248
9	Namakkal*	3783	12276	4528	14237	10877	1.240111821
10	Erode	8976	26139	13560	32254	17258	1.221219636
11	The Nilgiris	-122	4120	4565	11877	5947	1.126395984
12	Coimbatore	9806	33703	25443	50046	19971	0.63727706
13	Dindigul	2982	10592	7110	16022	7935	1.039988584
14	Karur *	655	1918	1979	10387	5821	1.355188178
15	Tiruchirappalli	-872	-4079	-1288	39535	24396	1.143197417
16	Perambalur *	272	513	31	2296	1294	1.131511095
17	Ariyalur *	209	610	145	2468	1615	1.334530342
18	Cuddalore	795	266	1836	30272	10039	1.1180308
19	Nagapattinam *	-194	-1489	307	8385	4391	0.906590165
20	Thiruvarur	-624	-2596	-206	7917	4558	1.107475148

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21	Thanjavur	288	-3009	993	17079	9977	0.857102754
22	Pudukkottai	-31	-835	433	6583	3557	0.895383843
23	Sivaganga	-473	-1575	194	11744	5193	1.137206704
24	Madurai	1241	5850	6677	30495	19278	0.760859964
25	Theni *	3237	8554	5159	10388	7250	0.911962968
26	Virudhunagar	649	7892	5904	13685	7538	0.828155707
27	Ramanathapuram	-1085	-1696	936	9407	6504	1.189557854
28	Thoothukkudi	-1918	-1223	781	12877	3820	0.643054327
29	Tirunelveli	-915	7551	11338	35228	15436	1.137395053
30	Kanniyakumari	581	226	1098	13920	-1616	0.317416723
31	Tamilnadu	60453	139029	136817	754392	454967	0.996029499

Source: BP-Below Primary, P-Primary level, M- Middle level, S- Secondary level, SS - Senior Secondary level, AYS – Average years of schooling

Gender disparity in Below Primary Level Education Attainment

In below primary level education, Dharmapuri district tops the list with the maximum difference between male and female educational attainment. The difference stands at 40, 466. Next is Salem district with a difference of 31,563. Villupuram, Erode and Vellore districts have the maximum differences of more than 20,000 in the educational attainment. The actual differences of the above districts are 29790, 25424 and 20029 respectively. Dindigul, Coimbatore, Tiruvannamalai, Tiruchirapalli and Kancheepuram districts are in the third place with maximum gender gap in the below primary level educational attainment and the differences are 17023, 14085, 14079, 11489 and 10553 for the above districts respectively. The least difference between male and female educational attainment at below primary level is found in the Nilgiris (256). Thoothukkudi district has more female educated population than male educated

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population at below primary level. The difference is, -1454. Even in Kanniyakumari district the difference is to the extent of 1,662. Madurai, Cuddalore, Pudukkottai and Karur districts have the differences of more than 7000 and in all others are between the range of 1800 and 6000.

Thus it is inferred from the table that, at the below primary level educational attainment, the least difference or gendergap is found in the Nilgiris district and maximum difference is found in Dharmapuri district.

Gender Disparity in Primary Level Educational Attainment

In the primary level educational attainment, the difference in Tamilnadu between male and female is 9,40,465. Villuppuram tops the list with the maximum difference in the educational attainment of the male and female population and the difference is 93,038. Next to Villuppuram, Dharmapuri district is found with the difference of 87,836. Tiruvannamalai and Vellore districts have the maximum differences of more than 50,080 in the educational attainment. The actual differences of above districts are 28550, 251781 and 56,063 respectively. Thanjavur, Nagapattinam, Thiruvarur, Theni and Perambalur, districts are in the third with maximum gendergap in the below primary level educational attainment and the differences are 17680, 16149, 12298, 11046 and 12820 for the above districts. The least difference between male and female education attainment at below primary level is found in the Kanniyakumari (2039). Thoothukkudi district has more female educated population than male educated population at primary level. Hence the difference is 8,354. Madurai, Cuddalore, Pudukkottai and Karur districts have the difference more than 15000, and in all other districts, the differences are between the range of 4000 and 16000.

Thus it is inferred from the table that, at the below primary level educational attainment the least difference or gender gap is found in the Kanniyakumari district and maximum difference is in Villupuram district.

