



Understanding the status of literacy and education in Chamba district of Himachal Pradesh

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Abstract

Literacy and level of education in any society are considered as one of the important indicators of development. High level of literacy ensures better understanding of socio-cultural, political and economic environment by the population, thus, ensuring appropriate response to the same. Himachal Pradesh, a hilly state of north India, ranks 11th in the country with total literacy rate of 82.80 per cent. However, at district level variations can be seen not only in terms of total literacy rates but also in terms of sex-wise literacy and their differential. Within the progressive state of Himachal Pradesh, Chamba district is placed at the bottom in literacy. This paper attempts to understand the status of Chamba district with respect to literacy rates and education facilities as per 2011 census. The present paper completely based on secondary data obtained from General Population Tables of various census years and Statistical Abstract of Himachal Pradesh, 2015-16. The study revealed that Chamba district had the lowest total literacy rate, male literacy rate and female literacy rate in the entire state. Chamba district can be designated as a “Less Performing District within a Performing State” with respect to literacy and education.

Keywords: literacy, education, Chamba, scheduled tribe population

Introduction

Development is a very broad concept. There are many indicators of development among which literacy and education very important. Literacy and level of education in any society are considered as one of the important indicators of development. As the society is transformed from traditional to modern, backward to technically advanced, rural to urban and becomes industrialized and commercial in nature, the literacy rates attain a very high level. High level of literacy ensures better understanding of socio-cultural, political and economic environment by the population, thus, ensuring appropriate response to the same. Although literacy and education are related concepts, yet their meanings are very different. Literacy is related to learning and skills acquirement, education, on the other hand, deals with the application of this learning and skills for the benefit of self, in particular and the society and country, in general.

According to 2011 Census, the total literacy rate in India is 74.04 per cent while wide disparities occur at state level. Apart from inter-state differences, intra-state disparities also exist with respect to literacy. Himachal Pradesh, a hilly state of north India, ranks 11th in the country with total literacy rate of 82.80 per cent. However, at district level variations can be seen not only in terms of total literacy rates but also in terms of sex-wise literacy and their differential. Within the progressive state of Himachal Pradesh, Chamba district is placed at the bottom in literacy. The Saakshar Bharat Mission (SBM), 2012, was launched in Chamba district in 2009. This district was the only district of the hill state among the 365 districts of the country identified to be covered under the centre government's programme of Saakshar Bharat Mission (SBM) to increase the literacy rate in the concerned district of

the country (The Times of India, 2010). This study focuses on the literacy attainment of Chamba district in 2011 with respect to the other districts of the state.

Objectives of the study

1. To study the literacy rates in Himachal Pradesh as per 2011 census.
2. To analyze the district-wise literacy rates in Himachal Pradesh during 1991-2011.
3. To understand the status of Chamba district with respect to literacy rates and education facilities as per 2011 census.
4. To compare the literacy attainment in Chamba district with other tribal districts of the state.

Database and Methodology

The study is completely based on secondary data obtained from General Population Tables, Census 1991, 2001 and 2011. The data pertaining to district-wise availability of educational institutions and literacy has been taken from Statistical abstract of Himachal Pradesh, 2015-16.

In order to calculate the number of educational institutions per lakh of population, following formula has been applied:

Number of Educational Institutions lakh of population=

$$\frac{\text{Number of Educational Institutions}}{\text{Total Population}} \times 1,00,000 \text{ per lakh of population}$$

Study Area

Himachal Pradesh, earlier a Union Territory, was provided the statehood on January 25, 1971. Situated in western Himalayas, the state extend from 30°22'40" North to 33°12'40" North

latitudes and 75°45'55" East to 79°04'20" longitudes. It is bordered by Jammu and Kashmir to the north, Punjab to the west, Haryana to the south-west, Uttar Pradesh to the south-east and shares international boundary with China to the east. The state covers an area of 55,673 square Km which is divided into 12 districts, 3 division, 62 subdivisions, 97 tehsils

and 49 sub-tehsils. As per 2011 Census, the total population of Himachal Pradesh is 68,64,602 having an average density of 123 persons per square kilometre. The state has very high total literacy rate of 82.80 per cent. The male and female literacy rates are 89.53 per cent and 75.93 per cent, respectively.

