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Women education and gender disparity in Murshidabad district of West Bengal

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Abstract

Education is a crucial social factor that helps in development by expending knowledge, thought, ability and skill. However, in our patriarchal society, the educational status of women is far behind than men. The present study is an attempt to analyses the educational status of women and male-female disparity in education in the Murshidabad district of West Bengal using the secondary data from the Census of India and the district statistical handbook and male-female disparity in literacy is calculated based on Sopher's Disparity Index method. The result of the study indicates that the Murshidabad district is backward compared to other districts in West Bengal. The present female-literacy rate of the district is 67.53%, which is below the state average (77%) and the overall district rank is 16th in 2011 out of 19 districts. Still, the female literacy rate of the district is increased by 13.18% over the past decade. The study reveals that there is an uneven distribution of block-level female literacy rate in Murshidabad district in both the Census year 2001 and 2011, as well as it is also noticed that female literacy rate is very high in middle and southern blocks such as Berhampore, Hariharpara and Beldanga I and very low in the northern blocks namely Farakka, Suti I, Suti II and Samserganj block. The male-female disparity in literacy is very high in western blocks like Kandi (0.147), Nabagram (0.141), Khargram (0.140) and Burwan (.0136) and very low in the eastern blocks viz. Bhagwangola II (.039), Domkal (.052). However, the overall district-level female literacy rate is gradually increasing and gender disparity in education is decreasing, the Government should take appropriate measures to accelerate women education and eradicate male-female inequality in education.

Keywords: Education, female literacy, literacy change, male-female disparity

1. Introduction

Education can change in mind, thought, outlook, personality and leads enlightenment as it facilitates knowledge, skills and abilities, which helps to achieve encouraging attitudes. Education makes a man civilized and takes a responsible role in making humans as social. Consequently, education is considered one of the basics need after food clothing and shelter (Vasantha, 2017). It is one of the crucial elements to the progress of an individual, social group, or a community, in particular, women's status in society. Women education denotes every section of education that aims at improving the knowledge, capability, thought and skills of women and girls. Educated women can bring their socio-economic changes. Swami Vivekananda said, "There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved." Female literacy has been improving over the years in India (Margaret, 2017) [15]. The female literacy rate in our country has increased by 11.5 percent over the last decade from 54 percent in 2001 to 65.5 percent in 2011. The constitution of India not only provides for equal rights for women and men but also for making special arrangements for women. After independence different five-year plans have successively placed for the betterment of women, which particular emphasis on providing minimum health facilities and nutrition for women and children, acceleration of women's education, their increase in the welfare service for women in need (Ghosh, 2017). Nevertheless, the condition of women has not improved and they are lagged behind men. In this regard, researchers have been selected to study the educational status of women and gender inequality. Significant research work on women education has been carried out by various scholars like Santu Biswas (Biswas, 2017), Vasantha Gouri (Gouri, 2017) [6], Kalpana Saxena (Sexena, 2017) [20], Dr. Prameela Margaret

4. Result and Discussion

4.1 District wise female literacy rate in West Bengal and Murshidabad district position in it

According to the Census report of 2011, the female literacy rate in West Bengal is 77.08%, which is almost 12% higher than the national level (65.5%). But literacy rate is unequally distributed in districts. Table-1 shows that the female literacy rate is highest in Purba Medinipur (87.66%), followed by Kolkata (87.14). It is also very high in North 24 Parganas (84.95%), Howrah (83.85%) and Hooghly district (82.55%). The female literacy rate is lowest in Uttar Dinajpur district (60.13%) and also very poor in Maldah (62.71%), Purulia (65.38%) and Murshidabad district (67.53%). Moderate female literacy is identified in

Darjeeling, Paschim Medinipur, South 24 Parganas, Burdwan, Nadia, Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, Bankura and Birbhum district. The literacy rate in the Murshidabad district is comparatively backward in terms of female education. Here the female literacy rate is almost 10% less than the State level but 2% higher than our national level. Out of 19 districts, the female literacy rank of the district is 16th. However, the district female literacy rank has declined one step from the last decade. In the Census year 2001, Murshidabad district's female literacy was 54.35%, which was 14.29% less than the state level and 0.35% higher than the country level and the district rank was 17th out of 19 districts in West Bengal.

