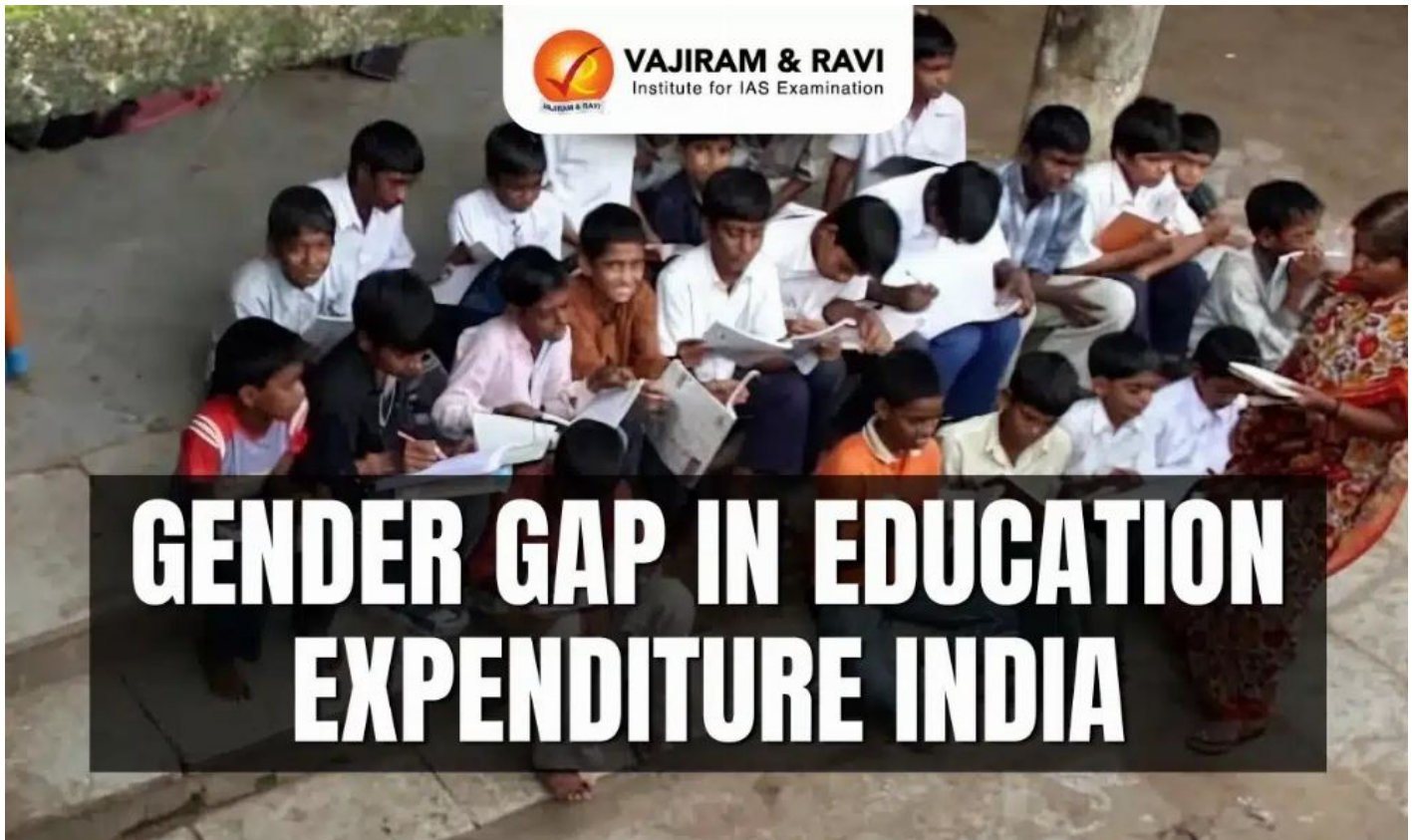


Spending on Children's Education in India: Gender Gaps and State Variations

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Gender Gap in Education Expenditure India Latest News

- Despite a recent drop in the World Economic Forum's gender gap rankings, partly due to the education category, India has increased girls' school enrolment, with girls now forming 48% of the student population and slightly higher participation in higher education than men.
- However, National Sample Survey data reveal a persisting gender gap: families spend significantly less on daughters' education compared to sons, highlighting unequal investment despite improved enrolment.