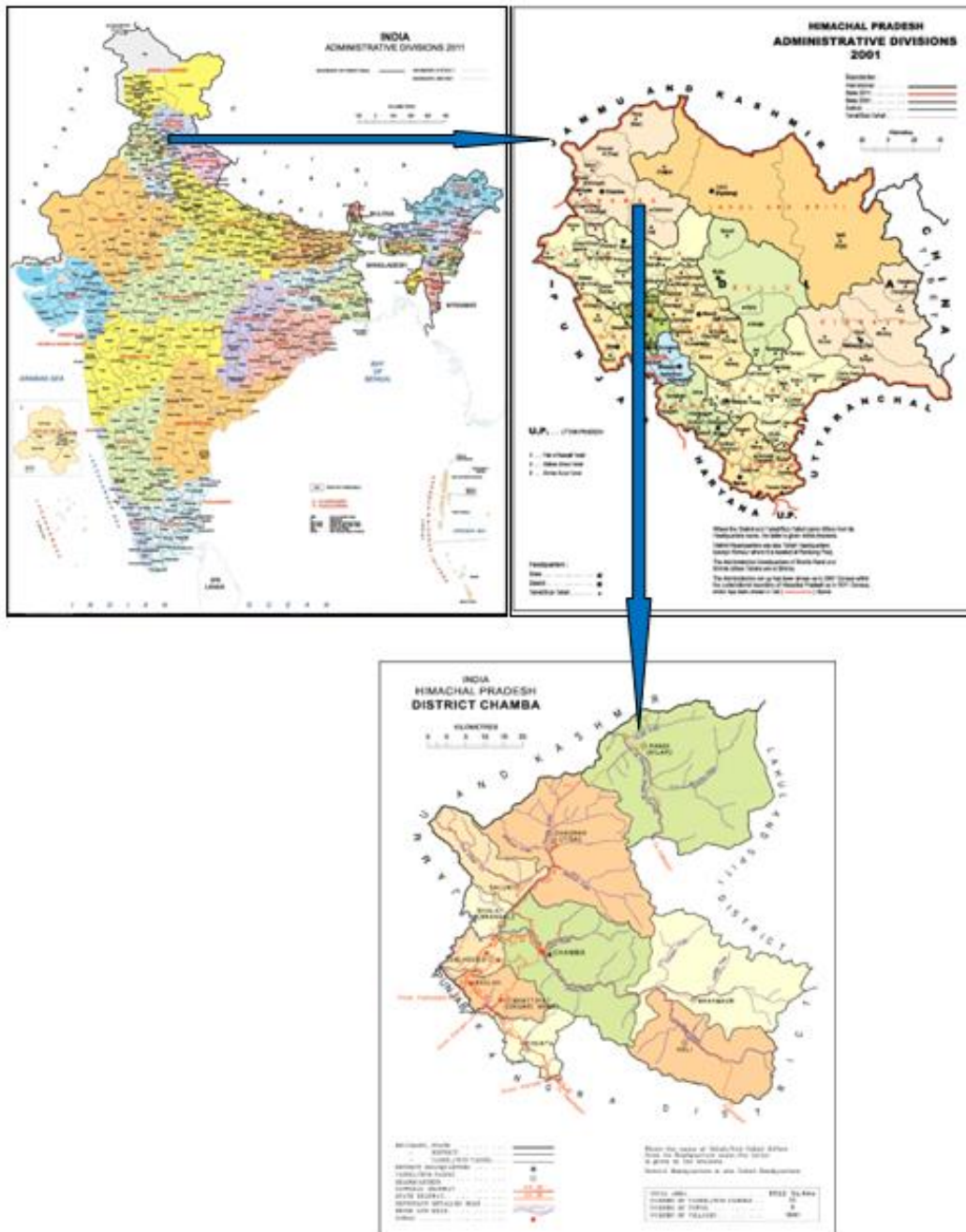


Fig 1

Discussion

According to 2011 Census, Himachal Pradesh ranks 11th in terms of total literacy rates in the country while its rank is 5th if only states are considered. The state has total literacy rate of

82.80 per cent which is highest as compared to other northern states of the country. Hence, it can be said that, with respect to literacy rates, Himachal Pradesh is the best performing North Indian state (Table 1).