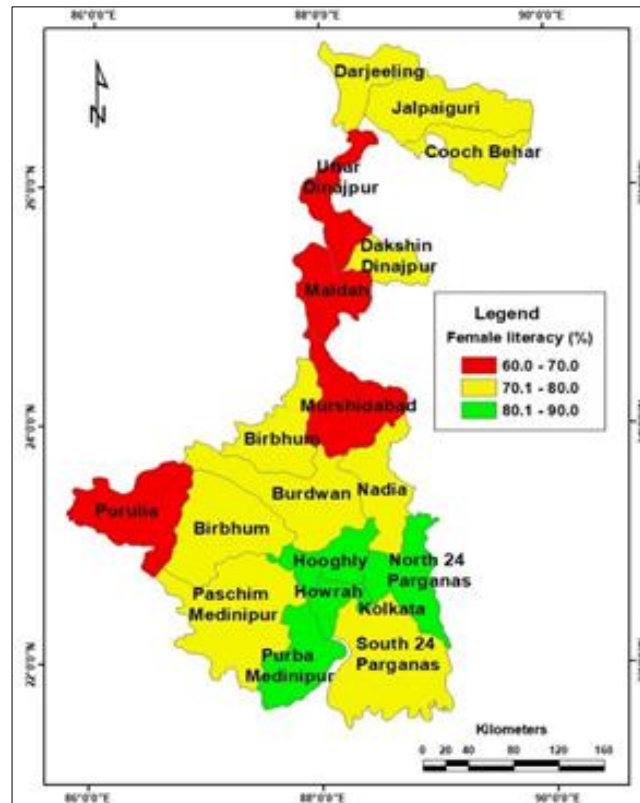


Fig 2: District wise literacy rate in West Bengal - 2011

Table 1: Showing female literacy rate in West Bengal

District Name	Female literacy 2001 (%)	Rank	Female literacy 2011 (%)	Rank
Purba Medinipur	80.16	2	87.66	1
Kolkata	80.86	1	87.14	2
North 24 Parganas	78.07	3	84.95	3
Howrah	77.01	4	83.85	4
Hooghly	75.11	5	82.55	5
Darjeeling	71.79	6	79.92	6
Paschim Medinipur	70.41	7	79.04	7
South 24 Parganas	69.45	9	78.57	8
Burdwan	70.18	8	77.15	9
Nadia	66.14	11	75.58	10
Cooch Behar	66.30	10	75.49	11
Dakshin Dinajpur	63.59	12	73.86	12
Jalpaiguri	62.85	13	73.79	13
Bankura	63.44	14	70.95	14
Birbhum	61.48	15	70.90	15
Murshidabad	54.35	17	67.53	16
Purulia	55.57	16	65.38	17
Maldah	50.28	18	62.71	18
Uttar Dinajpur	47.89	19	60.13	19
West Bengal	68.64		77.08	

