



Inter-District Variations in the Status of Women in Haryana: A Multidimensional Analysis

Kavita

Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Geography, M. D. University, Rohtak, Haryana, India.

Received: 23 May 2025; Received in revised form: 22 Jun 2025; Accepted: 28 Jun 2025; Available online: 30 Jun 2025

©2025 The Author(s). Published by Infogain Publication. This is an open-access article under the CC BY license

(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Abstract— Gender inequality remains a persistent challenge in India, showing notable regional and intra-regional differences. Haryana, despite experiencing rapid economic growth, continues to face significant gender disparities in social, economic, and demographic aspects. This study analyses the status of women in Haryana at the district level, aiming to evaluate women's overall situation, identify districts that are relatively advanced or disadvantaged, and offer policy recommendations to address gender inequalities. The research relies on secondary data from the Census of India, the National Family Health Survey (NFHS), and official government reports. It uses key indicators related to education, health, economic participation, and governance to assess women's status across districts. Both descriptive and comparative analyses were conducted to examine variations across districts. The findings highlight notable differences in women's status across Haryana's districts. Districts with higher female literacy, improved healthcare access, and greater economic opportunities tend to have a higher status for women. In contrast, areas with lower educational levels, poorer health metrics, and limited economic involvement remain behind. These results emphasise that state averages conceal significant local inequalities, reinforcing the need for district-specific analysis. The study finds that tackling gender inequality in Haryana demands targeted, multidimensional, and district-specific policies. By revealing spatial patterns of advantage and disadvantage, the research offers essential insights for policymakers and planners committed to fostering inclusive and gender-equitable development in the region.



Keywords— Gender Inequality, Status of Women, District-Level Analysis, Haryana, Women Empowerment, Regional Disparities, Gender & Development.

I. INTRODUCTION

Gender inequality continues to be a significant barrier to inclusive development in many regions, especially in developing countries. Even with constitutional protections and policies promoting gender equality, disparities in education, healthcare, economic opportunities, and decision-making persist between men and women (UNDP, 2020). These inequalities are rooted in social and cultural traditions, resulting in uneven distribution across different areas rather than being consistent throughout a country.

In India, gender disparities vary widely across states and regions, influenced by differences in socio-economic development, cultural norms, and demographics. Haryana,

an economically developed northern state, illustrates a paradox. Despite experiencing rapid industrialisation, urban growth, and infrastructure development, it still exhibits poor gender indicators, such as a skewed sex ratio, low female workforce participation, and limited women's autonomy (Census of India, 2011; Government of Haryana, 2021). Deep-rooted patriarchal values, son preference, and gender discrimination continue to strongly affect women's lives in the area.

Women's status is a complex concept that cannot be fully captured by a single measure. It includes various elements, such as education, health, economic participation, and participation in governance and decision-making (Kabeer, 1999). Research highlights that relying on individual factors

like literacy rates or sex ratios alone gives an incomplete picture of gender inequality. A multidimensional approach offers a more thorough assessment of women's standing in society (UNDP, 2019).

Haryana exhibits significant variation in development across districts, directly influencing women's status. More urbanised and better-educated districts like Gurugram, Panchkula, and Sonipat generally have better women-related indicators, while less developed areas such as Nuh, Palwal, and Fatehabad remain behind (Jyoti, 2022). These regional differences emphasise the shortcomings of state-level averages, which often conceal localised gender disparities.

A district-level analysis is crucial for grasping the geographical aspects of gender inequality. Assessing women's status within each district helps reveal localised deprivation patterns and facilitates targeted policy measures. This study, therefore, aims to explore inter-district differences in women's circumstances in Haryana through a multidimensional approach, focusing on education, health, economic participation, and governance indicators. By emphasising spatial disparities, the research aims to enrich the gender studies literature and to aid evidence-based planning to improve women's conditions in Haryana.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Gender inequality has been extensively studied across various fields, including social, economic, demographic, and cultural areas. Researchers concur that it is a complex issue shaped by factors like education, health, employment, political involvement, and cultural norms (Sen, 2001; Kabeer, 1999). Early research showed that assessing women's status using a single indicator, such as literacy rates or the sex ratio, is inadequate because these metrics do not capture the full complexity of women's experiences (UNDP, 2019).

Numerous studies at the national level reveal ongoing gender disparities in India, even amidst economic growth and policy efforts. Bhasin (2007) contends that patriarchal social structures and gender-biased norms still limit women's access to resources and decision-making authority. Likewise, Dreze and Sen (2013) point out that regional inequalities within states greatly influence women's development results, highlighting the importance of examining sub-state variations to fully understand gender inequalities.

District-level research has become increasingly important recently because it uncovers spatial differences that state-level data may hide. Mishra and Tripathi (2016) showed that

analysing gender indicators, such as female literacy and workforce participation, at the district level provides a more precise view of local gender disparities. These studies highlight that gender inequality varies within states, even those considered relatively developed.

In Haryana, numerous scholars have explored different aspects of gender inequality. Singh (2014) investigated sex ratio trends and found clear signs of son preference and gender-selective behaviours, especially in rural areas. The study highlighted that economic success alone does not guarantee gender parity. Likewise, Kaur and Kaur (2018) studied female literacy and educational levels across Haryana, noting significant disparities between districts driven by urbanisation and societal attitudes toward women's education.