Table 1: India State-wise Total Literacy Rates, 2011

State/Union Territory	Total Literacy Rate (%)	Rank
India	74.04	
Kerala	94.00	1
Lakshadweep	91.85	2
Mizoram	91.33	3
Goa	88.70	4
Tripura	87.22	5
Daman and Diu	87.10	6
Andaman and Nicobar Islands	86.63	7
Delhi	86.21	8
Chandigarh	86.05	9
Puducherry	85.85	10
Himachal Pradesh	82.80	11
Maharashtra	82.34	12
Sikkim	81.42	13
Tamil Nadu	80.09	14
Nagaland	79.55	15
Uttarakhand	78.82	16
Gujarat	78.03	17
Manipur	76.94	18
West Bengal	76.26	19
Dadra and Nagar Haveli	76.24	20
Punjab	75.84	21
Haryana	75.55	22
Karnataka	75.36	23
Meghalaya	74.43	24
Orissa	72.87	25
Assam	72.19	26
Chhattisgarh	70.28	27
Madhya Pradesh	69.32	28
Uttar Pradesh	67.68	29
Jammu & Kashmir	67.16	30
Andhra Pradesh	67.02	31
Jharkhand	66.41	32
Rajasthan	66.11	33
Arunachal Pradesh	65.38	34
Bihar	61.80	35

Source: General Population Tables, Census of India 2011.

The Position of Chamba district in terms of Literacy and Education with respect to other districts of Himachal Pradesh

At the time of independence, Himachal Pradesh had total literacy rate of only 7.98 per cent and was among the least literate states of India. After 70 years of independence, the literacy rate in the state has greatly improved to reach 82.80 per cent as per 2011 census. The state stands 11th in the country with respect to literacy rates if all the administrative units are taken while among the Indian states, it ranks at 5th position. However, within Himachal, variations in literacy rates exist at the district level. Among the 12 districts of the state, Chamba lies at the bottom position with almost 30 per cent of the total population of the district being illiterate. Further, the literacy gap between males and females is around 16% in the district. Therefore, out of 365 districts of India, Chamba is the only hill district in the country to be included in the Sakshar Bharat Abhiyan, with special focus on female literacy (www.indiatimes.com).

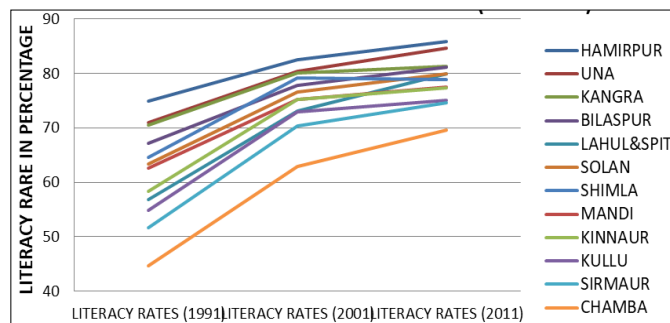
Table 2: Himachal Pradesh: District-wise Total Literacy Rates, 1991-2011

State/Districts	Percentage of Literate Population 1991	Percentage of Literate Population 2001	Percentage of Literate Population 2011	Rank in 2011
Himachal Pradesh	63.86	76.50	82.80	-
Hamirpur	74.88	82.50	88.15	1
Una	70.91	80.40	86.53	2
Kangra	70.57	80.10	85.67	3
Bilaspur	67.17	77.80	84.59	4
Lahul&Spiti	56.82	73.10	76.81	5
Solan	63.30	76.60	83.68	6
Shimla	64.61	79.10	83.64	7
Mandi	62.74	75.20	81.53	8
Kinnaur	58.36	75.20	80.00	9
Kullu	54.82	72.90	79.40	10
Sirmaur	51.62	70.40	78.80	11
Chamba	44.70	62.90	69.55	12

Source: General Population Tables, Census of India 1991, 2001, 2011.