Table 2: Female literacy rate of Murshidabad district

Sl. No.	Block Name	2001	Block Name	2011	Block Name	Female Literacy Change from 2001 to 2011 (%)
		Female Literacy (%)		Female Literacy (%)		
1	Behrampore	57.50	Behrampore	70.34	Samserganj	19.57
2	Hariharpara	52.30	Hariharpara	68.39	Murshidabad Jiaganj	17.50
3	Jalangi	50.90	Beldanga I	68.08	Suti I	17.48
4	Nowda	50.40	Raninagar I	66.03	Suti II	17.48
5	Beldanga I	50.10	Bhagwangola I	65.89	Jalangi	17.18
6	Burwan	49.20	Nowda	65.24	Raghunathganj II	17.16
7	Raninagar I	49.10	Jalangi	65.24	Beldanga II	16.85
8	Nabagram	48.90	Murshidabad Jiaganj	65.16	Lalgola	16.80
9	Domkal	48.20	Nabagram	64.98	Domkal	16.78
10	Murshidabad Jiaganj	46.90	Beldanga II	64.40	Raninagar II	16.76
11	Bharatpur II	46.80	Domkal	63.31	Sagardighi	16.56
12	Bhagwangola I	46.70	Bhagwangola II	63.06	Khargram	16.54
13	Sagardighi	46.20	Lalgola	62.76	Bharatpur II	16.51
14	Lalgola	45.80	Burwan	62.60	Bhagwangola II	16.47
15	Raninagar II	45.60	Raninagar II	62.36	Bhagwangola I	16.36
16	Beldanga II	45.20	Sagardighi	62.05	Farakka	16.27
17	Bhagwangola II	44.50	Bharatpur II	60.97	Nabagram	16.26
18	Khargram	43.20	Raghunathganj I	59.74	Raninagar I	16.14
19	Bharatpur I	42.90	Kandi	58.25	Hariharpara	16.09
20	Kandi	42.20	Bharatpur I	57.57	Burwan	16.04
21	Raghunathganj I	42.00	Raghunathganj II	57.45	Beldanga I	15.79
22	Raghunathganj II	40.00	Khargram	57.16	Nowda	15.63
23	Farakka	37.50	Farakka	53.77	Raghunathganj I	15.45
24	Suti I	35.60	Suti I	53.08	Kandi	15.37
25	Suti II	32.50	Suti II	49.98	Bharatpur I	15.35
26	Samserganj	30.00	Samserganj	49.57	Behrampore	12.84
Murshidabad district		47.63		63.88		16.25

Source: District Statistical Handbook, 2010-2011, Murshidabad district

Table 3: Block wise male- female disparity of literacy in Murshidabad district

Sl. No.	Bloc Name	2011 Literacy (%)			Male-Female Disparity Index	Rank
		Male	Female	Total		
1	Bhagwangola II	62.58	63.06	62.82	0.039	1
2	Domkal	64.47	63.31	63.90	0.052	2
3	Nowda	66.91	65.24	66.09	0.058	3
4	Bhagwangola I	67.64	65.89	66.79	0.059	4
5	Hariharpara	69.97	68.39	69.20	0.060	5
6	Raninagar II	64.78	62.36	63.60	0.061	6
7	Raninagar I	68.42	66.03	67.25	0.064	7
8	Lalgola	65.81	62.76	64.32	0.067	8
9	Jalangi	69.36	65.24	67.35	0.077	9
10	Beldanga I	71.92	68.08	70.06	0.077	10
11	Sagardighi	68.34	62.05	65.26	0.092	11
12	Beldanga II	71.10	64.40	67.86	0.097	12
13	Raghunathganj II	64.71	57.45	61.17	0.098	13
14	Behrampore	76.52	70.34	73.51	0.099	14
15	Murshidabad Jiaganj	72.82	65.16	69.12	0.105	15
16	Raghunathganj I	68.99	59.74	64.49	0.114	16
17	Suti I	62.84	53.08	58.06	0.118	17
18	Bharatpur II	70.96	60.97	66.07	0.121	18
19	Bharatpur I	67.94	57.57	62.93	0.123	19
20	Suti II	60.44	49.98	55.23	0.125	20
21	Samserganj	60.42	49.57	54.98	0.129	21
22	Farakka	65.56	53.77	59.75	0.134	22
23	Nabagram	76.44	64.98	70.83	0.136	23
24	Khargram	69.69	57.16	63.56	0.140	24
25	Burwan	74.97	62.60	68.96	0.141	25
26	Kandi	71.66	58.25	65.13	0.147	26
Murshidabad district		71.02	63.88	67.53	0.100	

Source: District Statistical Handbook, 2014, Murshidabad district

4.2 Block wise female literacy in Murshidabad district-2001

Figure 3 and Table 2 represent the block-wise female literacy rate of the Murshidabad district in 2001. The highest female literacy found in Behrampore block (57.5%) and lowest in Samsanganj block (only 30%). The district has been divided into five zones such as very high (52.31-57.5%), high (46.91%-52.30%), moderate (43.21%-46.90%), low (37.51-43.2%) and very low (30-37.5%) female literacy rate. Only one block falls into the very high female literacy zone, which was the Behrampore block, located in the middle part of the district. The southeastern part of the district is mainly high female literacy zone, includes 8 blocks such as Hariharpara (52.3%), Jalangi

