



Gender Disparity in Literacy in Prayagraj District, Uttar Pradesh: A Geographical Analysis

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Abstract:

Literacy is one of the prime socio-economic elements of modern society in a population that accelerates social and economic development. Illiteracy, particularly among females in society, results in stagnation of technology, social and cultural lags, and overall economic progress. Moreover, female education contributes significantly to raising the state's standard of living. This study delves into the prevalent gender disparity in literacy rates within Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, with a particular focus on the literacy rate of the district and the gender disparity gap in literacy. It assesses the spatial variation in gender disparity in literacy across the 20 blocks of the Prayagraj district. The results show that the gender gap in literacy has decreased over the decade, but still remains high in most blocks, especially in the rural areas. The paper finds that the gender gap in literacy is negatively associated with the female work participation rate, the proportion of scheduled castes and tribes, the availability of schools, and road connectivity. The paper suggests some policy implications and recommendations to reduce the gender disparity in literacy and promote female education in the Prayagraj district.

Keynote: Literacy, Gender disparity, Female work participation, Inequality, Census.

Introduction:

Education is one of the most critical areas for the empowerment of women. An educated woman acquires skills, information, and self-confidence to be a better citizen. About 49% of India's population is women. Due to the dominance of Patriarchal belief, in almost all communities of the country, sons get more preference in every field. This is why the number of women per 1000 men in the country is 943. This inequality is reflected sharply in the literacy rate. The female literacy rate in the district as per census 2011 was 64.6% compared to 80.9% for males.

Literacy is a sensitive indicator of social empowerment and cultural advancement of any geographical region. The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has defined literacy as the “ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying context. Literacy involves a process of learning to enable an individual to achieve his or her goals to develop his or her knowledge and potential and to participate fully in the wider society.”

In India, the Constitution has not only guaranteed equality before law to everyone but has also undertaken a responsibility to provide equal opportunities for social, economic, and cultural development to all citizens in all dimensions of life. It has also committed to the eradication of all forms of discrimination based on gender, religion, race, caste, and region (Article 15&29). Currently, the Constitution mandates the state to provide free education to all children in the age group of 6 to 14 years. Despite that, there is a wide disparity in educational opportunities between males and females in our country.

There is a wide disparity in educational opportunities between males and females in our country (The gender gap in literacy in the country is 16.3%). The situation of Prayagraj is not different from the country, in fact, in terms of literacy, the situation of Prayagraj is not very good in Uttar Pradesh. In terms of literacy, Prayagraj ranks 15th in Uttar Pradesh, where male and female literacy is 82.6% and 61% and the total literacy is 72.3% according to census 2011. The gender gap in literacy in the district is 21.6% which is more than the country (16.3%) and Uttar Pradesh.

The main objectives of the study are to -

1. Highlight the literacy status of Prayagraj district and present the block-wise analysis
2. Assess the block-wise sex disparity in literacy.
3. Providing suggestions for increasing literacy rate by identifying regions of low literacy and high gender disparity

Study area: -

The study area ‘Prayagraj’, Geography lies at 25° 44’ N latitude, 81° 85’ E longitude, and 98m altitude. The district encompasses an area of 5482 sq. Km and in terms of geographical area it occupies 5th rank in the state. Administratively the district is divided into 8 tahsils and 20 development blocks according to census 2011. The district has a population of 59,54,391 out of which 31,31,804 are males and 28,22,584 are females. The district has a sex ratio of 901 females for every 1,000 male.