Gender Disparity in Middle Level Education Attainment

In the middle level educational attainment, the difference in Tamilnadu between male and female is 4,82,919. Villuppuram tops the list with the maximum difference in the educational attainment of the male and female population and the difference is 43,508. Next to Villuppuram, Vellore district is found with the difference of 32,971. Tiruvanannamalai and Cuddalore districts have the maximum difference of more than 25,000 in the educational attainment. The actual differences of the above districts are 25,837 and 27,136 respectively. Salem, Dindugal and Erode have the differences of 24,370, 23,732 and 20,874 respectively. Kancheepuram, Madurai and Thiruvallur are in the third place with maximum gender gap in the middle level educational attainment and the differences are 20485, 19035 and 18837 for the above districts. The least difference between male and female educational attainment at middle level is found in the Kanniyakumari (1,437). Villuppuram district has more female educated population than male educated population at middle level. Hence the difference is 5794. Even in the Nilgiris district, the difference is to the extent of 4,219. Namakkal, Cimbatores, Virudhunagar and Thoothukkudi districts have the difference of more than 15,000 and in all other districts the differences are between the range of 5,000 and 17,100.

Thus it is inferred from the table that at the middle level educational attainment the least difference or gender gap is found in the Nilgiris district and maximum difference is found in Villupuram district.

Gender Disparity in Secondary Level Educational Attainment

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In the secondary level educational attainment, the difference in Tamilnadu between male and female is 8,22,150, Villuppuram tops the list with the maximum difference in the educational attainment of the male and female population and the difference is 65,246. Next to Villuppuram, Vellore district is found with the difference of 64,311. Thiruvallur, Kancheepuram, Cuddalore, Salem and Tiruchirapalli have the maximum difference of more than 36,000 in the educational attainment. The actual differences of above districts are, 47127, 33018, 57310, 39412 and 36851 respectively. Erode is in the third place with maximum gender gap in the secondary level educational attainment and the difference is 28,789 for the above district. The least difference between male and female educational attainment at secondary level is found in the Kanniyakumari (6,245). In Nilgiris district, the difference is to the extent of 6,775. In Thiruvarur, Nagapattiam and Erode the differences are more than 29,000 and in all other districts the differences are between the range of 40,000 and 42,000.

Thus it is inferred from the table, at the secondary level educational attainment. The least difference or gender gap is found in the Villuppuram district and maximum difference is found in Kanniyakumari.

Gender Disparity in Senior Secondary Level Educational Attainment

In the senior secondary educational attainment, the difference in Tamilnadu between male and female is 4,32,444. Dharampuri tops the list with the maximum difference in the educational attainment of the male and female population and the difference is 36,025. Next Villuppuram and Vellore districts are found with the differences of 32,641 and 28,692 respectively. Salem and Cuddalore have the maximum differences of more than 23,000 in the educational attainment. The actual differences of above districts are 25,593 and 25,650 respectively. Madurai, Nagapattinam, Erode, Namakkal districts are in the third place with maximum gender gap in the senior secondary level education attainment and the differences are 18,771, 1,644, 14,662 and

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13,024 for the above districts. The least difference between male and female educational attainment at senior secondary level is found in Kanniyakumari (-1,812). Dharmapuri district has more female educated population than male educated population at senior secondary level. In Nilgris the difference is to the extent of 7,800. In Perambalur, Thiruvallur, Thiruvannamalai, Namakkal, Erode districts the differences are more than 1,700, and in all other districts the differences are between the range of 4,100 and 7,300.

Thus, it is inferred from the table that at the senior secondary level education attainment, the least difference or gender gap is found in the Dharmapuri district and maximum difference is found in Kanniyakumari district.

The percentages of rural and urban female population with different levels of educational attainment are presented in the **Tables Nos. 3 to 4**.

Table No. 3
PERCENTAGE OF RURAL FEMALE POPULATION IN DIFFERENT LEVELS
OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

District Code	District	% OF LILLITERATE	% OF BP	% OF P	% OF M	% OF S	% OF SS
1	Thiruvallur	52.49	9.55	16.33	10.84	7.24	3.54
2	Chennai	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!
3	Kancheepuram	55.00	10.62	16.33	10.49	5.08	2.48
4	Vellore	51.86	10.45	17.91	11.05	6.01	2.71
5	Dharmapuri	60.54	10.16	14.24	7.10	5.30	2.66
6	Tiruvannamalai	62.36	9.49	14.62	7.76	3.89	1.88

