

Demographics of Non-Conventional Learners in Mumbai Metropolitan Region, An Evaluative Analysis

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ABSTRACT

A new type of Education deliver system has emerged in the World which was completely different in character known as Non- Conventional Education of Open and Distance Learning. (ODL) this new system is fast growing in India taking a great space in Indian Education System. The government's target of taking GER to nearly 30% by 2020 is thus a herculean task which is made possible through this ODL mode and to reach the Countries GER of Higher Education at 24.5% by 2020. The present study is carried out with an intention to understand the demographic profile of the students of such Non-Conventional Learners in the metropolitan region of Mumbai city. This study helps the planners and the Educational Policy makers a direction to further plan for different infrastructural and educational needs of such learners in the upright directions for expanding the access of Higher Education through ODL mode in the existing demographic structure of India thereby help in increasing the countries GER as envisaged by Ministry of Human Resource development.

Keywords: Non-Conventional Learning, ODL, Demography, GER

INTRODUCTION

Indian Educational System has undergone tremendous changes over the years. The ancient education which began in India in 3rd Century BC imparted only religious training to select people by the sages. India was known as the scholarly region for ages, which derived many people to come here for seeking education in ancient India. However over the period and due to colonial spread Indian Education was destroyed and replaced with Conventional Learning which was highly need based during the time of Colonial Rule. Over the years such Convention type of Education has always played a role of disseminating education to masses in Higher Education. However the Convention education due to its limitations could not reach to all the masses as deserved. Thus a new type of Education deliver emerged which was completely different and Non-Conventional Mode. Such a system was known as correspondence education, external education, postal education, Distance Education, Open and Distance Learning and now emerging as Online Learning. Such non-conventional type of learning is in great demand across the world due to its flexibility, choice of credits available for study pace of the study etc. ODL or Distance education is the widely accepted and known name for such Non-Conventional type of studies. Distance Education is based on the primary idea of taking the education to the door steps of the learners. In India various governments in the past and the present focused on increasing the country's Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) in Higher education. India being a diverse country with different beliefs, practices, variations in topography, no uniformity in the resource availability etc. makes any policy planning a big challenge in the country. The government's target of taking GER to nearly 30% by 2020 is thus a herculean task. At present the Countries GER is at 24.5%. Since the conventional universities and colleges alone cannot provide the Higher Education to all, UGC is encouraging Open and Distance Education (ODL). There are number of Directorate (DEIs/DDEs), State Open Universities and one National Open university (Indira Gandhi National Open University) in the country serving the educational needs of the masses.

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND CONCEIVED FOR THE STUDY

In last one decade, there has been lot of changes and regulations in offering programmes through Distance mode. The erstwhile Distance Education Council (DEC) which was under IGNOU is taken away and brought under UGC with a different nomenclature i.e. Distance Education Bureau (DEB) by amending the existing act enacted in 1985. DEB is now an apex body to regulate and formulate the policies for all ODL institutes in the country. The present demographic structure of India clearly shows that large amount of population is under youth bracket. This simply means that the target of educating youth is one of the biggest challenges for the government. In view of this, the present study is taken with an intention to know the demographic profile of Open and Distance Learners in Maharashtra state. In the present study Indira Gandhi National Open University, Regional Centre Mumbai which provides education in ODL mode in the districts of Mumbai, Thane, Palgarh, Raigad and Ratnagiri are taken for analysis. Through this study it will be ascertained the detailed demographic profile of the learners which will help to clearly understand the type of people joinin ODL and also help the planners and regulators to focus on the core issues.

TARGETED OBJECTIVES

The present study is carried out with an intention to understand the demographic profile of the students seeking admission through ODL. The prime objectives of the study are:

1. To understand the gender wise, marital and employment status of the students
2. To know gender wise and religion wise trends joining ODL system.
3. To ascertain religion wise students under BPL category opting for ODL.
4. To know the status of different reservation category students in Distance learning.
5. To analyze the student admission trend for different programmes and To know the courses which are popular among the students

WHAT DATA, WHICH METHOD?

IGNOU has two modes of admission, online and offline. The university has encouraged online admission more than 90% of the forms are submitted through online mode. However to facilitate those students who do not have access to internet, IGNOU also accepts the application in offline mode. On completion of entire admission process every cycle, both offline and online data is clubbed and maintained in the central database at every Regional Centres. In the present study the offline and online data was procured from IGNOU Regional Centre Mumbai for four academic cycle i.e July 2017, January 2017, July 2018 and January 2018i.e for two complete years.

Only selective data required for the present study was extracted from the raw data and the same was tabulated and analysed with the help of Microsoft Excel and SPSS. The cross tables of variables were used for more than one variableat the same time. The results are presented in absolute number and percentages.

ANALYSIS OF DEMOGRAPHIC STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS OF NON CONVENTIONAL LEARNERS

In this study the admission figures pertaining to all the programmes offered under Regional Centre Mumbai are taken for analysis. The admission was done by students through the Online Admission System and offline modes. All together 12317 students had taken admission 104 programmes in two years.

