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The province-wise literacy rate in Pakistan and its impact on the economy

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ABSTRACT

The basic objective of this paper is to determine and analyse the province-wise literacy rate in Pakistan and its impact on the economy. Pakistan belongs to those nations who have the world's worst literacy rate, which is the main reason for its slow agricultural growth and sluggish economy. In this study, we will examine Pakistan's literacy rate province-wise and its comparison with some other Asian countries: India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan. Pakistan has ignored education, which is the most vital element for the success and development of any nation; this has resulted in one of the lowest literacy rate in world: Pakistan's literacy rate is ranked 113 in a total of 120 countries. This is a huge issue for the country and its economic development, as well as a shameful and alarming state of affairs. Without attention and improvements to the education sector, Pakistan is predestined to face even greater problems. In this paper, we will also focus specifically on the current literacy rates of Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan.

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1. Introduction

The literacy rate for Pakistan in a 2012 consensus was 56%, which includes both males and females from both rural and urban areas. A 56% literacy rate is very low; this means that almost half of the country is illiterate and can contribute very little to economic development because the major contribution in that area is made through education. Despite a very low average literacy rate, however, there are exceptional cases where the rate is very high; for example, in Lahore, Islamabad and Karachi. In these cities, the literacy rate is almost 75%, far above those in tribal areas, where acquiring a modern education is considered un-Islamic due to religious extremism. In these areas, the literacy rate can be as low as 9%, particularly because females are not allowed to attend school. Boys alone do so and with their education, obtain employment. The

contribution made by education is the key factor in the development of a national economy and the growth of a country. Thus, it is the responsibility of the administration as well as the people of Pakistan to ensure that their children are educated so that they can raise the literacy rate and, ultimately, improve the country's situation and status.

From 2000 to 2004, the literacy rate ranged from 96% in Islamabad; in the 55–64 age group, the literacy rate was almost 38%, with a rate for ages 45–54 of nearly 46%, ages 25–34 of 57%, and ages 15–24 of 72%. In the tribal areas of Pakistan literacy, the rate is very low. Poor performance in the education sector is mainly caused by minimal public investment and expenditure on education, which has increased to 2.4% of the gross national product (GNP) in recent years. In addition, as allocation of government funds is skewed towards higher education, this allows upper-income earners to obtain educational public subsidy benefits.

The government of Pakistan has developed a series of educational policies: the national education policy in 1972, the national education policy in 1979, and the national education policy in 1992, all of them to develop the education sector and to achieve 100 percent literacy rate. However, the [United Nations \(2010\)](#) reported that in respect to literacy rates, Pakistan remains at 160th, with a 50% world literacy rate; in other words, the country is among the bottom countries of the world for literacy. According to the

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Economic Survey of Pakistan (2010–11) the overall literacy rate for those ages 10 and above is 57.7%, although with regional and gender discrimination (favouring males).

2. Factors affecting literacy rates in the literature review

Boissiere (2004) conducted research on primary school determinants and outcomes in developing countries. According to author, in today's world merely getting children to school is not enough; the government should also ensure that children complete their primary cycle to gain the basic knowledge and skills needed for their well-being and development as citizens. Many studies have been examined how total resources are devoted to education. *Boissiere's* research shows five main contributing factors to education effectiveness: curriculum, learning materials, instructions, teaching techniques and the learning capacity of students.

Johnston (2004) conducted research on adult literacy rates and economic growth to show that sustained economic growth is a priority for the government and that investment in human capital, seen as economic growth, is an important contribution. His research also focused on raising the basic literacy rate in adults by increasing employment and labour productivity towards a positive economic impact. It contributes to scientific research project was carried out for human capital that is; knowledge, skills, personal literacy reflection, skills ability quality is one of the most important general cognitive skills. Literacy was once considered to mean the ability to read and write; those who cannot reach a very basic standard—for example, writing one's name—are considered illiterate. The basic definition of literacy includes not only reading and writing but also a range of skills used in work done at home, so-called "literacy" in a broader sense.