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7	Viluppuram	58.94	10.44	15.76	8.08	4.75	2.04
8	Salem	61.27	9.09	14.49	7.27	5.08	2.80
9	Namakkal *	56.30	9.18	15.14	7.46	6.56	5.35
10	Erode	60.92	9.51	14.91	6.82	4.63	3.21
11	The Nilgiris	43.86	11.23	17.03	10.78	11.09	6.00
12	Coimbatore	65.68	8.90	12.38	6.25	3.93	2.86
13	Dindigul	56.33	10.40	16.44	8.63	4.92	3.28
14	Karur *	57.12	10.45	15.70	7.90	5.38	3.45
15	Tiruchirappalli	49.60	10.84	17.68	10.48	7.01	4.39
16	Perambalur *	56.88	10.88	15.81	8.53	5.25	2.65
17	Ariyalur *	59.06	10.32	14.75	8.08	5.09	2.70
18	Cuddalore	55.98	9.81	16.41	9.48	5.56	2.77
19	Nagapattinam *	50.31	10.67	19.31	11.13	5.51	3.07
20	Thiruvarur	46.63	10.72	20.88	12.14	6.65	2.98
21	Thanjavur	61.28	8.19	14.44	8.96	4.30	2.82
22	Pudukkottai	56.90	10.71	16.16	8.56	4.82	2.84
23	Sivaganga	53.65	9.35	17.07	10.62	5.80	3.52
24	Madurai	58.85	9.67	15.86	8.29	4.41	2.93
25	Theni *	69.14	8.90	11.48	6.13	2.73	1.63
26	Virudhunagar	55.71	11.56	17.83	7.28	4.14	3.49
27	Ramanathapuram	50.81	11.83	19.63	9.73	5.14	2.86
28	Thoothukkudi	44.41	12.56	23.14	10.83	5.06	4.00
29	Tirunelveli	50.60	11.90	20.95	9.13	4.17	3.25

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30	Kanniyakumari	34.93	12.17	20.41	12.22	11.59	8.69
31	Tamilnadu	56.00	10.22	16.49	8.91	5.29	3.09

	Illiterate	Bp	P	M	S	SS
0-10%	0	24	0	26	28	30
11-20%	0	6	29	4	2	0
21-30%	0	0	1	0	0	0
31-40%	1	0	0	0	0	0
41-50%	7	0	0	0	0	0
>50%	22	0	0	0	0	0

Source: Computed

Note : BP-Below Primary, P-Primary level, M- Middle level, S- Secondary level, SS - Senior Secondary level,

AYS – Average years of schooling

Table No. 4
PERCENTAGE OF URBAN FEMALE IN DIFFERENT LEVELS OF
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

District Code	District	% OF LILLITERATE	% OF BP	% OF P	% OF M	% OF S	% OF SS
1	Thiruvallur	33.32	8.21	17.08	13.66	14.82	12.91
2	Chennai	30.37	7.74	16.12	13.17	15.41	17.19
3	Kancheepuram	37.67	9.88	17.37	13.00	11.36	10.71
4	Vellore	36.76	10.67	20.53	12.71	11.14	8.19
5	Dharmapuri	39.31	9.62	17.23	10.45	12.55	10.83
6	Tiruvannamalai	54.05	8.76	16.02	9.33	7.10	4.74
7	Viluppuram	37.52	10.50	19.52	12.96	11.11	8.38
8	Salem	42.65	9.31	17.43	10.55	10.67	9.40
9	Namakkal *	42.84	10.84	18.33	9.65	9.90	8.44
10	Erode	42.78	10.64	19.25	10.03	9.18	8.12
11	The Nilgiris	33.06	10.84	18.37	12.63	14.24	10.86
12	Coimbatore	51.11	8.59	14.62	9.09	8.51	8.07
13	Dindigul	40.73	10.08	19.25	12.25	9.62	8.07
14	Karur *	38.47	10.54	19.77	11.68	10.39	9.15
15	Tiruchirappalli	29.07	9.06	18.44	14.12	14.80	14.51
16	Perambalur *	37.97	9.49	17.51	12.42	12.20	10.41
17	Ariyalur *	40.31	10.25	18.04	11.90	11.10	8.40
18	Cuddalore	38.51	9.64	18.18	12.38	11.66	9.62

