



TRENDS IN WOMEN'S ENROLMENT AND GENDER GAP IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A STUDY OF MIZORAM UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

Gender disparity has historically been a major hurdle in higher education enrolment. However, prioritizing women's enrolment has become an important indicator of development, leading to significant growth in female participation. Despite this progress, gender gap still exists in the choice of courses of study, with certain fields remaining male-dominated. In Mizoram, higher education has seen a noticeable surge in women's enrolment, even though the state had a relatively late start in emphasizing women's education. The efforts to bridge the gender gap in higher education are crucial for the continued development and progress of Mizoram, ensuring that both men and women have equal opportunities to learn and succeed. This study aims to investigate the enrolment of women in higher education institutions in Mizoram at undergraduate, postgraduate, and PhD levels. It also analyses the trends in course selection among women at these educational stages, while addressing the persistent gender gap in both enrolment and course preferences.

KEYWORDS: Higher Education, Gender Gap, Enrolment, Women.

INTRODUCTION

Higher education refers to post-secondary education which accommodates learners in their late adolescence, early adulthood and beyond. Often referred to as tertiary education, higher education offers different educational programmes which leads to the award of a degree, diploma or certificate in colleges, universities, professional institutions, etc. managed by both private and government bodies. Enrolment in higher education signifies a country's societal progress and development. The major hurdle evident from past studies has always been gender disparity. However, women enrolment in educational institutions has now been prioritised as an important indicator of development and hence has seen significant growth. Regardless of this growth, gender gap is still prevalent in the selection of course of studies.

Mizoram has also seen a surge in the enrolment of women in higher education institutions in contrast to its late start on women's education.

Mizoram University

Mizoram University was created by an Act of Parliament (No. 8 of 2000) and it became functional from 2nd July, 2001. Located in Aizawl, the capital city of Mizoram, the university spreads over 9781988 acres in the outskirts of the city. Mizoram University has made considerable progress in terms of infrastructure, academic programmes, manpower, and support services during the last 22 years of its existence (Mizoram University Act, 2000).

Mizoram University has 39 functioning academic departments offering undergraduate, postgraduate, and research programmes under 9 schools of studies. The university has 39 affiliated colleges and one constituent college. In line with the National Education Policy, 2020, it is progressing towards offering programmes that envisage broad-based, multi-

disciplinary, and holistic education at undergraduate and postgraduate levels (National Education Policy, 2020).

There are 9 functioning schools of studies currently in Mizoram University. They are:

1. School of Economics, Management & Information Sciences (SEMIS)
2. School of Social Sciences (SSS)
3. School of Education & Humanities (SEH)
4. School of Earth Sciences & Natural Resources Management (SES & NRM)
5. School of Physical Sciences (SPS)
6. School of Life Sciences (SLS)
7. School of Engineering & Technology (SET)
8. School of Fine Arts, Architecture & Fashion Technology (SFAA & AT)
9. School of Medical & Paramedical Sciences (SMP)

Rationale of the Study

Women's empowerment has emerged as a significant societal concern in recent times. Education plays a crucial role in empowering women by providing them with opportunities to participate equally in socio-cultural, political, and economic spheres. Consequently, conducting a study on gender disparities in higher education has become imperative in the present-day context. Analysing women's enrolment in higher education will indicate the growth of women and also the outcome of the recent trends in women empowerment.

In contrast to its late start on women education, Mizoram has also seen a surge in the enrolment of women in higher education institutions in contrast to its late start on women education. This study aims to explore gender disparity in higher education in Mizoram and identify the gender trend prevalent in the selection of course of studies. The findings of this study will reveal the status of women enrolment and the



gender gap in the selection of course of studies at various levels of higher education.

Statement of the Problem

The problem is stated as 'Trends in Women's Enrolment and Gender Gap in Higher Education: A Study of Mizoram University'.

Research Questions

1. What is the status of women in higher education in Mizoram?
2. Does the enrolment of men and women differ in university departments?
3. Does gender gap exist in enrolment at the level of higher education?

Objectives of the Study

1. To find out gender-wise enrolment in higher education institutions under Mizoram University.
2. To find out the gender gap in enrolment at various levels of higher education in Mizoram.
3. To analyse the enrolment of women in Mizoram University departments.
4. To analyse the enrolment of women in PhD and MPhil programmes under Mizoram University.

Operational Definitions of Terms Used

Higher Education: The level of education after secondary education that includes undergraduate, post graduate, MPhil and PhD courses.

Enrolment: Registering for a course of study.