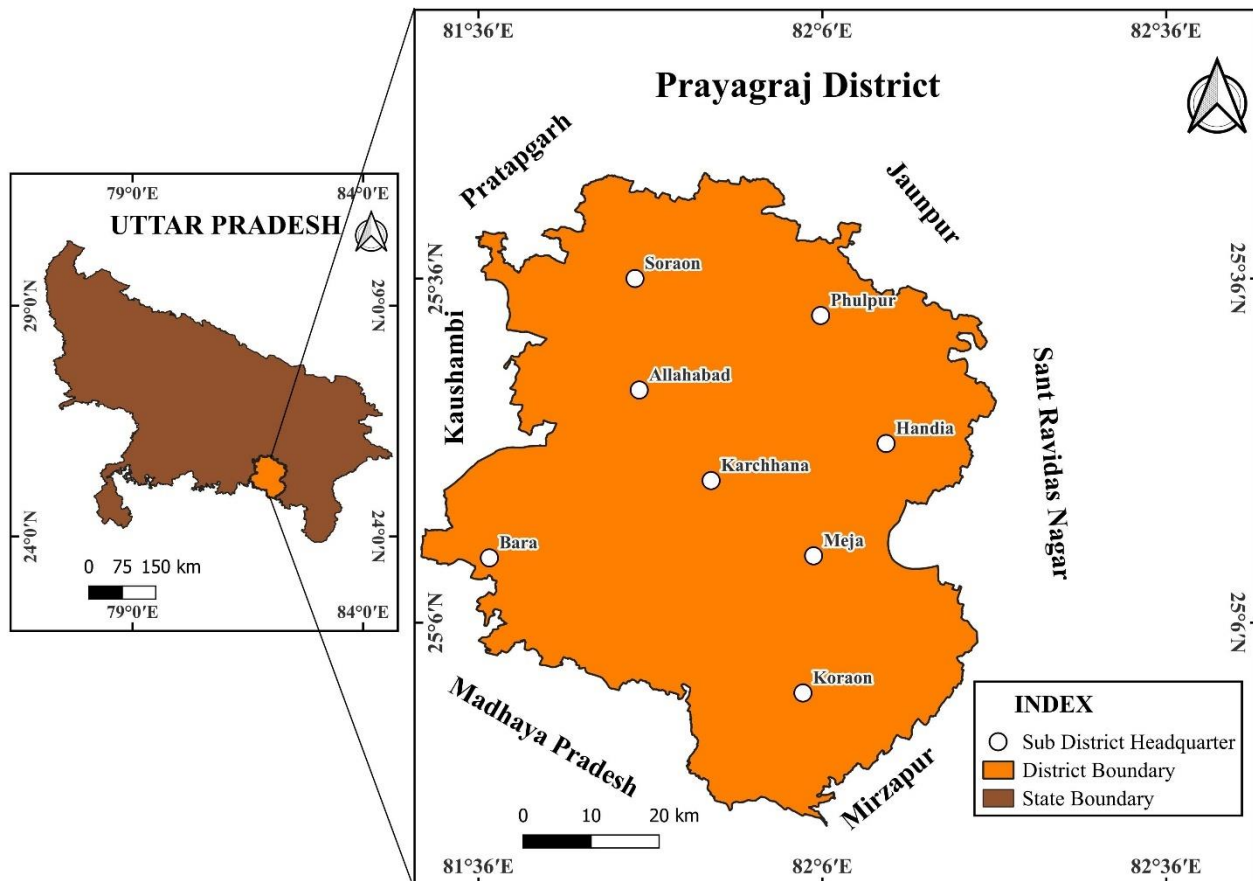


Fig1: Location map of study area

Methods and Methodology:

In this study, the main source of data is secondary data which are mainly obtained from the District Census Handbook, Jila Mashik Patrika, etc, source. Analysis of data is made through various tables and figures so that complexity related to literacy can be understood properly. To analyze gender disparity in literacy rate in Prayagraj district, I have selected block-wise literacy rates of males and females.

Result and discussion:

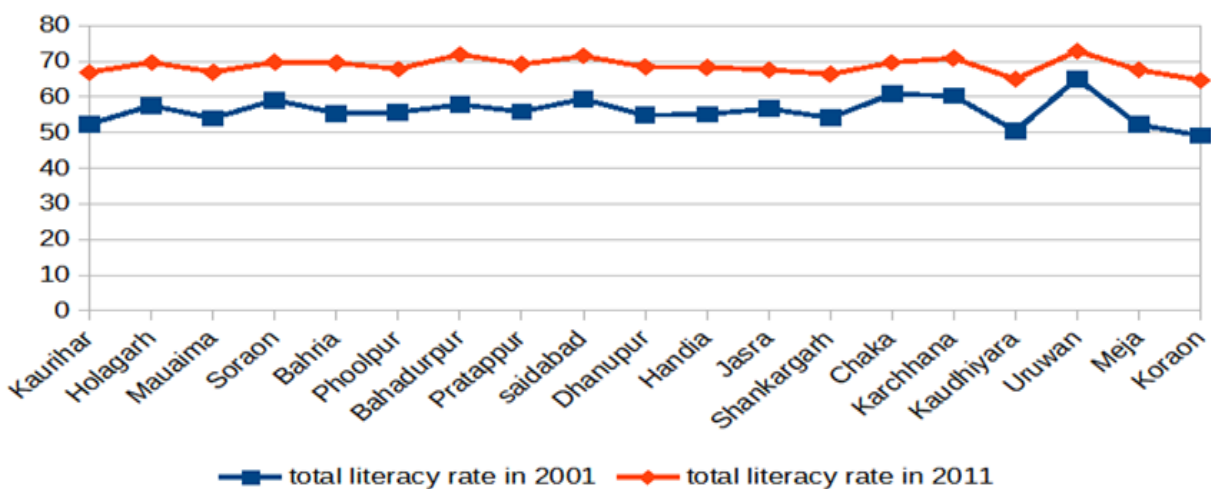
Pattern of literacy rate of Prayagraj district:

Total literacy rate of Prayagraj district according to the census 2011 is 72.32%, which is below than national literacy rate of 73% and above Uttar Pradesh's literacy rate of 67.7%. There are many blocks in districts whose literacy rate is below the average literacy rate of the district 72.32% (Table 1). For better understanding and by taking regional inequality of literacy in mind the study is divided into following sub-division.