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19	Nagapattinam *	42.57	9.42	18.39	12.35	9.04	8.24
20	Thiruvarur	34.51	10.17	21.89	14.58	11.01	7.84
21	Thanjavur	43.47	8.63	18.24	12.40	9.34	7.92
22	Pudukkottai	45.72	8.87	16.88	10.99	9.35	8.19
23	Sivaganga	32.61	9.37	20.14	14.19	12.40	11.29
24	Madurai	44.27	8.46	16.95	12.09	9.28	8.94
25	Theni *	54.45	9.21	15.37	10.40	5.98	4.59
26	Virudhunagar	54.19	9.76	15.89	9.03	5.85	5.28
27	Ramanathapuram	33.04	11.70	22.97	13.81	10.40	8.08
28	Thoothukkudi	38.27	11.02	20.68	13.06	8.32	8.64
29	Tirunelveli	40.15	11.60	21.97	12.36	7.31	6.62
30	Kanniyakumari	32.38	11.75	19.64	12.12	12.85	11.25
31	Tamilnadu	39.39	9.43	17.77	11.94	11.12	10.36

	Illiterate	Bp	P	M	S	SS
0-10%	0	26	0	8	16	25
11-20%	0	4	27	22	14	5
21-30%	2	0	3	0	0	0
31-40%	17	0	0	0	0	0
41-50%	8	0	0	0	0	0
>50%	3	0	0	0	0	0

Source: Computed

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Note : BP-Below Primary, P-Primary level, M- Middle level, S- Secondary level, SS - Senior Secondary level,

AYS – Average years of schooling

The educational attainment of the population is divided into 6 ranges as 0-10%, 11-20%, 21-30%, 31-40%, 41-50%, and >50%.

In rural female population between 0-10%, 24 districts are found in below primary. In middle level education, 26 districts are found in 0-10%. In 0-10% 28 districts with senior – secondary level educational attainment are found. In 11-20%, 6 districts are found in below primary level and 29 districts are seen in primary level. In 4 district middle level education is attained by 11-20% of the population. In 6 districts, 21-30% of the female population is found with primary level education. In 31-40%, 1 district is found in below primary level educational attainment. Only in 7 districts 41-50% of the population is found in below primary level.

In urban female population between 0-10%, 26 districts are found in below primary level. In middle level education, 8 districts are found in 0-10%. 25 districts with senior – secondary level educational attainment are found. In 11-20%, 4 districts are found in below primary level and 27 districts are seen in primary level. In 27 districts middle level education is attained by 11-20% of the population. In 31-40% 17 districts are found in below primary level educational attainment. Only in 8 districts 41-50% of the population is found in below primary level.

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Average Years of Schooling of Rural Female Population

Table No. 5

AVERAGE YEARS OF SCHOOLING OF RURAL FEMALE POPULATION

<i>District Code</i>	District	TP	Illiterate	YS_BP	YS_P	YS_M	YS_S	YS_SS	AYS
1	Thiruvallur	625622	328417	149425	510760	542432	453250	265848	3.071687
2	Chennai	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	Kancheepuram	666407	366529	176905	544105	559280	338260	198708	2.726949
4	Vellore	1081229	560774	282390	968485	956056	649980	351564	2.967433
5	Dharmapuri	1160232	702368	294602.5	826195	658664	615330	371016	2.38384
6	Tiruvannamalai	889626	554784	211020	650400	552064	346470	200388	2.203557
7	Viluppuram	1256041	740317	327827.5	989520	811496	596050	307764	2.414457
8	Salem	773709	474086	175765	560415	450256	392990	259836	2.377201
9	Namakkal *	465865	262292	106950	352600	278208	305810	298992	2.881865
10	Erode	682101	415513	162132.5	508500	372384	315850	262824	2.377493
11	The Nilgiris	155658	68278	43705	132515	134240	172700	112140	3.82441
12	Coimbatore	716954	470929	159485	443840	358608	281610	245712	2.077197
13	Dindigul	620689	349645	161312.5	510280	428384	305490	244392	2.658108
14	Karur *	313508	179066	81885	246140	198056	168740	129948	2.630775
15	Tiruchirappalli	640587	317717	173602.5	566150	537088	449220	337692	3.221658
16	Perambalur *	207619	118104	56460	164105	141672	109060	65940	2.58761
17	Ariyalur *	308869	182409	79700	227765	199640	157220	100200	2.47524
18	Cuddalore	759248	424990	186292.5	622840	575672	422060	252096	2.711842
19	Nagapattinam *	582547	293085	155327.5	562455	518672	321260	214560	3.042286
20	Thiruvarur	468729	218584	125637.5	489340	455312	311560	167424	3.305265
21	Thanjavur	741084	454151	151687.5	535175	531440	318790	250968	2.412764