Ridker (1997) performed research on the determinants of educational success and attainment in Africa, and he describes and explains the educational achievements, attainments, and participation in different African countries. Available information on schools, children, households, and communities are explored for this purpose. His study analysed four types of national surveys and field evidence of specific interventions in primary schools, and showed a variety of problems contrasting with school characteristics in determining educational outcomes: the effect of quality improvements on enrolment, textbooks versus class size, professional versus para-professional teachers, and the role of parent participation. It was found that consequences varied significantly depending on the framework and the status of variables.

According to *Rahman and Uddin (2009)*, education is a fundamental need of all human beings and crucial to any country's development. Education is the effort of state and government, who should do everything in their means, in keeping with national resources, to provide on-going funding. The community should also play a role in educational development. Pakistan has the highest concentration of illiterates of any country. Illiteracy is not only an individual disability but also has an impact on society. Democratic institutions and values can hardly flourish in a society where half of the adult population is illiterate and where the majority voters cannot access information or read newspapers. This is particularly the case for women and those living rural areas. Literacy can not only lead to dependence, but it also allows people of different social and economic levels to participate in the decision-making process to the fullest.

Fuller et al. (1999) have researched early literacy and the influence of family, teachers, and classrooms in northeastern Brazil. Countries around the world, whether industrialized or poor, in the south or to the north, are looking for ways to improve children's early literacy through government assistance. Policy makers may be aiming at improving their country's social and human capital

and at reducing inequalities inherent in schools. Whatever their motivation, policy makers and local educators are trying to determine which investment policies will improve basic literacy through local programs.

Kremer et al. (2005) conducted research on schools, teachers, and education outcomes in developing countries. The most important policy issues that improved the welfare of the five billion people living in developing countries stemmed from the potential role of education. Many macroeconomists have highlighted the impact of education on economic growth. This was an enriching experience worthy of careful study, including the input and widespread changes in the educational systems of developing countries. In addition, a number of developing countries have carried out the evaluation of their educational policies over the past 10 years. The many differences between the educational systems in developed and developing countries provide basic information about education in developing countries.

Chaudhry and Rahman (2009) researched the impact of gender inequality on education in Pakistan. Gender refers to the social roles and responsibilities of women and men. The difference in the roles and responsibilities of women and men relate to our families, societies and cultures. The characteristics, attitudes and behaviours of men and women are essential in promoting gender analysis. The different social roles, rights and resources of both genders are important determinants of the nature and scope of their inequality and poverty. Inequality of access to resources between women and men is most common in poor and developing countries. The status of women in Pakistan is different from that of women in Western countries. Gender is one of the principles of social organization in Pakistan. Family is defined by women, while men dominate the world outside the home, with the husband as the family pillar. Men and women are thus conceptually divided into two separate spheres. Family resources favour sons; it creates their assigned roles and equips them with skills to compete for resources in the public arena. Education is the most important instrument in human resource development. According to *Knowles and Maddison (2002)*, in developing countries, female education reduces fertility and infant mortality, while increasing children's education. Gender inequality in education directly and significantly affects economic growth.

3. Pakistan literacy rate from 1952 to 2014

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Pakistan at 55% has one of the lowest literacy rates in the world, and stands 160th among world nations. Many schools and colleges are entering the teaching profession, particularly in major cities, but those living in rural areas record a greater loss. Pakistan's literacy rate from 1952 to 2014 in percentages is shown in *Fig. 1* below.

Fig. 1 shows historical literacy rates in Pakistan. In 1950, the rate was 16.40% and it was 16.30% in 1961. It increased in 1972, with a total rate of 21.70%, including urban and rural areas. It was 26.30% in 1981, with urban areas 47.10% and rural areas 17.30%. In 1998, the total was 43.90%, with rates of urban and rural areas of 63.08% and 33.64%. In 2004 and 2009, it was 54% and 57%, including urban and rural areas, and in 2012, it was 57%, the same as in 2014.

3.1. Province-wise literacy rate of Pakistan

The province-wise literacy rate of Pakistan is shown in *Fig. 2* below.