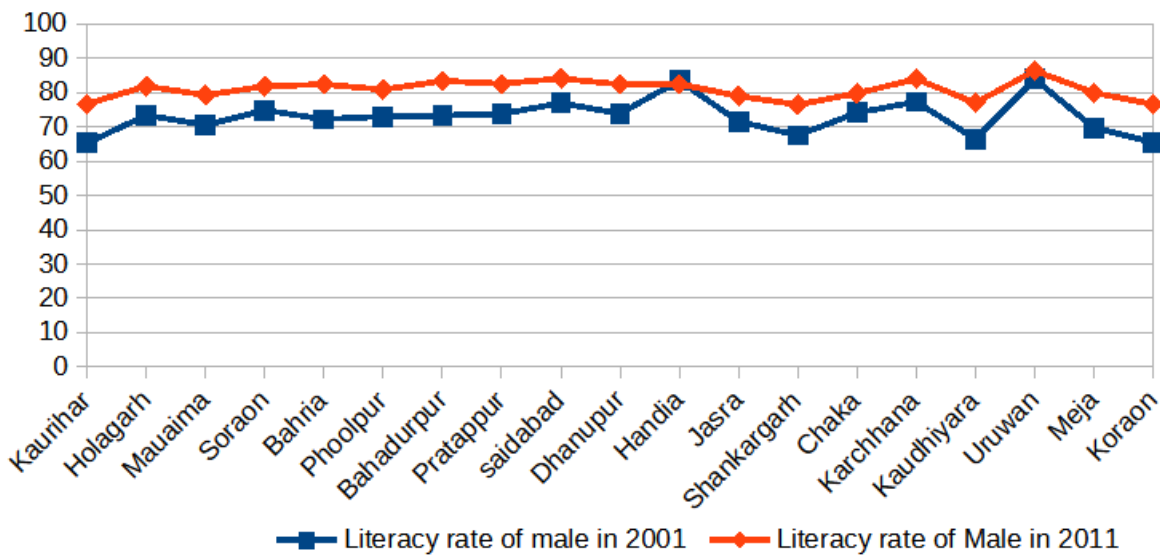
Table 1: Literacy rate of Prayagraj district by sex in Blocks

S. No.	Blocks	Literacy rate 2001 In %			gender gap in literacy (2001)	Literacy rate 2011 In %			Gender gap in literacy (2011)
		Total	Male	Female		Total	Male	Female	
1	Kaurihar	52.41	65.29	37.42	27.87	66.95	76.72	55.28	21.44
2	Holagarh	57.57	73.43	40.69	32.74	69.68	81.87	56.83	25.04
3	Mauaima	54.01	70.49	36.39	34.1	67.03	79.27	54.08	25.19
4	Soraon	59.15	74.88	41.47	33.41	69.76	81.84	56.56	25.28
5	Bahria	55.47	72.22	37.17	35.05	69.59	82.41	56.01	26.4
6	Phoolpur	55.66	73.08	36.72	36.36	67.86	80.89	54.15	26.74
7	Bahadurpur	57.9	73.29	40.46	32.83	71.9	83.4	59.14	24.26
8	Pratappur	55.88	73.83	37.68	36.15	69.15	82.59	55.4	27.19
9	saidabad	59.45	76.91	39.79	37.12	71.48	84.13	57.58	26.55
10	Dhanupur	54.86	73.92	34.67	39.25	68.43	82.39	54.13	28.36
11	Handia	55.17	83.48	35.19	38.29	68.34	82.48	53.33	29.15
12	Jasra	56.68	71.57	39.26	32.31	67.65	78.99	55.02	23.97
13	Shankargarh	54.17	67.52	38.97	28.55	66.4	76.46	55.3	21.16
14	Chaka	60.78	74.11	45.17	28.94	69.69	79.79	58.62	21.17
15	Karchhana	60.34	77.3	40.7	36.6	70.9	83.98	56.42	27.56
16	Kaudhiyara	50.47	66.48	31.9	34.58	65	77	57.71	25.29
17	Uruwan	65.1	83.88	44.23	39.65	72.89	86.37	58.25	28.12
18	Meja	52.22	69.76	32.22	37.54	67.59	79.99	54.09	25.9
19	Koraon	49.16	65.45	30.72	34.73	64.69	76.57	51.59	24.98
20	Manda	55.41	74.33	34.13	40.2	70.03	83.32	55.4	27.92
	Total rural	55.98	72.32	37.73	54.59	68.76	80.97	55.46	25.51
	Total urban	79.14	85.06	71.8	13.26	82.51	86.96	77.46	9.62
	Total district	62.11	75.81	46.28	29.53	72.32	82.55	60.97	21.58