(50.9%), Nowda (50.4%), Beldanga I (50.1%), Burwan (49.2%), Raninagar I (49.1%), Nabagram (48.9%) and Domkal (48.2%). The moderate female literacy rate is mainly in the middle east part of the district, includes 8 blocks – Murshidabad Jiaganj (46.9%), Bharatpur II (46.8%), Bhagwangola I (46.7%), Sagardighi (46.2%), Lalgola (45.8%), Raninagar II (45.6%), Beldanga II (45.2%) and Bhagwangola II (44.5%). 5 blocks fall in low female literacy rate; these are Khargram (43.2%), Bharatpur I (42.9%), Kandi (42.2%), Raghunathpur I (42%) and Raghunathpur II (40%). 4 blocks are under the very low female literacy rate zone, which is located in the northern part of the district, such as Farakka (37.5%), Suti I (35.6%), Suti II (32.5%) and Samsanganj block (30%).

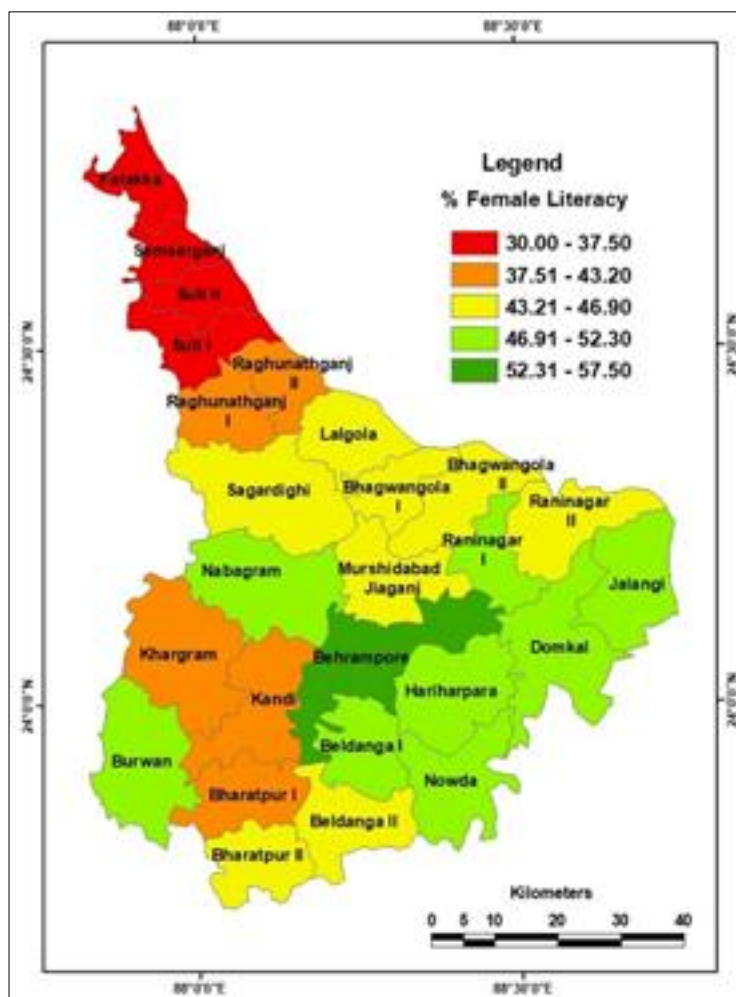


Fig 3: Block wise female literacy rate in Murshidabad district – 2001.

