Abstract:

This thesis emphasizes rural regions due to their demographic significance and distinct socio-economic context characterized by a predominant informal workforce. The primary objective of this study is to illuminate the landscape of primary school education attainment and achievement within the context of rural India. Primary education in India is the foundation of a child's educational journey and typically covers students aged 6 to 10 years. It constitutes the initial stage of formal education and is crucial for laying the groundwork for further learning. While there have been positive strides in primary school enrolment and access, challenges and continuing to focus on improving the overall learning experience for students are essential for the growth and development of India's education system. The first three chapters contain an introduction, a survey of the literature and the objectives of the thesis respectively.

The Fourth chapter of the thesis 'Determinants of Overall Enrolment Ratio and Girls' Enrolment Ratio in Primary Education in Rural India: A Region-based Analysis' investigates the factors that can influence overall enrolment and girls' enrolment in primary education in rural India. Based on the 2011 Census, 352 rural people-dominated districts of 16 major states of India are identified. Due to socio-cultural differences among rural Indian people, which can influence enrolment decisions in primary schools, the states are divided into four regions based on their geographical locations. Initially, after constructing the School Grant Coverage Index through Principal Component Analysis and with the help of the General Entropy measure of Inequality, it is observed that the coverage of grants in public primary schools has enhanced and inequality in terms of receiving government grants has decreased over time in rural India. Results based on the static panel regression model depict that mid-day meals and teaching-learning material grants influence overall enrolment only in the Northern and Eastern regions of rural India. Similarly, mid-day meals, school development grants, and fathers' education influence girls' enrolment in Eastern, Western and Northern regions but fail to influence the Southern regions of rural India. The availability of female teachers positively influences girls' enrolment in primary school attainment in Eastern, Western and Southern regions of India. It has also been observed that parents show a higher inclination towards enrolling their daughters in public primary schools and sons in private primary schools located in rural India.

Next, the Fifth chapter of the thesis 'Gender Parity Index in Primary School in Rural India: An Analysis' tries to identify the possible factors that can influence the Gender Parity Index (GPI) during the time of enrolment in primary education in rural India. This study based on DISE statistics has found that school development grant influences GPI in Eastern, Western and Southern zones and teaching learning material grant influence GPI value in Eastern and Western zone and also encourages overall enrolment of children in the Northern zone in rural schools. It is also found that increased female teacher positively influences GPI value in primary school enrolment in the Eastern and Southern zone of India. The reduced pupil-teacher ratio has a positive impact on girls' enrolment in primary schools mainly in the Eastern, Western and Southern zones of India. The availability of mid-day meals in school has positively influenced GPI value in primary school enrolment in the Eastern, Western and Southern zone of India and also have a positive impact in increasing overall enrolment in rural primary schools in the Northern zone of India. Female literacy and overall literacy have a positive influence on GPI in the Eastern zone of India. The provision of specialised toilets for girl children has also motivated parents to enrol their girl child in primary school mainly in the Eastern, Western and Southern zones of India.

Then, in the Sixth chapter of the thesis 'Gender Discrimination in Enrolment in Private Primary Schools in Rural India: A Fairlie's Decomposition Analysis' using the 75th round NSS unit level data on Social Consumption on Education tries to identify the various household and school-related factors which influence the household choice of schooling for their children at the time of enrolment in primary school in rural India. The contribution of each factor explaining the gender gap in school enrolment is quantified with the help of Fairlie's decomposition technique. Social attributes like caste, religion and school-related factors like English medium school, the distance between the household and primary school and household size widen the gender gap and economic attributes like the occupation of the head of the household, the income of the household and ownership of computers can reduce the gender gap in enrolment in private primary schools in rural India.

Next, the Seventh chapter 'Gender Discrimination in Education Expenditure in Public Primary Schools in Rural India among Religious Groups: An Oaxaca-Blinder Decomposition Analysis' will try to capture the disparity in expenditure on primary education based on gender among the religious groups (Hindu, Muslim & Christian) in rural India. The gender gap in education expenditure for a certain demographic group is calculated using the Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition

approach. Further, the study tries to identify the various household-related factors that might influence the decision to spend on a child's education using the 75th-level National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) unit-level dataset of July 2017 to June 2018(one academic year) to obtain data on education expenditure and other household factors which play a manifesting role in the gender gap in expenditure on education. This study suggests that the total differential (log mean boys education expenditure-log mean girls education expenditure) is positive among all religious groups signifying the gender bias in education expenditure. It is found that the magnitude of the 'Unexplained Effect' component is higher compared to the 'Explained Effect' component signifying that the treatment of characteristics by students differs by their sex at primary education attainment. Household size and if household members are employed on a casual basis, then their expenditure on education falls on the other hand, a household with computer availability and household members engaged in regular wage/salary earning plays a positive role in expenditure on primary education in rural India.

Later, in the Eighth chapter 'Learning Outcomes in Primary Education in Rural India: An Inter-state Comparison' the focus of the study shifted from educational attainment to academic achievement gained after completion of a class from primary school. An investigation is done on learning outcomes among children of different states of India at the primary level. Here 24 major states of India are considered. The exercise is done based on different ASER reports from 2010 onwards whose information is rural-specific. The learning outcome index of the students of each state is here calculated both at standard III and standard V levels. It is observed that in most states, the learning achievement of children at the primary level is deteriorating but not rapidly. This analysis also portrays that higher literacy among parents; and availability of some school-related factors like Mid-day Meals, proper drinking water, sanitation and playground facilities can play a positive role in improving the learning achievement of rural Indian children at the primary level.

The last chapter 'Nexus between Children's Malnutrition and their Academic Achievement at the Primary Level in Rural India' tries to identify the influence of children's health, measured by stunting, wasting and underweight and other socioeconomic factors such as household characteristics, parental education, and school-level infrastructure on the academic achievement of rural Indian children after completion of primary education using National Achievement Survey(NAS), National Family Health Survey(NFHS) and DISE Statistics. A significant negative relationship between undernutrition and the academic achievement of children who have passed

standard IV from rural primary schools in India is established. It is observed that parental support, students' understanding of the teaching taught in the class and the presence of qualified teaching staff in schools with adequate instructional materials and more proportion of female teachers in school will lead to better academic achievement of the children in primary education in rural India. Maternal education also plays a positive role in achieving quality education for children. It is also noted that mid-day programs, the pupil-teacher ratio at primary schools and immunization of children under five years fail to influence the learning outcome of children at the primary level in the rural Indian context.