The total literacy rates in Himachal Pradesh increased from 63.86 per cent in 1991 to 82.80 per cent in 2011, thereby, showing an increase of 18.94 per cent points. Similarly, all the districts of the state registered a substantial increase in the percentage of literate population during the same period where maximum increase was displayed by the districts of Sirmaur (27.18 per cent points), Chamba (24.85 per cent points) and Kullu (24.58 per cent points). On the other hand, the minimum increase was recorded by Hamirpur (13.27 per cent points), Kangra (15.10 per cent points) and Una (15.62 per cent points) districts mainly due to the fact that literacy rates were already quite high in them in 1991 (Table 2).

During 1991-2011, substantial change has been witnessed in the total literacy rates of all the districts of Himachal Pradesh, including Chamba. Although, the total literacy rate in Chamba district increased from 44.70 per cent to 69.55 per cent in last two decades, yet it had remained at lowest position with regards to all the other districts of the state (Fig. 2).



Source: Computed by researcher from data taken from the Census of India

Fig 2: District Wise Change in Literacy Rate (1991-2011)

As per 2011 census, the male literacy rate in Himachal Pradesh is 89.53 per cent while the female literacy rate is 75.93 per cent leading to a male-female literacy differential of

13.60 per cent. The highest male literacy is recorded by the districts of Hamirpur (94.36 per cent), Una (91.89 per cent) and Kangra (91.49 per cent) whereas the highest female literacy is also recorded by the same states with percentage of female literate population being 82.62, 81.11 and 80.02 in Hamirpur, Una and Kangra, respectively. The lowest male literacy rate, on the other hand, is recorded by the districts of Chamba (82.59 per cent), Sirmaur (85.61 per cent) and Lahul & Spiti (85.69 per cent) while the lowest percentage of female literacy is recorded by Chamba (61.67 per cent), Lahul & Spiti (66.84 per cent) and Kullu (70.91 per cent) districts (Table 3).

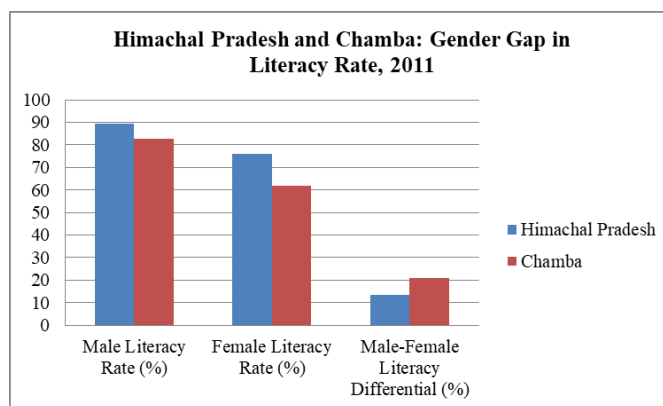
Table 3: Himachal Pradesh: Male and Female Literacy Rates, 2011

State/Districts	Male Literacy Rate (%)	Female Literacy Rate (%)	Male-Female Literacy Differential (%)
Himachal Pradesh	89.53	75.93	13.60
Hamirpur	94.36	82.62	11.74
Una	91.89	81.11	10.78
Kangra	91.49	80.02	11.47
Bilaspur	91.16	77.97	13.19
Lahul&Spiti	85.69	66.84	18.85
Solan	89.56	76.97	12.59
Shimla	89.59	77.13	12.46
Mandi	89.56	73.66	15.90
Kinnaur	87.27	70.96	16.31
Kullu	87.39	70.91	16.48
Sirmaur	85.61	71.36	14.25
Chamba	82.59	61.67	20.92

Source: General Population Tables, Census of India, 2011.

If male and female literacy differential is considered, then maximum difference is displayed by the districts of Chamba (20.92 per cent) followed by Lahul & Spiti (18.85 per cent) and Kullu (16.48 per cent). In fact, there is a difference of

7.32 per cent points in the male-female literacy differential between Chamba and Himachal Pradesh as a whole (Table 3, Fig. 3).