The primary analysis of the gender wise marital data reveals that almost equal number of students seeking admission through ODL in Mumbai are male (51.00%) followed by female (49.00%) The gender-wise distribution of the students is presented in **Table-1**. Majority of the students are married (59.1%) in their marital status and (40.9%) students were single. The marital status-wise distribution of students is presented in **Table-2**. It is also interesting to ascertain that ODL gives a better platform for married learners to pursue their higher educational aspirations.

Gender	Total	% Total	Marital	Total	% Total
Male	6277	51	Married	7282	59.1
Female	6040	49	Single	5036	40.9
Total	12317	100	Total	12318	100

Table-1: Gender-wise distribution **Table-2: Material Status-wise distribution of students**

Gender	Marital Status				Total	% Total
	Married	% Married	Single	% Single		
Male	3877	61.8	2400	38.2	6277	51
female	3405	56.4	2635	43.6	6040	49
Total	7282	59.1	5035	40.9	12317	100

Table-3: Gender-wise marital status of students

The gender-wise marital status of students reveals that out of the total of 51% male students, 61.8% were married followed by 38.2% males had single(56.4%) followed by single female students (43.6%). The gender-wise marital status of students is presented in **Table-3**. marital status. As opposed to this, out of the total of 49% female students, majority were married

The Marital Status-wise employment status of students as presented in **Table-4** brings out the fact that out 51.5% students are unemployed followed by 48.5% students who were employed. Out of the married students 66% were unemployed whereas 51.8% were employed. Similarly, Single employed students are (48.2%) and 34% of single students were unemployed

Employment	Marital Status				Total	%
	Married	(%) Married	Single	% Single		
Unemployed	4193	66	2156	34	6349	51.5
Employed	3089	51.8	2880	48.2	5969	48.5
Total	7282	59.1	5036	40.9	12318	100

Table-4: Marital Status-wise Employment Status of students

The gender-wise employment status of students clears that out of the total of 51% male students, 57.6% are employed and as much as 42.4% are unemployed however its interesting to note that out of 49% of female students are un-employed (61.1%) with only 38.9% females as employed. See **Table-5**

Gender	Employment status		Total
	Unemployed	Employed	
Male	2661	3616	6277
(%)	42.4	57.6	51
Female	3688	2352	6040
(%)	61.1	38.9	49
Total	6349	5968	12317
	51.5	48.5	100

Table-5: Gender-wise employment status of students

Religion	Marital Status				Total	% Total
	Married	% Married	Single	% Single		
Hindu	5445	58.1	3922	41.9	9367	76
Muslim	819	67.9	388	32.1	1207	9.8
Christian	431	61.3	272	38.7	703	5.7
Sikh	68	55.3	55	44.7	123	1
Jain	223	56.6	171	43.4	394	3.2
Buddhist	244	57.7	179	42.3	423	3.4
Parsi	16	47.1	18	52.9	34	0.3
Other	36	54.5	30	45.5	66	0.5
Total	7282	59.1	5035	40.9	12317	100

Table-6: Religion-wise Marital status of students

The analysis of the student data on the basis of Religion as a factor was also studied. The analysis revealed some interesting facts. 76% of the students who sought admission in IGNOU are Hindus followed by 9.8% Muslims, 5.7% Christians and 2.07%, and interesting 3.4% of Buddhist also join ODL in Mumbai. It is interesting to note that 49.2% of Hindus are employed and remaining almost equal majority (50.8%) was un-employed. Similarly, only 69.4% Muslims were employed with 30.6% are un-employed. In case of Christians, 46.4% students were employed leaving behind 53.6% as un-employed. In the case of Buddhist almost equal percentage are employed and unemployed i.e. 50.6% and 49.4%. It is pertinent to note that there is no difference between employment status and religion of the students joining Distance education in Mumbai region.

Religion	Marital Status				Total	% Total
	Married	% Married	Single	% Single		
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Other	36	54.5	30	45.5	66	0.5
Total	7282	59.1	5035	40.9	12317	100

Table-7: Religion-wise Marital status of students

The Religion-wise student data was further analysed on the basis of the marital status and it was revealed that 58.1% of the students belonging to Hindu Religion are married and 41.9% were single in status. In case of Muslim students the number of married was much higher (67.9%) and only 32.1% are had single marital status. This brings out a very interesting observation that Muslims even after marriage has a strong urge to continue higher education. As many as 61.3% of Christian students were married leaving behind 38.7% as

unmarried. Here it can be generalized that majority of students belonging to minority community continue the studies even after marriage. Religion-wise marital status of students is presented in **Table-7**

Religion-wise gender-wise distribution of data as presented in **Table-8** revealed that majority of Hindu (46.2%), Muslim (55.9%) and Christian (61.6%) students were males followed by female students worth 53.8%, 44.1% and 38.4% respectively. In the case of Buddhist female percentage is more 50.6% as compared to male which is 49.4%. Jain has the lowest females in Higher education i.e. only 33%.