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22	Pudukkottai	610706	347515	163590	493535	418088	294630	207888	2.583454
23	Sivaganga	424179	227555	99132.5	362045	360312	245880	179220	2.938829
24	Madurai	560989	330136	135647.5	444740	371944	247220	197172	2.489752
25	Theni *	246957	170737	54935	141760	121016	67390	48336	1.755111
26	Virudhunagar	491330	273717	141937.5	437965	285960	203420	205896	2.595361
27	Ramanathapuram	451920	229607	133647.5	443665	351664	232480	154980	2.912986
28	Thoothukkudi	468246	207941	147032.5	541830	405792	236720	224760	3.323327
29	Tirunelveli	726945	367846	216210	761320	531168	303490	283272	2.882556
30	Kanniyakumari	292591	102190	88997.5	298540	286048	339140	305088	4.503944
31	Tamilnadu	17390187	9739282	4443243	14336985	12391616	9202070	6444624	2.692239

Source: Computed

Note : BP-Below Primary, P-Primary level, M- Middle level, S- Secondary level, SS - Senior Secondary level, AYS – Average years of schooling

Table No 5 presents the average years of schooling of rural female population. The total years of schooling at below primary level is the highest for the Villuppuram district and the least for the Nilgiris district being 3,27,827.5 years and the 43,705 years respectively. At primary level education the total years of schooling of the population is the highest for Villuppuram district being 9,89,520 years and its is the least for Nilgiris district 1,32,515 years of schooling of the population. The total years of schooling of the population for Vellore district in middle level education is (9,56,056) and Theni district has 1,21,016 years of schooling which is the least among all the districts. At secondary level of education, Vellore district ranks first with 6,49,980 years of schooling and. Theni there has the least number of years of schooling of 67,390 years respectively. At senior secondary level, Dharmapuri district ranks first with 3,71,016 years of schooling and Theni district ranks least with 48,336 years of schooling respectively. The average years

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of schooling is the highest for Kanniyakumari district with 4.5 years and it is the least for Theni district with 1.7 average years of schooling. The Nilgiris, Tiruchirappalli, Nagapattinam, Thanjavur, Thoothukkudi districts have an average years of schooling of 2.7 years approximately. Kancheepuram, Vellore, Dharampuri, Tiruvannamalai, Villuppuram, Salem, Erode, Namakkal, Coimbatore, Dindigul, Karur, Perambalur, Ariyalur, Cuddalore, Thanjavur, Pudukkottai, Sivaganga, Virudhunagar, Ramanathapuram, Tirunelveli district have on an average 3.4 years of schooling of their respective population. From this table, it is inferred that the districts Kanniyakumari stands first with more average years of schooling (4.5 years) and the district Theni ranks least with 1.7 years of average years of schooling.

Average Years of Schooling of Urban Female Population

Table No. 6

AVERAGE YEARS OF SCHOOLING OF URBAN FEMALE POPULATION

District Code	District	TP	YS_Illiterate	YS_BP	YS_P	YS_M	YS_S	YS_SS	AYS
1	Thiruvallur	731727	243814	150148	624935	799552	1084420	1133772	5.1834
2	Chennai	2124106	645110	410760	1712305	2238112	3274060	4380732	5.657
3	Kancheepuram	753819	283985	186255	654830	783856	856480	968832	4.577
4	Vellore	655005	240810	174780	672310	665936	729460	643596	4.4062
5	Dharmapuri	222471	87457	53512.5	191620	186032	279270	289248	4.4935
6	Tiruvannamalai	200640	108454	43932.5	160710	149768	142430	114084	3.0449
7	Viluppuram	211890	79510	55600	206850	219648	235510	213156	4.3927
8	Salem	679004	289590	158000	591735	573000	724360	765672	4.1425
9	Namakkal *	268046	114825	72665	245670	206968	265350	271380	3.9621
10	Erode	590121	252454	156973	568130	473544	541590	574800	3.923
11	The Nilgiris	228132	75419	61845	209560	230496	324810	297240	4.9268