Source: District Census Handbook Prayagraj (2001 and 2011).

Decadal change in literacy rate(%) in Prayagraj district

Decadal change in male literacy rate(%) in Prayagraj district



Decadal change in female literacy rate(%) in Prayagraj district

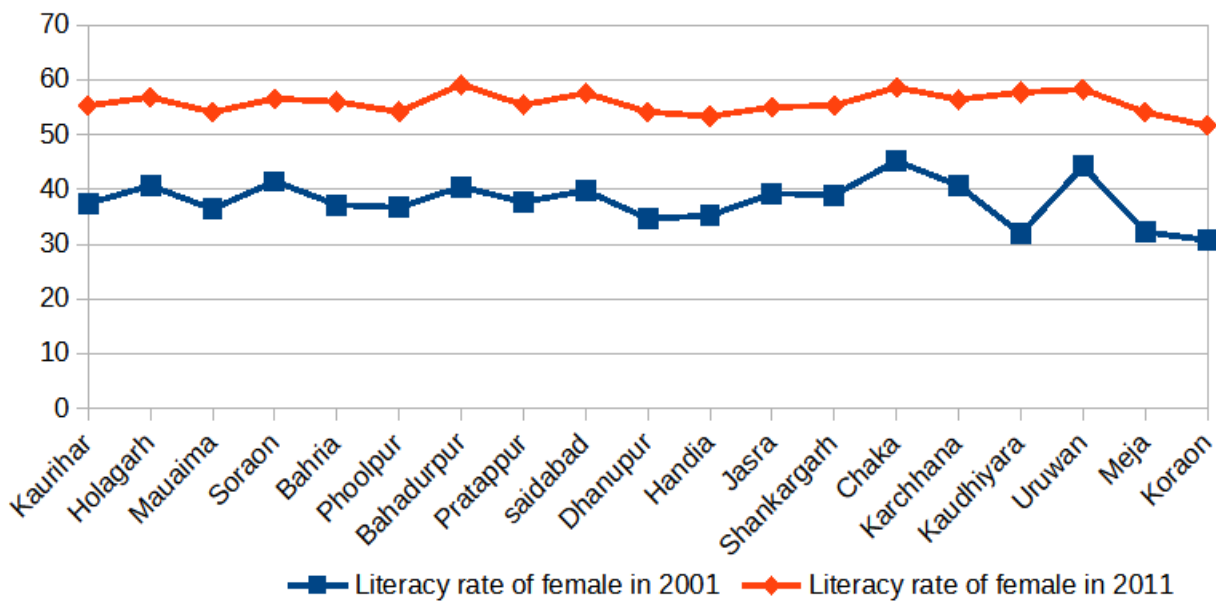


Table 2: Blocks according to literacy rate (2001).