Source: Table 3

Fig. 3: Himachal Pradesh and Chamba: Gender Gap in Literacy Rate, 2011

Availability of Educational Facilities in Chamba district

Availability of adequate educational infrastructure is a pre-requisite for ensuring high literacy rates. Literacy is considered to be both, a cause and result of development. On one hand, literacy is one of the most significant indicator of the development process in a society, on the other hand, the structural changes which are undergoing in a society eventually lead to attainment of higher literacy level (Mohapatra, 1993). The total number of educational institutions of various types in Himachal Pradesh was 15483 in 2015-16. These included primary schools (10710), middle schools (2130), high/senior secondary schools (2487) and degree colleges (156). However, wide variations were seen when the district-wise educational facilities were analyzed.

Table 4: Himachal Pradesh: District-wise Number of Educational Institutions, 2015-16

State/District	Primary Schools	Middle Schools	High/Sr. Secondary Schools	Degree Colleges		
				Government	Private	Total
Himachal Pradesh	10710	2130	2487	89	67	156
Hamirpur	489	120	156	5	11	16
Una	499	95	167	5	9	14
Kangra	1707	324	491	20	17	37
Bilaspur	591	108	144	4	1	5
Lahul&Spiti	198	35	35	1	0	1
Solan	766	148	162	7	8	15
Shimla	1605	333	368	13	7	20
Mandi	1733	349	373	14	6	20
Kinnaur	183	36	50	1	0	1
Kullu	754	129	125	5	1	6
Sirmaur	1022	194	213	8	4	12
Chamba	1163	259	203	6	3	9

Source: Statistical Abstract of Himachal Pradesh, 2015-16.

It was found that Chamba district had four highest number of primary schools (1163) and middle schools (259), fifth highest number of high/senior secondary schools (203) in the state. Contrastingly, with regard to degree colleges, Chamba district (9) was far behind in the entire state (Table 4). However, the presence of large number of schools of various

levels for ensuring higher literacy rates has not been able to meet the basic requirement as the literacy rates in Chamba district were lowest among all the districts of the state. Low literacy in Chamba district can be attributed to distant location of schools, remoteness of certain areas, poverty and nomadism. The district is home to two nomadic tribes, namely

Gaddis and Gujjars who practice transhumance and are constantly on the move from one place to another because of which their children are deprived from the opportunity of going to schools. Moreover, due to prevalent orthodoxy, education of girls is also not looked after (Bharti, 2001). For further analysis, number of educational institutions per

lakh of population had been calculated and presented in Table 5. The total number of educational institutions in Himachal Pradesh in 2015-16 was 15483 and the number of educational institutions per lakh of population was found to be 226. However, wide disparities were found at district level.

Table 5: Himachal Pradesh: District-wise Number of Educational Institutions per Lakh of Population, 2015-16

State/District	Total Number of Educational Institutions	Total Population	No. of Educational Institutions per lakh of population
Himachal Pradesh	15483	6864602	226
Hamirpur	781	454768	172
Una	775	521173	149
Kangra	2559	1510075	169
Bilaspur	848	381956	222
Lahul&Spiti	269	31564	852
Solan	1091	580320	188
Shimla	2326	814010	286
Mandi	2475	999777	248
Kinnaur	270	84121	321
Kullu	1014	437903	232
Sirmaur	1441	529855	272
Chamba	1634	519080	315

Source: Statistical Abstract of Himachal Pradesh, 2015-16.

The highest number of educational institutions per lakh of population was recorded by the districts of Lahul & Spiti (852), Kinnaur (321) and Chamba (315) while the lowest value was displayed by Una (149), Kangra (169) and Hamirpur (172). The total population in Lahul & Spiti and Kinnaur districts was very less as compared to the total number of educational institutions, thereby, leading to very high value of educational institutions per lakh of population. Contrastingly, the total population in Chamba district was quite high along with the fact that this district was having fourth highest number of educational institutions in the state. In fact, the number of educational institutions per lakh of population in Chamba (315) was 89 points more than the state

average value (Table 5).