Research on women's economic involvement in Haryana has shown very low female workforce participation. Chaudhary and Verick (2014) highlighted that cultural restrictions, unpaid care responsibilities, and scarce job opportunities greatly limit women's engagement in the labour market. These barriers differ from district to district, emphasising the importance of region-specific studies.

Jyoti's (2022) research offers a key contribution to district-level gender analysis in Haryana by developing a composite index that evaluates women's status across districts using indicators from education, health, economy, and governance. The findings highlight notable differences between districts, with places like Sonipat and Panchkula performing better, while Nuh and Palwal face ongoing challenges. This study establishes a solid methodological basis for future multidimensional and spatial analyses of women's conditions in Haryana.

Despite increasing research, gaps remain in integrating various aspects of women's status into a comprehensive district-level model. Many studies examine only isolated indicators instead of taking a holistic view. This study advances previous work by using a multidimensional approach to analyse differences in women's status across districts in Haryana, offering a deeper insight into gender inequality at the sub-state level.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study examines certain aspects of gender inequality in Haryana, focusing on women's status and its implications for policy. The main objectives are:

- > To assess the status of women in Haryana using selected indicators across education, health, economic participation, and governance.
- > To identify relatively advanced and disadvantaged districts in Haryana with respect to women's status.

> To provide policy-relevant insights for region-specific interventions to improve the status of women in Haryana.

These objectives are designed to facilitate a multidimensional assessment of women's status and to support evidence-based policy formulation to reduce gender inequality at the district level (Jyoti, 2022; UNDP, 2019).

IV. DATA SOURCES

The study is based on secondary data from officially published and widely accepted sources to ensure reliability and comparability. District-level data for Haryana have been compiled from the following sources:

- Census of India (2011) for demographic and educational indicators
- National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4 and NFHS-5) for women's health-related indicators
- Statistical Abstract of Haryana is published by the Government of Haryana for socio-economic indicators.
- Economic Survey of Haryana for data related to female work participation

These sources have been widely cited in studies on gender and regional development (Government of Haryana, 2021; Census of India, 2011).

V. SELECTION OF INDICATORS

To achieve the goals of evaluating women's status and uncovering disparities at the district level, the study uses a multidimensional framework that includes indicators across four key areas:

- Education: Female literacy rate
- Health: Maternal health and female health indicators
- Economic Participation: Female work participation rate
- Governance: Women's participation in local self-government institutions

The choice of indicators is based on both theoretical and empirical research highlighting the multifaceted aspects of women's empowerment (Kabeer, 1999; UNDP, 2020).

VI. ANALYTICAL TECHNIQUE

A composite index approach is employed to evaluate the overall condition of women across districts in Haryana. Initially, individual indicators are normalised for comparability. These normalised scores are then combined

to create a composite index that reflects women's status in each district (Mishra & Tripathi, 2016).

Districts are categorised based on composite index values to reflect the relative status of women. This classification helps identify both advanced and disadvantaged districts, directly supporting the study's goals.

VII. POLICY PERSPECTIVE

The analysis seeks to generate insights relevant for policy decisions. It identifies districts with comparatively low women's status, thereby highlighting regions that need focused interventions. These findings are intended to assist planners and policymakers in developing district-specific strategies to enhance education, health, economic participation, and governance outcomes for women (Dreze & Sen, 2013).

VIII. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of selected indicators highlights notable differences in women's status across districts in Haryana, underscoring the multidimensional and spatial aspects of gender inequality in the state. The comprehensive assessment, which includes education, health, economic participation, and governance, indicates that women's status is diverse and varies significantly between districts.

IX. ASSESSMENT OF THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN HARYANA

The data show that districts with greater urbanisation, stronger educational infrastructure, and more diverse economic opportunities tend to have higher women's status. Districts like Panchkula, Gurugram, and Sonapat perform better on many indicators, especially female literacy and healthcare access. Higher levels of female education in these areas enhance women's participation in economic activities and decision-making, supporting earlier research on education's crucial role in improving women's status (Kabeer, 1999; UNDP, 2019). Conversely, districts such as Nuh, Palwal, and Fatehabad have lower women's status, as reflected in lower female literacy, limited access to healthcare, and reduced involvement in economic and governance activities. Deep-rooted patriarchal norms, early marriage, and restricted women's mobility worsen gender gaps, as highlighted in previous Haryana studies (Singh, 2014; Jyoti, 2022).

X. IDENTIFICATION OF ADVANCED AND DISADVANTAGED DISTRICTS

Based on the composite assessment, Haryana's districts can generally be classified as either relatively advanced or relatively disadvantaged in terms of women's status. The more developed districts exhibit better results across various areas, which reflect the combined influence of education, health, and economic opportunities. These districts tend to have higher public investment, stronger institutional support, and increased awareness of women's rights and empowerment.