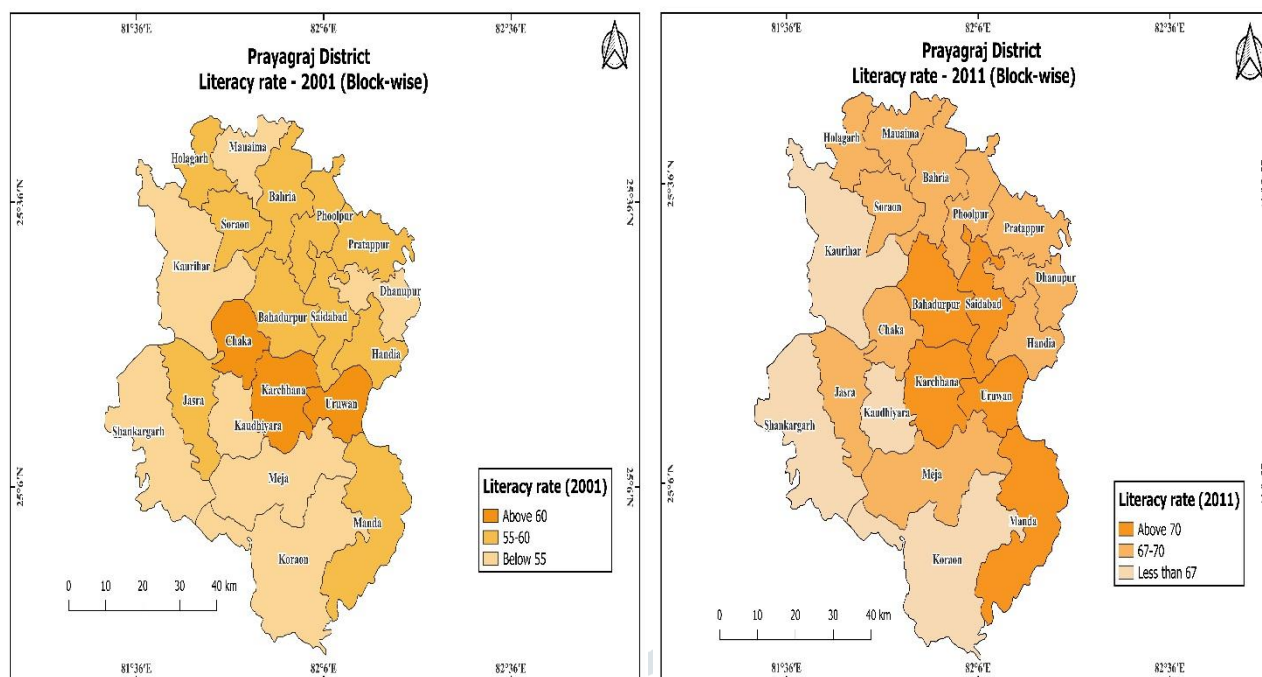
S. No.	Category	Literacy rate (%)	No. of Blocks	Name of Blocks
1	High literacy	Above 60	3	Chaka, Karchhana, Uruwan
2	Medium literacy	55-60	10	Holagarh, Bahadurpur Saidabad, Soraon, Bahria, Phoolpur, Pratappur, Jasra, Handia, Manda
3	Low literacy	Below 55	7	Kaurihar, Mauaima, Dhanupur, Shankargarh, Kaudhiyara, Meja, Koraon,

Table 3: Blocks according to literacy rate (2011).

S. No.	Category	Literacy rate (%)	No. of Blocks	Name of Blocks
1	High literacy	Above 70	5	Bahadurpur, Saidabad, Karchhana, Uruwan, Manda
2	Medium literacy	67-70	11	Holagarh, Mauaima, Soraon, Bahria, Phoolpur, Pratappur, Dhanupur, Handia, Jasra, Chaka, Meja
3	Low literacy	Less Than 67	4	Kaurihar, Shankargarh, Kaudhiyara, Koraon

High literacy rate:

Under this category, five blocks of the district are included. Uruwan Block, whose literacy rate is 72.89% is the highest literacy rate block in the district followed by Bahadurpur (71.90%), Saidabad (71.48%), Karchhana (70.90%), Manda (70.03%) (Table 1). All these Blocks are located in the peripheral area of Prayagraj City, which is the epicenter of the educational center. The main factor of high literacy in these blocks is the urbanization of the region, which provides better access to educational infrastructure and facilities, such as schools, colleges, libraries, and the Internet. Urban areas also have more employment opportunities and social awareness, which motivate people to pursue education and improve their skills.

Figure 2: Block-wise distribution of literacy rate of Prayagraj district (2001 and 2011).**Medium literacy rate: -**

There are 11 blocks under this category, whose literacy rate is between 67-70% (Table 1). These blocks are Holagarh (69.68%), Mauaima (67.03%), Soraon (69.76%), Bahria (69.59%), Phoolpur (67.68%), Pratappur (69.15%), Dhanupur (68.43%), Handia (68.34%), Jasra (67.65%), Chaka (69.69%) and Meja (67.59%). All these blocks are located in the suburban area of the Prayagraj city, where the infrastructural and educational development is in extremely good condition. Other factors which support high literacy in these blocks are - sufficient number of government and private schools, public awareness, literacy campaign and importantly better transportation connectivity from Prayagraj city.

Low literacy rate: -

In this category, four blocks are included, whose literacy rate is below 67%, these blocks are Kaurihar (66.95%), Shankargarh (66.40%), Kaudhiyara (65%) and Koraon (64.69%). Main cause of low rural literacy in these are - low economic level of people, poverty and backwardness, due to this reason parents prefer to involve their children in economic activities (mainly to help parents in farming and other household activities). Other reasons are the condition of schools and colleges is not good, inefficient implementation of government scheme, lack of public awareness, etc.