Gender Gap: The difference in the number of male and female enrolments.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Razack and CV (2021) conducted a district-wise analysis of Karnataka to find out the gender gap in higher education enrolment. The study used information from AISHE and Census Report of 2011 to calculate the total, male and female GER and also estimated the gender gap for 30 districts of Karnataka for the years 2011-12 and 2017-18. The study found that between 2011 and 2017 the gender inequalities in higher education was reversed. In 2011, out of 30 districts of Karnataka 24 districts reported higher male enrolment in higher education. Thereafter the increased enrolment of female in higher levels of education has reversed the trend. Except 9 districts in 24 which witnessed higher male enrolment in 2011 reported higher female enrolment in 2018. Thus, the gender gap has mainly been disadvantageous to women till 2011 has tilted towards male.

Kotian and Nair (2023) conducted an exploratory study to find out gender disparity in higher education system in India. The study majorly focused on the gender disparity in the field of higher education in Indian context. The reality of existence of gender inequality in higher education in India was found to be complex and exists in all spheres of life. In this study, an attempt was made to explore the factors that lead to this phenomenon. The data was gathered through an electronic

search, and since the literature on this topic was focused on the Indian context, all types of research studies were included. The electronic search encompassed SCOPUS, PsycINFO, Google Scholar, and MEDLINE. The study highlighted the critical role of socio-cultural practices in hindering female representation in the Indian higher education system. By promoting female education, Indian women can become self-reliant, adequately socialized, and empowered to contribute significantly to the nation's development. The study concluded that raising societal awareness about the importance of women's education is crucial for creating a better world for women to live and thrive.

Methodology

The investigator employed descriptive research design for the study. To conduct an analysis of enrolment trends and gender gap in higher education in Mizoram, the study analysed pre-existing data obtained from Mizoram University Annual Reports (2016-2021). Additional information was collected from official sources and publications. The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, and gender gap calculation.

Gender gap was calculated by subtracting female enrolment percentage from male enrolment percentage for each academic year.

$$\text{Gender Gap (\%)} = \text{Male Percentage} - \text{Female Percentage}$$

By employing this approach, the study provided an analysis of enrolment of women in higher education in Mizoram.

Population of the Study

The population of the study consisted of all students enrolled in undergraduate, post-graduate, MPhil and PhD programmes in Mizoram University during five academic years, i.e., 2016-2017 to 2020-2021.

Sample of the Study

No sampling method was employed since the study was based on secondary data available in the Mizoram University Annual Reports.

Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to enrolment data available only on the Mizoram University Annual Reports published by the university and official website records of the university. The investigator observed unrevised data both from the published reports and the university website. In certain academic years, identical enrolment figures were identified across consecutive years. These figures were retained without modification in order to preserve authenticity and integrity of the institutional data. However, the data obtained from the Annual Reports were cross-checked with data from the university website to ensure consistency. Therefore, the findings and interpretations are limited to the data available during the time of study. The data used may have variations or updates, and secondary data sources may have limitations in accuracy and availability.

The study also focused only on gender-wise enrolment trends and course preferences.



ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

Objective 1: To find out gender-wise enrolment in higher education institutions under Mizoram University.

Table 1.1: Gender-wise Enrolment in Undergraduate Courses (2016-2021)

Year	Total	M	F	% of Female	Gender Gap
2016-2017	17851	9206	8645	48.43	3.14
2017-2018	17707	9384	8323	47	6
2018-2019	17707	9384	8323	47	6
2019-2020	15832	9591	6241	39.42	21.16
2020-2021	19347	9873	9474	48.97	2.06

Source: Mizoram University Annual Report (2016-2021)

The data from Table 1.1 revealed that gender gap in 2019-2020 is the highest while it is the lowest in 2020-2021, both in favour of males.

Table 1.2: Gender-wise Enrolment in Postgraduate Courses (2016-2021)

Year	Total	M	F	% of Female	Gender Gap
2016-2017	2195	1187	1008	45.92	8.16
2017-2018	2195	1187	1008	45.92	8.16
2018-2019	2410	1305	1105	45.85	8.3
2019-2020	2458	1286	1172	47.68	4.64
2020-2021	2807	1375	1432	51.01	2.02

Source: Mizoram University Annual Report (2016-2021)

Table 1.2 revealed that gender gap in Post Graduate courses is the highest in 2016-2018 in favour of males while it is the lowest in 2020-2021, in favour of females.

Table 1.3: Gender-wise Enrolment in PhD and MPhil Courses (2016-2021)

Year	Total	M	F	% of Female	Gender Gap
2016-2017	761	389	372	48.88	2.24
2017-2018	761	389	372	48.88	2.24
2018-2019	715	361	354	49.51	0.98
2019-2020	598	309	289	48.33	3.34
2020-2021	931	489	442	47.48	5.04

Source: Mizoram University Annual Report (2016-2021)

The analysis of gender-wise enrolment in PhD and MPhil courses revealed that gender gap is the highest in 2020-2021 while the lowest is in 2018-2019, all in favour of males.