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12	Coimbatore	1378871	704790	296255	1007880	1003096	1173130	1335636	3.4927
13	Dindigul	334188	136108	84215	321735	327568	321430	323496	4.1248
14	Karur *	156640	60252	41260	154830	146392	162800	172068	4.3242
15	Tiruchirappalli	569245	165493	128933	524855	642992	842420	991104	5.499
16	Perambalur *	39886	15143	9462.5	34925	39632	48680	49812	4.5758
17	Ariyalur *	39892	16082	10217.5	35990	37968	44270	40224	4.2282
18	Cuddalore	375239	144518	90470	341035	371648	437600	433320	4.4614
19	Nagapattinam *	167218	71177	39362.5	153750	165184	151170	165372	4.0357
20	Thiruvavarur	119961	41395	30492.5	131315	139928	132110	112848	4.5573
21	Thanjavur	378416	164495	81670	345035	375312	353610	359652	4.0043
22	Pudukkottai	124595	56966	27627.5	105170	109576	116450	122424	3.8625
23	Sivaganga	164230	53558	38467.5	165420	186376	203670	222444	4.9709
24	Madurai	713849	315998	150983	605020	690656	662710	766212	4.0283
25	Theni *	294007	160094	67720	225965	244504	175740	161940	2.9791
26	Virudhunagar	389595	211106	95092.5	309610	281568	227720	246744	2.9793
27	Ramanathapuram	152308	50323	44550	174900	168256	158460	147684	4.5556
28	Thoothukkudi	337204	129043	92917.5	348725	352432	280600	349620	4.2238
29	Tirunelveli	663104	266210	192248	728275	655800	484490	526992	3.9026
30	Kanniyakumari	551174	178456	161975	541340	534344	708430	744288	4.8812
31	Tamilnadu	13614583	5362635	3208388	12094430	13000144	15143230	16924392	4.4343

Source: Computed

Note : BP-Below Primary, P-Primary level, M- Middle level, S- Secondary level,
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Table No. 6 exhibits the average years of schooling of urban female population. The total years of schooling at below primary level is the highest for Chennai district being 4,10,760 years and the lowest for Perambalur 9,462.5 years respectively. In primary level education, the total years of schooling is found to be high for Chennai with 17,12,305 years and it is the least for Perambalur district with 34,925 years respectively. Likewise for middle level education, the total years of schooling is the highest for Chennai district (22,38,112) it is the lowest for Ariyalur district with 37,968 years respectively. In secondary level education, the total years of schooling of the population is the highest for Chennai district with 32,74,060 years and the least for Ariyalur district with 44,270 years respectively. Chennai district ranks first with highest total years of schooling in senior secondary level also being 43,80,732 years Ariyalur ranks the lowest years of schooling of 40, 224 respectively. The average years of schooling is found to be the highest for Chennai district with 5.65 years Thirvallur, Tiruchirappalli, districts also have around 5.4 average years of schooling of their population. From this table, it is inferred that among all the districts Chennai tops the districts in total and average years of schooling. Ariyalur district is found with least total years of schooling at all educational levels but Kancheepuram district ranks the least in average years of schooling with 4.57 years.

Ranking of Districts by Rural Female Literacy Rate – 2001

Table – 7

Ranking of Districts by Rural Female Literacy Rate (2001 Census)

Rank in literacy rate	State / District	Percentage of female literates
1	Kanniyakumari	84.11

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2	Thoothukkudi	70.66
3	The Nilgiris	67.18
4	Nagapattinam	65.70
5	Thiruvarur	65.47
6	Tiruneveli	64.04
7	Thanjavur	61.13
8	Tiruchirappali	59.27
9	Virudhunagar	57.54
10	Ramanathapuram	58.65
11	Pudukkottai	57.04
12	Thiruvallur	57.96
13	Madurai	56.05
14	Vellore	57.26
15	Kancheepuram	58.65
16	Sivaganga	55.34
17	Theni	54.26
18	Cuddalore	53.36
19	Tiruvannamalai	52.80
20	Coimbatore	56.16
21	Dindigal	52.85
22	Perambalur	51.41
23	Namakkal	51.63
24	Ariyalur	49.63
25	Karur	50.27
26	Villupuram	49.72
27	Erode	46.70

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28	Salem	46.11
29	Dharmapuri	44.79
30	Chennai	-
	Tamilnadu	55.84