In this way it is clear that the literacy of Prayagraj district is lower than literacy of country but more than literacy of Uttar Pradesh. This literacy rate is undoubtedly unsatisfactory for any district, but if we compare the district according to census 2001 and 2011, then in 2001 it was much below the current literacy rate. At that time the literacy rate of Prayagraj district was just 62.11%, where male and female literacy rate were 75.81% and 46.28% respectively.

(Table 1). Comparatively the literacy rate of Prayagraj district has increased from 62.11% in 2001 to 73.32% in 2011, which is a positive sign.

Gender disparity in literacy in Prayagraj district:

Gender disparity in literacy is the unequal distribution of literacy skills and opportunities between men and women. It is measured by the difference or ratio of the literacy rates of males and females in a given population. Gender disparity in literacy can have negative impacts on the social and economic development of a country, as well as the well-being and empowerment of women and girls.

According to the latest data from UNESCO, the global adult literacy rate in 2022 was 86.8%, with a male literacy rate of 90.1% and a female literacy rate of 83.7%. This means that there were more than 600 million illiterate women in the world, accounting for almost two-thirds of the total illiterate population. The gender gap in literacy was widest in Southern Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, and Northern Africa, where the female literacy rate was more than 20% lower than the male literacy rate.

Development of any state at any stage requires not only high level of literacy but also equal level of literacy among both genders, but it is unfortunate to know that in countries like India inequality persists in almost every sphere. In 2011 male and female literacy rate of India are 80.9% and 64.6% respectively which shows gender gap of around 16.3%. In Uttar Pradesh male and female literacy rate are 77.3% and 57.2% respectively and the gender gap is 20.1%. Whereas In Prayagraj district male and female literacy rate are 82.6% and 61% respectively, which shows gender gap of around 21.6%. Thus, the gender literacy gap in Prayagraj district is higher than both Uttar Pradesh and the national level. According to the study highest literacy gap is found in Handia block 29.15% and lowest is found in Shankargarh block 21.16%. This indicates high level of gender disparity in Prayagraj district. So it is important to study about the gender literacy gap of the district. For the convenience of a study in the district is divided into the following different categories.

Table 4: Block wise gender gap in literacy rate (2001 and 2011)

S. No.	Blocks	Gender gap in 2001	Gender gap in 2011
1	Kaurhar	27.87	21.44
2	Holagarh	32.74	25.04
3	Mauaima	34.1	25.19
4	Soraon	33.41	25.28
5	Bahria	35.05	26.4
6	Phoolpur	36.36	26.74
7	Bahadurpur	32.83	24.26
8	Pratappur	36.15	27.19
9	Saidabad	37.12	26.55
10	Dhanupur	39.25	28.36
11	Handia	38.29	29.15
12	Jasra	32.31	23.97

13	Shankargarh	28.55	21.16
14	Chaka	28.94	21.17
15	Karchhana	36.6	27.56
16	Kaudhiyara	34.58	25.29
17	Uruwan	39.65	28.12
18	Meja	37.54	25.9
19	Koraon	34.73	24.98
20	Manda	40.2	27.92

Source: District Census Handbook Prayagraj (2001 and 2011).