Objective 2: To find out the gender gap in enrolment at various levels of higher education in Mizoram.

Table 2: Gender-wise Enrolment in Mizoram University (2016-2021)

Year	Grand Total	UG			PG			PhD/MPhil			% of Female	Gender Gap
		Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F		
2016-2017	20807	17851	9206	8645	2195	1187	1008	761	389	372	48.18	3.64
2017-2018	20663	17707	9384	8323	2195	1187	1008	761	389	372	46.96	6.08
2018-2019	20832	17707	9384	8323	2410	1305	1105	715	361	354	46.96	6.08
2019-2020	18888	15832	9591	6241	2458	1286	1172	598	309	289	40.78	18.44
2020-2021	23085	19347	9873	9474	2807	1375	1432	931	489	442	49.16	1.68

From the analysis of Table 2, the investigator found that gender gap in Mizoram University was the highest in 2019-2020 with 18.44% and it was the lowest in 2020-2021 with 1.68%. All the five academic years in study were found to be in favour of males in terms of enrolment into higher education.

FINDINGS

1. In undergraduate courses, gender gap was found to be the highest in 2019-2020 while it is the lowest in 2020-2021. The five academic years in study revealed that gender gap was in favour of males.
2. In postgraduate courses, gender gap was found to be in favour of females only in 2020-2021.

3. In MPhil and PhD courses, gender gap was found to be in favour of males during all the five academic years in study.
4. Gender gap was found to be the highest in the year 2019-2020 in the overall analysis of data and the lowest was in the year 2020-2021, all in favour of males.
5. The findings revealed that the overall enrolment of students in higher education was all in favour of males during 2016-2021.



Objective 3: To analyse the enrolment of women in Mizoram University departments.

Table 3: Gender-wise Enrolment in Mizoram University Departments (2016-2021)

School of Study	2016-2017				2017-2018				2018-2019				2019-2020				2020-2021			
	TT	M	F	GG	TT	M	F	GG	TT	M	F	GG	TT	M	F	GG	TT	M	F	GG
SEMIS	418	242	176 (42.1%)	15.8	418	242	176 (42.1%)	15.8	438	235	203 (46.38%)	7.24	420	217	203 (48.33%)	3.34	437	215	222 (50.8%)	1.6
SSS	413	188	225 (54.48%)	8.96	413	188	225 (54.48%)	8.96	434	208	226 (52.07%)	4.14	464	201	263 (56.68%)	13.36	480	188	292 (60.83%)	21.66
SEH	348	125	223 (64.08%)	28.16	348	125	223 (64.08%)	28.16	431	166	265 (61.49%)	22.98	392	147	245 (62.5%)	25	455	153	302 (66.38%)	32.76
SES & NRM	273	121	152 (55.68%)	11.36	273	121	152 (55.68%)	11.36	281	122	159 (56.58%)	13.16	334	160	174 (52.1%)	4.2	343	154	189 (55.1%)	10.2
SPS	191	126	65 (34.03%)	31.94	191	126	65 (34.03%)	31.94	195	136	59 (30.26%)	39.48	215	142	73 (33.95%)	32.1	232	141	91 (39.22%)	21.56
SLS	168	68	100 (59.52%)	19.04	168	68	100 (59.52%)	19.04	178	81	97 (54.5%)	9	183	76	107 (58.47%)	16.94	209	83	126 (60.29%)	20.58
SET	364	308	56 (15.38%)	69.24	364	308	56 (15.38%)	69.24	397	325	72 (18.14%)	63.72	381	303	78 (20.47%)	59.06	468	352	116 (24.79%)	50.42
SFAA&FT	20	9	11 (55%)	10	20	9	11 (55%)	10	52	32	20 (38.46%)	23.08	69	40	29 (42.03%)	15.94	114	71	43 (37.72%)	24.56

Analysis of Table 3 reveals recurrent gender gap in favour of females in three schools of studies, i.e., SSS, SEH and SLS, and recurrent gender gap in favour of males in three schools of studies, i.e., SEMIS, SPS, and SET. The table also revealed the gender gap in SES & NRM was in favour of females in all the studied years except for 2019-2020. Further, the gender gap in SFAA & FT was found to be in favour of females between 2016-2018 but found a decline and in favour of males in the later years, i.e., 2019-2021.

Findings

1. In Mizoram University departments, gender gap was found to be recurrent in favour of females in courses considered to be soft, i.e., SSS, SEH and SLS.
2. In courses considered to be challenging like SEMIS, SPS and SET, gender gap was found to be in favour of males in all the studied years.
3. Gender gap in SES & NRM and SFAA & FT were found to be inconsistent.
4. All the studied years revealed a gradual increase in women enrolment and also, in enrolment in general except for fluctuation observed in the academic year 2019-2020

Objective 4: To analyse the enrolment of women in PhD and MPhil programmes under Mizoram University.