4.3 Block wise female literacy in Murshidabad district – 2011

Figure 4 and Table 2 represent the block-wise female literacy rate of Murshidabad district in the Census year 2011, which portrays the similar trend of literacy of the previous decade in Murshidabad district. The highest female literacy found in Behrampore block (70.34%) and lowest in Samsanganj block (only 49.57%). Here also the district is divided into 5 zones, such as very high (66.04%-70.34%), high (63.32%-66.03%), moderate (59.75%-63.31%), low (53.78-59.74%) and very low (49.57%-53.77%) female literacy zone. 3 blocks, which located in the middle part of the district, show the very high female literacy rate; these blocks are Behrampore (70.34%), Hariharpara (68.39%) and

Beldanga I block (68.08%). 7 blocks are under the high female literacy zone such as Raninagar I (66.03%), Bhagwangola I (65.89%), Nowda (65.24%), Jalangi (65.24%), Murshidabad Jiaganj (65.16%), Nabagram (64.98%) and Beldanga II (64.4%). Moderate female literacy is seen in Domkal ((63.31%), Bhagwangola II ((63.06%), Lalgola (62.76%), Burwan (62.6%), Raninagar II (62.36%), Sagardighi (62.05%) and Bharatpur I (60.97%). The low female literacy rate is mainly marked in 5 blocks- Raghunathganj I (59.74%), Kandi (58.25%), Bharatpur I (57.57%), Raghunathganj II (57.45%) and Khargram (57.16%). The northern part of the district is under the very low female literacy area, and there are 4 blocks such as

Farakka (53.77%), Suti I (53.08%), Suti II (49.98%) and Samerganj (49.57%).

Table 2 also presents the block-wise female literacy change from 2001 to 2011. It is noticed that the female literacy rate is significantly increased in each block of the Murshidabad district. Maximum female literacy increased is found in Samserganj block (19.57%) and minimum in Behrampore block (12.84%) from 2001 to 2011. 16% to 18% female literacy increased are identified in Murshidabad Jiaganj (17.5%), Suti I (17.48%), Suti II (17.48%), Jalangi

(17.18%), Raghunathpur block (17.165%), Beldanga II (16.85%), Lalgola (16.8%), Domkal (16.78%), Raninagar II (16.76), Sagardighi (16.56%), Khargram (16.54%), Bharatput II (16.51%), Bhagwangola II (16.47%), Bhagwangola I (16.36%), Farakka (16.57%), Nabagram (16.26%), Raninagar I (16.14%) and Hariharpara block (16.09%). 12% to below 16% female literacy changed are noticed in Beldanga I (15.79%), Nowda (15.63%), Raghunathganj I (15.46%), Kandi (15.37%), Bharatpur I (15.35%) and Berhampore (12.84%).