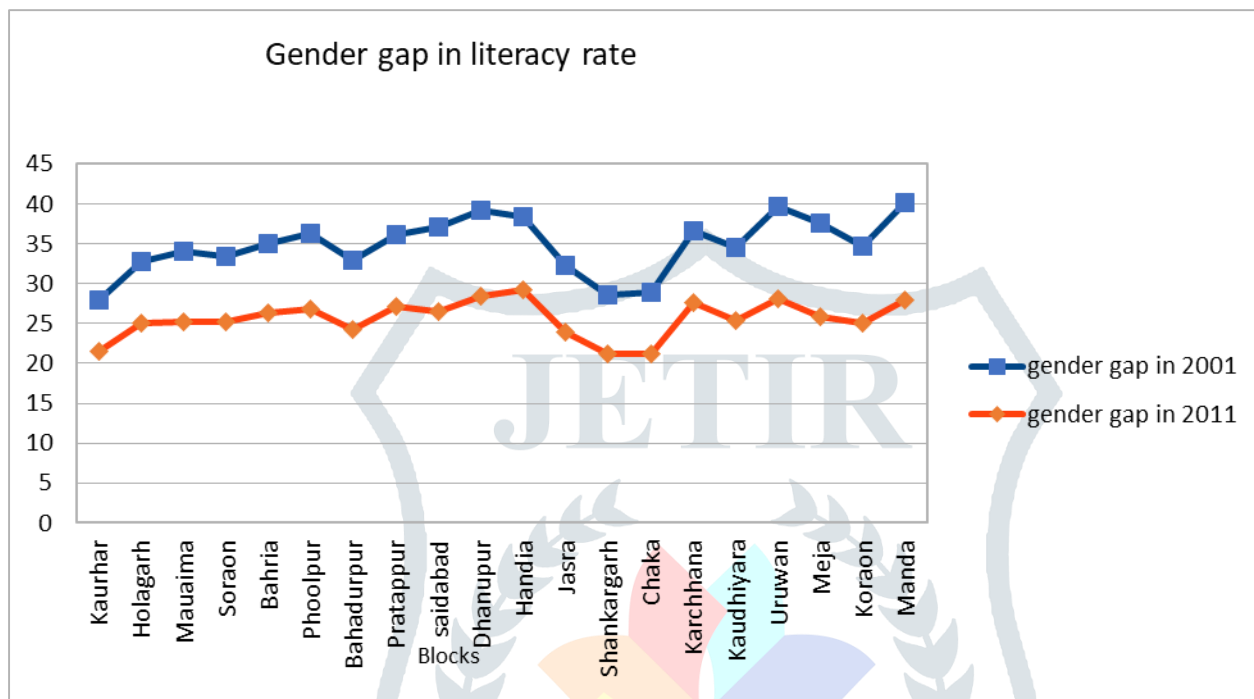
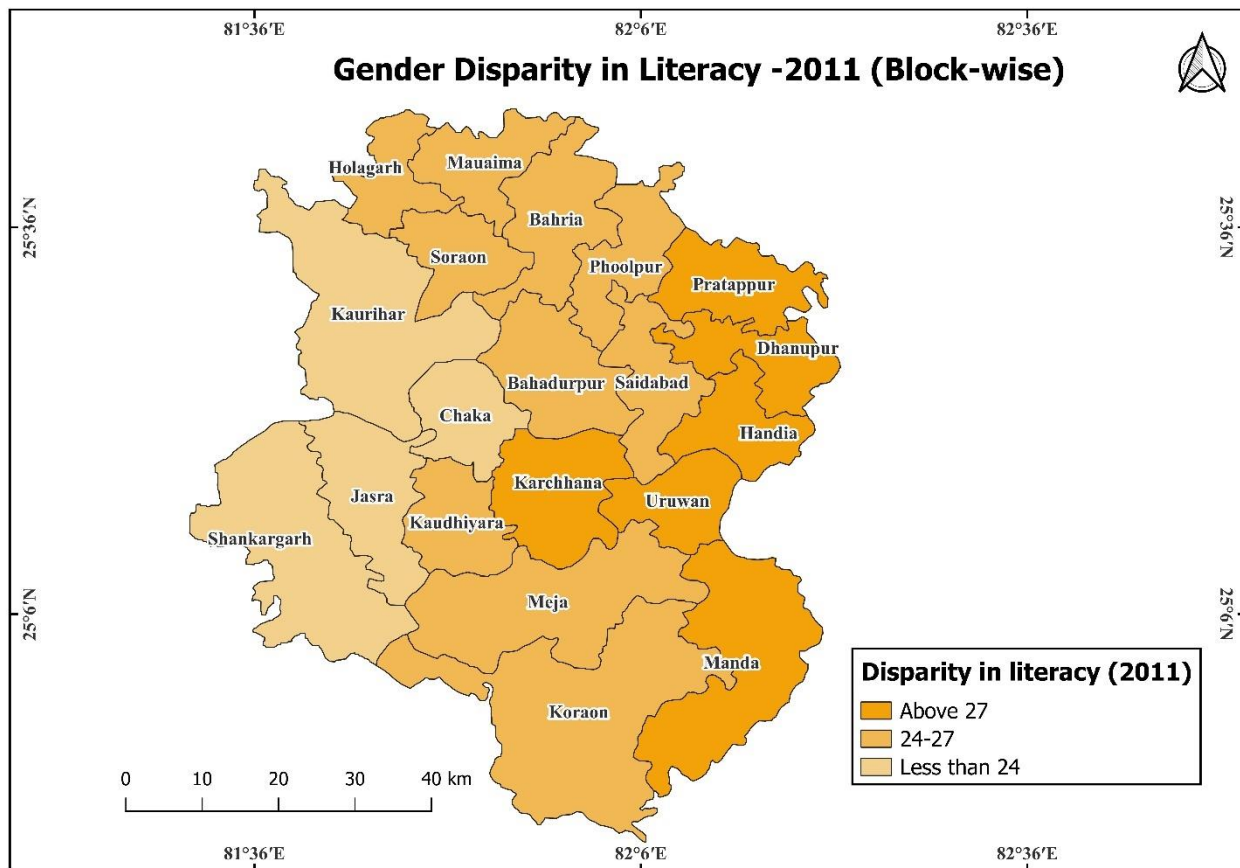