3.1.1. Punjab

Punjab is Pakistan's most popular province, with 56% of the country's population and a number of important cities, as well as

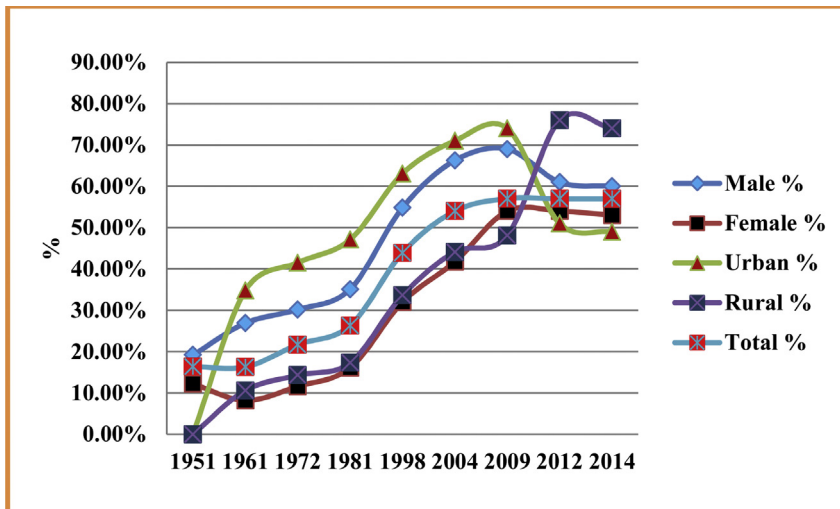


Fig. 1. Pakistan literacy rate from 1952–2014 in %.

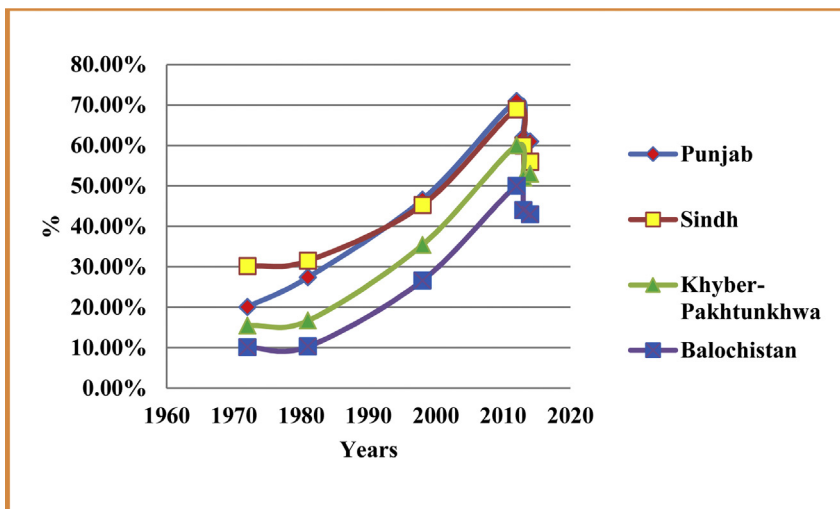


Fig. 2. Province wise literacy rate in Pakistan.

over 3.8 million illiterates. This means that millions of people over the age of 15 can neither read nor write. The literacy rate of Punjab in 1972 was 20.07% and 46.60% in 1998. In 2012, 2013 and 2014, the rate was 71%, 62% and 61%. Most of the improvements were made in elementary schools, but much work remains to bring further changes.

3.1.2. Sindh

Sindh is Pakistan's most populated province, with a population of over 25 million people. Its literacy rate is below 50% in rural areas. In 1972 and 1998, it was 30.20% and 45.30%. Similarly, in 2010, 2013 and 2014, it was 69%, 60% and 56%. Overall, many children are deprived of education, as evidenced by the greater percentage of child labour.

3.1.3. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Due to the growing number of security threats, families are always concerned about sending their children to school. In 1972 and 1998, the literacy rate of KPK was 15.50% and 35.40%, and in 2012, 2013 and 2014, it was 60%, 52% and 53%. According to recent reports, KPK's literacy rate is 50%.

3.1.4. Balochistan

Balochistan province contains a desert and a mountainous region; thus, it has always been problematic to build school-based amenities. 28% of its population is literate, with males at 39% and females at 16%. The literacy rates of Balochistan in 1972 and 1998 were 10.10% and 26.60% in urban and rural areas. In 2012, 2013 and 2014, the rates were 50%, 44% and 43%, respectively. Children are the most valuable asset in any country; it is a challenge for Pakistan to improve its literacy rate.