BELOW POVERTY LINE LEARNERS

Out of the total number of 86 students belonging to Below Poverty Line (BPL) Category who took admission in IGNOU, majority (76.7%) are Hindus followed by Muslims (11.6%) and Christians (4.7%) and Buddhist are 7%. The Religion-wise distribution of BPL students' is presented in **Table-9**

Religion	Gender				Total	%
	Male	% male	Female	% Female		
Hindu	5036	53.8	4330	46.2	9366	76
Muslim	532	44.1	675	55.9	1207	9.8
Christian	270	38.4	433	61.6	703	5.7
Sikh	46	37.4	77	62.6	123	1
Jain	130	33	264	67	394	3.2
Buddhist	214	50.6	209	49.4	423	3.4
Parsi	13	38.2	21	61.8	34	0.3
Other	36	54.5	30	45.5	66	0.5
Total	6277		6039		12316	100

Table-8: Religion-wise Gender-wise distribution of students

Religion	Total Students	% Total
Hindu	66	76.7
Muslim	10	11.6
Christian	4	4.7
Sikh	0	0
Jain	0	0
Buddhist	6	7
total	86	100

Table-9 Religion-wise distribution of students from 'Below Poverty Line' Category

Category	Total Students	% Total
General	10195	82.8
SC	862	7
ST	188	1.5
OBC – Creamy	388	3.1
OBC NC	685	5.6
Grand Total	12318	100

Table-10. Category-wise distribution of students

SOCIAL SRTATA DISTRIBUTION

The Govt of India through special component schemes and plans is encouraging the students belonging to schedule caste and tribes. The parameter was purposely taken to understand the category wise distribution in this study. The category-wise analysis of the student data gets out the fact that as many as 82.8% students who seek admission through belonged to General Category followed by OBC (Non-Creamy) (5.6%), SC

(7%), OBC (Creamy) (3.1%) and ST (1%). The category-wise distribution of students is presented in **table - 10**

CATEGORY WISE DISTRIBUTION OF EX-SERVICEMEN AND WAR WIDOWS

It was found from the analysis of the data that out of the total of 12318 students who took admission only 102 students and 1 student belonged to Ex-Serviceman and War Widow Categories respectively. Out of them, majority belonged to General category followed by OBC creamy and non-creamy with 6.8 and 7.8% respectively. See table-11.

Category	Ex-Serviceman		War Widow	
	Total Students	% Total	Total Students	% Total
General	80	78	1	1
SC	5	4.9	0	
ST	2	1.96	0	
OBC (Creamy)	7	6.86	0	
OBC (Non-Creamy)	8	7.8	0	
Total	102	100	1	
Table-11. Category-wise distribution of students belonging to Ex-Serviceman and War Widow Categories				

DEMAND AND TREAND ANALYSIS OF ACADMIC PROGRAMMES

It is very interesting to note that the lone undergraduate programme (BA) alone has the largest enrollment ratio i.e. 16.6%. MA Psychology (MAPC) has 11.4% of enrollment ratio. It is very astonishing to note and observe that most of the learners join MAPC and has highest enrollment among Master degree programme. Among the other Master degrees MA Economics, MA-Social Work, MA English and MA English has 3.9%, 3.6% and 3.4% of share. It is very surprising to observe that MAPC when compared to other Master's Degree has highest enrollment ratio. An exclusive study is worth to be taken to ascertain why MAPC alone attracts so many learners and no other master degrees in comparison. This study is the future area of research in continuation to this paper. Though there are 104 programmes are activated under Regional Centre Mumbai, the major enrollment is attracted by only 15 programmes amounting to 65.4%. Analysis also depicts that BPP programme which does not require any formal qualification and help the aspirants to join bachelor's degree programme except BSc and BCA attracts nearly 5.5 % of the total enrollment. This is a clear indication that many people who do not have formal qualification of 10+2 prefer to join higher education.

CONCLUSIONS

Indian population is a huge youth dominant population and also has a potential serve the entire ageing world due to the demographic advantage it has. However the target of educating this youth population is to be taken as priority by the governments. As less than 18 % of the youth population is able to reach the Higher education, it is for the planners and the policy makers to supplement the governments with effective education providing institutions especially Open and Distance learning and online platforms for Higher Learning. In the background of very swiftly growing number of learners opting to study through distance mode, it is very essential to know the different programmes in demand, understand the relations between different demographic aspects of the learners. This study will show the planners a direction to further plan for different infrastructural and educational needs of such learners in the upright directions. This study will strongly help the planners in expanding the access of Higher Education through ODL mode in the existing demographic structure of India thereby help in increasing the countries GER as envisaged by Ministry of Human Resource development

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