The Position of Chamba district with respect to other Tribal districts of Himachal Pradesh

Himachal Pradesh had 5.71 per cent of total scheduled tribes population of India. Majority of these tribes are nomadic herders and undertake seasonal migrations up and down the mountains during summers and winters, respectively. Although, all the districts of the state had tribal population as per 2011 census, yet the districts of Lahul & Spiti (81.44 per cent), Kinnaur (57.95 per cent) and Chamba (26.10 per cent) recorded the highest number of scheduled tribes population.

Table 6: Himachal Pradesh: District-wise Scheduled Tribe Population, 2011

State/District	Total Population	Total Scheduled Tribe Population	Scheduled Tribes as percentage to Total Population
Himachal Pradesh	6864602	392126	5.71
Hamirpur	454768	3044	0.67
Una	521173	8601	1.65
Kangra	1510075	84564	5.60
Bilaspur	381956	10693	2.80
Lahul&Spiti	31564	25707	81.44
Solan	580320	25645	4.42
Shimla	814010	8755	1.08
Mandi	999777	12787	1.28
Kinnaur	84121	48746	57.95
Kullu	437903	16822	3.84
Sirmaur	529855	11262	2.13
Chamba	519080	135500	26.10

Source: Statistical Abstract of Himachal Pradesh, 2015-16.

Seasonal migration adversely affects the literacy and education attainment as there is non-regularity in attending schools by the children of nomadic herders. Interestingly, when compared with other tribal districts of Himachal

Pradesh, Chamba district was found to have lowest literacy rates among the three districts having maximum percentage of tribal population in them.

Table 7: Himachal Pradesh: Literacy Rates of Districts having Maximum Scheduled Tribe Population, 2011

Districts	Total Literacy Rate (%)	Male Literacy Rate (%)	Female Literacy Rate (%)	Male-Female Literacy Differential (%)
Lahul&Spiti	76.81	85.69	66.84	18.85
Kinnaur	80.00	87.27	70.96	16.31
Chamba	69.55	82.59	61.67	20.92

Source: Statistical Abstract of Himachal Pradesh, 2015-16.

Lahul & Spiti, having maximum percentage of scheduled tribe population, was 7.26 per cent points, 3.10 per cent points and 5.17 per cent points ahead of Chamba district in terms of total literacy rate, male literacy rate and female literacy rate, respectively. Similarly, Kinnaur district, which had second highest percentage of scheduled tribe population, was ahead of Chamba district in terms of total literacy rate, male literacy rate and female literacy rate by 10.45 per cent points, 4.68 per cent points and 9.29 per cent points, respectively. Even the male-female literacy differential was more in Chamba district than the other two. Out of the three most tribal districts, Kinnaur was best placed in terms of literacy and education.

Conclusion

Himachal Pradesh is the most literate northern state in India ranking 11th among all the states and union territories and 5th if only states are considered. Within the state, huge disparities exist at district level in terms of literacy. The study revealed that Chamba district had the lowest total literacy rate, male literacy rate and female literacy rate in the entire state. When the number of various educational institutions was considered with the view to find the reason for the low literacy rates, it was found that the district had fourth highest number of primary and middle schools and fifth highest number of high/senior secondary schools in the entire state. However, the district was lagging behind with respect to degree colleges. Further, the investigation into the availability of educational institutions per lakh of population revealed that Chamba district (315) had third highest number of educational institutions per lakh of population, the value of which was even higher than the state average.

The most common reason attributed to the low levels of literacy in the district is attributed to large size of scheduled tribe population, mainly comprising of nomadic herders who follow seasonal migration and hence, remain devoid of education. The comparison of Chamba district with Lahul & Spiti and Kinnaur districts, which too have very high percentage of scheduled tribe population in them revealed that despite having relatively far less percentage of scheduled tribe population than the other two districts, Chamba district had much lower literacy rates and higher male-female literacy differential. Hence, Chamba district can be designated as a "Less Performing District within a Performing State" with respect to literacy and education.

The real impact of Sakshar Bharat Mission-2012, which was launched in 2009 in the district, will be visible in 2021 census. However, in order to achieve the desired objective, the state government has to work very closely and in coordination with the NGOs and other bodies who need to reach out to entire population having even the remotest location. Additionally, the government needs to ensure easy connectivity through transport and communication in all the parts of the district

which would greatly help in improving the literacy rates and education status in the district.

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