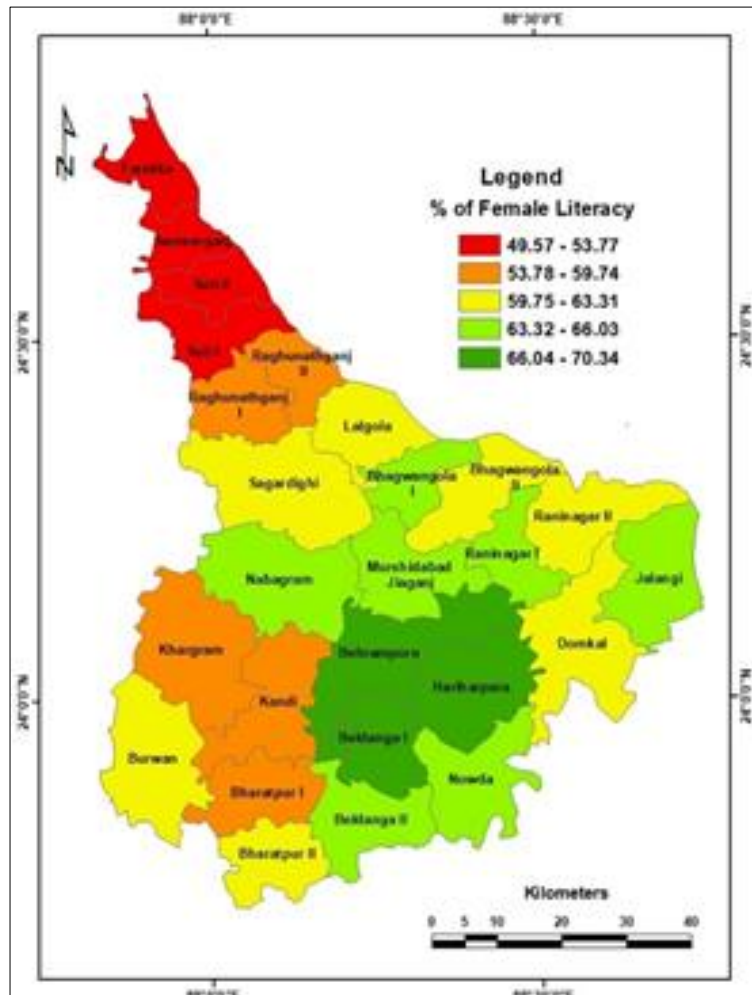


Fig 4: Block wise female literacy rate in Murshidabad district – 2011.

4.4 Block wise female disparity in literacy of Murshidabad district – 2011

The male-female disparity in education means gender inequality in education. The male-female disparity in literacy is calculated using the Census data of 2011 based on Sopher's Disparity Index formula. It measures the degree of gender disparity in education. Where the male-female disparity in literacy index is high, gender inequality will be high and if the index value is low, it reflects the opposite condition. Table 3 and Figure 5 delineate the block-wise male-female disparity of the Murshidabad district. Disparity in the literacy of the district was 0.100. The lowest disparity is found in Bhagwangola II (0.039) and highest in Kandi block (.147). Figure 5 clearly remarks that the eastern part of the district, the disparity in literacy was very less. Still, almost the whole western part and northern part represented a high disparity in literacy. There are 14 blocks, in which male-female disparity are below district average, these block

namely Bhagwangola II (0.039), Domkal (0.052), Nowda (0.058), Bhagwangola I (0.59), Hariharpara (0.060), Raninagar II (0.061), Raninagar I (0.064), Lalgola (0.067), Jalangi (0.077), Beldanga I (0.077), Sagardighi (0.092), Beldanga II (0.097), Raghunathganj II (0.098) and Berhampore block (0.099). While, the male-female disparity of the remaining 12 blocks is above the district average, these blocks are Murshidabad Jiaganj (0.105), Raghunathganj I (0.114), Suti I (.0118), Bharatpur II (.0121), Bharatpur I (0.123), Suti II (0.125), Samerganj (0.129), Farakka (0.134), Nabagram (0.136), Khargram (0.141), Burwan (0.141) and Kandi (0.147). One thing that has been particularly noticed that both the Census year 2001 and 2011, the female literacy rate is highest in Berhampore block but the male-female disparity is comparatively high (.099) and the block rank is 14 out of 26 blocks of the district. On the other hand, the female literacy rate is lowest in the both Census year in the Sumserganj block, but male-

female disparity in this block comparatively low and the block rank is 21 out of 26 blocks in the Murshidabad

district.