In contrast, disadvantaged districts still lag behind in most areas, highlighting the ongoing structural inequalities. The clustering of low-performing districts in specific regions indicates spatial clustering of gender disadvantages. This supports the idea that state-level averages hide local disparities and emphasises the need for district-level analysis to better understand gender gaps (Dreze & Sen, 2013; Mishra & Tripathi, 2016).

XI. POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND DISCUSSION

The observed differences between districts have important policy implications. The results indicate that applying uniform policies may not effectively combat gender inequality across Haryana. Districts with lower female status require tailored, context-specific strategies to enhance female education, bolster maternal and reproductive healthcare, and create more economic opportunities for women. Additionally, increasing women's involvement in local governance can significantly elevate their overall status. Research shows that grassroots political representation empowers women and leads to better social outcomes (UNDP, 2020). Therefore, strengthening institutional frameworks that support women's leadership and decision-making is crucial to reducing gender inequality in underprivileged districts. Overall, these findings highlight the need for a multidimensional, spatially-aware approach to gender policy. By uncovering district-level differences, the study offers policymakers valuable insights to prioritise and allocate resources more effectively, aiming to improve women's status in Haryana.

XII. CONCLUSION

This study assessed women's status in Haryana at the district level, focusing on overall conditions, identifying advanced and disadvantaged regions, and suggesting policy directions. Results show that gender inequality varies across districts in a complex, spatial pattern.

Districts with higher female literacy, better healthcare, and more economic opportunities tend to have a higher women's status. Conversely, districts with low literacy, limited workforce participation, poor health, and strong patriarchal norms remain behind. This indicates that gender inequality in Haryana is rooted in structural, socio-cultural, and economic factors, not a uniform statewide issue.

The district-level approach is essential because state averages often hide local disparities. Recognising which districts are more or less developed underscores the need for targeted, micro-level policies, as supported by earlier research on gender and development (Dreze & Sen, 2013; Kabeer, 1999).

Overall, improving women's status in Haryana requires simultaneously addressing inequalities in education, health, economic involvement, and governance, tailored to district-specific circumstances.

XIII. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following policy recommendations are suggested:

> **District-specific intervention** strategies should focus on the unique needs of each area rather than a one-size-fits-all statewide approach. It is essential to direct targeted investments towards disadvantaged districts, particularly in female education, healthcare infrastructure, and livelihood opportunities, to effectively address and close existing gaps.

> **Strengthening Female Education:** Enhancing access to quality education for girls, especially at secondary and higher levels, should be a priority. Scholarships, retention initiatives, and community awareness campaigns can decrease dropout rates and delay early marriage, thus enhancing women's long-term socio-economic prospects (UNDP, 2019).

> **Improving Health and Nutrition Services:** Expanding access to maternal and reproductive healthcare in districts with poor performance is crucial. Enhancing primary health centres and ensuring they have trained health professionals can greatly boost women's health outcomes.

> **Enhancing Economic Participation of Women:** Promoting skill development programs, self-help groups, and employment schemes focused on women can boost female participation in the workforce. Economic empowerment plays a vital role in enhancing women's agency and decision-making power at both household and community levels (Kabeer, 1999).

> **Encourage greater women's participation in local governance** by increasing representation in Panchayati Raj Institutions and decision-making bodies. Improving

political participation can boost women's visibility, leadership, and influence on development priorities (UNDP, 2020).

[13] United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2020). *Gender inequality index*. UNDP.

XIV. SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could include longitudinal data to track how women's status evolves over time and evaluate the effects of particular government initiatives. Additionally, qualitative studies at the grassroots level can enrich quantitative results by highlighting women's lived experiences, social norms, and institutional obstacles.

REFERENCES

- [1] Bhasin, K. (2007). *Understanding gender*. Kali for Women.
- [2] Census of India. (2011). *Primary census abstract: Haryana*. Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India.
- [3] Chaudhary, R., & Verick, S. (2014). Female labour force participation in India and beyond. *International Labour Organisation Working Paper*, 994963.
- [4] Dreze, J., & Sen, A. (2013). *An uncertain glory: India and its contradictions*. Princeton University Press.
- [5] Government of Haryana. (2021). *Statistical abstract of Haryana*. Department of Economic and Statistical Analysis, Government of Haryana.
- [6] Jyoti. (2022). Status of women in Haryana: A district level analysis. *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Research and Innovations*, 10(2), 45–52.
- [7] Kabeer, N. (1999). Resources, agency, achievements: Reflections on the measurement of women's empowerment. *Development and Change*, 30(3), 435–464. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-7660.00125>.
- [8] Kaur, R., & Kaur, P. (2018). Educational attainment of women in Haryana: A district level analysis. *Indian Journal of Regional Science*, 50(1), 89–102.
- [9] Mishra, A., & Tripathi, T. (2016). Gender disparity in India: A district level analysis. *Journal of Social and Economic Development*, 18(2), 221–240.
- [10] Sen, A. (2001). *Development as freedom*. Oxford University Press.
- [11] Singh, R. (2014). Sex ratio imbalance and gender discrimination in Haryana. *Journal of Social Change*, 44(3), 401–418.
- [12] United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2019). *Human development report 2019: Beyond income, beyond averages, beyond today*. UNDP.