Table 5: Blocks according to gender disparity in literacy rate (2011)

S.N.	Category	Gender disparity	No of blocks	Block's name
1	High disparity	Above 27	6	Pratappur, Dhanupur, Handia, Karchhana, Uruwan, Manda
2	Medium disparity	24-27	10	Hologarh, Mauaima, Soraon, Bahria, Phoolpur, Bahadurpur, Saidabad, Kaudhiyara, Meja, Koraon
3	Low disparity	Less than 27	4	Kaurihar, Jasra, Shankargarh, Chaka

Figure 3: Blocks showing gender disparity in the literacy rate of Prayagraj district.



High Disparity in literacy:

Under this category, 6 blocks are included whose gender literacy gap is above the 27%, namely Handia (29.15%), Dhanupur (28.36%), Uruwan (28.12%), Manda (27.92%), Karchchhana (27.56%) and Pratappur (27.19%) (Table 1&3). The main cause of high disparity in these blocks are - lack of awareness among females, due to which male education is preferred over female education indulgence of girls child in household works, conservative mindset of society etc.

Medium Disparity in literacy:

There are 10 blocks in this category, whose gender literacy gap is between 24-27%, namely Holagarh (25.08%), Mauaima (25.19%), Soraon (25.28%), Bahria (26.40%), Phoolpur (26.74%), Saidabad (26.55%), Bahadurpur (24.26%), Kaundhiyara (25.29%), Meja (25.90%) and Koraon (24.98%). Main causes of gender literacy gap in these blocks are - low level of awareness among females, preference to household works than schooling of girls child etc.

Low disparity in literacy:

Under this category, 4 blocks are included namely Kaurihar (21.44%), Jasara (23.97%), Shankargadh (21.16%) and Chaka (21.17%), whose gender literacy gap is below 24%. The main reason of low gender gap in these blocks are – low level of male literacy, sufficient number of government and private schools, government initiative towards women empowerment and education etc.

Conclusion:

Gender literacy gaps in Prayagraj district are indeed high. According to 2011 census Prayagraj ranked 15th in Uttar Pradesh in terms of literacy rate. District's literacy rate is less than national literacy rate but more than literacy rate of the state. Whereas in terms of gender literacy gap, Prayagraj's rank is lower than both Uttar Pradesh and the national level. There are many factors that affect the literacy rate of the district, such as socio-economic conditions, educational infrastructure, gender inequality, cultural norms, and government policies. The female literacy rate is influenced by the educational backwardness of the district, which is measured by the number of schools, teachers, and students per 1000 population. There are some areas where the schools are not accessible or have poor amenities, such as toilets, drinking water, and electricity. These factors discourage the enrollment of female students, especially in rural areas. Therefore, to improve the literacy rate of Prayagraj district, there is a need to enhance the quality and accessibility of primary education, especially for girls, and to create awareness among the parents and the community about the importance of female literacy. The state government of Uttar Pradesh has launched a scheme called 'Padhna Likhna Abhiyan' or PLA to improve the literacy rate of the state and reduce the gender literacy gap. The scheme aims to teach nearly 5 crore illiterate people in the state, aged 15 years and above, to read and write with the help of volunteers and teachers. Prayagraj district has a population of 12.62 lakh illiterate persons, aged 15 years and above, who are the target beneficiaries of this scheme. The district skill development plan for Prayagraj also identifies literacy as one of the key factors for enhancing the employability and livelihood opportunities of the youth. The plan proposes various interventions to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of the potential and existing workforce in the district. Not only the literacy of Prayagraj district is low in Uttar Pradesh but also high gender disparity in literacy is also found. So there is need to take multiple measures to increase the literacy rate and minimise the gender literacy gap of the district. Special focus should be given to pre-primary, primary schools and Anganwadi centres. Survey should be conducted using Anganwadi workers in educationally backward areas and they should be tasked to bring the unenrolled children to Anganbadi centres. Effective restrictions should be imposed on child labour, education should be linked with job, awareness campaign should be organised to aware females about education, new technologies like smart classes, projectors, etc, should be introduced in schools, so that teaching and learning become effective and interesting. Parents have wide control over their children so there is a need to aware these parents. There may be many reasons for parents for not sending their children to schools, so it is necessary to know about those reasons and resolves the issue accordingly. Participation of NGO's teachers, peoples of the area should be ensured in building a healthy and interactive environment so that the literacy rate of the district can be increased and gender disparity in literacy can be minimised.

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