3.2. Youth literacy rate in Pakistan and its comparison with India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan

Youth literacy rate in Pakistan and its comparison with India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan are showed in Fig. 3 below.

Pakistan's youth literacy rate is 71%, with males at 79% and females at 61%. India's youth literacy rate is 90.20%, with a male to female ratio of 92.90%–87.20%, which is higher than Pakistan's literacy rate. Similarly, the youth literacy rate of Bangladesh is 68%, with males at 75% and females at 78%. In Nepal, the youth literacy rate is 61%, with males at 89% and females at 78%. The

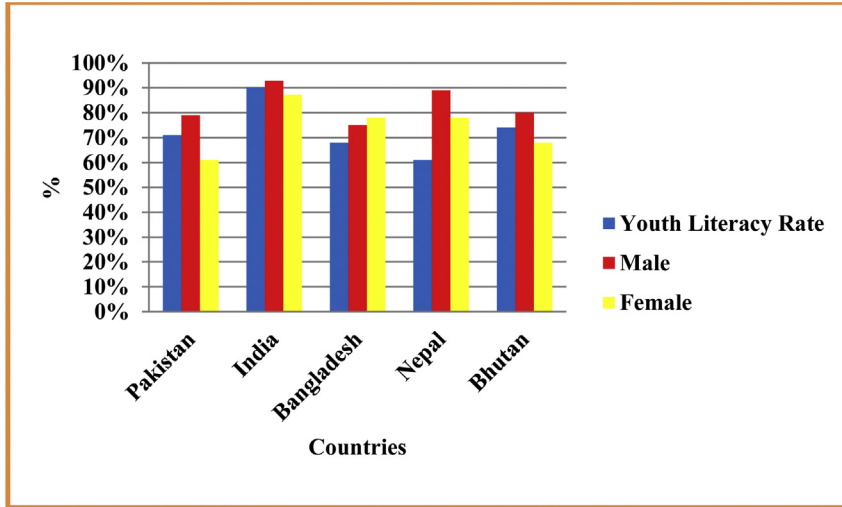


Fig. 3. Youth literacy rate in %.

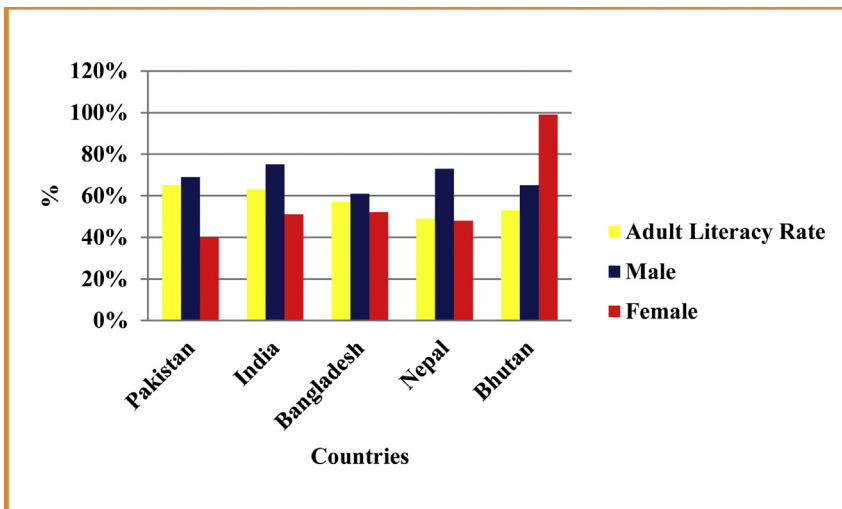


Fig. 4. Adult literacy rate in %.