Gender Gaps in Education Expenditure in India

- The Comprehensive Modular Survey on Education (NSS 80th round, April-June) reveals consistent gender disparities in spending on children's education across India.
- The survey shows that **families spend less on girls than boys at every stage of schooling**, from pre-primary to higher secondary, in both rural and urban areas.

- In rural India, households spend about ₹1,373 (18%) more on boys, while in urban India, girls receive ₹2,791 less on average.
- By higher secondary school, urban families spend nearly 30% more on boys' education.
- Considering course fees alone, the gap widens further, with boys receiving 21.5% more spending nationwide.
- Enrollment patterns reflect this bias: 58.4% of girls study in government schools compared to 34% of boys in private unaided schools, highlighting unequal access to costlier private education.
- The disparity extends to tuition classes as well, with 22% more spent on boys' tuition at the higher secondary level.

State-Level Gaps in School Enrolment

- Gender disparities in school enrolment vary widely across India.
- In **Delhi**, 65% of girls attend government schools compared to 54% of boys, while 38.8% of boys attend private schools against 26.6% of girls.
- Similar gaps of over 10 percentage points are seen in **Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Punjab**.
- In **Gujarat**, the divide is sharper in urban areas but narrower in rural regions.
- In contrast, **Tamil Nadu and Kerala** show near-equal ratios for boys and girls across government and private schools, while several **northeastern States** send more girls to private schools than boys.

Differences in Education Expenditure

- Spending patterns also differ by State, especially at higher classes.
- In **Telangana, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal**, families spend far more on boys at the higher secondary level, despite spending more on girls at the secondary level.
- For instance, in **Tamil Nadu**, average secondary-level spending is ₹23,796 for girls and ₹22,593 for boys, but at the higher secondary level, it jumps to ₹35,973 for boys versus just ₹19,412 for girls.
- Dropouts and subsidies for girls partly explain this reversal.

States Spending More on Girls

- Some States show the opposite trend.
- In **Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, and Kerala**, families spend more on girls in higher secondary education, particularly in urban areas where higher transport costs are linked to parental concerns about girls' safety.

Private Tuition Expenditure Gaps

- Private coaching costs reveal further inequalities.
- In Himachal Pradesh, families spend ₹9,813 per boy in higher secondary tuition, compared to just ₹1,550 per girl.
- Significant tuition-related gender gaps are also seen in Bihar, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, and Tamil Nadu, underscoring how education spending priorities differ across regions.

Reasons Behind Gender Gaps in Education Expenditure

- **Societal Preferences and Gender Bias**

- Deep-rooted cultural norms often prioritize sons' education over daughters, as boys are seen as future breadwinners.
- Daughters are frequently expected to marry early, reducing perceived returns on investing heavily in their education.

- **Type of Schools Chosen**

- Families disproportionately send boys to private unaided schools, which charge higher fees, while girls are more likely to attend government schools.
- This directly reduces average per-student expenditure on girls.

- **Dropouts Among Girls**

- Higher dropout rates among girls, especially after secondary school, mean families spend less on their higher secondary education.
- Safety concerns, early marriage, and household responsibilities are key drivers of dropout.

- **Access to Private Tuitions**

- Although boys and girls enroll in tuition classes at similar rates, families spend significantly more on boys' coaching, especially at higher classes.
- This reflects a belief that competitive exams and higher education are more important for boys' futures.

- **Economic Considerations and Subsidies**

- Government schemes often subsidize girls' fees, uniforms, and transport, lowering the reported expenditure on them.

Source: **TH**

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