Source : Census Repot 2001, Government of India

Table – 8
Ranking of Districts by Urban Female Literacy (2001 Census)

Rank in literacy rate	State / District	Literacy rate
1	Kanniyakumari	86.06
2	Tiruchirappalli	84.65
3	Thirunelveli	83.66
4	Thoothukkudi	82.58
5	Madurai	8.78
6	Kancheepuram	80.20
7	Sivagangai	79.64
8	Thiruvallur	79.56
9	Thiruvarur	79.56
10	Thanjavur	78.30
11	Ramanathapuram	78.21
12	The Nilgiris	77.66
13	Nagapattinam	77.49
14	Coimbatore	76.92
15	Cuddalore	75.87
16	Chennai	75.32
17	Vellore	73.68
18	Viluppuram	73.50
19	Virudhunagar	72.78
20	Dharmapuri	71.77
21	Karur	71.77

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22	Thiruvannamalai	71.75
23	Dindigal	71.72
24	Perambalur	70.68
25	Pudukkottai	68.09
26	Theni	67.41
27	Namakkal	66.39
28	Salem	66.36
29	Erode	65.60
30	Ariyalur	17.53

Source : Census Repot 2001, Government of India

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The state average female literacy rate is 55.19% which is less than the total rural literacy rate of 66.66%. 8 districts excel the state average literacy rate by more than 6%. Kanniyakumari and Thoothukkudi districts literacy rates are 15% higher than state average female literacy rate of 55.19%. The Niligiris, Nagapattinam, Thiruvavarur, Tirunelveli, Thanjavur, Tiruchirapalli, Virudhunagar, Ramanathapuram, Pudukkottai, Thiruvallur, Madurai and Vellore districts literacy rates are higher than state average literacy rate by more than 3%. Sivaganga, Theni, Cuddalore, Tiruvannamalai, Coimbalore, Dindigul, Perambalur, Namakkal, Ariyalur, Karur, Villupuram, Erode, Salem and Dharmapuri district have literacy rates ranging from 44.79 to 55.34%.

Ranking of Districts by Urban Female Literacy Rate – 2001

In urban female literacy, Kanniyakumari district is ranked first with 86.06% literacy rate. Next to Kanniyakumari, Tiruchirapalli district is ranked second according to the literacy rate (84.65%). The literacy rates vary between 17.53% and 86.06%. Ariyalur district ranks last in urban female literacy rate. Only 5 districts are having literacy by more than 80%. 19 districts have literacy rates more than 70% but less than 80%. All the other districts except Ariyalur have literacy between 60% and 69%. From the table, it is inferred that urban female literacy is better in all the districts except Ariyalur.

SUMMARY

This paper attempted to find out the gender divide in the educational attainment of the population of Tamilnadu. The gender divides in rural and urban population is measured by finding the gap in the educational attainment of the population at different levels viz., below primary, primary, middle, secondary and senior secondary levels. The

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gender gaps in rural and urban female population in educational attainment are summarised below.

1. Educational Attainment of Rural Female Population

The total female population of Tamilnadu is 1, 73, 90, 187 and 78.55% of the rural female population in the state is belonging to the illiterate's category. 10.22% of the population has the below primary level educational attainment. 16.48% of the population is with the primary level education. 89.07% is found to be having the middle level education. 5.31% is found to be with senior secondary level education. The rural female population's average year of schooling is 4.5 years. It is the highest for Kanniyakumari district (4.5 years) and lowest for Theni district (1.7 years). Dharmapuri district tops with more population with the highest number of persons in senior secondary level and Theni district ranks low with less number of persons in the senior secondary level (4.028%).

2. Educational Attainment of Urban Female Population in Tamilnadu

The total urban female population is 1,36,14,585, and 39.4% of the female population are illiterates. 9.4% of the female population is found with below primary level education. 17.76% of the population has primary level education. 11.94% has middle level education. 11.12% and 10.36% have attained the secondary level and senior secondary level of education respectively. In Chennai district, the average years of schooling of the female population is found to be 5.66 years. Besides Chennai, Tiruchirapalli and Thiruvallur districts are found with 5.5 years of schooling approximately. Theni and Virudhunagar districts are found with only 2.9 average years of schooling of the population. All the other districts are found with approximately 4.5 average years of schooling.