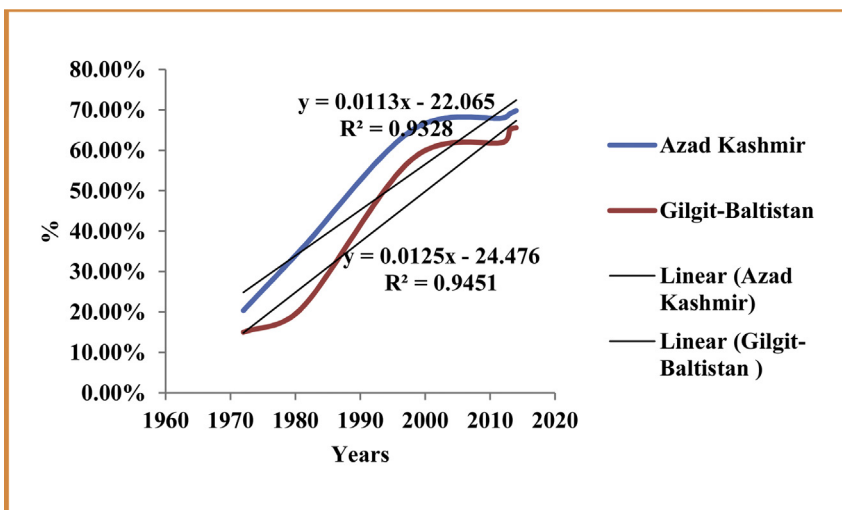


Fig. 5. Literacy rate in Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan.

youth literacy rate of Bhutan is 74%, with males at 80% and females at 68%.

3.3. Adult literacy rate in Pakistan and its comparison with India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan

Adult literacy rates of Pakistan and its comparison with India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan are showed in Fig. 4 below.

Fig. 4 shows that the adult literacy rate for Pakistan is 65%, with males at 69% and females at 40%. Those for India are 63%, with males at 75% and females at 51%. Similarly, Bangladesh's adult literacy rate is 57%, with males at 61% and females at 52%. That of Nepal is 49%, with males at 73% and females at 48%. In Bhutan, it is 53%, with males at 65% and females at 99%.

4. Literacy rate in Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan

The current literacy rate of Azad Kashmir is 78%, compared with 45% in Pakistan. In Azad Kashmir, primary school enrolment is 80% for boys and 74% for girls. Fig. 5 below shows the literacy rate of Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan during the period 1972–2014.

In 1972, literacy rates for Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan were 20.40% and 15%, with an increase to 35.70% and 21% in 1981. Similarly, in 1998, the literacy rates for Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan were 65% and 57.85%. In 2012 and 2013, the rates were 68% and 69% in Azad Kashmir and 62% and 65% in Gilgit-Baltistan. In 2014, the rates were 69.80% in Azad Kashmir and 65.60% in Gilgit-Baltistan.

5. Impact of literacy rate on Pakistan's GDP

Literacy rates have a significant impact on Pakistan's gross domestic product (GDP). Public expenditure on education amounts to 2% of the GDP. The government of Pakistan approved a new national policy in 2009, according to which education expenditure will be increased to 7% of the GDP. During the past 37 years, the highest public expenditure on education was 2.80% of the GDP in 1987–88. Public expenditure on education as a percentage of the GDP actually decreased over 16 years and was maintained in the five years between 1972 and 1973 and 2008 and 2009. Since 1972, 37 years ago, public expenditure on education as a proportion of the GDP has decreased. Pakistan may have reached 4% of its GDP well before 2015. However, it is unlikely to happen as consumption levels remain significantly unpredictable and unstable.

According to Siraj (2010), given this unsatisfactory state of affairs, increasing public expenditure on education to 7% of the GDP would be nothing less than a miracle; but it is not going to be a divine one. Instead, it is going to be a political miracle because it has to be “invented” by those in power. The author suggests that little success can be achieved unless Pakistan adopts an “unconventional” approach to education. That is to say, the education sector should be treated as a special sector by immunizing budgetary

allocations for it from fiscal stresses and political and economic instabilities. Allocations for education should not be affected by squeezed fiscal space or surges in military expenditure or debts. At the same time, there is a need to debate other options as to how Pakistan can “invent” the miracle of raising education expenditure to 7% of its GDP by 2015.

6. Conclusion

Literacy is a major indicator of economic development of countries where illiteracy has slowed down socio-economic growth. Recently, many nations have managed to reach a 100% literacy rate and now successfully compete in the global economy. In Pakistan, the literacy rate is far from satisfactory and compares unfavourably with many world nations. Pakistan's government should make serious efforts to improve the country's literacy rate. Moreover, Pakistan's economy is undergoing many economic and non-economic problems, including large increases in population and poverty, both of which continue to have a significant negative impact on the country's literacy rate.

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