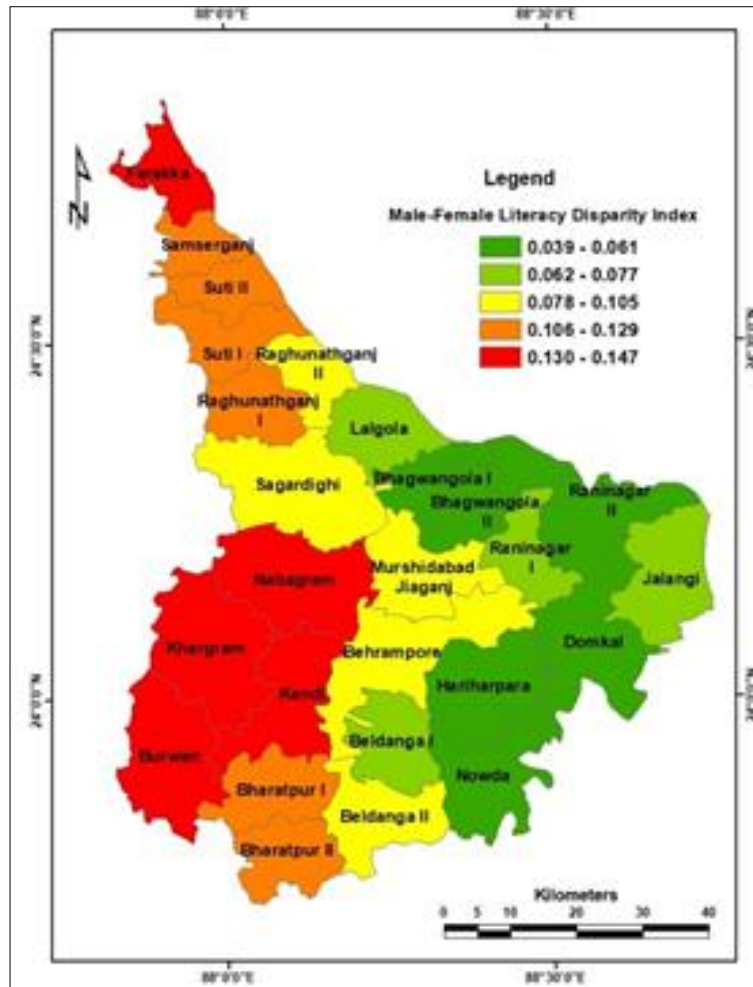


Fig 5: Block wise male female disparity in literacy of Murshidabad district – 2011

5. Conclusion

The study mainly emphasizes on analysis block-wise women's literacy and gender disparity in the literacy of Murshidabad district. It is clearly illustrated that the block-level female literacy rate is gradually increased. Especially in the last decade, changes have been taken place in the female literacy rate not only in the Murshidabad district but also in West Bengal. There exists a considerable regional variation in the block level female literacy in the Murshidabad block. A very high level of education was seen in the middle and eastern regions of the study area. At the same time, the whole of the western part was characterized by a medium level of education. In contrast, the very low level of female education was found in the northern region. The above pattern of the educational level of the Murshidabad district could be correlated with the prevailing economic activity. As the urban area is located in the middle Eastern part, most of the people are engaged in secondary and tertiary activities, and they give more weightage to education to get employment. In contrast, the northern and eastern part of the district has primary sectors activities, so they give less preference to education.

There is still gender disparity in education in this study area, especially in the western part of the district. Although female literacy was very low in the northern region, the male-female disparity in literacy was comparatively better than the part of the west. Like the high female literacy rate,

the male-female disparity in literacy was much lower in the middle and eastern parts of the district. There may be few reasons for less gender inequality in education in the east and central region, one is an increase in awareness of female education and others may be better education facilities, better infrastructure and accessibility of communication. The key factor of this female literacy increases and reducing gender inequality in education may be various Government educational programs of the Central Government as well as the State Government for girls and other reasons may be changed in the superstitious mentality of society to female, socio-economic development, modernization, globalization and the Government law. However, men are far ahead of women in literacy and there is still gender disparity in our society not only in education but also in various aspects of society. In the case of literacy, this disparity has stepwise reduced. Hopefully, in the near future gender inequality will be eliminated and social equality will prevail. In this regard, the Government as well as every citizen must take equal responsibility so that women can express themselves and achieve social establishment by following their equal constitutional rights.

6. Recommendations

1. In-depth field survey work on women education and gender disparity should be done in the Murshidabad

district to find out the main reasons for the backwardness of women in education.

2. The Government should introduce new schemes for the improvement of women's education and take appropriate measures to reduced school drop-out of girl's students.
3. Mass awareness should be enhanced to women's education.
4. Parents should look after their son and daughter equally and create a conducive environment for their learning.
5. The participation of women in school education, as well as higher education, should be ensured.
6. To eliminate regional disparity in literacy, proper educational infrastructure should be built in urban as well as village areas.
7. Adult education should be introduced so that aged women who are deprived of education also can get the light of knowledge.

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