Table 4: Gender-wise Enrolment in Mizoram University Departments PhD and MPhil (2016-2021)

School of Study	2016-2017				2017-2018				2018-2019				2019-2020				2020-2021			
	TT	M	F	GG	TT	M	F	G G	TT	M	F	G G	TT	M	F	GG	TT	M	F	GG
SEMIS	146	73	73 (50%)	0	146	73	73 (50%)	0	144	79	65 (45.14%)	9.72	154	81	73 (47.4%)	5.2	159	87	72 (45.28%)	9.44
SSS	171	89	82 (47.95%)	4.1	171	89	82 (47.95%)	4.1	175	70	105 (60%)	20	178	83	95 (53.37%)	6.74	172	85	87 (50.58%)	1.16
SEH	152	47	105 (69.08%)	38.16	152	47	105 (69.08%)	38.16	222	70	152 (68.47%)	36.94	167	67	100 (59.88%)	19.76	159	63	96 (60.38%)	20.76
SES & NRM	157	97	60 (38.22%)	23.56	157	97	60 (38.22%)	23.56	191	116	75 (39.27%)	21.46	39	24	15 (38.46%)	23.08	214	119	95 (44.39%)	11.22
SPS	58	41	17 (29.31%)	41.38	58	41	17 (29.31%)	41.38	73	53	20 (27.4%)	45.2	78	61	17 (21.8%)	56.4	94	67	27 (28.72%)	42.56
SLS	77	42	35 (45.45%)	9.1	77	42	35 (45.45%)	9.1	86	37	49 (56.98%)	13.96	103	47	56 (54.37%)	8.74	113	60	53 (46.90%)	6.2
SET	Not applicable								16	11	5 (31.25%)	37.5	27	19	8 (29.63%)	40.74	27	17	10 (37.04%)	25.92
SFAA&FT	Not applicable																2	-	2 (100%)	100

From Table 4, the investigator found gender gap in favour of females during all the five academic years in study only in SEH. SFAA & TT was found to have 100% women enrolment in 2020-2021. Four schools of studies, i.e., SEMIS, SES & NRM, SPS and SET were found to have recurrent gender gap in favour of males in all the studied years. The table also revealed the gender gap in SSS was in favour of males during 2016-2018 and in favour of females in the later years,

i.e., 2019-2021. Further, the gender gap in SLS was found to be in favour of males between 2016-2018 but found a decline and in favour of females during 2018-2019 and 2019-2020. However, in 2020-2021, the gender gap was found to be again in favour of males.



FINDINGS

1. In MPhil and PhD courses, gender gap was found to be prevalent in favour of males in schools of studies such as SEMIS, SES & NRM, SPS and SET.
2. However, one remarkable finding was in 2020-2021 where all enrolment recorded in SFAA & TT were females.
3. Also, gender gap in SEH was found to be the only school of study consistently in favour of females in all the studied years.
4. Gender gap in schools of studies such as SSS and SLS were found to be inconsistent.
5. Enrolment in PhD and MPhil courses were also found to be inconsistent in number during all the studied years.
6. However, the latest year in study, i.e., 2020-2021, revealed an improvement in enrolment for both males and females and is thus the year where gender gap is also found to be the least.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The study found that there is little to no gender gap in almost all courses offered under Mizoram University. However, the main prevalence of gender gap is found in the selection of what are considered soft courses (Humanities and Social Science disciplines) and hard courses (Science, Technology and Engineering disciplines). The gender gap in favour of women found in schools like SSS and SEH may reflect gendered educational preferences, occupational expectations and socio-cultural influences that shape academic choices. The gender gap in favour of men is eminent in schools like SPS and SET may reflect the continued perception of these disciplines as traditionally male-oriented fields. The academic year 2020-21 revealed a massive enrolment in general which could be the impact of COVID-19 forcing students to study in their hometown. The gender gap does not drastically decrease or increase in the studied years. However, the only level where gender gap is in favour of women is at the postgraduate level.

The findings of the study are consistent with the findings of Razack and CV (2021), who reported that although women's enrolment in higher education has shown a gradual improvement, gender gap still exists across different academic disciplines. Similarly, Kotian and Nair V (2023), also reported that socio-cultural factors and gendered educational preferences still persist in higher education. The study further supports these findings, revealing that there is improvement in women's enrolment, but variations still exist in course preferences among the genders.

The status of women in education has always been a topic of debate. Past studies have shown gender imbalance in education. However, with women empowerment and education now taken as an important indicator of economic development, considerable progress has been made in women enrolment and enrolment in general. Higher education has thus seen improvement in enrolment. The study therefore concludes that despite its late start to women education, Mizoram has made significant progress in educating its women.

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