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3. Gender Disparity in Rural Literacy Rate

The gender gap in rural literacy rate varies in the range of 5% to 26% between the districts and Dindigul. In Karur districts the gender disparity is found to be the highest (25.84%). (Table 9).

Table – 9
Gender Disparity in Literacy (Rural)

Year District	2001		
	Rural Male literacy	Rural female literacy	Difference
Thiruvallur	78.72	57.96	20.76
Chennai	-	-	-
Kanceepuram	76.65	58.69	17.96
Vellore	79.03	57.26	21.71
Dharmapuri	65.46	44.79	20.67
Tiruvannamalai	78.14	52.80	25.34
Villupuram	72.76	49.72	23.12
Salem	69.23	46.11	23.12
Namakkal	74.70	51.63	23.07
Erode	69.53	46.70	22.77
The Nilgiris	86.88	67.18	19.7
Coimbatore	73.81	56.16	17.65
Dindigul	76.74	52.27	25.84
Karur	76.11	50.27	25.84
Tiruchirappalli	81.99	59.27	22.72
Perambalur	76.27	51.41	24.86

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Ariyalur	79.03	53.36	25.67
Cuddalore	84.05	65.70	18.35
Nagapattinam	84.06	65.47	18.59
Tiruvarur	84.06	65.47	18.59
Thanjavur	81.83	61.13	20.7
Pudukkottai	81.22	57.04	24.18
Sivaganga	80.13	55.34	24.79
Madurai	80.32	56.05	24.27
Theni	78.69	54.26	24.43
Virudhunagar	81.36	57.54	23.82
Ramanathapuram	80.21	56.65	21.56
Thoothukkudi	86.22	70.66	15.56
Tirunelveli	82.61	64.04	18.57
Kanniyakumari	89.36	84.11	5.25

Source : Census Report 2001, Government of India

4. Gender Disparity in Urban Literacy Rate

The gender gap in urban literacy varies in the range of 5.5% to 17% between the districts. Theni district has the maximum gender gap of 18.34% in literacy rate. It is to be noted that gender disparity in rural and urban literacy rates are the highest in Karur district. In Kanniyakumari district, least gender disparity in urban literacy is found (5.64). Chennai and Thoothukkudi districts have gender gap below 10%. (Table 10).

Table – 10
Gender Disparity in Literacy (Urban)

Year	2001
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District	Rural Male literacy	Rural female literacy	Difference
Thiruvallur	89.37	76.87	12.5
Chennai	84.71	75.32	9.39
Kanceepuram	91.75	80.20	11.55
Vellore	88.58	73.68	14.9
Dharmapuri	86.65	71.77	14.88
Tiruvannamalai	89.01	71.75	17.26
Villupuram	89.23	73.15	16.08
Salem	82.27	66.36	15.91
Namakkal	83.75	66.39	17.33
Erode	82.49	77.66	13.83
The Nilgiris	88.93	76.92	12.01
Coimbatore	86.85	71.25	15.6
Dindigul	89.09	71.38	17.71
Karur	93.02	84.65	8.37
Tiruchirappalli	93.02	84.65	8.37
Perambalur	85.89	70.68	15.21
Ariyalur	87.18	70.53	16.65
Cuddalore	90.25	75.87	14.38
Nagapattinam	91.09	77.49	13.6
Tiruvarur	91.59	79.56	12.03
Thanjavur	92.43	78.13	14.3
Pudukkottai	92.89	80.08	12.81
Sivaganga	92.66	79.64	13.02
Madurai	92.58	80.78	11.8

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Theni	85.75	67.41	18.34
Virudhunagar	88.49	72.28	16.21
Ramanathapuram	90.94	98.21	12.73
Thoothukkudi	91.91	82.58	9.33
Tirunelveli	89.57	73.66	15.95
Kanniyakumari	91.70	86.06	5.64

Source : Census Rept 2001, Government of India

SUGGESTIONS

Narrowing the gender disparity in education at the primary, secondary, high school and higher secondary levels, calls for a multi pronged strategy that includes (a) educating parents about the economic and social benefits of girls, education.

(b) Lowering the opportunity cost of girls, education. (c) free education, (d) providing scholarships to girls to encourage them to continue in secondary school, (e) providing day care facilities to look after the young ones (f) involving the community in planning and development of education, (g) making the curriculum more gender sensitive and (h) recruiting more female teachers. Ultimately teachers should be trained to create an enabling environment whereby parents feel comfortable sending their girl children to school.

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